

# SHE SHREDS

DEDICATED TO WOMEN  
GUITARISTS & BASSISTS

## REVIVAL ISSUE

In 2015, the circulation of She Shreds Magazine came to an end. But we know you missed us. After eight long years, we're back, bolder and louder than ever before.



**EX HEX**  
**SHARON VAN ETTEN**  
**CHANELLE KAZADI**  
**VERA DEVORAH**

## CHANGING TIDES

**The Evolution of Women  
Musicians in Mainstream Coverage**

1920's – Now: Early Blues & the Black Consumer,  
The Influence of Tharpe & Thornton, Emergence  
of the Modern Rock Critic, Gonzo Journalism & the Male  
Gaze, Independent Publication & Women Critics



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This article is about how mainstream music publications have portrayed musicians who live outside of the cis male mold, because widespread visibility can have a powerful impact on our understanding of what is possible. As Oprah put it in a documentary about the Ed Sullivan Show's impact: "You don't understand what it's like to be in a world where nobody looks like you. When I first saw Diana Ross looking glamorous and beautiful, it represented possibility and hope. It was life changing." Achieving visibility and respect that fully reflects the contributions of a person or group to our culture is part of a systemic cycle of awareness.

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**“ I DON'T WANT TO BE QUALIFIED AS A FEMALE SINGER. I JUST WANT TO BE A SINGER. ”**

**I don't think you should be qualified by your gender. That's always bullshit. And unfortunately, it's probably not going to change in my lifetime. But I just want to be considered a good lyricist and a good singer, not a "girl" singer or a "girl" lyricist. That's not relevant. Just evaluate me on my music**

— GRETCHEN SEAGER, 1967



# SHE'S BACK

## WE KNOW YOU MISSED US...

In 2015, the circulation of She Shreds Magazine came to an end. But we know you missed us. After eight long years, we're back, bolder and louder than ever before.

She Shreds is a community-driven, comprehensive answer to guitar culture and music media. Dedicated to women & gnc guitarists and bassists, our mission is to educate, empower, and inspire people through unexplored musical and cultural landscapes. Our vision is to continuously refine, redefine, and reimagine the possibilities of how music connects us, ensuring an inclusive and accessible music community 100% of the time.

We aim to be a revitalizing voice in contemporary feminism, one that welcomes complex arguments and refuses to ignore the contradictory and often uncomfortable realities of life in an unequivocally gendered world. We have a diverse audience, which keeps the dialogue and the movement we're a part of dynamic and strong. We are also uniquely situated to draw in young readers who are at a critical moment in their lives—a moment when they are discovering feminism and activism, finding answers to who they are, and questioning the definitions of gender, sexuality, power and agency prescribed by the mainstream media.

She Shred's mission is to provide and encourage an engaged, thoughtful feminist response to mainstream media and popular culture. She Shreds is in print with a Feminist Response to Pop Culture, online at sheshreds.com, on the air with our podcasts, Popaganda and Backtalk, and on campuses around the world via Campus. We also host four fellows a year with our She Shreds Fellowships for Writers program.

[Verse 1]  
My baby gives me poison  
Tells me that it's a treat  
Says it's made of sugar  
But it tastes bitter to me  
You got me in the garden  
By the apple tree  
Wrap yourself around me  
'Til I can barely breathe

[Chorus]  
Look in my eyes  
Hypnotize me  
Mesmerize me  
You think you're the charmer  
But you're really the snake

[Chorus]  
Look in my eyes  
Hypnotize me  
Mesmerize me  
You think you're the charmer  
But you're really the snake

[Verse 2]  
You're lying in the grass now  
Your old familiar ways  
I see you slither past now  
Trying to get away  
You said that I could trust you  
That I should have some faith  
But when you shed your skin  
I know that it's too late

[Chorus]  
Look in my eyes  
Hypnotize me  
Mesmerize me  
You think you're the charmer  
But you're really the snake

[Outro]  
Look in my eyes  
Hypnotize me  
Mesmerize me  
You think you're the charmer  
You think you're the charmer  
You think you're the charmer  
But you're really the snake

— SHARON VAN ETTEN  
THE CHARMER  
AND THE SNAKE



Sharon Van Etten playing at the OA Amphitheatre along side Nick Cave on her Supernatural Tour.



