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King, Liesl (2020) Twists in the Tracks: An interview with singer, composer, and sound producer Aynee Osborn Joujon Roche. In: Hepworth-Sawyer, Russ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8266-0149>, Hodgson, Jay, King, Liesl and Marrington, Mark ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5404-2546>, (eds.) Gender in Music Production. Perspectives on Music Production . Routledge, pp. 156-175

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<https://www.routledge.com/Gender-in-Music-Production-1st-Edition/Hepworth-Sawyer-Hodgson-King-Marrington/p/book/9781138613362>

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~~Running Head Right-hand: Twists in the Tracks~~

~~Running Head Left-hand: Liesl King~~

## 10

### Twists in the Tracks

#### An Interview WWith Singer, Composer, and Sound Producer Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche

Liesl King

Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche is an accomplished singer, composer, and sound editor for film and television who lives and works in Long Beach, California. She is the lead singer and co-founder of Restless Blues Band, the lead singer and co-composer of the albums *There and Back Again* and *Just In Time*, and when you look for her on IMDb, she has 71 credits with the Sound Department beginning in 1998. I first met Aynee as an undergraduate, when we were both studying for a degree in Theatre Studies at the University of Santa Barbara, and then professionally and geographically, we went very different ways – I to the UK, where I pursued a career as an academic, teaching literature, science fiction, and gender theory; and she, as you will hear, to Colorado, LA, Nashville, and then back again to LA, pursuing a career in music and sound post-production for film and television. She and I and a small group of other Californians who met in Santa Barbara in the 1980s have stayed in touch over these many years, and this summer of 2019 I had the privilege of interviewing her in Santa Barbara for this collection on gender in music production. In the interview you are about to read, Part 1 offers a potted history of Aynee’s experiences in the music industry; Part 2 explores her experiences as an editor/creator of sound for film and television; and Part 3 expands on her impressions – touched on in Parts 1 and 2 – of the way gender differences can adversely impact women’s well-being in the industries

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## 10 Twists in the Tracks

of music and post-production, but also the ways in which they can offer fantastic opportunities for collaborations among women and enhanced relationships between men and women, too. As I read through the interview, it strikes me that feminists and gender theorists working across the same historical period have helped to shed light on many of the issues that Aynee raises, and have contributed to the dramatic advancements in gender equality that post-industrial Western societies have undergone in the twentieth century, a dynamic that has (largely) continued to shape gender relations positively in the twenty-first century. Importantly – and the points Aynee raises in the final section, ‘On Gender’, make this clear – feminists, activists, gender theorists, the LGBT community, AND innumerable women and men who would not officially place themselves in any of the above categories but who simply live their lives with sensitivity and respect for others – have contributed to a radically transformed and transforming reality in this twenty-first century where *men and women of both genders and all sexual identities are becoming more comfortable relating to each other as human beings instead of types.*

As I have suggested, twentieth-century gender theory, which came into its own through second-wave feminism in the 1980s, gathered up individual narratives like Aynee’s, garnered statistics and trends, and offered a studied critique of the way in which women, women and men of color, and non-heteronormative men and women were treated within a vast range of professional and domestic cultures that appeared to primarily privilege white, heterosexual men. The point that Aynee makes in the final section of the interview, which is that during the time she was getting started in the music business and coming out as a gay woman in LA, many men still felt it was acceptable to ‘grab [her] in the butt’, not only foregrounds the sexism that was prevalent in the popular music industry at the time, but also underlines theorist Monique Wittig’s point in *The Straight Mind* in 1991 (originally 1978), which was that, to paraphrase, the straight community often simply assumes that everyone else is straight. And in Part 2, her narration of the way in which the female producer she was working with at Sound Deluxe left to start her own business, and invited Aynee to come join her when she was made redundant, brings to mind Adrienne Rich’s utopian concept of an all-female, ‘lesbian continuum’ (Rich 27), in which

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

women of every sexual identity – straight, bisexual, gay – might support one another so that they mutually thrive, and overcome difficulties by looking out for each other whenever they have a chance. And in the final section of the interview, Aynee’s discussion of the fantastic, collaborative experiences she has had working with a wide range of men in the music and post-production film/TV industries, when she and they have been able to ‘take off the hats of men and women’, and be ‘in the same tribe, making music’, brings to mind gender theorist John Beynon’s key point in *Masculinities and Culture* (2002), which is that men too are adversely impacted by hypermasculine environments (in which ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is culturally produced (3)), and by extension, that they too naturally benefit from collaborative, respectful, non-hierarchical ways of being and making and doing.

