

Episode 4.6 Rape is Real & Everywhere with Emma Cooper

OCTOBER 26, 2019

Hannah McGregor: [00:00:10](#)

Hi. I'm Hannah McGregor and this is Secret Feminist Agenda. And here's a confession, i've really missed doing this podcast every week. I can't bring it back to weekly right now I just have too many other commitments. I have a grant application i'm working on, a first draft of a book I'm trying to get finished and just all of these other things up in the air and other potential podcasting projects coming up and lots to do. It's not like I miss the obligation of getting an episode done every week, but I miss how much more in touch I felt with listeners when an episode came out every week. I miss how much more space I felt like I had to think through things in a timely way. Even that cut down to every second week makes everything feel less timely. For example, I haven't had a chance to talk about how fucking furious I am at institutions platforming transphobic speakers and the work that's going on around that and I would like to talk about it in the next minisode, I think I probably will, but that's another two weeks from now and literally feels weird even while the space is proving to be extremely helpful.

Before we get into the interview, I want to just give you a little bit of information about the upcoming Vancouver Podcast Festival, which I am on the organizing committee of and doing a couple of things that. It is happening here in Vancouver, November 7th to 10th and what I particularly want to highlight is that I am doing a Secret Feminist Agenda meetup on Friday, November 8th at 3:00 PM in the SFU Woodward's World Art Center. There's a link to the Facebook event in the show notes. It's free to get into that part of the podcast festival, it's called the PodFair. It's sort of like a little mini convention that we're doing and there's going to be lots of different people tabling there and meetups happening in the same space. I am also going to have there for sale the first ever official Secret Feminist Agenda merch. I've made some pins and stickers and if you want to pick those up, those will be available there as well. So I really hope I got a chance to meet some of you there. And then I'm also chairing a panel at the Vancouver Public Library Saturday, November 9th at 11:00 AM the panel is on women and non-binary people in podcasting. There's a lot of fantastic speakers, so I hope that I'll see some of you there as well. If you want to check out the different shows and main stage events and masterclasses and all of that stuff that's going on, you can check out [van.podfest.ca](#). There's really, really great headliner shows and I'll be at all of them. So if you just want the opportunity to follow me around for three days: Vancouver Podcast Festival, it's the place to be and that's a creepy way to promote an event.

One last thing before we get started with the interview. I want to give you a content warning for this episode. Emma makes a joke in the episode about the title itself being a content warning. We're going to talk about rape and sexual assault in general. We do not

talk about specific details of assaults. We don't speak in graphic detail about anything specific. We talk about rape and sexual assault as a phenomenon, a widespread thing, cultural conversations around rape and sexual assault. So I just wanted to give you the heads up. The show that we are discussing contains more personal stories about actual assaults, but we don't go into details about any of them in the conversation. So with no further ado, let me introduce Emma.

Emma Cooper has been performing standup comedy in dimly lit bars, service elevators, barns and blanket forts since 2007. They hosted an all female and non-binary comedy show as part of the 2018 Smash Comedy Festival in Vancouver. They are the host of the comedy show Rape is Real & Everywhere, which sold out across Canada in 2016 and provided performers and audiences with cathartic laughs prior to the height of Me Too. Emma's comedy is smart, personal and human and they are an outstanding and relatable MC.

- Music: [00:04:44](#) [I'm proud of who I am. No more monsters, I can breathe again. And you said that I was done, but you were wrong and now the best is yet to come.]
- Emma Cooper: [00:05:11](#) How are the levels? Testing. Testing.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:05:14](#) Oh, it's good.
- Emma Cooper: [00:05:15](#) Joking about sexual assault. Joking about sexual assault. Joking about sexual assault.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:05:20](#) Yeah, that's what it sounds like, great. Okay. And I'll just keep my eye on those for the first little while. So we're mostly here to talk about your show Rape is Real & Everywhere, which before I knew it was a show, I just knew that it was a series of really beautiful stickers I kept seeing in East Van as I biked around.
- Emma Cooper: [00:05:40](#) I'm so glad you saw those stickers.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:05:41](#) I love those stickers. And I kept seeing them and being like, Oh, who's making these beautiful stickers? And then I heard about the show and was like, Oh my God, it's the same.
- Emma Cooper: [00:05:50](#) Yes, the ground game reeling 'em i.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:05:53](#) You did it.
- Emma Cooper: [00:05:54](#) Well, my partner did it. My partner, Keeleigh, did all of the art and then actually has the wherewithal to, you know, get on the emails, email to get stickers printed, pick them up, you know, the actual human skills that you need to run a show?

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:08](#) Sorry, so your skills are non-human skills.

Emma Cooper: [00:06:13](#) The non-human skills,

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:14](#) Robot skills or animal skills. Which side of the human are we?

Emma Cooper: [00:06:17](#) I just really feign human on stage and then after just sort of slide around like a puddle a la Alex Mack, Alec Mack? I don't remember, it was a while ago.

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:24](#) Alex Mack?

Emma Cooper: [00:06:26](#) Cool.

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:27](#) Well I'm not going to look it up and we don't want any of you to correct.

Emma Cooper: [00:06:30](#) No one correct us.

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:33](#) Thanks, we're good.

Emma Cooper: [00:06:33](#) I'll be better at my, all my future references forever.

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:37](#) So tell us a little bit about the show. How long have you been doing it? What inspired you to start it?

Emma Cooper: [00:06:44](#) Started doing the show in 2015 and it was a pre-MeToo effort because, as a comedian, I've been doing comedy since 2007. And I was chatting with a friend who helped found the show and we realized that, you know, the people telling rape jokes are maybe not the people we wanted to hear tell rape jokes. Maybe not the people with the lived experience to tell a frickin rape joke.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:13](#) Well not with the right side of the lived experience. Or is that too dark?

Emma Cooper: [00:07:17](#) Not too dark at all. That's unfortunately accurate and I won't, yeah, I won't get specific. But yeah, so that was kind of one show that really inspired the idea of Rape is Real is a show called The Tragedy Show that was started by Alex Sparling and Amber Harper Young, who are two comedians that are awesome and we're based out of Vancouver in 2015 and they just talked about dark stuff that had happened to them and they got other comedians to do that. And then some of the folks that we ended up, you know, working with on Rape is Real actually talked about their experiences with sexual assault on that show.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:53](#) Gotcha.

