

Women on Top The Quiet Revolution That's Rocking the American Music Industry

James Dickerson

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In 1996 a quiet, unnoticed revolution hit the American music industry. For the first time women artists outsold male artists. This may seem like a small thing but since women artists had held only about 30 percent of sales historically this amounted to a major shift, one which has held steady since then. *Women on Top* chronicles, in fascinating detail, the rise of the female artist.

The book begins, promisingly enough, with an intelligent and convincing overview of the role of women in the music industry. The anecdotes are fun and also telling. Unfortunately the analysis gives way to a chronological fanzine bio section which details each artist's struggles with sexism. There is little variation in the basic pattern here. Unless you are a fan of each artist it is hard to focus on the repetition of the author's basic premise. I also found the author's preoccupation with his subject's sexual persona, while inevitable, a bit distracting from his topic. Still, there are frequent and detailed revelations. The book ends with the briefest of conclusions, which left me wishing for more summation.

While the book is an enjoyable read, the bio section is uneven, particularly in its occasional lack of focus on the artist's music. When the author is on his mark, and he is dead on frequently, this book stands as an alternative history of the American music industry.

PETER TERRY (September / October 1998)

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