

[Theme music plays]

Ione: 0:19 We're interrupting your normal scheduling to bring an extra episode of the podcast, but this isn't really what it seems. [Alice laughing] Alice still isn't over the experience in itself so she just -

Alice It was like... I'm still trying to figure out if it really happened or if it was just a dream.

Ione: Yeah, last week, we had -

Alice: The legend herself.

Ione: Rose McGowan. We had the opportunity to interview her, which was extremely interesting.

Alice: Yeah, she had a lot to say.

Ione: So we decided instead of lumping the interview in with an Ask an Expert section or like, whatever, we'd just give it its own space to breathe, space for people to listen. We thought it was a shame to cut down the length, especially with someone like Rose who... there is just so much history and insight. And I love Rose, and I love her work. I love teen movies, they're one of my favorite things, I love Jawbreaker. I have never myself watched Charmed, but I know how much it means like a lot of people our age in a lot of different ways. And then obviously, she's kind of had this whole second coming. I mean, like, I'm sure that's a simplistic way to put it.

But obviously, I'm sure most people listening to the podcast will already know this, she wasn't a founder, she didn't think of the #MeToo movement, but she definitely invigorated it on to a worldwide platform that, well, it probably would have reached but she, along with a few other women in Hollywood, were some of the first women or people to speak out against sexual assault and sexism.

Alice: Yeah, use their voices and their platform I think in a sense of highlighting these issues.

Ione: And since then Rose has obviously gone on to write a book, Brave, which we speak about in, in the interview itself. She's also gone on to become, maybe not become because as you'll hear in our interview, Rose has always campaigned for different causes she believed in and anyone reading the book will also know that, but to kind of shift her career into somewhere that primarily deals with social activism. When I got offered the interview with Rose there was this moment where like, I have so much respect for this woman, like, there are like career pinpoints that have defined a lot of our upbringing in a way like Jawbreaker but then her dating Marilyn Manson and the naked dress and all of these pinpoints, like she's always kind of, she's one of those people, who's kind of like, ever present.

But I think there was still this tiny bit of hesitation because as is common when people become more vocal in their views, there's always not only a backlash from those that may be on the other side of the political spectrum, but also from within our own community, and she definitely hasn't been perfect in everything she's

done. I think one of the most pressing pieces of controversy she has been involved in was an incident during the first round of book promotion, where she was accused of some transphobic comments by someone who went to her book launch, basically, and you probably already know what I'm talking about anyway, because I feel like it's something that was very, you know, brought into our community and our thinking when it happened, it was everywhere basically is what I'm saying.

But, before we agreed to do this interview Rose actually did make a public apology with Pink News. We're going to play a clip here in a second. I think that video clarified her point of view, showing that she'd done the learning she needed to do, made the apologies that were necessary to make to continue moving forward in her line of activism, and the fact that she cleared up the issue just a couple of months ago - we'll link the whole video below - meant that we were of sound mind to continue.

Rose: [From clip] I would like to say I'm sorry, I didn't have the correct language. I am profoundly sorry. And I really do understand.

Ione: Obviously, that was only 10 seconds so I'd definitely recommend, we'll link the whole video from Pink News below, so you can watch that yourself but some of the shit she's been called out for is valid and she's addressed that equally in a valid way. But I think just because of that, I didn't see any hugely pressing reason not to have her on because she is someone that has done a lot of amazing things I think and I think a lot of our listeners, readers, audience, although they might think it's a bit passé, because we're very used to having these conversations within our own communities when it comes to sexual assault and all of this, and I think it's very easy to forget that Rose and these other women and these other queer people really did put this on to the world stage. That can seem a bit passé for us cause we're so used to like dealing with these things in our everyday life. Rose got our grandmas talking about sexual assault, our mothers, like people that aren't touched by feminism or social justice in normal situations. So I think having the opportunity to speak to her was definitely amazing and like weird to be honest, like weird in a good way -

Alice: Surreal I think definitely, but this thing of you know listening to each other and saying like "I'm not perfect but I'm willing to understand and hold a conversation about this and and grow from that", I think it was really amazing to hear what Rose had to say in that regard.