Emma Cooper: [00:07:53](#) So it was this sort of interesting thing where we'd seen a few people talk about it and make it funny, legitimately comedy-funny and seen people laugh at it. And then also as, you know, I'm on the, I'm in the non-binary field of things now, but as a person who's grown up as a woman, I also have, and I have this very, you know, this face that people like telling their secrets to. I just have that. I have that like tell me your trauma on the bus face. So yeah, I've also just heard a lot of people's stories, you know, and I've also done work a little bit more recently on kind of trying to collect some of those stories with other people in the comedy community to sort of, when me to hit, we're sort of trying to collect stories and organize them so that's like, can we have a little bit of 'please don't come here' list if you have assaulted people or if you've hurt people or what would that list look like? How are we curating this? That's separate from this project. But that was something that I also did off the side of my comedy desk. Just, you know, because activism, I dunno, because you just want to,

Hannah McGregor: [00:09:03](#) And because once you start hearing the stories, right, it's so hard. Like once you start doing one kind of work, now you're in this community and it's like, well, I'm going to do other kinds of work too. I'm going to do whatever is needed.

Emma Cooper: [00:09:16](#) Yeah. And I don't have any answers and I haven't called anyone out publicly, but it was sort of, it was like an informal attempt to try to, yeah organize and kind of go like, what needs to happen now that we're starting to understand the amount of bullshit that's out there? And there's, still don't know, still don't have any or answers. But the nice thing about Rape is Real is that it's something that seems to kind of make a difference for people who watch it. And it seems to be, it's an act of art and self-expression, but the ripple effect that we didn't know when we started is it seems to be very cathartic for people and it seems to help people, and we've had a lot of people come up to the show afterwards and just say that it's like, okay, now I'll go to therapy. Or you know, you're like, cool, I should be getting a cut. Therapy cut.

Hannah McGregor: [00:10:12](#) Therapist's waiting outside.

Emma Cooper: [00:10:14](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:10:14](#) Who like you get 10% signing bonus from people.

Emma Cooper: [00:10:17](#) With Groupons or something.

Hannah McGregor: [00:10:18](#) Yeah. Therapy Groupon sounds like a great idea.

Emma Cooper: [00:10:21](#) It's a real row.

Hannah McGregor: [00:10:22](#) I mean that's so remarkable to be able to see so quickly, sort of, or so immediately if it's not necessarily quickly but like to know that

the art that you are creating is actually doing something in people's lives, that they're actually taking a step that they couldn't take before.

- Emma Cooper: [00:10:39](#) Well, and that's the nice thing about, I think that's the hard and scary thing about comedy, and also the nice thing and people kind of, there's a lot of people talking about comedy now. It's like, Oh my God, it's the last bastion of free speech and it's so scary and you're so brave. And it's like, or you just, you want the free therapy for yourself and here we go. Like, you know, but it's, the thing that's good and bad about comedy is that, you know if people laugh right away and they're real people that are in front of you and they're telling you with how they behave, if whatever you're saying is doing it for them and you know, you don't have to wait to get your book published or something to find out what people think, like they tell you right away. So that's also a blessing. But like, and then people are there so after the show people, comedy is also such an approachable art form, then the whole, if you're good at it, you're making it look like you're kind of talking almost like you just thought of it a second ago. And then people will come up and tell you what they think because they're not like you're, you're someone who's an expert. You're just someone who happened to have a microphone who made it look really easy. And so people are very candid with you and will come up and talk to you afterwards. So that's I think why we've had people feel comfortable because people are really kind of being raw and honest and like putting themselves out there when they get on stage, but.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:52](#) For sure.
- Emma Cooper: [00:11:52](#) But also kind of, yeah, I don't know, there's something approachable about it.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:55](#) Yeah. Yeah. And that sense of approachability is an art, right? To generate a stage persona who seems and feels comfortable standing in front of a bunch of strangers with a microphone telling incredibly intimate stories is an incredibly difficult thing to do.
- Emma Cooper: [00:12:11](#) Totally.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:12:12](#) And is rewarded I think by that sense of intimacy, by that sort of creation of a connection with the audience and seeing the show, there was an unusually heightened sense of intimacy in that room. I think there was a lot of strangers relating to one another. There were people laughing while simultaneously openly weeping like there was,
- Emma Cooper: [00:12:32](#) Always the end goal of a comedy show.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:12:34](#) That's where you really want, that's what you really want. But that, a thing that really stood out to me, you as the, like what? How do you identify your role? Are you the host?
- Emma Cooper: [00:12:44](#) I'm like the host and producer. But yeah, for the show, I'm just there to host it, and as the host you're just like, I'm going to tell my story, but I'm really there to set the tone and try to like tell people how to frickin behave at a comedy show about rape because yeah, someone needs to tell you how to behave. That's not a normal place to be.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:13:02](#) That's what stood out to me is that amount of like that hosting element that you were doing had a lot of like, I'm going to give you permission to laugh, but I'm actually also maybe going to tell you that you have to laugh like that, that there was this framing that, because of the sensitivity of the material, because of the vulnerability of the speakers, there's like this permission being given in this environment being created. Is that piece of it something that you had to develop over time as you felt out how audiences responded to the material?
- Emma Cooper: [00:13:38](#) Yeah, I think like we started doing the show at Hot Art Wet City. So it's, myself and Heather Jordan Ross had started doing it on a small scale in 2015 at Hot Art Wet City, RIP Hot Art Wet City, it's no more. It's sort of a venue for 50 people kind of thing. And so then I was hosting and it was that same thing of trying to figure out how to like, what do you do, how do you make this okay, we just know we want to do this and we don't know how people will react. We don't even know if we're allowed to say this. So the first couple attempts I would say, I don't even know what I said. I think there was a lot of like kind of apology, but then when you started watching the audience reaction, you start learning, like people do want to release, especially pre-MeToo. Like you could sort of just say like, Hey, you're not allowed to touch someone if they don't want to be touched. And people would be like standing ovation. Like, because no one was saying that and there was so much pent up energy and you know, in comedy there's this sort of thing of kind of clapped or sort of saying something where you're kind of milking applause out of people. But in this case it's like that's also part of the show is to kind of use this as a vehicle to really tell people, Hey like I see you and this is how we want to behave. So it was an evolution over time of trying to figure out like how can we get this going as quickly as possible. And I knew for Fringe there's a time limit, you can't just keep going. And I know that like I don't want to shortchange other people telling their sexual assaults, assault stories if I'm putting together a show. So, I was really trying to go like you got to get people up to speed that they are here to laugh, this is for catharsis, they're welcome to leave and take care of themselves, this is as safe as possible, but we cannot guarantee your safety cause that's just not how the world works. And like, here's my story, let's go. And that's it. And when I think you start hosting

things, and we've done this show enough, you start realizing that people look to you for social cues and we're all looking to each other. So you're like, I'm going to show you how to behave. And I would say if you listen really closely to other comedy shows, sometimes people, if they're hosting will tell you to laugh. Like I've like I hosted someone's comedy album taping and he was like, I dunno, a tip I got is you just sort of drop in the word 'applause break' and at the start and just see if it influences and you're like, Oh yeah, you're right. We're like telling people how to behave. So it's like telling people to laugh, but also telling people like as a person who is a survivor, you can also still laugh. And that's kind of the obviously the bigger message.