# SHARON VAN ETTEN

SHARON VAN ETTEN ON TWIN PEAKS, MOTHERHOOD, AND HER MANY LIVES

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE LANGE

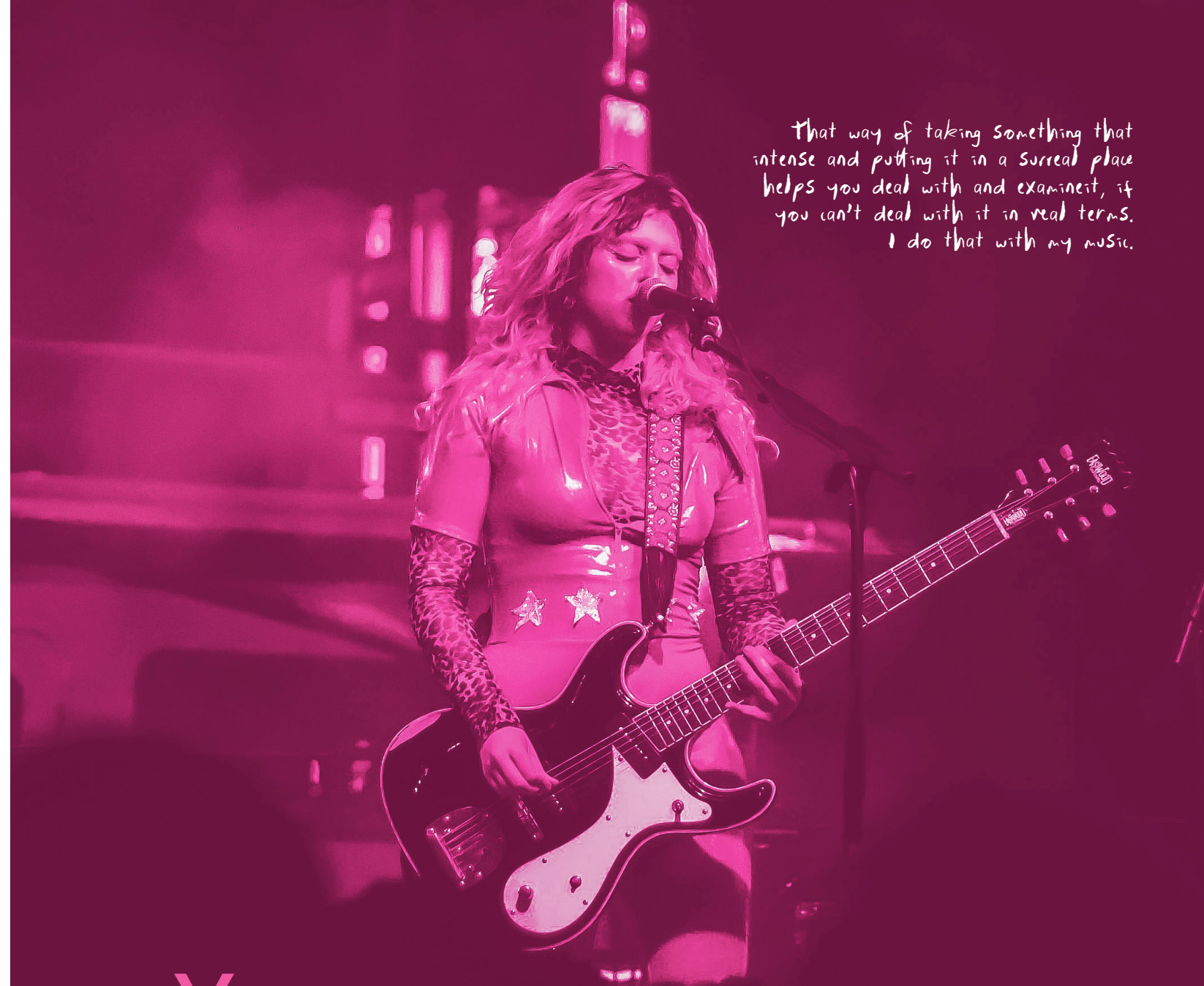
Her bandmates call her snacks, because she would always bring treats to rehearsals. She says that she tended to fill the role of “den mother” among her friends. Recording her last album, *Are We There*. Van Etten started writing the songs that became her debut album during the years she was working in wine stores. Her music is salt-in-the-wound stuff, a lot of it based on one particular relationship.

One night in 2004, she left the guy and left Tennessee (where she’d started college and worked at a café-slash-record store) with what she could pack and went home to New Jersey “with my tail between my legs — my family took me in.” At its most powerful, her music evokes the risky, shaky moment when a secret is exposed. She spent the next years unwinding that pain into her albums. The first, called “Because I Was In Love,” came out in 2009. “Epic,” released the following year, crystallized a forever-place for Sharon Van Etten in the hearts of critics and many other people with hearts.

A casting director who saw Van Etten open for Nick Cave in 2013 brought her to *The OA*, where she plays a troubled drifter. She was drawn to the challenge. Still, she says, “it doesn’t feel as cathartic when you’re acting because you’re living in that pain, as opposed to when you’re performing, you’re exorcizing it.” Both *Twin Peaks* and *The OA* draw on Van Etten’s music as well as her presence: Her roles involve singing her own songs, “I Wish I Knew” in *The OA* and “Tarifa” in *Twin Peaks*. The shows’ fictional worlds are built on their secrets. That’s a foundation that suits the Sharon Van Etten sound. At its most powerful, her music evokes the risky, shaky moment when a secret is exposed.