Ione: And also think it's very different. I was saying that when I was researching the interview, because I hadn't read her book and I started reading her book but I also started going back on maybe like all the print interviews I've missed, and a lot of the interview she does which is great that she gets herself on these platforms like The Times or The Telegraph, or like, very serious broadsheets, and I think having the opportunity to sit down with her as like a new feminist publication that deals with contemporary feminist issues at it's core was a good opportunity to kind of see past the sound bites, because you know how is when you get interviewed and it gets compiled into soundbites, you get the most simplistic form of what the actual meaning of that conversation was.

Alice: Yeah absolutely.

lone: At the beginning of this interview, you'll hear it kind of just like go straight into it. I think definitely from interviewing her, Rose is this type of person where it's like straight away you're straight into conversation. And Alice just decided to press record because -

Alice: It was good stuff.

lone: We were just chatting and it felt like to then bring that out and be like "oh wait let's actually start"...

Alice: So we just pressed record.

lone: If you feel a bit jolted into it then... We definitely had a great time speaking to Rose and hearing a bit more about just everything that she has to speak about. We hope you enjoy this interview and we'd love to hear like your feedback. Thank you to Protein for letting us have the space to interview Rose Thank you to Rose for coming on the show. Thank you to Rachel Hodgson for doing the pics which you can see alongside this episode and she's also going to be featured in a future episode of the podcast. And thank you to our season partner Melissa shoes for supporting us even if we decide to go off schedule for a week or two, so as you know we're partnering with Melissa shoes for the whole of this first series. We have an exclusive discount code which is MELISSAPOLY30 that will get you 30% off all full price products at shop melissa.co.uk, we'll link that as always below. And, here's the interview.

[Theme music plays]

lone: Hi Rose.

Rose: Hi.

lone: I love memoirs, especially of women that have are a bit batshit, in a good way obviously. Sometimes I feel like there's snags in people's memoirs whereas in your book there hasn't been yet.

Rose: When people just kind of peruse the book or thumb through it, it doesn't really work that way. There's an old movie called Ferris Bueller's Day Off. And Ferris Bueller speaks to the screen, and he's speaking to the audience. And that's called breaking the fourth wall in the theatre and acting world. And I was like, I'm going to do that in my book. So people are like "what was your biggest inspiration?" and I'm like "Ferris Bueller's Day Off actually" [all laughing]. And I say in the book, I really just wanted to have a conversation with whoever is reading it. And so, so I talked about my stories but then I break the fourth wall and I just wanted to like literally have a conversation with you.

lone: I also think especially when it does come to literature, especially literature that deals with you know, all of the stuff you're dealing with and the femme experience that have been so many boundaries put in place for us to stop accessing these kinds of materials like historically -

Rose: Yes.

lone: And like feminism has been clouded in academia until now, in a lot of ways, and I think it's good that we're seeing a lot more books get published that really are helping to break that down by just talking to someone, well writing as if you're talking someone, normally.

Rose: I get a lot of questions about feminism and I sometimes feel like there's a huge gap in my knowledge, I think other than believing in equal pay and equal rights, which I think makes you a feminist, I don't know, you know, I imagine I would have had a very different experience had I gone to a women's college or just maybe college in general. I played like I went to college, that was in movies though, haha [all laughing].

lone: I also get like a lot of shit, well not a lot of shit, but like -

Rose: Some shit.

lone: I feel like there's a school of feminists that maybe like have taken the more academic route or whatever, that think Polyester is stupid because it's like quite visual or it's like not steeped in academia. I remember I got shit once for getting the like academic way of saying what fourth wave feminism is wrong. And I was like "but in my opinion fourth wave feminism is the fact that we don't need academics describe to us what we are or are not needing and demanding now, so..."

Rose: Yeah, I think to an extent being too esoteric doesn't really work, it doesn't penetrate the world, it doesn't penetrate consciousness and in fact it becomes a huge turnoff to a lot of people and I think breaking it down like equal pay, equal rights and bite sized chunk, you're like yeah and also just, I think just recognising your own humanity as a woman, you know, that's pretty much it to me. I mean, even honestly, like, what's the second wave, what's the third wave? I fucking honestly don't know, and I'm here to say I'm semi ignorant but at the same time people like, I don't know if you know who Germaine Greer is but she comes for me a lot, [lone laughing] I don't understand entirely why. Maybe I achieved something you didn't, with all your academia

lone: Germaine Greer is the super TERFy one, right? Yeah. So she's, she's just backtracking on her own legacy, like as minutes tick by -

Rose: Well it's so weird because the criticism she faced when she started out she, that's what she meats out, that's what she gives out now. And it is weird. It's like, "oh God, I hope I don't turn into that when I'm older, that I'm gonna all of a sudden be this... fucking total bitch - " [all laughing] "- to other people".

lone: So obviously, this week, the paperback came out, right? And it's kind of like a year and a bit since the hardback came out, how would you describe the book to maybe someone who's never heard of it. And what's changed for you since the initial release of it?