Hannah McGregor: [00:16:07](#) Yeah. Yeah. The point here is that we are finding the catharsis that exists in laughter. And that's what we're doing collectively. And that needs to be, that's only going to be possible for that audience if they feel like at least somewhat safe.

Emma Cooper: [00:16:22](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:16:22](#) I mean, again, it's a theater venue. It's public space. It's full of strangers. Like that's impossible. But to at least signal to people, like the people in this room are on your side so you can laugh and know that you're not about to get made fun of or,

Emma Cooper: [00:16:36](#) Yeah. And you're not, yeah, we're not gonna turn around and start a Twitter war on you cause you started laughing at a joke. And that is a thing too. I mean, there's people who complain. I don't typically sympathize with people who complain about the like current climate in comedy. Like if you've taken the energy and the breath to complain about the current climate in comedy, I'm like, you're not like, I'm probably not onside, but like also I get it, like,

Hannah McGregor: [00:16:57](#) I don't, you're so much nicer than me.

Emma Cooper: [00:16:59](#) I don't, like if you bothered to say it, I'm not onside, but I get it. Like I get that no one likes the feeling of walking on eggshells around what they're saying. Unfortunately usually the people complaining about it don't realize that everyone else has been walking on eggshells around them and they just found out what eggshells are for the first time in their lives. And that's called privilege, you know? But like, eggshells aren't fun. So that part I understand the lack of content is unfortunate, but yeah, like you just, people of all over the spectrum of Woke I think are wondering like how to behave and so you do have to just tell people sometimes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:17:39](#) Yeah, it's fun. That's a great point. There is, I read recently Kai Cheng Thom's new book, I Hope We Choose Love, which has some really lovely stuff in it about, I mean handling a particular

moment in social justice culture where we seem collectively not to quite be able to figure out how to speak or relate to each other.

- Emma Cooper: [00:18:01](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:18:01](#) And I think you're right that there is something there about saying, here's the context, here's what's going to be permitted in this environment. Here's how we're going to collectively behave.
- Emma Cooper: [00:18:12](#) Just for tonight.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:18:13](#) There's a set of rules and structures around this that liberate us into feeling comfortable hearing stories that might otherwise make us uncomfortable.
- Emma Cooper: [00:18:22](#) Yeah. And I think people, I mean, you know, if anyone's gone to like a really well facilitated workshop or something like you have those kinds of experiences where you feel like you go through a tunnel with a group of people and they're the only ones that get it. And sometimes those tunnels are cults, don't join those. But it's interesting to find that out. And I think we're also feeling desperate to relate to each other and having such a hard time with it these days. And being able to laugh is a really important first step. You know? And when you are worried that people will misconstrue things, and I was, as I was talking about before we started recording as a settler, I get really in my head and white-guilty about my white privilege, especially as it relates to indigenous folks. And I think I need to put it down to a degree because it just stops me from even being as helpful as I could otherwise be. So there's that understanding of sitting in your own privilege enough to understand how much is self reflection and now what is like really gross navel gazing and maybe like leave the Lindt alone and like put your pants on, get out in the world and like do something helpful, you know?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:19:30](#) Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.
- Emma Cooper: [00:19:32](#) I don't read enough books. I'm just going to make up metaphors on the fly. Please start quoting books. I know your audience is academics.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:19:38](#) Always going to quote books, my absolutely only partially academic.
- Emma Cooper: [00:19:43](#) Perfect.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:19:44](#) Many members of my audience either, I put on a poll once where I was like, do you identify as an academic? I gave people three options. One was yes. One was absolutely no. And one was what do you mean by an academic? And by what do you mean by an

academic I assumed everybody who answered that is probably a librarian, because that's a significant portion of my listenership.

Emma Cooper: [00:20:08](#)

Trick question.

Hannah McGregor: [00:20:08](#)

But like I'd say it's maybe a third, like a third each of those three categories. Yeah. It's important for me that the podcast not just be for academics, cause I can talk to them anytime. So easy to talk to them. Just send them an email. It's fine. It's fine. I can see them at conferences. I don't need to talk to them on podcasts.

Emma Cooper: [00:20:26](#)

Fairplay love it. I love it.

Hannah McGregor: [00:20:29](#)

I am thinking about this navel gazing thing a lot alongside you. This question of at what point the work of self positioning and identifying yourself becomes actually another gesture of self centering and another way of trying to get praised for being good. Which, having been raised as a white woman myself, I have been socialized so hard to be good and likable and nice and to do the right things and to make people happy. And how much am I importing that set of desires into the social justice work that I do so that what I'm trying to do is be really, really good at social justice so people will tell me I'm a good girl. And that, if I'm bringing a set of white supremacist, patriarchal settler ideals into this work, I'm going to have to let go of those and I have to let go of the desire to be good if I want to actually do anything. There's a, I'm reading Lindy West's new book right now.

Emma Cooper: [00:21:32](#)

Cool. Oh, you're going to moderate.

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:33](#)

Because when I'm moderate, it's just going to be her and I just talking to each other. Very very excited and scared. Those two things at the same time. She has an essay in there about likability and particularly the way that women are socialized into likability. And in it she says something along the lines of likability is the opposite of politics.

Emma Cooper: [00:21:53](#)

Hmm. Interesting.

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:54](#)

Like, yes, you can't do real work if what you are worried about is getting patted on the head and told you do a good job, cause that can't be the goal. And I've been, I'm still pulling these things apart because that's hard baggage to let go of. That desire to be told that you're doing a good job.

Emma Cooper: [00:22:13](#)

It's pretty in there. It's pretty far in there. You know, it's right back in the brainstem part or something. Yeah. I don't know the brain.

Hannah McGregor: [00:22:19](#)

And it ties right back into rape culture as well, right? Because also people who are raised as women, that you don't like, don't be bad.

Don't be mean. Don't refuse to make pleasant, small talk with strange men in public because you will get punished for that.