**“This guy basically told me I wasn’t good enough to play, he forbade me to play. He physically kept me from playing sometimes, and smashed my guitar.”**

Van Etten remembers watching *Twin Peaks* for the first time in her early 20s. “I couldn’t believe it had been on television. It gave me goose bumps. It goes to disturbing places that people still don’t go now,” she says. “That way of taking something that intense and putting it in a surreal place helps you deal with and examine it, if you can’t deal with it in real terms. I do that with my music.” She tries not to “name experience or narrative” in her work in order to leave room for her listeners’ own stories. “Rather than reliving my experience, they can take their emotion and apply it to whatever they like,” she explains, sounding like the aspiring therapist she is.



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the power trio—comprised of vocalist-guitarist and indie rock legend Mary Timony (Helium, Wild Flag), bassist-guitarist Betsy Wright (Bat Fangs), and drummer Laura Harris (Aquarium)—assembled a collection indebted to the Ramones and Def Leppard as much as each member's own time-tested creativity. The band's cohesion is an act of trust: "If somebody [has] a really strong opinion, everyone [gets] on board," Timony says of their songwriting process. And you can hear that faith all over their adventurous second album, It's Real, released in March via Merge Records.



# EX HEX

## EX HEX AND THEIR NEW WORK HINGES ON CREATIVITY AND TRUST

WRITTEN BY FABI REYNA

Washington D.C. trio Ex Hex couldn't have picked a better title for their 2014 debut album, *Rips*. The power trio—comprised of vocalist-guitarist and indie rock legend Mary Timony (Helium, Wild Flag), bassist-guitarist Betsy Wright (Bat Fangs), and drummer Laura Harris (Aquarium)—assembled a collection indebted to the Ramones and Def Leppard as much as each member's own time-tested creativity. The band's cohesion is an act of trust: "If somebody [has] a really strong opinion, everyone [gets] on board," Timony says of their songwriting process. And you can hear that faith all over their adventurous second album, *It's Real*, released in March via Merge Records.

Like *Rips*, *It's Real* was inspired by the group's love of Mutt Lange and Heart, but was a more exploratory endeavor, resulting in a collection representative of everything the group likes to listen to. But they aren't just polyglots when it comes to their sound influences—speaking to *She Shreds*, Timony and Wright recounted that the group was just as voracious when it came to gear. "At one point, we had literally 10 or 12 amplifiers lined up in the studio: Gemini, AMPEG, Orange Rockerverb, a Fender amp," they explain, almost in unison. But it's that curiosity and willingness to try new things that makes Ex Hex.

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# CHANGING TIDES

## The Evolution of Women Musicians in Mainstream Coverage

WRITTEN BY NATALIE BAKER

### IN THE FIRST THREE ROLLING STONE COVERS OF 2020

more musicians were women of color (Lizzo, SZA, Megan Thee Stallion, Normani) than all of its covers combined from 2010 to 2015 (Rihanna, Whitney Houston, and Nicki Minaj).

This shift in representation hasn't been swift so much as sudden: a whiplash undoing of mainstream publications presenting scattered gendered exceptionalism, packaged and sold under a slobbery male gaze as music journalism. Plenty of people have been calling it out (or mutely unsubscribing) for decades, but to little avail. However, over the last few years, a combination of capitalist survivalism and good old-fashioned public shame has jolted greasier-than-glossy magazines into accepting that short-term impulse buys for sexy covers can't remedy the consequential reputation rot.

Over the course of a decade, Rolling Stone newsstand buys had slunk from 139k per issue in 2007 to 28k in 2017, surviving more on a few bouts of impressive political journalism than much else. In 2018, the new owner of Rolling Stone's parent company announced that their goal for the publication was to be relevant to millennial consumers—a hell of an endeavor for a magazine that has been recycling Bob Dylan and The Beatles since its inaugural issue. Guitar World similarly changed its tune in 2016 when it announced an end to the annual bikini gear guide.

This article is about how mainstream music publications have portrayed musicians who live outside of the cis male mold, because widespread visibility can have a powerful impact on our understanding of what is possible. As Oprah put it in a documentary about the Ed Sullivan Show's impact. As hip hop exploded and rock and pop kept morphing into a mind-numbing multiplicity of genres, music journalism was slow to evolve. Guitar World similarly changed its tune in 2016 when it announced an end to the annual bikini gear guide. The New York Times covered the award winning Selena for the first and only time before her death in 1994.

Achieving visibility and respect that fully reflects the contributions of a person or group to our culture is part of a systemic cycle of awareness, acceptance, and appreciation. Maddeningly, these cycles wax and wane without regard to the unity of our intersecting identities, which is why so few of the musicians discussed in this article are openly trans or nonbinary. To discuss how certain musicians have been talked about over the course of history is to be limited to those names that were uttered loudest to begin with. It is paramount, then, to distinguish between an analysis of what was and an analysis of what we have found. This is the latter.

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Rock created the music publications we read today, R&B created rock, blues created R&B, and Mamie Smith made the blues a national sensation. In the summer of 1920, a small label called Okeh Records recorded Smith singing a rendition of Perry Bradford's "Crazy Blues." The record was an overnight sensation among Black working-class consumers, catalyzing a series of reactions by the record industry that would change popular culture forever.