Rose: Good questions. Um, Brave is my book. And I titled it that because that was my father's nickname for me, "the brave one", you know, each kid gets, you know, like, my sister Eva was the beautiful one, my sister Daisy was the sweet one, and I was the brave one, which was kind of a curse. The book is an autobiography, but the bone of it is really comparing the cult that I grew up in to the cult of Hollywood and how it affects your mind in ways you're not aware of. And I start dissecting that later as I get more into the Hollywood side of the book, and for people to draw parallels into their own lives, because I know Hollywood seems kind of like a faraway, weird experience. And it is, but it doesn't just stay there, it is America's number one export, and it goes to all of us. And I think it does a lot of damage and has caused a lot of damage.

lone: I think that's also something that like, British people really don't have a handle on. Like I went to LA for the second time like last week, I got back last week, and the first time was the year before. And when you just literally are driving around or whatever, you're like "what the *fuck*?" [All laughing].

Rose: I felt that way every day!

lone: You feel like you can't walk anywhere, you can't do anything, it looks like all of the signs are so old, it's really confusing. It's such a weird place.

Rose: It's a very strange place, it's both ugly and beautiful. And, I kind of love that about it. I love the land of California and I love trees, I love all of that but it's, it's not right in the head, its value system's super skewed. And it's, you know that's what amazing to me about I love being in London and other places where it's, you know, you would think LA is multicultural, and it is but it's also really self segregated. And it has this underclass of Latinos that serve everybody else. And it's, it's, um, I mean, not all of them. But it's an awful lot because that's where a lot of immigrants come. And it always left me feeling like deeply uncomfortable, I swear to god if they, if Latinos just decided to stop working one day, that whole place would shut down, they wouldn't know what to do, they wouldn't know how to take care of themselves.

But what is worse about it is just really the damage they do to your mind. And it's, it is a cult, because a cult like structure benefits somebody else at the top that's not you and everybody's supporting that same thing. And it's a myth in the first place and an illusion. So it has all these rules, but not written in stone. They're just saying "this is how we've always done it, this is how we're always going to do it". There's a story it was like 1926, I think of the first girl that came out about being raped in Hollywood, was a young actress. And they had taken a bus and bussed in 50 young women to a ranch where they said they were going to give them, you know, they're going to be in a movie. And instead they took all these, they're called box office exhibitors, the people that own the movie theatres, and it was like a convention for them.

lone: What the fuck.

Rose: And instead, they took 50 young girls there to all be raped. It was a mass rape, and they called it in the newspaper, they called it, after the young woman came out against it, you know, the only one that did, they were like "she was ravaged", you know, that's how they described it. And instead it was like a mass rape. And that's what Hollywood is built on.

lone: The episode hasn't come out yet, but Misha, who I share my studio with came on the podcast, we're getting artists to talk about like specialist subjects as well for the second half. And they were telling us loads about, Alice do you remember what it was? The like codes that came in in the 30s that prevented like, women being shown on screen in certain ways, and queer people -

Alice: Was it called like the Hays rule?

Rose: Yeah the Hays Code, it was the Hays Code, Will Hays.

lone: I had no idea existed that that before. And it's like, it's just so mad that one day in a very short period of time, you can be like, no, this is banned, this is banned, this is banned. And then it stays like that for the next 80 to 100 years essentially.

Rose: Essentially what happened is the government, after the repeal of the Hays Code was like hands off, not that the government does much in Hollywood, not that it certainly would now to prevent any bad things from happening there, because I think it just mystifies a lot of people and they wouldn't even know. It's just, we have our own strange language, we have our own strange rules, we have our own strange ecosystem. And the Hays Code was really, if you look and you go back to 19, early 1930s, there was, there was some really racy films. You know, Barbara Stanwyck, Hedy Lamarr was nude on screen in the 20s. You know, it was, it was wild and it was free and it was new. And it was really, early Hollywood was run by women.

lone: And then that just like -

Rose: And then Wall Street boys came in and that's, that ended that.

lone: So what would you say has changed for you since the book came out a year ago, initially?