As soon as I lay claim to the position that ‘we’ (and we all must be careful about ‘we’, as often our sphere of understanding is far more local than we believe it to be) in many arenas within Western culture are making dramatic strides in terms of gender equality, a reader will no doubt disagree profoundly, and point to heinous examples of sexism that she or he has experienced or observed. Of course. My literary specialism is feminist science fiction utopias of the ’70s and ’80s, and we are a long way from the difference-respecting culture that Marge Piercy imagined in *Woman on the Edge of Time* in 1976. However, I would argue that in many ways, the collective, Western ‘we’ (and of course this is not a dynamic exclusive to the West, but for the purposes of this essay, I will talk about the geographical areas with which I am familiar) is experiencing and in many ways contributing to a gender-quake that in terms of the long history of *Homo sapiens*’ relations, is marking out a profound and dramatically important sea change. Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche’s experiences, observations, and conclusions, in sum, show me a glimpse of what our species can be, and what it ideally will become.

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## Part 1 – Backstory

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### Interviewer

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

Our edited collection, *Gender in Music Production*, is hoping to acknowledge the contributions that female sound producers, engineers, and musicians bring to the music production process within a studio environment. We want to identify and celebrate the positive attributes women bring to the production and the ultimate outcome of a musical artefact, and we want to discuss the attitudes or cultural behaviors that potentially impinge on this process.

Firstly, can you outline your background and tell us something about how you arrived at where you are now?

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

My God – I’m out of college, I was under development with a girl trio, called, are you ready? Trimm. And we were thrust into the studio. We were thrust into roles, where I fit a certain niche of a certain girl ‘type’ – a white girl, a black girl, me whatever – and was put in an outfit and hair, makeup, and totally doing something that had nothing to do with who I was other than the fact that I could sing. So that was my first sort of exposure to the business, and Berry Gordy and all these people were involved with Motown and it was so, so interesting. And yet, it was so not me. So that was part of it. And then that kind of went into ‘okay, what can I do?’ I wasn’t a songwriter in the sense that I felt proud of at the time. So I could sing; so then I got a piano player. And I did the whole cabaret route. And so I would sing songs that I liked – you know – it’s interesting because it’s almost full circle, because now I’m singing with a jazz band – and I started out doing jazz stuff like Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday, and Dinah Washington and all these old beautiful, phenomenal American songs. And I got some attention through that, in the form of I made a friend – and he comes into this later – I was singing in the cabarets of Los Angeles, and I met this guy named Paul Rothchild. And Rothchild ended up being this icon of ’60s rock, where he produced some Dylan; he recorded Janis Joplin; he produced The Doors and Bonnie Raitt.

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

And he and I hit it off like wildfire, and the same goes for his amazingly talented son Dan, who later would help me produce some of my Americana music in the '90s. So to go back to 1989 . . . I'd auditioned for *Star Search*, which is like today's *American Idol*. I sang a very, very old song from the '20s, and I didn't look like the other typical people. And nothing really came of it. And I was working in an office – right, this crazy thing – in an office, and my phone rings. And this woman introduces herself and she says, I'm the assistant of Glenn Frey of The Eagles, and he and another guy who's a New York Broadway producer have a nightclub/restaurant in Aspen, Colorado, and they saw your audition tape for *Star Search*. And I'm thinking 'what?!'. They want you – they're going to make their restaurant called 'Andiamo' in Aspen – (where everybody goes in the wintertime, all the rich and famous people go there to ski and party) – and they just saw *The Fabulous Baker Boys* with Michelle Pfeiffer and the Bridges brothers, and they want to do a piano bar, and they are captivated by you. They've got three people that they're auditioning here in Los Angeles. Can you come tomorrow and sing/audition? And so I did. And I got the gig immediately. And my whole life changed. I was flown out to Aspen – you know, private jet – it was like a Cinderella story. Time goes by; so I sing out there and one of the important things that happens is that I meet Irving Azoff, who was the manager of The Eagles at the time. He'd heard me sing in Aspen, and Glenn Frey really believed in me, so Glenn helped tremendously after the Aspen shows ended.

Then I kind of lily-padded that exposure in Aspen along with Glenn Frey's help to jumping into the music scene in Los Angeles, and this would have been around 1990. So I had a meeting with Irving Azoff, where I told him that I felt I was somewhere on the spectrum between Melissa Etheridge and Sade. However, I didn't really have this – ALL – you know the 'complete package' or my own identity as an artist, singer/songwriter at the time – I could sing, but I didn't know who I was. I didn't know. So I couldn't tell them. That uncertainty put me in a very interesting and vulnerable position too, and looking back on this – well, I've never really talked about it like this before – so you guys are my first – and it's all flowing out of me because usually I can't remember. So I'm going to get quickly to the end. But I bring Paul Rothchild in as