- Emma Cooper: [00:22:34](#) Or if you have you, maybe you say no once but you don't have another, no as backup. And you know, or whatever the situation is. It certainly plays into that. And the nice thing about storytelling is kind of hearing without having to explicitly state all the ways in which society is hurting or elements of, you know, elements of oppression. Like some people when they, you saw the show, some people will take a minute and just be like, and this is a thing that's fucked up. But sometimes you just hear that in the stories and you just know that the audience can kind of take what they want to take from it. And that's also a really nice thing and it's also, I mean it's also so much harder to argue with. And you and you saw that pre MeToo some of the most powerful moments where in cases where people just said their story and then sort of like moonwalked out of there and called it a day and you're like, you didn't necessarily get the trial on your side. You didn't, but people believed you because you can't argue with your story and as far as being likable, you wouldn't think that the show is likable cause the name is a trigger warning. Rape is Real and Everywhere you're like, Whoa, Whoa,
- Hannah McGregor: [00:23:46](#) Oh this sounds like just a humorless evening.
- Emma Cooper: [00:23:50](#) Yes. Like it's not a likable name but it's also, it's a good reminder as someone who really desperately wants to be a likable person as well and has that kind of whole thing that that's really helpful. Cause if the show was like a nice evening where we might touch on some touchy subjects and then you had just a bunch of nice people coming in for a nice evening and then everyone was just like my rape, which is the voice that everyone uses at the show if you haven't been so very low register. But yeah, the name is a trigger warning, the name of the show isn't nice and it tells people if they want to be there or not kind of right away. And not to say that there aren't some folks that will get up and walk out if the show happens to be too much. But yeah, just being out there and being a little bit unpleasant just to start with is like inherently part of the show, which is yeah, it makes it more powerful.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:24:41](#) Yeah. You're not having people leap to their feet and go, this is about rape!?
- Emma Cooper: [00:24:44](#) Doilies flying everywhere.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:24:50](#) Happens at every talk I give. Doilies. Though I'm sure you do get people who are like, I thought I was ready for this.
- Emma Cooper: [00:24:55](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:24:55](#) But I'm less ready for this than I expected.

Emma Cooper: [00:24:57](#) I find that's a coming from a different place than well this isn't very polite. Yeah. And so genuine, like, a lot of the audience are survivors who come to the show and I always ask, like where my survivors at? And that's for me always one of the most powerful moments of the show is like hearing way too much applause when you're like, Hey, you know, who else? And it's always just most of the audience. Like every time, in 2016 we took the show across Canada and it's the same everywhere. And, you know, that's not academic, like I'm judging by my applause-o-meter.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:30](#) Yeah i'm not asking you for a statistical breakdown. But like, yeah, seems true.

Emma Cooper: [00:25:32](#) It seems to be a problem from coast to coast.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:36](#) Which cities did you get the most applause in and we'll just all avoid those ones.

Emma Cooper: [00:25:40](#) Yeah, that's right. It's pretty even Stevens, I think so. But just kind of hearing that it's always this reminder of like, the whole show is kind of an exercise in like strategic retraumatization a little bit. Because you're like, okay, anyone who's done the show has probably done enough work on themselves and processed the thing enough that they've gotten to a point where they at least are like, I could talk about this. And any audience member is kind of done probably enough work that they've like, okay, I know what the name of the show is and I have signed on to go see it. And I know for myself, and I think a lot of other people have this is, anything with sexual assault, your brain can come in, and just sort of erase memories for a little while. And then you kind of remember them randomly and it's very patchy and weird.

Hannah McGregor: [00:26:29](#) Or you might remember it theoretically, but not have remembered it like this dramatically.

Emma Cooper: [00:26:33](#) Yeah, totally.

Hannah McGregor: [00:26:34](#) And that's a different experience.

Emma Cooper: [00:26:36](#) Yeah. So, and I would imagine for some people they might kind of go like, yes, I think I could come and see this show. And then maybe as it gets closer there's usually a couple, you know, a few tickets on every show that people get close to the date and they'll just be like, Ooh, I can't come. And that totally makes sense because it's like in your top brain or whatever, you're like no big deal. And then it got closer and you're like, I am gonna be confronted with real human people in their real human people bodies and I'll be in my human body, that'll be a bummer. And then we're going to be the same room breathing the same air and talking about rape. Like what is this? You know? So it's kinda like when you're planning an event you're like, yeah, I'll just, no

problem. I'll just fill a theater full of people. And then you're like, Oh my God, I gotta stick stickers all over the city. My girlfriend has to order the stickers.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:27:23](#) Really hate that part of event planning. Everything else about event planning except the part where you have to somehow convince human beings to come to the thing. Everything else, like I like the sort of negotiating with the speakers and I like figuring out the like where's it going to happen and what do we need? And what do we put in place and posters and get the posters. But the part where you're like, I have to somehow convince a hundred people to put their human bodies in this room at the same time.
- Emma Cooper: [00:27:49](#) And all of a sudden now I'm on Facebook. I didn't want to be here trying to figure out Instagram stories. I'm too old for this shit.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:27:56](#) I feel like an asshole asking people to go to things always too because I am so tired myself and it's like I'm asking you to leave your house.
- Emma Cooper: [00:28:06](#) The least favourite thing to do in Vancouver. I fought for this place. I don't want to leave it.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:28:12](#) Is that what it is?
- Emma Cooper: [00:28:13](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:28:13](#) Okay.
- Emma Cooper: [00:28:15](#) I'm so proud that I have a home at all.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:28:17](#) Just stay inside of it.
- Emma Cooper: [00:28:19](#) I got to guard it so no one else kicks me.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:28:20](#) Oh that's it. You can't. If you leave somebody's going to renovate you.
- Emma Cooper: [00:28:24](#) That's why. That's why attendance is low.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:28:27](#) Okay. All right.
- Emma Cooper: [00:28:27](#) Blame the landlords.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:28:28](#) That's helpful because I know that Vancouver is like, bail culture in Vancouver is massive. Attendance is super low. If it rains, it gets even worse, which is hilarious to me because it rains every fucking day. Vancouver, what are you doing? You'll go for a three hour hike in the rain, but if it's raining and you have a movie date, you're like, Oh, raining sorry.

Emma Cooper: [00:28:47](#) You don't get to show off your Patagonia head to toe outfit if you're inside, it's not the same.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:53](#) I don't understand this city.

Emma Cooper: [00:28:56](#) It's a big old day.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:57](#) Yeah, yeah. Anyway. Okay. We've been talking about audience and like how to handle...how to handle them, that's not, but you know the complexities of audience. Can we talk a little bit about the performers? Maybe starting with like how you curate the show, like how do you invite people? Where are you finding people who are both sort of comedians or storytellers and also willing to share stories about their rapes?