“ You don't understand what it's like to be in a world where nobody looks like you. When I first saw Diana Ross looking glamorous and beautiful, it represented possibility and hope. It was life changing. ”

# CHANGING TIDES

— CONTINUED

## 1920s

### Early Blues and the Black Consumer

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Because of Mamie Smith's success, the country's biggest record labels rushed to sign Black women musicians such as Ma Rainey, Memphis Minnie, Ethel Waters, Gladys Bentley, and Bessie Smith (no relation to Mamie Smith), who a teenaged Billie Holiday listened to before moving to Harlem and singing in the nightclub where Benny Goodman discovered her. The rest is history—or as Frank Sinatra put it in an interview with *Ebony*, "Billie Holiday is unquestionably the most important influence on American singing in the last twenty years."

## 1930s — 1940s

### The Influence of Tharpe & Thornton

The Second World War came and went, and temporary openings for women in factories (such as Gibson's Kalamazoo Gals) as well as the mainstream music business along with it. When the war ended, government propaganda of women's equality did too, leading to a spike in pop music as a vessel for messages of feminine domesticity. When the war ended in 1945—seven years after she packed an audience at New York's Carnegie Hall—Sister Rosetta Tharpe's "Strange Things Happening Every Day" made history as the first gospel song to cross over into popular appeal, while Doris Day's "Sentimental Journey" topped the charts, marking the beginning of Day's career as an "armed forces sweetheart."

Sure, Sister Rosetta Tharpe was so popular that she played to a massive stadium 14 years before The Beatles' Shea Stadium concert (popularly cited as the first such performance), but *Variety*'s white male writers couldn't resist framing their kudos as being about a person "of considerable heft" whose music was "even for sophisticates." The same drivel applied to Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, whose 1953 charts-topper "Hound Dog" rocked the musical landscape at #1 for seven straight weeks while she was subjected to vile physical comparisons and blatant respectability politics.

## 1960s

### Emergence of the Modern Rock Critic

Considering how the 1960s birthed second-wave feminism, it's impressive how dude-centric the emergence of modern rock journalism was. In fact, if there's a moment from which you can directly trace the peak crudeness of mainstream music magazines, the mid-1960s might be your best bet. While the 1980s took the objectification of women to appalling heights, it was the 1960s emergence of the modern rock critic as well as gonzo journalism—which prided itself on making dumpster fires of professional ethics—and the left's rejection of sexual mores that provided a rebranding opportunity for deeply entrenched misogyny in the music industry.

Even *Rolling Stone* had its exceptions, though, as any vessel of exceptionalism must. A few months before the magazine published its first issue in 1967, Aretha Franklin's "Respect" hit #1 on *Billboard*'s charts. Taking a break from its worship of Jimi Hendrix and John Lennon, the second issue of *Rolling Stone* dedicated a full page to the Queen of Soul. "Let her do her things, after all, she's the one with the talent," the piece advised Franklin's new producer before launching into a song-by-song analysis.

## 1970s

### Gonzo Journalism and the Male Gaze

In hindsight, the 1969 Woodstock and Harlem Cultural festivals served as a perfect transition into the 1970s. Joan Baez and Janis Joplin were notable exceptions to Woodstock's celebration of men in music, while Nina Simone and Mahalia Jackson headlined the 300,000 strong Harlem Cultural Festival weeks prior. Choice exceptionalism prevailed in both the festival circuit and mainstream media coverage, but it was also an era of milestones: the Filipino-American rock trio Fanny made waves on the *Billboard* charts, inspiring *The Runaways*, fronted by Joan Jett; Sylvia Robinson recorded "Sylvia" before founding Sugar Hill Records and bringing hip hop into the mainstream.

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## 1980s — Now

### Independent Publication & Women Critics

"Annie Lennox began her life as a man two years ago," reads the intro of choice for *Rolling Stone*'s 1983 cover story of Eurythmics' newfound fame. In an act of truly gymnastic erasure, the piece recited Lennox's explanation for her switch to an androgynous style as an anti-harassment strategy before concluding that "sexual speculation" at her recent concert "suddenly seemed irrelevant in the presence of such triumphant talent." Nevermind the implication that abuse is reserved for those who are inadequate or that the musical ingenuity of other powerhouses from the era like Whitney Houston didn't stave off the collective gnashing of teeth by arena crowds or magazines alike (*Rolling Stone* would wait until 1993 to publish a proper feature of Houston, promoting its unremarkable interview with a bright red splash of "Whitney Houston Gets Nasty" across its cover and another "Whitney Houston Gets Down and Dirty" for its headline).

As hip hop exploded and rock and pop kept morphing into a mind-numbing multiplicity of genres, music journalism was slow to evolve. The *New York Times* covered the beloved Grammy-award winning Selena for the first and only time before her death in 1994.

Our understanding of time may be linear, but cultural trajectories rarely are. The volume and tone of the mainstream media's recognition of our communities has been a similarly fickle thing. To take their words and hold them up to the light isn't an act of independence so much as accountability. We've always been here, taking music to new places, and we always will be.