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

my producer, and he and I begin the work of trying to figure out what I want to sing that will be honest and ME. They throw some money at me; this is the music industry at the time: they throw some money at me. I go into the most amazing recording studios in Los Angeles – The Mamas and The Papas recorded at Ocean Way, A&M Records, Larrabee studio, all this stuff started to happen. But again, I didn't have my identity. So I went into a song search, a process of searching for songs that I loved and felt a connection to. And, ironically, one of the songwriters we listen to was Sheryl Crow, and a bunch of other people were trying to find songs that resonated with me so I could come from a place of truth, blah blah blah . . . all of this at you know, age 26 (which many considered too old). And even then he wanted me to say I was 23 – it was fascinating. And during the course of all this, I started writing more of my own songs. But I went into development prior to this; I was sort of songwriting on the outskirts, but I was still trying to get this record deal.

We made my demo; time went by, and they decided to sign Sheryl Crow, because she was a songwriter and an amazing musician. And so, you know, her career went in the way you know; it was me or Sheryl Crow, and they picked/chose Sheryl Crow. . . . But anyway, so that ship sailed. And then I started writing my own stuff. *And Paul wasn't into it.* And I remember I had done a show in a place called Genghis Cohen in LA, and I was doing my own stuff, and this guy [Jac Holzman](#) at [Elektra Records](#) – he was really digging it. But he thought I needed more time. So that was when they were putting artists – and this is all again – my whole . . . everything is up to men. At that time, it was all men making these choices and decisions. And I intercepted a letter that was addressed to me – my name but Paul's address: we both lived on Lookout Mountain up in Laurel Canyon, which had its own amazing music scene. Paul was at the top, I was at the bottom. And I intercepted this letter addressed to me at his address, and I decided to open it. And it was from the record company, basically offering me a development deal. So they were going to supplement my income as an artist, give me the stipend, and let me continue developing myself. *And Paul . . .* and I sealed it back up, and I took it to Paul's house. And a couple weeks went by and you [sic] never mentioned it to me. And I'll never forget this day,

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

because I had him on the phone. He was in the recording studio with someone else at the time. So I said, “Paul, I gotta tell you, I found this letter”. And he got so pissed. And he was like . . . he was on his back foot and he just attacked. And he just said, “I don’t like the songs that you’re writing. I don’t like the direction you’re going. It is not what we were looking for. It was not what”, you know, blah, blah, blah . . . “And I don’t think they should put this money into you. I don’t think that they should invest in you”. He no longer believed in my music – because he didn’t have the control and, well, maybe my own songs just weren’t his cup of tea.

And yeah, it was devastating. It was my last chance in a way, you know, not to like, pity party it. This is not . . . I haven’t also talked about it. So, clearly there is a little emotion to it. So this – you know – this little dream went away, and also it felt like the betrayal of a friend. Because Paul and I went to the theatre together, and Paul and I went to the opera together; Paul and I, you know, would drink into the night and sing and cry, and his son is amazing, *his son is amazing* – Dan Rothchild – he’s in Echo In the Canyon right now. We made music together and he seemed to really like my original Americana songs. We recorded several songs together. I love him madly.

Anyway, it was, it just was – my little thing, and it happened for a reason, because I’m also a super private person. And even though I sing and I do all this stuff, I’m also a little bit introverted. You know, maybe if you knew me well enough you’d be like – you’d be so [saying] – I mean, *you really are*. I don’t need to wear the red dress. I don’t need to do the – listen to me; look at me. . . . Even though I can front a band. I can tell a story; I can sing a song; I can be that entertainer, but in my own private life, I don’t need to be the center of attention. I just don’t need that limelight.

So I went to Nashville – I forgot all that part – I went to Nashville, on the radio, my whole country world that I made happen – I did get a small record deal. I got the deal, had songs and radio interviews, CDs in the record stores, all that stuff – I’ll keep going and not get into the therapy! But I did find my own voice and I liked it. And I told my own stories in a way with the American fabric of Americana/folk, if you will, where I morphed into country/folk out of the

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

rock. And I loved it, and I lived it for years and years and years. And I hooked up with other musicians and wrote many, many songs.

But anyway so the country thing – I was too country for LA and I was too folky/LA for Nashville, and this would have been in around '97; and then later on I moved away from it, because basically I'm 34, I got back from Nashville; I'm 34 – ran that track. Also, I didn't like all the attention afterwards, like men coming up to you and having their agenda in a bar in Nashville, such as "Oh my God, I'm in love with you, and I want you to meet my mom, and blah blah blah. . .", and my guitar player having to pretend to be my boyfriend. You know, it was a very interesting thing. But you're talking about a 30-year career in what I'm trying to shove in in 20 minutes – how I got to where I am . . . ! But I came to LA, got into a job, because I didn't want to be a broke musician. So I got very practical. And then my work – I fell in love with my work – and did a sh\*\* ton of movies and a sh\*\* ton of work and walked away from the music, getting into sound editorial for film.