Rose: Yeah, I didn't have a normal, like, "I'm an author now, my book is coming out, and I'm going to feel what that feels like". Because I was fighting kinda like the fight of my life in the public eye against a bunch of dickheads [all laughing]. A bunch of very powerful dickheads. And when you push a power, they push back and they, it was, it was just like being on the ropes in a boxing ring just getting punched every day. What's changed is that during that year I fell in love, and I've come out the other side of that wind tunnel kind of thing. And I feel really good now. You know, I feel really good. And there was a million dollar bounty on my book that my rapist had placed on it, and 125 pages of it were stolen before it was published.

lone: Wow.

Rose: My literary agent was secretly working with him behind the scenes, introduced spies into my life who pretended they were sexual assault survivors to get ahold of my book. It was batshit crazy stuff going on.

lone: Did you get the pages back?

Rose: No, they took them.

lone: Fuuuuuck.

Rose: So to have your rapist in your mind before you're ready to put it out in the world is, it's, it's, I can't describe exactly what that feels like, it's so strange, you know, to know he was reading about my childhood, my thoughts. And it's just like, ugh, it's really it is, it is assault another way, you know, mental assault, and it was just so, I think what's changed also the world has changed a lot. And the world has changed and grown up, I think by like 10%, that's what I think.

lone: I read the 10% thing, where did you come to that number from?

Rose: I was smoking weed one night [all laughing], sitting on my couch, it's California, it's legal, hey, lucky us! And I was sitting there like "huh, I wonder if there was a percentage number that I could be better, I wonder what percentage that would be? And I was like, 10% seems doable. Yeah, that's a good idea, I bet the world could be 10% better". That's actually my movement. It's not #MeToo, #MeToo kind of kicked off, the hashtag kind of kicked off and you know, went global, about two weeks after the big, these big articles came out, these exposes in the New York Times and The New Yorker magazine. And, because I was on book tour, I got asked questions constantly about it. So I kind of inadvertently became the poster child for it.

But my thing, my movement and my pushing at social structure, and kind of people in a way, went back about four years before that. And I just wanted to see, I was tired of the same stupid man woman conversation, it was literally so bored of it I couldn't take it. And I thought what if instead of being an activist for a singular cause, we could address the overall intelligence level of humans? What if we could kind of push them into being *just* a bit more adult about things and just a bit more awake? Could I do that? Can I almost antagonise them and push them and kind of bully them into being better? You know, can I do this? And I, I kind of think in a weird way I did. You know, it came with a lot of repercussions and a lot of backlash. People don't like change, they don't really like growth, and a lot of people don't want to look at ugly things. But there's, there's so much beauty in this world, but there's also a lot of ugliness, and a lot of us have felt it and dealt with it. And so why the fuck not address it?

lone: I also think it's really important, which is also what you've done, which is, you know, #MeToo exposed this huge thing that a lot of people already knew existed, but it took it into the limelight, it made people start having to face up to the consequences of their actions. But I think a lot of people struggle, especially in activism when they reach that point, and then it's like "oh fuck, like what now?". We've done this thing, we've blown the lid off, how do we actually like -

Rose: How do we keep going?

lone: Yeah, work towards something better? Or like make sure that this doesn't just become a pit of anger and sadness and everything? How do we then turn that into

something where the survivors and like, people who are affected by it in any way can then go on and live better lives? Be the people who -

Rose: They were meant to be before they were attacked.

lone: Yeah exactly.

Rose: Yeah, it's you know, it's tricky and it's all unfolding in real time. So I get asked a lot like "where's #MeToo going?" and like, I don't have a crystal ball. It's not like, so the media came up with this movement thing, they kept calling it a *movement*, and it made it sound like there were like, thousands of scary screeching feminists in the streets running after men and the media were like *movement, movement*. I'm like, there's no head of a, there's no -

lone: Yeah of course not.

Rose: It's not like there's Martin Luther King with the civil rights movement. There's not there, like I kind of became the poster child for it. You know, I did not create that hashtag that Tarana Burke, it was not my thing. I always say I am a #MeToo, if you want, it was basically created just so people can have a chance to shorthand: "Did this happen to you? Me too". That's literally in my mind all it actually is. And that people can be strong enough to be like "fuck the abuse of power". And, and, and if sexual harassment is, or assault, is like the flaming spear tip that I rode in on, then that's how it is. I think the way to keep going and the way it's just trying to get more - and it's so hard in the press, oh my god - trying to get them to have more nuanced conversations about this stuff because it's not black and white.

