

# The Chinese Female Underground Voice: Exploring the Economic Struggle of Women in Chinese Underground Rock Music

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# Project Background

- Even though China is receiving more international attention than ever, when it comes to Chinese contemporary music, especially underground rock, very few people are aware of it.
- Under relatively strict government censorship bands and musicians face many obstacles in pursuing their dreams.
- For an artist to be successful on a global level, it's not only simple language barriers that need to be crossed, but also major identities that need to be developed.
- Through my research, I want to investigate the fast growing underground rock scene in China. In particular, I want to focus on female musicians and their economic situation.

# Project Goals

Using the Survey method with a historical approach I am trying to understand the following questions:

- What range is their primary annual income?
- Is their income enough for them to live a decent life in Chinese cities?
- How do they sustain themselves if their income is not sufficient?
- Do they hold any second jobs?
- Is there any difference between what males make monetarily versus female musicians?
- Does income affect their equipment limitation?
- What are their difficulties in getting publicity and touring outside of China?
- What are some of the complications of their creative process?
- How do they want to improve their situation, and how do they want to get help?

# Results

- The annual income from band related activities ranges from \$1000 USD to \$200000 USD.
- For most musicians, it's not enough to live a decent life in the major cities of China.
- All the musicians I interviewed hold second or third jobs.
- They don't want to be seen as female musicians. They want to be judged solely by their music, not gender. At the same time, most of them feel less pressured than male musicians because in Chinese norms they are not traditionally obligated to maintain a household.
- Income affects their ability to purchase quality equipment.
- The biggest difficulty for them facing gaining international attention is their English fluency. It does not only hold them from publicizing in the west, but also halts them from getting the newest information concerning the global music industry. Musicians with better English communication skills and bands with more English lyrics tend to do better financially.
- The Rock music scene in China is still immature because of government censorship. Audiences are more accustomed to listening to popular music, more traditional, and familiar sounds rather than unique or experimental works.
- 8 out of 20 potential participants didn't accept my interview for a variety of reasons.