And we can get into that later – I don't want to just monologue for you – but I moved away from music. And then maybe halfway through my career, you know, working as an editor, I knew something was missing from my soul – this creative side too, that the editing wasn't satisfying – and that I wasn't playing music anymore. And some people I would meet at parties that I used to be in bands with, they'd say, "Aynee, how can you not be doing this?" And I would say, "well, you know, I met a girl, I got married and I got a house; I have a job. I'm, you know, blah, blah, blah, you know, that whole materialistic thing". And then I realized – you're right. So then I started to get in that groove. And then I ended up getting into a blues band. And that's when the blues band thing started because I could be any age – didn't have to be young and hot. I just had to sing and really have that together. And the blues was kind of jazz and country coming together. And it was this Bonnie Raitt thing and Susan Tedeschi and Aynee [Osborn Joujon-Roche] – this melding, and I was thinking, this is awesome, because it had the power but the finesse and the ease, and so I was digging that and I've done that for eight years, which brought me into where I am now.

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

And at that point I was 48 years old, and playing in a club from say 11 pm to 2 am, and – who am I? – driving home *drenched* from singing for three hours and feeling incredibly satisfied – and that you know had its trajectory and as bands go, as relationships go, we kind of had our climax and, it exploded and imploded when my brother got sick. And then after I lost my brother, I could not touch a guitar. I could not – you know, I wrote one song that nobody probably will ever hear called *Broken*. And then I didn't sing anymore, for a while, like over a year, year and a half, and then I slowly have gotten back into it, slowly, a little bit at a time, because it's all about our lifestyles, and our managing our stress, or whatever – that reflection of us – and also I was just, you know, healing. And part of that healing was me allowing myself to give myself a break, and to do whatever it is I wanted to do that I needed to do for me, because so much of my existence was output. You guys as Moms can understand that – as a mother, as a woman, whatever, giving, giving – and I almost, and it almost, killed me. To be perfectly honest, it almost killed me. And so climbing back from that, from the worst possible thing that you could imagine, you know, and coming back from that and how that's going to play into my music is still a story that's unfolding. You know, right now I'm singing – I've gone back to singing – not my stuff. It's too close. To be able to sing these classic songwriters and just have fun. . . . Just have fun again, right? I am also starting to play my own material with my writing partner Drew, and it feels good. I have a great home life with my wife, who is a light and my rock.

That's why I surf so much too, because it makes me feel closer to my brother. It resonates with me. And it's just pure fun. No thought. Just fun and joy and oneness with the planet, with the ocean. It's just the greatest gift in the world. I am so happy. I'm almost happier there than I am playing music.

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## Part 2 – Woman in Audio

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### Interviewer

So what's the relationship between – or is there one? – between the sound editing work that you've done, and your original interest in music and singing? What's that segue?

## **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

It was interesting because when I was making a record, when I first got into the music industry, it was analogue. So you're recording on this big two-inch tape, and it was visceral, and you were physically cutting the tape to edit out a breath that you didn't like, or whatever. And I was blown away by that process. When I started to work in sound, and I was helping to produce my own style of music, where we were taking control, it had become a digital world of sound. So now we're working in Pro Tools, but you're still seeing this visual representation of a track, and you're recording sound waves you can see going across this track. And so the music in Pro Tools, it's this linear thing, of this, for example, pink track, or orange track, or whatever; so it's really, it's almost like paint being dragged across the canvas horizontally with the soundwave going like this [gestures]. So it's really kind of cool visually. So when I first saw my voice being recorded that way, and the drums and how they looked, and the guitar, and all of this, I thought wow – that's pretty cool. That was my first introduction to sound being digitized and represented visually. And it was cool because it was multimedia, right? Plus, you're doing this creative thing that's energizing you and it's stimulating. So when I started to work for Warren Dewey, a sound engineer, sound designer – where he's designing sound, working in a digital format, with a huge mixing board still, it was the same kind of visual thing. But maybe in sound for film, as a sound effects editor, you might have that visual track going by, and instead of drums, it's the sound of crickets – because it's a scene that takes place at night in the forest. You might have another track of fire, crackling, and another track of the wind moving the leaves of the trees around. So you have that visual representation of the sound that way. It was an easy transition. And there's a ton of musicians who work in post-production sound, right? Because it totally translates across.

## **Interviewer**

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

Can you say something about the changes you've seen in terms of the tools you use to produce audio since you first began?