Emma Cooper: [00:29:22](#) Yeah. And kind of we started that conversation earlier where, unfortunately, I privately know folks who are very funny and eligible for the show and then had seen some people performing their stories already. So kind of between that the process is really just like have you done comedy for three years, do you self identify as someone who has survived a sexual assault? And it could also be like a harassment. I mean the first performer that we had, who kicked off the whole fringe run, she talked about someone who basically chased her into her apartment and what a brutal story. And she did such a good job. Randy Neumeier did such an amazing job. She's a fantastic comedian and her style is normally like really dark, dry one-liners and to have her be the first performer on this run of the show and just really open up with this story. Even though I've heard her tell it before, cause she's been with the show the whole time, just tell this story. It was interesting because we haven't done the show for awhile to hear her come back at it with sort of, I don't want to say almost the benefit of like watching MeToo unfold and kind of going like she had had a friend tell her like, just because this guy didn't technically get you, it's like still scary and like you don't deserve to be treated like that. And if you didn't deserve that, and to hear her like actually sort of well up about that, I was like, right. So it really gets to people and if you're doing this show you're literally retraumatizing yourself. Like I said, it's sort of controlled blast a bit, but it's not always because you don't know what's in there that you've kind of packed down. And so people are kind of trying to open up this package, think about their jokes, think about the moments that are sort of funny in and around the assault. And people can get right into details if they want to. And some people really don't talk about the like the physical assault itself, but they'll kind of talk about maybe situations like the date that lead up to it or what they were thinking or the song that was playing in the background or like details around it and it's just really, I mean almost to see how different performers kind of approach this thing that they all have in common is also really, really fascinating and really different. So yeah, I just, I appreciate everyone who has done the show to date and like

people's vulnerability. Like when we did the tour, there was sort of one point where we started getting into routine with it. We started realizing that it wasn't just going to explode into like an angry Twitter mob, that people were responding and then we got too comfortable one show and I as the host sort of came up and was like so rape am I right ladies? Like, ladies, not like that bad. But like I will just say for the record, not that bad.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:06](#)

I do quite like ladies, am I right?

Emma Cooper: [00:32:09](#)

How about that? But, but there's this like very subtle difference of kind of coming out and being like, this is just a comedy show. And the audience was like, Oh hell no. Like we've never seen this show before. We haven't processed this. We don't know you guys. Like no one comes to Rape is Real because they necessarily know the specific performers as like the draw of the performers as much as they come because they're like.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:34](#)

Because of the topics.

Emma Cooper: [00:32:35](#)

This is a topic. And so any kind of pretense or like shell over your heart with this show makes it impossible to work. So yeah, everyone who comes on this show, you're kind of, I mean, and I don't specifically ask for this, but I think people have done it before or kind of know, like you just have to be real about it and you don't have to tell me anything you don't want to tell me. And like there's people who check in and they go, well, you know, I've had multiple stories, do I have to talk about them all? No, you don't like you like this happened.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:08](#)

You're not testifying.

Emma Cooper: [00:33:09](#)

Yeah. This is going to embarrass other people that I know, like don't say it like you don't, but you just have to have that feeling in your body of like, I am doing truth to the sort of subject matter, and that's like good comedy anyways. And people are so fascinated by like what's true and what's not true about comedy. And one of my favourite podcasts is Good One, which is sort of like a dissection of one single joke that a comedian tells. And it's like just an hour, so, so fun.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:36](#)

That sounds really weird.

Emma Cooper: [00:33:37](#)

It's so great. Oh my God, Jesse David Fox just goes into taking one joke then talking with the comedian who wrote it for whole hour and you're like, how was that a whole hour? Oh, it's a whole hour. And it's great. But that, like, people are so fascinated by like what's true and what's not true in the details of jokes. And that's such an interesting thing. But like most comedians, when I've listened to that podcast a lot, most people are just like, I really can't lie about the important things. And it's interesting to just hear what those

important things are for different people too, right? Because it's for the sake of a joke, you just know you've got to get to the point really quickly and you've got to bring people with you. So you have to use language that people understand and you have to use visual imagery that people can relate to. And so some of these little things will get changed or you'll zero in on something that you know is more relatable and sort of blow it up a little bit. But like that truth of the feeling has to be there, especially like in any joke, but especially in this, this one. So yeah. Everyone who's done the show is frigging top. Tops.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:34:36](#) Yeah, no kidding. Being able to craft jokes and then also come with this vulnerability, right? This need to recognize that for the audience it's the first time basically every time.
- Emma Cooper: [00:34:47](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:34:47](#) That's intense. As producer, do you have to do a lot of work? Do you end up doing a lot of work with the performers, helping them develop their sets or is it more like you're curating the show and people are bringing what they're bringing?
- Emma Cooper: [00:35:02](#) I think the first time we did the kind of tour that was sort of like, we literally just pinged people like on Facebook forums, comedy forums across the country and we're like, yo, you don't know us but we're going to do the show about rape, you want in? And then people message back for some reason. Like I don't...that's the leap of faith I still don't understand. Who messages back?
- Hannah McGregor: [00:35:21](#) Like message positively?
- Emma Cooper: [00:35:23](#) Yeah. People like, yeah,
- Hannah McGregor: [00:35:24](#) Or like no never contact me again.
- Emma Cooper: [00:35:25](#) No people, like we did, this was on like on open forums like comedy forums and like, Hey, we're doing a comedy show about rape, like direct message us if you're interested. And we're like unknown comedians, and people were like, I will do this. And so that part to me like, there's the thing comedians are hard up for stage time and that's the constant joke. But like, no, the real thing of like, people just wanting to tell those stories and that people who didn't know us, it wasn't just the trust factor of knowing us. There's people who are like, yeah, that's something that I want to figure out how to talk about. Like for the Fringe, I feel like I tried to make myself available for people. And so there was like, there was writing sessions that were sort of scheduled. And I'm not the most organized person, so it was kind of like, Oh, I don't know, Wednesdays in August, here we go. And if people wanted to come, they came and chatted and a lot of people are very, very self sufficient and like have their own jokes and have their own

process, and I had nothing to do with it. But some people who hadn't done the show before sometimes were like, it's nice to just check in and just like get a read on what the expectation is. You know, like, what is this audience expecting? What am I, how much do I have to tell? You know? And you just, again, it's just like you do you, it's just people need to hear that they have permission to do their own thing.

Hannah McGregor: [00:36:36](#) Yeah. And how much, sort of in the terms of a curation of the show, again, like at this point you've been doing it for a couple of years.

Emma Cooper: [00:36:43](#) Four years. I mean 2013 late 2015 probably. So yeah, let's say three years.

Hannah McGregor: [00:36:48](#) Sure. It's average. Average the difference. Hypothetically at this point you are choosing people, right? Like you're not, you have more than enough people, right, that you are curating the show.

