

# Atlantic Records, Estate of Ahmet Ertegun Sued Over Sexual Assault Claims

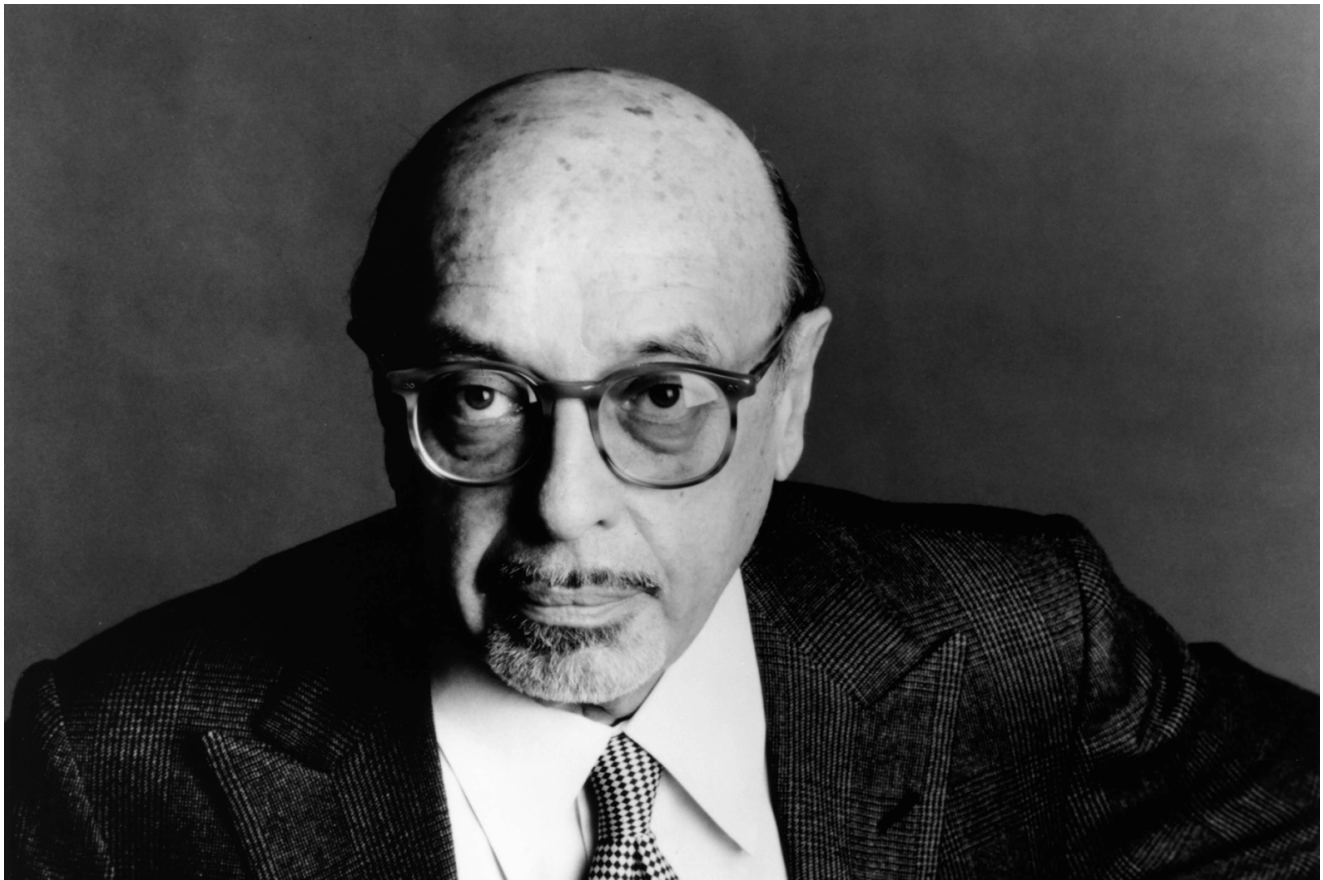
 [rollingstone.com/music/music-news/lawsuit-sexual-assault-ahmet-ertegun-atlantic-records-1234637635/](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/lawsuit-sexual-assault-ahmet-ertegun-atlantic-records-1234637635/)

Ethan Millman

November 28, 2022

## Sexual Misconduct

Jan Roeg, a former talent scout who worked with Atlantic, alleges that Ertegun sexually assaulted her numerous times and that the label "took a laissez faire approach to sexual misconduct"



*RB/Redferns/Getty Images*

A talent scout who worked with Atlantic Records from the 1980s to the mid-2000s sued the label and the estate of its founder Ahmet Ertegun on Monday, accusing the deceased record executive of multiple instances of sexual assault and claiming that Atlantic did little to stop Ertegun's alleged behavior.