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

I would say that technology has made my job as an editor and musician much easier. For example, my cell phone is also a recorder – I can quickly record a song idea and then email that audio file to my writing partner, and he can then use that audio file as a foundation to start building a song. In the same way, recording equipment and digital editing tools make everything more streamlined. Fast internet speeds are also a great tool, making it possible to send large amounts of data over the internet – sharing songs, or sound for a TV show or film; it can all be 'uploaded' via fiber optics, making it possible to send huge amounts of this data, intact, to the studio servers in a very short amount of time. For example, I can send the dialogue for an entire episode of a TV show I work on in less than an hour. A few years ago, without fast internet it would take over 12 hours to upload this material. Before that, I would take a portable drive and have to physically drive to the studio and give it to the assistants personally. In this digital age, things can happen in seconds vs. hours, and that's a huge help in productivity.

### **Interviewer**

Right. That makes sense. So back to the narrative about your career – you said you went to work for a sound designer?

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

Yes, I was working for this sound designer. And he taught me a million different things. And there – this was a nice thing because it never ended in this betrayal [like] it did with Paul – as I said I worked for Warren Dewey, who had started also as a sound engineer for people like Aretha Franklin, doing concert mixes and amazing things. And he was a record mixer and came

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

up with songs as well. So, we would sometimes do radio shows; we'd record the dialogue of a radio show, where you had, say, William Shatner, and these amazing actors, and we'd have a microphone on each guy and record them all. And we were still recording on digital audio tape, called Dat machines at the time. It wasn't even that digitized. Then we'd bring that back. We'd make this radio play, and even, say, how they did it in the old times with the guy holding the shoes, to make it sound like the footsteps were approaching or whatever – there's a door knock and glass breaking; we'd have the same thing. But we'd add it later; it exists in the library, a database that you could grab from and draw on.

And then I basically segued into working for a huge sound company in Hollywood called Sound Deluxe. And they did – you know – all of Oliver Stone's movies; they did everybody's films, mostly men's. So I basically worked my way up by working in a sound effects library, an encyclopedia of sound. So I would categorize, and I would organize, and I would edit and clean all these sounds from sound libraries from years gone by, and also [I was] creating new sounds. So I would go out with my microphone, and I would record a racing car going by, or we'd go out of the box and we'd go to, say, JPL – Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. And we'd talk to some of the scientists there and go into their laboratories, to see if we could find new sounds to record. And there were animals to record, too; there were a million things like that. I worked my way up – I finally got into a union, where you have to have a certain amount of hours as an editor, a certain amount of hours working with audio on certain movies, because it's a whole political situation. I had to have someone write a letter for me. And I worked my ass off there for about five years.

And then they got bought by a bigger company. And it became less of a Mom-and-Pop type feel. And just as I got into the union, one of the men who owned the company, they basically let me go. They gave me severance. And they said – we don't need you anymore. Thank you so much, after I had produced a sh\*\* ton of work, but they were downsizing and I didn't have the language, the self-love, to express myself and say, wait a minute, you guys are making a huge, huge – do you know what I could have brought to your company, the value? I

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

wish, right, as a 55-year-old woman now looking back, I wish I'd had those – that language – but also with all of those heartbreaks or disappointments in this career, in this world that is dominated by men – music world and post-production – as are so many other fields, we find, it also led to another opportunity for me that was where I hit my stride. So it was 2002 when I joined the union and I was let go from Sound Deluxe. And a woman who is a dear friend of mine, we've known each other for many years – worked there. She was leaving at the same time to basically start her own company. And she said, because I was in tears, you know, and they knew that I had formed a department; I had made this thing – I had made, I had monetized their library; I had digitized their library, and continued to bring in money, and all this stuff that was going to go on in perpetuity. . . . Oh, by the way, as well, [it's] still going on today, over 20 years later. But she left and she said, come and work for me. Come and work with me. And here it was, this woman going out on her own with one movie called *Blue Crush* about women surfers, and that was it. And we were off to the races, and we haven't looked back since. There have been ups and downs, ebbs and flows – film segueing into television, which is fantastic. More women. And now there's a ton of women on our crews. And we keep working, and I've been working steadily for a really, really long time.

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## Part 3 – On Gender

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### Interviewer

Okay, the second question was around how you were supported along the way, and you've really covered that. The next question is about obstacles, and I feel that you've talked a little bit about that, but is there something more that you wanted to add? The question is – what obstacles did you face as producer/engineer/musician that may have shaped the future for you?

