



—NAOMI POHL—

**DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY,
MUSICIANS' UNION**

How do you feel about joining the Music Week Women In Music Roll Of Honour?

"There are so many talented and exceptional women on the Roll Of Honour that it means a lot. It is important to acknowledge women who've fought their way into pivotal industry roles and are therefore, hopefully, inspiring and empowering other women to do likewise."

How do you look back on your early years getting into the industry?

"There have been many challenges associated with being a woman in a heavily male-dominated work environment – not just in music, but in trade unions. When I started, I had to fight assumptions that I was there to make the tea when I was there to do a deal."

Did you have a mentor or role model who helped you at that stage?

"I am lucky to have a lot of colleagues, both male and female, who have supported and championed me throughout my career. Horace Trubridge, current Musicians' Union (MU) general secretary, encourages me, pushes me and I know has utter faith in me. At the MU, I have actually been promoted during maternity leave and I know this is not an experience that is common."

What do you consider to be your biggest achievement so far?

"My biggest sense of achievement has to be from leading the MU's Safe Space service. The service was set up in the early days of the #MeToo movement to get a sense of the prevalence of sexual harassment in the industry. I have personally handled hundreds of reports and have tried to offer support, validation and advice. I have successfully raised awareness and am still fighting to improve the culture of workplaces."

What advice would you offer young female executives about enjoying a successful career in music?

"I'd say: have confidence in your abilities and stay focused on where you're headed. Always think a couple of steps ahead. I've always focused not just on the next career move or promotion, but the one after it."

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

"One of my mentors in my 20s was the then head of talent rights at the BBC, Simon Hayward-Tapp. He asked me what I thought made a good leader or manager and I said, 'I guess you have to ensure a separation between yourself and your team, don't make the mistake of being their friend'. He said 'Absolutely not. One of the best managers I know is friends with his team. He goes to the pub with them and it doesn't in any way impede his ability to lead them.' I still think about that a lot and find it strangely comforting."

On so many levels, 2020 has been a year of unprecedented change in the music business and the world itself – what's been the biggest lesson you'll take away from it?

"What a horror show 2020 has been! For the Union, we never thought we'd see a crisis like this. It has been awful to witness the impact of Covid on individual musicians and I've heard some really haunting stories of hardship. The only lesson really, and it's no comfort yet, is that we can't take anything for granted. What would all of us give to be at a gig? Next time we do that, we will really appreciate how precious the live experience is."

"I had to fight assumptions that I was there to make the tea when I was there to do a deal!"

NAOMI POHL
MUSICIANS'
UNION



—HELEN THOMAS—

HEAD OF BBC RADIO 2

How do you feel about joining the Music Week Women In Music Roll Of Honour?

"It was an absolute honour. I felt humbled when I looked down the list of previous recipients. I attended the awards lunch last year and it was such a spirited, uplifting positive event. It's great that *Music Week* choose to celebrate and champion women who they feel are making a difference in the music and broadcasting sectors. Hopefully it acts as encouragement to those starting out in their respective industries to keep pushing on through – it's totally worth it!"

How do you look back on your early years getting into the industry? What challenges did you have to overcome?

"I've been lucky as I found my calling in life early on and always worked alongside brilliant people who took their jobs seriously but recognised how fortunate they were and knew how to have fun as well. Radio had always been there in my life growing up, but it was when I was at university that I got really fascinated with it. I loved Radio

1, but a friend suggested I should listen to The Today Programme and it was like an explosion going off in my mind. I just knew I wanted to work in this industry. In terms of challenges, I've worked with very strong characters throughout my career at every level."

Did you have a mentor or role model who helped you at that stage?

"There are so many people who helped me at that stage, but I suppose I should credit two brilliant female producers who took me under their wing when I was a fresh faced work experience at Pebble Mill in Birmingham. Shirley Mann was a journalist who taught me all about attention to detail and Sian Roberts saw the joy in everything and taught me to do the same. Outside of work, I have to cite my mum who passed away last year. She was

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so stoic, calm, and always provided an alternative perspective when I was getting entangled in something. And most of all, she always had faith and believed I could work my way through it."

What do you consider to be your biggest achievement so far?

"Overseeing Radio 2 at the [London 2012] Olympics was an incredible experience. For those two weeks Stratford felt like the centre of the universe and the Radio 2 production team were at the heart of it broadcasting live every day. In personal terms, launching the Chris Evans Breakfast Show as exec producer has to rate as a career highlight. Creating and launching any new radio show is very special but to create and launch a breakfast show to succeed Sir Terry Wogan was an honour and a privilege. I was also thrilled overseeing the revamp of the Radio 2 schedule in January 2019 where Zoe Ball and Sara Cox took up their rightful places in Radio 2 daytime."

What advice would you offer young female executives about enjoying a career in music?

"Work really hard. You'll be surprised how many people don't, and it won't take long for you to get noticed! And squeeze the most fun you possibly can out of the whole experience. It's a joy to work in the entertainment industry, our reason for being is to make people happy. Never forget that, even when things get stressful."

What's the best advice you've ever received?

"If you can find a job you love, you'll never work another day in your life again." That came courtesy of Sir Terry Wogan. How right he was."

On so many levels, 2020 has been a year of unprecedented change in the music business and the world itself – what's been the biggest lesson you'll take away from it?

"How quickly we can change things around if we need to. And how committed and passionate all the teams and presenters at Radio 2 were to keep the radio station on air in hugely challenging circumstances. I genuinely believe we've never sounded stronger as we've had to strip a lot of programme content away and focus on the essence of what Radio 2 is for – to bring everyone together to feel great. And we do that by providing laughter, escape, companionship and connection for all, across all platforms."