I accidentally worked with a pedophile, a film director, I had no idea, nobody told me and on set when a neighbour started ranting and raving and handing out flyers about the director being a pedophile. The producer came running up me and he was like "oh, he's just mad that we didn't hire him to be on the crew". Right? And then it turned out this man had in fact, was a predator and had been in jail for it, but it was a man and still allowed to direct movies. What in the actual fuck?

lone: Yeah, it's just like, cover up, on cover up, on cover up, on cover up -

Rose: It's meta, it's coverup on complicity upon like everybody just like, and you can't find other people that aren't like that? What the hell are you doing? *What?*

lone: I think the Oscars was like such a -

Rose: I hate the Oscars.

lone: - weird dichotomy of, most of the men that won for like directing and whatever, there were all the problems with Green Book, there was all the problems with Bohemian Rhapsody, but then all the men behind those films were bad people who had committed like, bad offences, but it's like that, but then all the people when they get up on stage saying like "diversity in film, we're doing so much better!" It's like, ugh.

Rose: Hollywood just wants to look like they're doing better. And they know the buzzwords now, and they know what they're supposed to say, but they don't know how to be it.

lone: Well, that's what I was gonna say too because especially, I think something that we find when it comes to feminism is even like feminism is so commodified now.

Rose: It's so commodified.

lone: So it's hard to even make something, obviously, we *are* making authentic things, but then you see that everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. And you're like "well, where do I go from here?" Like -

Rose: No you're at H&M and there's a feminist t-shirt or something -

lone: Exactly.

Rose: And you're like facepalm you know, or like at Topshop ha ha ha.

lone: And it makes you want to throw the whole thing on the ground.

Rose: Burn it down.

lone: But, it makes you want to be like, oh, I feel like when something like that happens your initial reaction is to like, walk away, because you want to be different, because you know you're not the commodified thing.

Rose: Right.

lone: But, I always say like, with feminism or whatever, it's not about what it looks like because we intrinsically *are* it. So it doesn't matter the word, it doesn't matter anything, it matters what we do, and how we *do* separate ourselves from capitalism, from patriarchy, from these horrible people. But then they're only three steps behind all the time so... [all laughing]. We'll see!

Rose: We'll see! Fingers crossed, fingers crossed.

lone: I saw when you did the like #NOvember campaign on your Instagram, and I wanted to ask you, like, why you find social media such a good tool for your activism and what you do on those platforms?

Rose: Well, I write about this in my book actually too, I - previous to social media, and you guys probably don't remember that time, but previous to social media, the only time my voice ever got out there was if I was doing an interview, to promote a movie that I've been in that was created by a man, shot by a man, edited by a man. And so it's like, male gaze on and on and on, like, way more than one male gaze and all the questions were primarily about the man that I worked with, or some

idiotic, horrible, stupid thing they were saying, and there was no way to speak for yourself, you had no voice, you know.

And then I realised, so many people had been sending me messages all through, you know, the last year, survivors and, and not just survivors of sexual assault, but just all across the board. I get a lot of really intense messages and a lot of intense situations. And I wanted to show with #NOvember was what do people say no to in their lives, that became like a yes? Right. And what was cool about that was helping so many people, so many people just want to be heard. They just want their voice heard. And how do you do that if you don't have a platform to do that? They often get quite resentful of people that *do* have one, a voice. You're kind of damned if you do and damned if you don't, if you have a loud voice, you get beat up. If you don't talk, you get beat up. And maybe not physically necessarily, maybe.

But I wanted to give people a chance each day I featured you know, somebody else, whether it be trans, whether it be a young girl, whether it be - there's this beautiful black man who presented as femme, but was not gay and not trans and just like talking about his experience in his community, and just like letting people have... I was like "take my platform. I don't need it. Take it over". I wish I could do it every day. It was a lot of work. But it was, it made me feel really good. And it's a, it's a strange form of volunteer work. You know?

lone: Yeah, definitely. Like, especially with Polyester it was always the thing where I never really cared about amplifying my own voice because I saw everything I believed in other people and wanted to amplify them instead, if that makes sense?

Rose: Yeah.

lone: But I suppose now I'm hosting a podcast, so... [all laughing]. But I wanted to ask you also, because even social media has become like extremely muddied waters, especially over here with like, you know, Facebook being complicit in Brexit and also in the states with the election. Do you think that social media is still the utopia that maybe we all thought it was five years ago?