### Aynee Joujon-Roche

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

I mean, I've had such cliché experiences with male chauvinism and male control. But I've also had, you know, the 'let me handle this for you sweetie' type thing. And, and men just sh\*\* on you, thinking if I sh\*\* on you, maybe it's going to make you better type thing; make you stronger. And, of course, sexual undertones/overtones always end up being a part of it. And, I've – you know, like many women I used it too, if I could, used it in my benefit. I did too. And you know, I think it's part of the learning process, and the experience that is reflected by our society. And that evolution of realizing – okay, I don't need to do that. And I'm not that cute anymore anyway, so maybe I . . . you know what I mean? So there were some obstacles like that, and the self-doubt and of jumping into an area where you think – I didn't go to school for this; I don't have a degree in this, where some people, you know, did and do; I don't have an engineering degree. So much of it again, comes back to when you finally realize who you are and what you bring to the table, and how sometimes we beat ourselves up about it. . . . And then that realization – the irony that happens later in life that you do [know who you are and what you are doing]. To find your voice and your self-worth and are able to stand up for yourself. If young women could find their voices and self-worth sooner – ah, the years of pain and BS that might be avoided.

But one other thing I wanted to tell you was a positive experience, also with men – is sometimes if you're lucky, and you're making music, it's one of the few things – also in Martial Arts – but making music sometimes – it's one of those beautiful things. Maybe you've experienced this, where you're involved in a creative process, and you're with the opposite sex, where you just become humans, musicians – making music, where I'm not looking at 'Oh, wow, those are nice breasts', or 'Wow, he's so tall and handsome, look at his jaw line'. No, we're just humans, in the same tribe, making music, and that's such a beautiful thing, when those outer things can fall away. So I've had some lovely experiences with other musicians making music, making sound for a film, making a soundtrack for a film, where for a minute, we take those hats off, of men and women.

## **Interviewer**

What do you think contributes to that kind of experience, that kind of arena where people are just being themselves, where sexual politics or the attraction isn't a dominating factor?

## **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

Well, so what do you think contributes to that positive? I think it's that the whole is greater than the parts. So, if that whole, whatever that is – that cake that you're baking – becomes the thing, this communal energy of making this cake, making this record, making the soundtrack, whatever, when you all – can get out of your heads, and just be in that creative process. Yeah, it's that moment of creation, right? That hopefully happens in any endeavor where you're making something or experiencing something – perhaps too, maybe you're not making it, you're not making the music, you're not making the cake, but you're experiencing whatever it is – the fire, the lightning storm, the things that are part of you, but they're also way bigger than you. It's about the purity of connection.

## **Interviewer**

We can't categorize all men as a group or all women as a group. But if you were to give advice – let's start with male figures in the industry – if you were going to give advice to them about how to help the women in the industry feel included, and to be able to create that kind of natural ebb and flow that you just talked about, is there something you could say?

## **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

Yeah, that's a tough one. It would be nice where, where things aren't qualified by gender? You know, to say – the cliché of she's such a great drummer for a woman. And she's this amazing drummer, she's an amazing woman/female, you know, female director. You know what? That

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

part – the gender talk, the gender identification might be an interesting thing for them to try to think about more. And I think that it's happening too, because I was brought up in, came out, and was still working in the culture where men could still sometimes grab you in the butt or corner you – make you . . . for example, 'you're the secretary to this meeting. No, no, I'm a producer. I'm not. I'm not a secretary. Why is it, because I'm female?' You know, that kind of stuff, or the talking down.

### **Interviewer**

Okay, so then, what about for the women, so younger women or women new to the business? Is there something that you would say to them, that would offer some insight into how to help create that kind of 'human' reality in the business that you just described?

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

Boy, if it was a young woman, the more, the more work she could do *quickly* to somehow trust herself, to trust her gut, and to stand up for herself the way she might for her Mom. If somebody – you know – was down-talking your mother in the grocery store and embarrassing her, shaming her, or whatever, you'd stick up for your Mom or you'd stick up for your little brother, or your little sister or your best friend. Why can't we do that for ourselves in an educational, doesn't have to be a threatening, way; to be aware of your own self, and also your responsibility even about your tones – going back to the musicality of things, our tones – it's not what you say, it's how you say it. So, sonically, the way you might speak to somebody where they still feel like they're not being attacked; the man is not feeling like he's being attacked, but it's like – this would be so much more beneficial to all of us, if, you know . . . but so many people don't. That's the irony. That's, that's also the miracle of life, right, of aging, that you're not going to know everything at 20, nor should you have to. But, yes – I could have saved myself maybe some extra

steps had someone said, you've got to believe in yourself and trust yourself, and you *know* what's going on, but you're ignoring the voice. Which of course the inner voice knows.

## **Interviewer**

I hope that through this interview, some young women/women new to the music business will be hearing what you've just said. I hope they will trust themselves. And as you've said, in a professional and heartfelt way, the 'could you think about the way you've just said that' approach is so important – creating that trust.