**THERE'S A CHANGE  
IN THE OCEAN...  
CHANGE IN THE  
DEEP BLUE SEA...  
I'LL TELL YOU FOLKS,  
THERE AIN'T NO  
CHANGE IN ME.**

— Mamie Smith



# VERA DEVORAH

VERA DEVORAH ESCHEWS THE LIMITATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF GENRE, INDUSTRY AND AESTHETICS.

WRITTEN BY CYNTHIA SCHEMMER

From reimagining what it means to be a musician during a global pandemic to having her sister—who knows her best—work on her team, Jackie Venson centers authenticity and resourcefulness within her career. And as a result, she's created a resounding name for herself by eschewing the limitations and expectations of genre, industry, and aesthetics.

Since 2013, the Austin-born musician has released five EPs, three live albums, and three studio albums—along with two albums under her DJ moniker, jackie the robot—each one transcending the previous release yet remaining grounded and bound together by her stand-out guitar riffs, limitless songwriting, and commitment to genuineness. Last year, Venson released her latest studio album, *Vintage Machine*, which she describes as a rock album with its own individual flavor aligned to that of Prince: "It's mostly pop rock, with a heavier lean on rock, but it's also electronic, so it's not classic rock. It's like Prince rock, but it's his very individual, specific flavor. And that's how I feel about *Vintage Machine*: it's rock, but my version."

This commitment to self has gained Venson numerous accolades from the Austin Music Awards: in 2019 she won Best Guitarist, making her the first Black woman to receive the award; and this year she's won Best Livestreaming Artist, Musician of the Year, Album of the Year (*Vintage Machine*), and Musician Who Went Above and Beyond. "An interesting cherry on top of an interesting year," she laughs, as the 2020-2021 awards followed the recent detrimental winter storm in central Texas amidst a global pandemic.

In partnership with Marshall for our In Development series, we spoke with Venson about her close working relationship to her sister, the limitations of genre, and how she achieves her tone.

I didn't work with players on *Vintage Machine* because a lot of the players I prefer to work with were not in town anymore, and finding other players is overwhelming for me, especially when I can play three other instruments. I had the songs written, and I wanted to get the show on the road.

I wrote the songs for *Vintage Machine* on my sampler, a Pioneer Toraz SP-16, so I had all the parts worked out, really strong bones. That's why I used the sampler, to hear how that bass part sounded with that rhythm part instead of having to herd cats for rehearsal. I was like, "If I make demos this way, why don't I make recordings this way? It would be a lot of cheaper." It seemed like it would be real easy, and it was. I mean... it wasn't easy, it took a long time: two weeks of eleven-hour studio sessions, but it was way easier than getting a bunch of people together and on the same musical page.

Other people call me a rebel, but I feel like I'm just living my life and doing what I want to do. Sometimes people call that rebellion, especially when you're a woman.

Genres can be so limiting, especially when the industry forces them onto musicians.

Yes, and that just leads to discriminatory practices. Genres and basing things on genres—like festival lineups, all that stuff—is just another reason to be exclusionary. The sooner we can move away from that, the sooner we can live in a more equitable society and music industry. I'm against anything that labels anyone—that's what all the isms are. I don't want it in music, I don't want it in society, I don't want it anywhere. I just want everyone to give everybody the time of day.

You've mentioned that the first track on *Vintage Machine* is about your father, Andrew Venson, who is a retired professional musician. Can you talk about the importance of your family's involvement within your career?

People always focus on my dad being a musician because it's an easy story, but it's only a fraction of the picture. My dad believes in letting kids naturally find their way, and so a lot of my siblings don't play music. My mom's the reason why I even started playing the piano. So even though my dad nurtured and fostered me, my mom is the one who was like, "I'm signing you up for piano lessons, you have to do this, and if you hate it after a year you can quit."

And then for the first decade of my life, I was scared to do anything unless my sister was doing it. I couldn't leave the house, couldn't walk to school without Christina... I was completely attached at the hip. Anything my mom wanted me to do, she'd get my sister to do it too.

As I started high school and Christina went to college, it changed. We got to know each other and develop alongside each other. We turned into the people we are with each other. We've always been the closest; it was just innate. And that's why it's so easy to fit her into my career, because she genuinely cares just as much as I do. It's very hard to find other people who you can trust on that level.

Are there any outstanding moments in which collaborating with your sister felt especially powerful?

The first EP I ever released, *Rollin' On* in 2013, I had no idea what I was doing. I was only two years into playing the guitar. I just knew enough to record six pretty simple bluesy songs and some covers, just so I could have something to sell at my shows. I happened to know someone who had just gotten into recording, and it was this thing I threw together. I had no idea what I was embarking on. I realized I needed album art if I was going to print a CD, and all that stuff. It was such a learning curve for me.