Rose: No.

lone: Do you still use it with the same freedom as maybe, I don't know if you did, but I once felt I could.

Rose: I feel like Instagram is a job -

lone: Oh my god me too.

Rose: - and I hate it and it doesn't pay me and I'm like "ah fuck my life" [all laughing], "just taking another stupid picture of my stupid face to put on here? Fuuuuuuck.". Right? And I don't want to. Maybe if I was younger, I'd dig it more, I don't know. My Facebook is just, I mean, that's my mother and her political rantings, so I don't really go on there. She's super liberal. But it's even that, it's like, it's just a lot. Yeah, it's just not my jam. And then Twitter is a cesspool, Twitter's gnarly.

Lone: I can't use Twitter.

Rose: Twitter is just intense. But Twitter's the way I talk to the media. I use it to get what I want to say out and what I started realising I could do was just game the system. Like you think, you know, "you expected me just to stay polite and silent? Well you got another thing coming" so for me, you know, society has had an awful lot of thoughts on me over the years, on my body, on my face, on my mind, on... whatever the hell they can come up with. And I have some thoughts for them. Haha. [All laughing]

Lone: So when I was reading the book, and also in interviews of you, and when I've read your Instagram captions, or whatever, basically, something that I've really liked the way you speak about or the way you write about is rage, and like specifically feminized rage. It's something I read about in most of the media that I enjoy watching, reading, listening is about, yeah, I picked up on it before, like batshit women or like people who like, you know, cause I feel like so many femme and queer people, women, walk around with like, a ball of anger in their stomachs. It feels like now we're scratching the surface a bit where more people are talking about that, making work about it, why do you think that's now?

Rose: I think righteous anger can fuel change in the world. I mean look at Malcolm X, right? And he is painted in history as just this angry black man, *just* this, but he was so much more than that and when they write women off as "oh, they're angry"... We're trained to be polite from zero. And that fucks you *up*. There's a thing where I believe that, you know, rage can change the world. It doesn't. And people are so scared of especially women a lot of times being angry because there's so many taboos about it.

Someone, an activist I know in Black Lives Matter, said the reason that they come for me so hard is because I don't behave like what a white woman of my age is supposed to behave like. Because I show anger. And I show sadness when I'm sad, and I show happiness when I'm happy, and I just think who are you to take off my emotional like, arsenal. And so many people are scared if they *do* recognise their anger that they're going to be so fucking angry. And I did, it does feel like at times, like "oh my God, my hair is going to catch on fire". But then you pass through, it's like a thundercloud, right? I think we need to own it.

Lone: I also think something that like I'm seeing more and more, and the people that are really leading it are people that aren't very young women, it's women that are your age, or even older that are suddenly being like, wait, why have I been sitting on this for so many years -

Rose: So many years.

Lone: - I'm just gonna do it.

Rose: So if I had my brain now when I was younger, oh my god... [all laughing] I don't know what would have happened. I'm not sure what happened. I have every right to like, go down the street with my hair on fire if I feel like it. I've earned the right to be bat shit crazy. Except for I'm not, I'm extremely sane. At least I think so, haha [all laughing].

lone: Well I think that's the thing. It's like when a man, especially a white cis man, mostly them, it's like they are given everything to begin with, but whereas with other people, it's like, what can we take back? Because nothing has been given to us in the first place.

Rose: Correct. And that's, you know, I gave a speech at a Women's March convention. And the title of the convention was Reclaiming our Time. And I'm like, when did we claim it? I was like, did I miss something?

lone: Yeah.

Rose: I think I missed that that day [lone laughing]. I think it should just be *claiming* our time. And that's, and not just for women, but for everybody that's been oppressed. And men, white cis men especially, are the easiest people to scare on the planet, and I think it's because they know that Lazy Boy, that chair they're sitting in, is an illusion, but they're really comfortable in it.

lone: This is why I always love crying in front of cis straight white men, because they don't know what to do with you if you're upset or angry -

Rose: Specially British ones.

lone: They're like "uhhh, I'm gonna give you anything you want" [all laughing].

Rose: Yeah, "please just make it stop, I don't have the emotional complexity to deal with this, I don't know what to do" [all laughing]. I had a British boyfriend, that's all I'll say about that [all laughing].

lone: So I wanted to ask about also the art and music you've been making. I saw a bit about your performance, was it like last month or two months ago?