## **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

And this is so key, foundational, fundamental – 100%. But I also asked so many questions. And so all the men that I was around, that were so reclusive in their own little editorial worlds – but the minute I approached them with some curiosity – could you tell me why you like this or why you did it that way? Then they would say – oh, I would love to, and then they each give you little pearls of wisdom. And that also helped me in where I was going on my journey to educate myself to become that well-rounded person, and that also led to people going – she's pretty pleasant to be around; let's give her a call and get her on the show because she's easy to work with. And that's 90% of it. They assume you have the skills. So get the skills and know yourself and trust yourself. And then it's really about knowing when to stop talking and listen.

Because in that particular field, you could be with people in a dark room mixing a movie for 12 or 15 hours. And if you're a pain in the ass, on any level, you won't be getting that next job. The rub is, you get confidence with experience, but you need the experience to get the confidence. . . . As they say, fake it 'til you make it. I was thrown in the deep end, and I learned to swim and swim well – quickly.

## **Interviewer**

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

So the next question is about the disparity in terms of percentages of men and women in music/audio production. And I understand that there are still far more men in the industry? Why do you think it is the case that there are fewer women working, and especially fewer women in the higher, more prominent positions?

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

God, I wish I knew. Yeah, I really do.

It's not a sexy job. Not to say that women are after sexy jobs. But it takes a certain . . . I mean, now I'm talking about post-production, okay, post-production sound, which is mostly men. I mean, it's a technical job. There are a lot of female editors, also film editors, because, you know, it takes an incredible amount of patience. It's a super detail-oriented job, so you have to really be able to do that. And I almost look at it like virtual knitting. You're knitting this long, long scarf. And if you miss that one little thing, then the whole, you know, unravels. So it takes a great deal of patience. In so many ways women are so suited for it. And there are certain areas where in dialogue . . . although I started out in sound effects, but you know, dialogue is mostly women; sound effects and sound design, because it's gunshots and werewolves and who knows what, it could be mostly men. . . . So yeah, I honestly couldn't tell you why. It's just because there were more men in the workforce when this started to happen, and it just stayed that way. And it's slowly, slowly getting better.

### **Interviewer**

And so you see it shifting?

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

More women are coming in. Although I'm so sequestered I don't know a lot of the new young female editors. So I'm not sure about that. And in the music business, like any other business,

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

too, there's a ton of men that are in power. But the music industry, which I don't have a lot of knowledge about, at this point, the music industry is changing dramatically too, because it's not like – oh, let's give you a record contract and make a record, as now people can make high-quality records in their bedrooms, and you can get it digitized and out there in the marketplace. Now the marketing – you need deep pockets for that sometimes, unless something goes viral. But yeah, the digital world – you know, my music is going to exist on Spotify and Amazon and iTunes, and all of that long after I'm gone. And that's really cool. You know, maybe there's 5,000 people that know of my music or perhaps 500 – whatever! The point is, it's out there in the world.

### **Interviewer**

Okay, so final question, and we've talked a bit about this already, but what do you think the male music production population can learn from women working in the field? It's a pretty big question.

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

So what comes to mind. Oh my God, the first word that comes to mind is *collaboration*. Collaboration. And to have that sort of inclusion as opposed to . . . sometimes men come from this egotistical place. That's just so – it's such a quick knee-jerk way to do it. Welcome to my recording studio. These are my guitars. That's my room. These are my mics. And what are we going to do with your song today? And it could really be, what are we going to do today? What are we going to do? Yeah, and here we have all these toys and all these knobs and it's going to be . . . but to make it that because women, you know, historically are much more communal. . . . And if that atmosphere was there, that sort of gentleness there – if men can embrace a little more of their feminine side . . . of tribal . . . of say, welcome to this space – a tiny bit of incense wafting through the room, carpets everywhere. We're going to make music together today. And

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

I've encountered those men, too. And I love it. And you get up and you're in this vibe that is the most natural high when you're all vibrating on that creative level of like, yeah, yeah, right. Did you get – you know, oh, let's go again. Right. You know – we have to do it again. Right? Yeah, let's go back to the fifth measure, because . . . and they're reading your mind because they know/they heard/they felt/they experienced it. So you're all sharing that same thing. And even if it gets a little bit off-track, you knew exactly what to do to go back into that and in the corrective, collaborative moment, that's magical too. And there's a beautiful high there. And it's fun to be able to experience that with everybody you know – and the old guys with the old ego and it's my way or no way – they're going to be dying out on all levels, right? – the my way or no way. You guys are going to be going away. Just no room for tournaments anymore.