So I'm freaking out, trying to get this thing done, it's taking me forever, and I don't have any artwork. And that's the first time I hired Christina. I was venting to her on the phone, and she was like, "If you give me a nice picture of you playing guitar I can probably throw something together." So I sent her a picture, and she sent me back a five-panel digi-pack template made from that one picture. It was really sleek. Ever since then, she's been a jack of all trades.

## WHEN I SING, TROUBLE CAN SIT RIGHT ON MY SHOULDER AND I DON'T EVEN NOTICE.

When I spoke with Christina, she mentioned that aside from assistant manager, she's your tour manager, and also deals with fan engagement, artwork, and wardrobe. Tell me more about how your relationship lends to a successful partnership in your career.

Christina is a visual artist, so she helps me with aesthetics, and that includes so much: wardrobe, makeup, hairstyle, album artwork, the videographers and photographers I choose... She has an eye. And when you don't have an eye, it's hard to turn yourself as an artist into a package—not materialistic, but in that there's so many us, over seven billion humans, and we all have to find our own place. Imagery has something to do with that. If you have a look and a vibe, there's ways to get that look and vibe out in whatever medium you come across on.

[As a musician], you have to appeal to people who have never met you. I want people to know who I am before they show up to a show, so that they're not surprised. I don't want them to know who I am so that I can be a product; I want them to know who I am so that they can have a frame of expectation. Because at the end of the day, we're all strangers. So it's really important to have a uniform aesthetic. You know, I choose to wear sneakers, so people probably get a pretty laid back vibe from me, but the sneakers are always really fly. So I care about my sneakers, but I also care about being comfortable. And Christina's the one who pointed that out. It's not about trying to sell yourself—it's about people wanting to get to know you more, it's about people liking your vibe and wanting to go to your show. That's what it's about.

I can only imagine how alleviating it is to have someone like your sister, who already knows your vibe so well, to take that on so you can focus on the music.

It's a huge weight lifted. And a lot of people rebel against it: they say it's not important, it's stupid, it's "just about the music." But it's not stupid stuff, it's real. And if you think about it logically, if someone's watching my music video in Finland right now, I have no control over their thoughts about me or my music. But I do have control over what they're seeing. That's important, and Christina is somebody who really drove that home for me. I used to be someone who rebelled against it, because I knew it was too much of a weight for me to carry on my own. I just didn't care. I wore jeans and a t-shirt to my shows, and like I said, there's nothing wrong with jeans and a t-shirt, but if you're going to do it, do it. There's ways to do what you gravitate toward without it being sloppy, and when I was doing it all on my own it was sloppy because it was all I was capable of as a singular person. But Christina was the one who was like, "This is important. I'm going to do it for you and you'll see how important it is." And she was right.

Change can be an elusive,  
slippery thing when touted imprecisely.

Who are we including when we talk about how women are recognized, celebrated, or ignored? Who fits within that gendered category, and who do we consider entitled to recognition? Which voices count as “the media?” When we compare “right now” to “back then,” with which moment do we begin and how does our linear conception of time encompass the waxing and waning nature of progress?

This article is about how mainstream music publications have portrayed musicians who live outside of the cis male mold, because widespread visibility can have a powerful impact on our understanding of what is possible. As Oprah put it in a documentary about the Ed Sullivan Show: “You don’t understand what it’s like to be in a world where nobody looks like you. When I first saw Diana Ross looking glamorous and beautiful, it represented possibility and hope. It was life changing.” Achieving visibility and respect that fully reflects the contributions of a person or group to our culture is part of a systemic cycle of awareness, acceptance, and appreciation. Maddenin\gly, these cycles wax and wane without regard to the unity of our intersecting identities, which is why so few of the musicians discussed in this article are openly trans or nonbinary. To discuss how certain musicians have been talked about over the course of history is to be limited to those names that were uttered loudest to begin with. It is paramount, then, to distinguish between an analysis of what was and an analysis of what we have found. This is the latter.

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# CHANELLE KAZADI

CHANELLE KAZADI PLAYS A FUNDAMENTAL FEMALE BLUES STYLE, CHANNELING THE GREAT FEMALE BLUES

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE MENDEZ

Chanelle Kazadi plays a fundamental female blues style, channeling the great female blues artists of the past including her major influences Etta James and Alberta Hunter. Cathy Grier singer songwriter guitarist, moved to Sturgeon Bay, WI after meeting bassist Tony Menzer during a Blues night he hosted at Badger Bowl in Madison in the fall of 2015. Cathy was traveling around the Country, she called her Wandertour, in search of adventure, open spaces and a change of life from NYC where she lived 20 years. She bought a car and along with her 2 standard poodles Etta and Lily, began an adventure a la Travels With Charley (Steinbeck), 29 states 18000+ miles.

In 3 years, Cathy has performed hundreds of shows throughout Door County and Wisconsin, as a solo Artist including winning Paramount Music Association (Grafton) Solo and People's Choice Award in 2017 Blues Competition which earned her the right to compete in Memphis in 2018. She formed the band Troublemaker's in 2017.