Rose: Yeah it was a couple of months ago, it was a performance art piece.

lone: Is that after being in Britain that you started doing that more and more, and putting that out there?

Rose: Yes.

lone: Like, what do you want to achieve with it, I suppose?

Rose: Well, I've been also working on an album called Planet Nine and a visual experience that goes along with that. And it's, what I want to achieve with that is, is just really, it took me a *long* time to realise I was an artist. Nobody told me. I viewed myself as a commodity, that's the message I got and the commodity that wasn't worth very much. And I hated being an actress. It was not... You haven't got there yet, in the book but I was discovered. I'm standing on a street corner -

lone: Oh yeah, I literally have just read that page.

Rose: Okay, well, it's after my boyfriend is murdered, and I was standing on the street corner crying. Two weeks later I was it starring in a movie. And I did it because I had been homeless when I was 13 and a runaway and I didn't, I was so scared of going back to that. That's why I did my first movie and how, and why I kept going in the industry was because then, if you get famous really quickly, what are their jobs are you gonna do? You're kind of boxed into this corner. And I - acting is an art, I *do* believe it is an art. But it's funny how only certain actors are viewed as artists and the rest are just huge cheese balls. Right? And I myself come from a family of artists and writers and thinkers and these amazing, really dynamic brains and, and creatives. And I felt like my brain was melting when I was just acting. For me, when I started writing my book, I started simultaneously producing my album and writing it and singing on it, and I teamed up with... my favorite Daft Punk song, it's called Contact, and so I tracked down the producer of that -

lone: Oh cool.

Rose: And then I tracked down this other producer and, like assembling an album having never done it and having no idea what the hell I was doing... It's pretty fucking dope [all laughing]. It's a really strong, it's a concept album, and it's a really strong piece of work. And I'm playing my first dates at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August.

lone: Oh my god.

Rose: I'm terrified and excited. And it's you know, one of the tracks, the first track is over this kind of like operatic French electronic beat, it's seven and a half minutes of spoken word over that, as the music rises and rises and I say "are you lonely on your planet? Are you lonely on the fringe?" And it's all about getting us off of this world and getting us into another plane of thinking and thought and emotion really. And it's kind of a reward for going through the book.

lone: It sounds cool.

Rose: And it kept me sane while writing the book.

lone: It's funny that like, I think it's good now, when I started Polyester, or entered into being a professional, whatever that means, it felt like if you were a woman, you could only do one thing, and if you're a multi faceted creative, it means like "oh, you're not serious, and you're not actually good at any of it" -

Rose: You're a dilettante .

lone: Yeah, but you're just trying your hand at things. But also, what's wrong with that?

Rose: But what's wrong to try my hand at things? What if I'm actually good at it?

lone: Yeah, exactly.

Rose: There's an awful lot of things I am not good at, and there's an awful lot of things I am good at.

lone: I was interested when you said, I think just before we started recording, like "oh, writing is like, my least favorite talent". I'm a writer before most other things and then sometimes I feel like that as well, like, I know that I can write and I enjoy seeing how I can like craft sentences. But then I'm also like, "do I have to?" [all laughing].

Rose: "Do I have to do this?". It's definitely, it's kind of like you have to use a lot of your brain to do it. I know that sounds really dumb, but it's in a weird way, it's like this puzzle and I had a lot of people who were like "oh, just vomit it on the page and clean it up afterwards", I was like "I don't *like* vomit". And words mean a lot to me. Words count, you know, and each word unlocks the next word. And so it is it's like a puzzle that you have to piece together and get out of your own mind. And sometimes it feels like you got every word in the dictionary just weighing on your brain, and like you can't type fast enough. And I'm not one of those writers that's like "I write five hours every day, I get up at five in the morning and I have my tea and ohhhh..." [all laughing]. Die. No, I would, I would be you know at dinner and all of sudden have to get up and leave because it was like it was coming over me right then and I had to go do it right then. Cause it's like when you have that motivation to clean your closet, you don't know when it's going to come back [all laughing] so you have to seize that damn day.

lone: So I think for Polyester's listeners, readers, or whatever, and like a lot of my peers, I feel like people will predominantly know you and will love you for like Jawbreaker, Charmed, your roles in those films and TV has kind of had like, a second Renaissance with Instagram with people like posting all your looks and stuff on Instagram. And I know so many of my friends are like "Rose McGowan's my ultimate, like my *ultimate*" -

Rose: Awwww.

lone: How'd you feel about that, knowing that like that was such a contentious time for you in your life? Like how does it feel if this stuff just keeps coming back up, I suppose?