### **Interviewer**

And I suppose just finally, because I always have a final question, but it's just to say is there anything more that you want to add about this topic? The book is entitled *Gender in Music Production* – is there anything more that comes to mind that you would want to add? Men and women will be reading this, men and women with different sexual identities, different roles/positions, people from different cultural backgrounds.

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

Well, it's the dichotomy of embracing who you are, which also includes embracing your gender. And feeling empowered by that. As an example, to write a song from a female perspective of, say, watching your single Mom raising you and your brother – so that's going to have a female through line, and a feminine through line or a vulnerability. And so you know, okay, so because the idea would be to be gender neutral, and to go into a creative flow as human beings. That's while still honoring the idea of whatever might be happening in the project, while also the male, if the male is doing something, to be gender neutral, but also to embrace maybe his masculinity,

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

of being able to comfort you at some moment or to be able to maybe put you back on track because women can go off on tangents. So then the gender could take place, come into play in a beautiful way. But then to remember to go back to that sort of neutrality perhaps, and always come from a place of trusting yourself, trusting your inner voice, because if you're not, then you really have work to do. You know, and if the making of the art helps you do that, fantastic. Start from there first because then we can heal it outside of ourselves if we work on healing it inside of ourselves.

### **Interviewer**

Well, Aynee Joujon-Roche – the things you've said apply to my world too, and I just want to thank you for this amazing interview.

### **Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche**

Thank you!

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## **Conclusion**

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This interview with Aynee Osborn Joujon-Roche adds voice to the period between the second-wave feminism of the 1980s and '90s and to the current moment, where culturally and institutionally, we are all seeing radical changes in terms of gender expression and gender equality. From my own vantage point as a 53-year-old woman, it is fantastic to see the way in which university students here in the UK express a range of gender identities, and raise points in class about queer identity, non-binary identity, and asexuality, for example. The popular MeToo movement inspired by Tarana Burke in 2006 has inspired professional counterparts; in my own institution, Student Services has developed an 'All About Respect' campaign, which particularly focuses on the need to report sexual assault. A young woman in my science fiction class just last

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

week explained that she didn't know why some women she knew didn't call themselves feminists – she said she asked someone, 'do you think men and women should be treated equally?', and when the person replied 'of course', she said, 'well, that's feminism!' While editors such as Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (1991) have suggested through their title that in reality, the melody of voices which proudly foregrounds luminaries such as Virginia Woolf, Betty Friedan, Hélène Cixous, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Judith Butler, and Judith/Jack Halberstam is perhaps better represented as 'Feminisms', since feminists come from a range of different backgrounds and vantage points, my student nevertheless argues well. It is perhaps also true that the introduction of the more inclusive category 'gender theory', an umbrella term which includes theoretical essays on the topics of masculinity and non-heteronormative identities, has identified common ground between men and women, due to gender theory's simple acknowledgment that every human being (and every species on the planet) suffers in cultures where hypermasculinity dominates. We (and I am speaking as a woman, but also as a human being) needed the diverse language, the multifaceted discourse of feminism(s) to get to this greatly improved place in history, where it seems to me that finally our collective vision – where we come to perceive one another as people, first, and individual men and women, second.

Aynee's fluid description of a studio environment where men and women are going 'into a creative flow as human beings', while on a subtler level, accepting that there might be gender differences is for me, profound and deeply nuanced. Her comment 'if the male is doing something, to be gender neutral, but also to embrace maybe his masculinity, of being able to comfort you at some moment or to be able to maybe put you back on track because women can go off on tangents' is beautifully expressed. If a reader finds the phrase 'because women can go off on tangents' offensively stereotyping, I'm unsympathetic; of course this is not true of all women, but it is true of many. I'm happy to claim my own tendency towards self-interruptions, digressions, and trajectories. French feminist Hélène Cixous was perhaps the queen of the multi-levelled argument, and while few writers can compete with her erudition, she creates a meaning-making model which lends credibility to all habitual digressors!

## 10 Twists in the Tracks

Judith/Jack Halberstam famously explained that no one ‘owns’ masculinity or femininity in *Female Masculinity* (1998), and this observation is an important one for the context. In Aynee’s description of a collaborative environment where ‘the gender could take place, come into play in a beautiful way’, it seems to me that the terms ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘masculine’, ‘feminine’ have been thrown into free play, where all bets are off, and where the term ‘collaboration’ comes fully into its own. I can’t help but return to my science fictional reference – in Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the gender-fluid character Luciente tells protagonist Connie: ‘strangeness breeds richness’ (103). For me, this is where Aynee’s journey, which contains many twists and turns along diverse and intersecting tracks, finally arrives. I cannot agree with her sentiments more thoroughly, and so to all who read these pages, here’s to a future dense in collaborations rich and strange!

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