Her four decade long career is a rich musical tapestry with career highlights ranging from an MTV video in the 80's, opening up for legendary artists Laura Nyro, The Band, and Joan Armatrading. She Lived in France in the 90's, toured and wrote for many artists, including a #1 dance hit. Cathy spent 20 years in New York mostly performing under the name NYC Subway Girl as part of the Music Under New York Program, and was featured on CBS Sunday Morning, and performed at legendary Avery Fisher Hall. She created "The Inspiration Project," a video mini-doc series, where she asks passersby a simple yet complex question "What inspires you?".

At an early age Cathy loved the Blues and had a chance encounter when she was 17 with John Lee Hooker. As a young social activist, Cathy learned you can write about the environment and a breakup at the same time (recalling Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi) and loves to be socially conscious in her songwriting. She believes music is a healer and a powerful tool that crosses boundaries to help diffuse ignorance and hate. Her love of performing the Blues has found a home in Wisconsin! The new album "I'm All Burn" (2020) of Cathy Grier & The Troublemakers, is a 16-song sonic watercolor painted across almost every facet of the Blues landscape. I'm All Burn is her 14th album; it fits perfectly in with her musical canon, but also serves as a perfect introduction for those new to her world.



**Q** How has the Blues music and activism influenced your views of the world and the journeys you've taken?

**A** I believe that music has the most beautiful capacity to invite people to see how we can lift each other up, and not divide us.

**Where does your creative drive come from? How do you want your music/lyrics to affect people?**

I am lucky to be a creative, whether it's cooking or gardening or playing my guitar, I find my creative drive comes from this amazing life, and world we live in. I always hope that my lyrics and compositions affect people positively, and if in the process they can reflect in a way that makes them understand then I feel humbled.

**What touched you from your travels around the world? Do you find any similarities between world musics & Blues?**

I can see Blues is not just a genre but a way of a social, cultural condition of the people. Blues expresses the deep emotions that come from the fact that we as humans are capable of great things even while situations, present dire conditions. Blues doesn't need to be translated. It is easily understood in any language because the musical style and lyrical content. And why it so easily translates from a World Music perspective. Every country has their own version of musical cultural heritage. American Blues has a direct lineage with a very tragic part of our history. Which is so bittersweet. The music that originated in Africa was brought to America, had an outlet to express struggles by those forced to live in a world of slavery. The African musical traditions that came here to the US and one that still exists today, is rich and deeply moving.

**What are some of the most important lessons you have learned from your experience in the music paths?**

That as long as I stay true to my art and believe that I can make a difference, then I will always be a professional musician. That music is a great equalizer, it translates every language and brings people together.

**Are there any memories as a busker musician in the subways of New York which you'd like to share with us?**

Busking in the NYC subways was an amazing experience. There are so many stories. I guess the most important is that 1000's of people would pass by me in any given performance, and how I could reach those people without them ever stopping. Any time you have mass transit that moves millions of people daily, it becomes a part of the rich crazy fabric of the urban environment. Specific stories I loved were of children stopping, spontaneous jams with other musicians, performing in a public space by a commuter could bring comfort and possibly the only time they might ever experience a concert.

**What do you miss most nowadays from the blues of the past? What are your hopes and fears for the future of?**

Your question actually makes me think of what I don't miss, that musicians of the past were segregated or overlooked. America in the 1900's, musicians of color couldn't enter the front door, of the venue they performed in, or stay at a nice hotel, eat in the same restaurant as caucasians. I don't miss the songs that objectify women. I love BB King, but he was like so many notorious womanizers, and to hear songs like "Don't Answer The Door," not only being recorded but played to this day is personally infuriating. But that music, it's so incredible. To know that women like Big Mama Thorton was the one who sang Hound Dog, and that Elvis Presley was able to make a hit, or the Rolling Stones too. Of course, they supported Howlin Wolf, BB King. But Presley, Stones and so many other artists owe their careers and a huge debt to those who provided the material and the musical tapestry to build on. What I would like to see in the future is women being able to be given a chance to perform without the huge high bar that is set for us.