Jan Roeg, who started working with the label in 1984, alleged that Ertegun had sexually harassed and assaulted her numerous times throughout her tenure working with Atlantic, according to the lawsuit. Ertegun is widely credited as one of the most influential music

executives of all time, signing Aretha Franklin and Led Zeppelin, among many others, and co-founding the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He died in 2006; the label and his estate were named as defendants in the suit.

In the suit, Roeg alleged that the first time she met Ertegun, he put his hand up her skirt and touched her “backside and upper thigh close to her vaginal area” when she bent over to pick up a contact lens. He then told her “‘you have nice legs’ and ‘you’re a very good looking woman.’ Ms. Roeg quickly tried to get away from Mr. Ertegun,” the lawsuit claims.

After that initial alleged assault, Roeg claims Ertegun assaulted her several more times. In one instance, Roeg alleges that Ertegun brought her back to his home after a business dinner in what was supposed to be a momentary stop to get cocaine before heading to a club. She went to the bathroom and when she came back out, Ertegun was allegedly masturbating. He asked Roeg to “show me your tits,” and when she tried to leave, she claims, Ertegun pushed her against a wall and pressed his body against hers and continued to masturbate until he “soiled her shirt.” Ertegun masturbated in front of her numerous times, Roeg claims. In other instances, Ertegun allegedly forced Roeg’s head onto his crotch to try and get her to perform oral sex on him.

One night in 1986, according to the lawsuit, Ertegun came into Roeg’s room during a business trip and jumped onto her bed before inserting his fingers in Roeg’s vagina and anus. During a dinner in New York in 1990, Roeg alleges, Ertegun drugged her, forcing her to get her stomach pumped after collapsing in the restaurant’s bathroom. She further alleges that Ertegun withheld money she was owed as retaliation for rejecting him.

The suit notes that Ertegun and others in the industry referred to Roeg as his girlfriend. She denies that label and said that the phrase “stunted her career in the music business.”

Beyond the allegations themselves, Roeg says that Atlantic was aware of Ertegun’s behavior but actively enabled it. According to the lawsuit, Atlantic “took a laissez faire approach to sexual misconduct, misogynistic and hostile sexual attitudes towards women, and harassment of women in its offices, with a culture of abuse that has become famous in music business history.”

Further, Roeg alleges that Atlantic didn’t take measures to educate employees on appropriate behavior in the workplace or how to properly come forward with problems. “Atlantic utterly failed to engage in training or implementation of any policies or standards that would inform employees of the company’s disapproval of and how to report such conduct,” the lawsuit said, “much less anything that would dissuade employees from engaging in sexual misconduct on their premises or while on business trips and dealing with business partners for the Label.”

“As Ms. Roeg shows in her Complaint, the ‘sex, drugs, and Rock n’ Roll’ culture in the music industry at companies like Atlantic Records was taken as license by powerful men like Ahmet Ertegun to engage in sexual assault and other abuse of women,” Wigdor LLP partner Lawrence M. Pearson said in a statement. “Now, Ms. Roeg and other survivors of sexual assault who in past years were forced into silence due to the threat of retaliation or loss of their careers can get justice under the Adult Survivors Act. Ms. Roeg and we look forward to holding the Defendants accountable and finally getting some relief for her pain over the years.”

Atlantic Records and its parent company Warner Music Group have gone through several changes of ownership since the alleged incidents, with none of the current leadership around at the time of the allegations.

“Warner Music Group and Atlantic Records take allegations of misconduct very seriously,” a spokesperson for WMG said in a statement. “These allegations date back nearly 40 years, to before WMG was a standalone company. We are speaking with people who were there at the time, taking into consideration that many key individuals are deceased or into their 80s and 90s. To ensure a safe, equitable, and inclusive working environment, we have a comprehensive Code of Conduct, and mandatory workplace training, to which all of our employees must adhere. We regularly evaluate how we can evolve our policies to ensure our work environment is free from discrimination and harassment.”

As Rick Werder, attorney for Ertegun’s widow Mica Ertegun said: “Mr. Ertegun has been dead since 2006. Mrs. Ertegun is 96 years old. We haven’t seen a complaint. Any claim against Mrs. Ertegun is meritless and will be vigorously defended on her behalf.”

As Roeg’s lawsuit notes, this isn’t the first time someone has accused Ertegun of sexual misconduct. Dorothy Carvello, an advocate for sexual assault survivors in the music industry and the author of the book *Anything For a Hit*, alleged in her book that when she worked at Atlantic, Ertegun groped her and at one point squeezed her arm hard enough to cause a hairline fracture when he was angry. Carvello also claimed she was fired from Atlantic after refusing to sit on the lap of another executive at the label.

Roeg’s case is the first high-profile lawsuit to hit the music industry following the enactment of New York’s Adult Survivors Act. The act, which took effect last week, established a one-year period in which survivors could bring forward lawsuits regarding sexual misconduct that would have otherwise gone beyond the statute of limitations. The writer E. Jean Carroll, who previously accused former president Donald Trump of sexually assaulting her, filed a suit against him last week as part of the same statute.