Emma Cooper: [00:36:59](#) Yeah, I mean the most folks for the Fringe was nice cause we had six shows. So I was able to curate it in the terms of like the headliners and the people who are on all of the shows were folks who I'd seen perform before and I could kind of make sure that there was a balance of like comedy styles and like sort of their stories in a weird way. Like I want like,

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:22](#) That's what i'm kind of curious about are you trying to get, in part not just that sort of balance of comedy styles, but balance of perspectives and positions from which people are speaking, the kinds of stories people are telling, like the important to have men represented in the show so that it is not creating, or perpetuating a narrative where rape is only a women's problem. Is it important to make sure that you have queer representation and indigenous representation?

Emma Cooper: [00:37:43](#) Exactly. So like all of that was, was part of the decision making process and also like, you know, I didn't know everyone's story, but kind of, I also thought it was just important to have a story about someone who survived childhood trauma. Like that's important. And there's multiple people that have had, you know, elements of that experience for sure. But, the person who really is, I know the one person who's lived at really and also happens to be just a fantastic comedian. So it was a very easy choice to have that person on almost every show, you know? So yeah, everything about the show, that would be a normal comedy experience in terms of trying to like do that and then you're kind of going like, that's just such a weird rubric to have. You're like, I just want to make sure that, you know, childhood sexual assault is really represented. You're like, this is such a weird mental thing to do as a producer. It's just a weird exercise and so there's parts of the show that like are really sort of very removed from the vulnerability of sexual assault, cause

now you're just sort of doing a grid and you're like, I'd like as many people to be able to be on this show. I'd also want to make sure that it flows really well. What's the math here? So it's, yeah, there's so many elements of it or just, you know, different ways to phrase the show now. You're like, as a producer, we talked about like getting human bodies into a seat, you're trying to like tweet about rape in a palatable way. So someone comes down to the Cultch, you know? Like what? That's where there's this other kind of weird dissociation from the actual material that you kind of have to check back in every once in a while. But once you get into promoting and trying to talk about the show or sort of getting your elevator pitch, so to speak, it's this whole other weird thing. And I think about Cold Specks, who's such a wonderful Canadian singer and she did this one really like raw album, I forget like maybe seven or eight years ago. And then there was this one interview where she was like, yeah, I didn't realize that I would be touring this album. You know, the album is heartbreak, the album is personal. And then you've got to go and you're in Montreal and it's personal.

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:55](#)

Have to sing this fucking song over and over and over again.

Emma Cooper: [00:39:55](#)

And you're in Toronto and it's two nights and it's personal and you're going through the prairies and it's still personal and it's still your heartbreak every time. And now you're trying to relate to that heartbreak in a way that's still authentic. And so it's just this weird exercise, and I find like you kind of, for me as the person kind of holding the space for it you get so overwhelmed by how real it is and so overwhelmed by the whole, just everything about what's wrong with why this is an epidemic and all of the pieces that I know that contribute to that and the waves and the challenges and the fact that this is so many people's lived experience and you sit in that and then you get up the next day and you're like, okay, I'm going to tweet now. Or like, you know what I mean? Or it's very weird.

Hannah McGregor: [00:40:42](#)

You've gotta switch hats, right? You gotta put on this, it's Producer-Hat time now and that, I mean it's a perfect way of putting it. You can't live there, you can't be there all the time because you have to do that production stuff. But you also feel like go home and like do the litter, buy groceries and you have to still be a human in the world, which is impossible to do when you're sitting in that place of vulnerability all the time, like you gotta you gotta be able to move out of it.

Emma Cooper: [00:41:07](#)

And I think there's something about having to do a tangible thing like a show that involves bringing people in. It involves making people laugh and maybe cry, but they have to laugh otherwise it's not a comedy show and we can't put that on the poster.

Hannah McGregor: [00:41:19](#)

Crying is optional, but the laughing laughter has to happen.

Emma Cooper: [00:41:23](#) You've got to laugh at it once. Otherwise we have not done our jobs. So like all of those very practical things makes it a real world healing experience because you do, like you said, have to put down the vulnerability and like put your pants on and go do a thing. And it's made like the show has made me a. acknowledge that my rape adjacent experience was not cool and I didn't deserve that because someone who was on the show was like, yo, you can call that rape. And I was like, Oh yes, the host of the show, I should probably have figured that out by now. Not me, everyone else, not me.

Hannah McGregor: [00:41:57](#) The sort of difficult self-evaluation is for other people.

Emma Cooper: [00:42:01](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah. I will, I'll be the poster child, but I won't do the work, you know? And so there's, we took the show to Nanaimo and that's where I'm from and so like my dad came to the show, just like little things like that. Right? Like you know, it's always, my mom came to the show too, but it's this whole, yeah, it's this whole thing of just sort of saying it again for any people you know, and then saying it over here. And there's something about the practical thing that just makes you actually have to do the healing work cause there's deadlines. It's just deadlines.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:33](#) Yeah. Yeah. It's a very real part of doing work that is like associated with really intense trauma. And it's also like a lot of emotional labor to keep yourself present in that. I wrote my dissertation about literary representations of genocide and the,

Emma Cooper: [00:42:52](#) Speaking of lighthearted. Wow.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:54](#) Yeah just fun, just fun light stuff. And that process, you know, like writing the chapter of, one of the chapters is about the Kmer Rouge regime in Cambodia and involved me spending a lot of time with like a series of photographs that the Kmer Rouge would take of political prisoners before they executed them, tortured them, and then, and then executed them. And the dissertation was thinking about witnessing and whiteness and femininity and guilt. So there's, this is why I'm stuck in an ouroboros of self-reflective witnessing for the rest of my life. But you can't write a dissertation chapter while you're crying. Like you've got to stop feeling at some point in order to do the work.

Emma Cooper: [00:43:36](#) That the name of a dissertation, that's the t-shirt.

Hannah McGregor: [00:43:41](#) Yeah that's the t-shirt. But to be able to move back and forth between these modes in whatever kind of work you're doing is one of the hardest parts of it. It's one thing to feel and another thing to try to make something out of that.