**What would you say characterizes Wisconsin blues scene in comparison to other US scenes and circuits?**

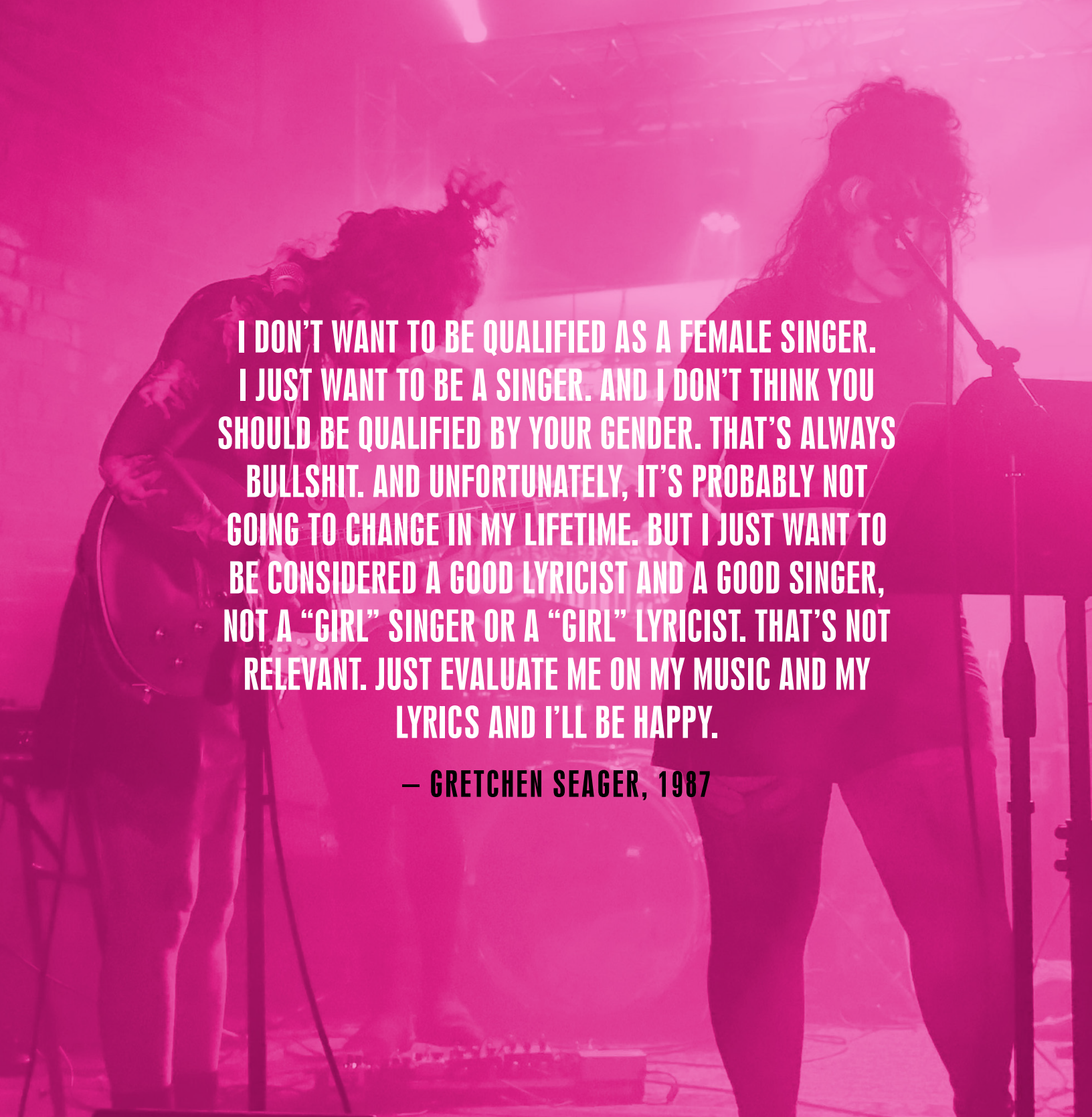
Wisconsin has some very important Blues history with the Paramount Furniture Factory in Grafton- early 1900's they made Victrola's (phonographic record players) and sold with a 78 rpm recording of some of the greatest Blues players who traveled from the south to Wisconsin to record. Artists like Bessie Smith, Geeshie Wiley, Elvie Thomas, Blind Lemon. They call it the Blues trail. Could it also be Stevie Ray Vaughn? Buddy Holly, who brought so much history here. Maybe it's the fact that we're not far from Chicago. I'm from NY, I could drive to Memphis in less time than driving to NY. I think there is a melting pot here. Wisconsin is a great location to stop over if you are touring. Blues is a genre that audiences are very much aware of and love to support. I had many great musicians from Wisconsin play on my album.

**What does to be a female artist in a Man's World as James Brown says? What is the status of women in music?**

It is a man's world for sure for many of the reasons that I've already expressed. A female guitarist shouldn't be so rare. Fortunately, in 21st Century many female musicians are finding a place- I believe the internet has helped that. I would like to see more stories about women in magazines and showing them playing their instruments. There are still too many songs by men who feel it necessary to write in misogynistic ways, and women who feel it's necessary to play the role of objectification.

*"Set your sight to one star and the constellation will naturally align"*





**I DON'T WANT TO BE QUALIFIED AS A FEMALE SINGER. I JUST WANT TO BE A SINGER. AND I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE QUALIFIED BY YOUR GENDER. THAT'S ALWAYS BULLSHIT. AND UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S PROBABLY NOT GOING TO CHANGE IN MY LIFETIME. BUT I JUST WANT TO BE CONSIDERED A GOOD LYRICIST AND A GOOD SINGER, NOT A "GIRL" SINGER OR A "GIRL" LYRICIST. THAT'S NOT RELEVANT. JUST EVALUATE ME ON MY MUSIC AND MY LYRICS AND I'LL BE HAPPY.**

**— GRETCHEN SEAGER, 1987**

## *SHE SHREDS*

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