Emma Cooper: [00:43:55](#) Yeah. I think that's the kind of thing that you're hearing more discussions about more recently. To me that doesn't feel like something that I inherently knew like growing up, or that wasn't

necessarily part of the conversation. It was like you dig in and you make something happen with sheer force of will. If your feelings are sort of separate from that. So it is, it's interesting to have a project that is very inherently like it's a heck of a lot of work. Anything, putting on any kind of arts event is, it's just a ton of work. Like it's just ridiculous. I just don't know why people do it. Like I don't know why I like, it's just wild.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:44:29](#) Cause it's so fucking great when it goes well.
- Emma Cooper: [00:44:32](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:44:32](#) That's why we keep doing it, because it's a nightmare putting it together and then you're in that room and the thing happened and the people did their art and the audience is moved and you're like, I'll do this every day for the rest of my life.
- Emma Cooper: [00:44:45](#) It's true. That's true. That's how they get you. That's it. Those moments.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:44:50](#) So you've referred a couple of times to starting the show pre-MeToo. Has the reception of the show has the tone of the show changed in that three year period given that we have had a pretty massive cultural conversation about sexual assault in the meantime?
- Emma Cooper: [00:45:07](#) Yeah, less than I would have thought, that was something that I was kind of concerned about going into like this year's Fringe show that we did because I go, did we just get away with that because we were one of the very few outlets for this sort of personal side of this conversation and am I not polished enough or something? Am I not saying the right words? Now will people be looking at the language with a more critical analysis and find that we come up short? I don't know. Like those were all sort of things in the back of my head. Turns out rape's shitty. It was shitty then, still shitty. Still happening. We still need to talk about it. That's, that's my thesis. It just, it was pretty much the same thing like it, I think the audience was different. I think the one thing that I could feel was before MeToo the people who came to the show had to come to the show. There was like a very sort of like, there was a real fervor to the people who came. They're like, I heard about this. And they knew it. Like you could just tell that they heard about it and as soon as they found out it wasn't a frat boy running it, they like immediately had to come and this show and now that it's a wider conversation, there is different kind of demographics of people that was maybe older folks coming or like, you know what I mean? It's like, okay, well this is at the Cultch. This is like a theater. Like I'm going to give this a chance. And you know, like one lady afterwards who I think was a volunteer came up to me and she was like, what's on your socks? I'm like, Oh, they're like blue socks with walruses on them, but they're also cheap so the walruses do look

like floating turds. So she was like, I couldn't see and it was very distracting. I'm like, you watched a whole show about rape...

Hannah McGregor: [00:46:57](#)

And you were distracted by my socks!

Emma Cooper: [00:46:59](#)

You we're distracted by my walrus turd socks. I love you so much. What was happening for you during this experience? Which is just not something I think we would have heard in our small little artsy venue, in you know, 2015 or 16 or something. So I think the interesting thing too is less people came up to me directly and went to other comedians and talked and maybe that's my skewed perception, but I felt like a lot of the other comedians got the sort of people coming up to them going like, Hey, what's up? afterwards. And I know like our co headliner Ryan Lachance had like, you know, he's super funny, super talented, like closed down a lot of the shows in the most powerful way. He like very much embodies the like being funny but like just so vulnerable at the same time. And he's also, you know, he's also got cerebral palsy, and I think sometimes that combination of him being vulnerable and also I think sometimes people feel really comfortable telling stuff to folks with disabilities in the same way that they feel comfortable doing, you know, talking to queers and talking to other groups of folks. Right. Like it's, I do it too. It's something where you're like, Oh, you gotta catch that. But there was, I noticed there was definitely some folks going up to him and he was getting the kind of really like profound, I gotta go to therapy or I've never told anyone this. There was an older man who came up to him and just said, I've never told anyone this before and this has happened to me. Like he really got these sort of like kind of heavy duty cathartic moments after.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:30](#)

Yeah. And that's intense, that's an intense, another layer of the work of doing this show that you don't just have to prepare for it, you have to prepare for the stories that are going to come to you in the wake of it.

Emma Cooper: [00:48:40](#)

Yeah. And that was the, I mean we organized active listeners at the show and when I say we, I mean Meg my partner organized active listeners. She was, she didn't know she was going to be a co-producer of this show. And then it was like, Oh, my partner is well over her head. I will go do all these things. Thank you Meg. Yeah. So she organized active listeners for every show. But the interesting thing was sometimes people would go and chat with the active listeners, but then there's some people who just saw someone who triggered their own thing and had to go tell that performer right away. So it is that thing of like, I know personally we did 13 cities in 2016 in three weeks across Canada, all the way up to Newfoundland. And so it was doing a show, meeting new people doing the show going, Oh my God, this happened to you. Oh my gosh, we pulled this off. Finding the venue the whole bit. And then people just pouring their stories out pre MeToo because there was

no outlet for them and no one was posting them on Facebook. And so you're kind of holding all of those stories and then you'd go and do it the next day again, and like after that I like shut down for almost a year and a half. I did not like I was just a walking tour guide so I was like I can phone my job in, this is fine. But like, the emotional labor part of it like really messed me up. And then that feeling, too, of like, especially kind of pre MeToo, knowing that feeling in your bones that this is something that should go viral is such a weird position to be in. So you're kind of like, do I have to make it go viral? I can feel the immediacy and the urgency, but I don't have the words for it, and I feel like if this was a thing it would go really far. I don't know what to do to make it go far. I have limited experience working with like Shit Harper Did and things that have like, you know, gone sort of viral, but I didn't start that project so I don't have all of the skills. But it was, it was weird because you could feel it like every time we did the show it was like this needs to be a thing. Every like everyone who sees this show like their mind is blown and like more people, how, how do we do it? But after having done it and then just not having the energy or the skills and having that kind of very pervasive lady-guilt sort of complex weighing on me, I was just like, well, I'm just going to chill in my basement suite and eat a lot of chips and not make notes. I'm not going to be making moves on this. Like I just didn't know how to actually do it in the way that I thought it needed to be done, which was a very kind of high expectation. So it's been really amazing to, yeah, take space from that and then just go and do a really great show and feel people still need to talk about it, feel that we didn't do anything during MeToo. This is the time that we're kind of going and having the conversation and it's really, really, it's felt like very energizing as someone who's had their up and down moments with the project itself. And that's, again, it's like the behind the scenes look that's not at all what the show is about.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:50](#)

But it's what making the show is about, right?

Emma Cooper: [00:51:54](#)

And it's what activism is about too, right? You've got to manage that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:57](#)

It's getting burnt out and taking time off, is I think a conversation that we still don't have enough around what it means to be doing hard work on difficult subjects.

Emma Cooper: [00:52:07](#)

Totally.

Hannah McGregor: [00:52:07](#)

That the expectation of constantly giving more, constantly doing, more always being on, which stems from absolutely the white guilt piece. Like these things all connect together. But that idea of like, I'm never allowed to take a day off. Where do I get off? I have so much privilege, I have so much unearned everything. Like how dare I take a day off? And, for me, spending more time sitting in that feeling piece of it, which is to say connecting really emotionally

to the actual realities of the work that I'm doing, rather than sitting in that like project manager piece of it. Like when you're there with the feelings, you can actually feel your way through to being like, no, no, no. I get to slow down. We all get to slow down. Like we are all collectively trying to create a world here where we're like allowed to have boundaries including from ourselves. Hopefully, right? Wouldn't that be great?

Emma Cooper: [00:53:00](#)

If you're not, you're off the team. I mean, but yeah!

Hannah McGregor: [00:53:03](#)

I keep thinking back to this just weird interaction I had when I was traveling recently where I was in the hotel ordering a cab and there was a cab driver from another company who had been called and then the person who had called him wasn't there and he was like, Oh, I'll drive you to the airport. And I was like, Oh no, thanks I've already called a cab, somebody else is coming. He was like, Oh, I'll take you. And I was like, no thank you, I've already got a cab and went outside and he drove up in his cab and was like, come on, I'll take you to the airport. And I was like, this is, it's fucking every second of every day is just you being like, no thank you. And men being like, what if I ask you 17 more times? Will you eventually give up?

Emma Cooper: [00:53:43](#)

Sometimes I will, but I won't be happy about it. Not today. Tomorrow. Yes though. Certainly tomorrow.

Hannah McGregor: [00:53:50](#)

Tomorrow I'm going to be too tired to say no seven times because you'll have more, yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Emma Cooper: [00:53:57](#)

Good job in your collective effort. Yeah. That is, it is frustrating.

Hannah McGregor: [00:54:00](#)

Anyway. All of which is to say taking a couple years off. Clearly necessary.

Emma Cooper: [00:54:05](#)

The energizing thing was coming back and actually being reminded that it meant a lot to the performers because, like Ryan is, again, he's this like big openhearted guy he's just like, This means a lot, we're doing good things. And he's like kind of, he gets on a roll, he's kinda got the TedTalk vibes, you know, on top of being fucking hilarious. And so, honestly, being around him and being around everyone on the show, it was like, right, okay, yeah, this is your incentive to like get out of your head and off your ass and like make this thing happen with all these wonderful people. So yeah, it's very, very heartening. And then you just realize like, Oh yeah, when you do leave the house, and you just see people, there's so much that is in your head that kind of melts away. And there's, there's so much, there's these sort of like, it feels like I'm kind of building these little walls that I don't notice I'm building. They're just like kind of laminate or clear or something. And then once you actually meet people, they kind of melt like ice immediately and you're going like, Oh, like you just have to be around people so you

don't let that calcify, you don't let it build up. Otherwise it's, yeah. It's just not a good scene. That's what you got to do stuff just to, you know,

- Hannah McGregor: [00:55:18](#) Oh my god, just do stuff.
- Emma Cooper: [00:55:20](#) Do some stuff.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:55:20](#) So what's next for the show?
- Emma Cooper: [00:55:22](#) That's a great question. Yeah, the, the thing that I would really like to do is get it into a few festivals and get it to universities. I think universities make a lot of sense, it's not fixed anywhere and it's not fixed at universities. That's the whole issue.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:55:36](#) It's really not fixed at universities. We've super not fixed it.
- Emma Cooper: [00:55:39](#) Yeah. You know, that's the kind of thing where in hindsight you think about your own university experiences and you're like, Oh, I was lucky in a lot of cases. Like there's, it's just tough. It's just a tough, it's a tough time of life and circumstance and stuff like that. So, but the other thing is that's really exciting is we have performed at universities before and people are so receptive. So that's the, the goal is to just figure out how to get this into universities and, yeah and hopefully a few festivals cause I would love to have someone else support the organizing side. I mean it's a mission driven, right? But it is that combination of sort of sustainability too, of like I know that I can put on an independent show wherever and figure that out, but also how often can you do that when you're responsible for everything versus being able to bring something that you know now is this really polished, wonderful, profound thing that is, I don't think that you can promise that the show does anything, but I think you can put the show in with good intentions and hope for the best and some of those things are going to happen. Like I haven't, you know I used to work in the nonprofit sector. I have not done an outcomes model on this. I just am judging on the stories of people bouncing back and be like, this was meaningful. Like I've been in bars separately from the event entirely and have people be like, I saw that in 2015 it changed my life. You're like, cool. So that's, based on that it's like, yeah, let's get this out to young people. Also in institutions that, by virtue of having something like this, might have to have some discussions about what else needs to change. And the challenging thing about universities is that they're institutions, but the positive thing about universities is that they're institutions for learning. So inherently people are having conversations. So yeah, so that's the goal, and then getting into festivals and stuff like that would just be icing on the cake.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:57:30](#) So if people are listening to this and they're like, Oh, I really want to bring this show to my university, can they like contact you?

- Emma Cooper: [00:57:35](#) The dream team is just, yeah, of course. rapeisrealandeverywhere@gmail.com. Can't believe that. Yeah. I know. rapeisreal waa actually taken and I was like, Oh, nuts. Yeah. So that's, that is the dream. And you know, we've done it before and the way that it works best is really when there's a champion in a department at a university who wants to bring it there and have a discussion. And we're fortunate, I was fortunate enough to go to Concordia as part of their symposium on feminism and controversial humour and like have a chat with all of these wonderful academics who are talking about humour. And ironically having like some of the same conversations that your stereotypical, angry-about-free speech, trope man is thinking that no one wants to have in those spheres. And they're like actively having them, they're just having them with rigor and bigger words. So it was very, very cool. We got to sort of talk about Rape Is Real and kind of that whole scene as well. So it was very cool.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:58:42](#) Awesome. That's wonderful. Great description of academia. Same things other people are saying, but with bigger words.
- Emma Cooper: [00:58:50](#) I mean comedy is just saying things other people are saying, but like smaller words that you're gonna like, they're gonna like stick in your brain somehow. That's, you know, that's it. I don't know. I have no idea what's harder.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:59:02](#) Oh my God. Who knows. This has been really great. Thank you so much.
- Emma Cooper: [00:59:05](#) Thanks so much for having me.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:59:33](#) If you want to learn more about Emma's work, you can check out rapeisreal.com. Also they are going to be opening for Jenna Friedman as part of the Big Fun Festival, an alt comedy festival happening here in Vancouver. That is on Saturday, November 23rd doors are at 7:30 PM and I've included a link for tickets in the show notes, so check it out. You can follow me on Twitter @HKPMcGregor and you can tweet about the podcast using the #secretfeministagenda. And of course you can review the show. We have new reviews this week from Davbonav and Ebae? Ebee? E-Ebby I dunno, but thank you!

The podcast theme song is Mesh Shirt by Mom Jeans, off their album, Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on free musicarchive.org or follow them on Facebook. Emma's theme song was Praying by Ke\$ha.

This episode was recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations where I'm grateful to live and work.

This has been Secret Feminist Agenda. Pass it on