Rose: The harder thing about it is, it's not because it was a contentious time, because I kept that private, I wanted to really separate the work from that. And I wanted the work that I did to really stand out and stand the test of time. And I think you know, I think I've achieved that somewhat. But it's just weird to see pictures of yourself when you're younger. It's just strange, a strange phenomenon. It's just there's a lot of things that are abnormal about my life, and that that is one of them, you know. And I gained 10 pounds to play the role of Paige in Charmed so that I'd look cutesy and round face, "America, love me", you know, one of those things and whereas on my own I'm smaller and have a more angular face and everyone's like, you look so different. I'm like "of course". Also I grew up, you know, it happens to us our faces change, we have more angular, whatever it is, whatever happens. But it is, it's a peculiar thing, seeing your time marked in such a way, yeah.

lone: I also wanted to ask you because I saw that you performed at Vivienne Westwood's fashion week show. How would you say that, like your relationship to fashion and clothes and that expression of identity has changed throughout the course of your life?

Rose: Well, I felt for a long time in Hollywood, specifically public appearances, I was so uncomfortable and I couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. I was like, "is it the shoes? Is it this, is it that?" And it was like... and then later I was like "it's fucking all of it. It's all of it. They made you look like a human freaky Barbie". Like, and going down a stupid red carpet, they used to say stuff like "oh, you can't wear that dress, that's too editorial". Like, "no, *this* is red carpet and *that's* editorial", as if you can't be too weird. because then the gossip magazines will savage you. And I'm like "so? They're going to anyway". You know, let them savage you.

My relationship with fashion is that I just want to wear whatever I want to wear, when I want to wear it, and the way I want to look, when I want to look like that. And I wish I had been able to arrive at that earlier, cause I *had* my whole life had like serious looks. And then especially during Charmed, it was for TV, which is very, very mainstream. All of a sudden, I was being dressed in a very mainstream way. And it's so strange, like the rules in Hollywood is that you have to pay someone to dress you. The messages is "you're too stupid to do it yourself". You have to pay someone to do your hair and makeup because you're not pretty enough on your own. You have to wear these stupid high heels and take little mincing steps with your dumb hand on your hip cocked out, you know, stupid, ugh.

And so I'm glad to be back to me, and Vivian Westwood... Vivian I love, I just I love her personally, we've known each other a little bit now for a while. And she's incredible, and you know, a true punk and what a true punk is is a disruptor and someone that just wants to like fuck the system up because the system needs to be fucked up. And I consider myself a punk spirit, and a kindred spirit to her. And it was cool. In the show, it was actually a performance piece, and I played the angel of democracy [all laughing]. And, you know, talking about how we needed more heroes, and it was nice actually performing because I hadn't done that in a really long time, and because Hollywood is so toxic for me, the *feeling* of performing got lost, if I ever had love for it, it was taken away. And it was nice to have a moment where it felt good.

lone: Yeah. Especially reading just the beginning of the book, you can definitely get a sense that you have like, love for like the way you dress yourself and your identity and how you use that to help you construct yourself. Like when you're describing, like cutting the top off the polo necks and then going out clubbing, it's like you can tell your whole look was a big part of that -

Rose: Oh very much so.

lone: - and I really like, appreciate it when people do that, I think, I think it's discarded too often, how this stuff can help us build ourselves and become who we are.

Rose: Oh completely! Yeah, you get your own identity. And that's why, you know, I was so young, when all of a sudden for 12 to 17 hours a day I was being dressed in clothes that I wouldn't have chosen, saying things that I wouldn't choose to say or think about and behaving in ways that... or hanging out with people or being with people I didn't necessarily want to be with. And it's a very, it fucks up your head. You know, I only got to be me like, after work, which is usually when I was exhausted and passing out and I think that's how I lost myself for so long, yeah.

Ione: Yeah, I can't even imagine.

Rose: It's really important to... to just check in with yourself, do you look the way you want to look because you want to look that way or is it because of societal expectations? Do you have the hair *you* want, do you have the clothes *you* want?

[Theme music plays]

Ione: 40:36 What the fuck, that was Rose McGowan. Reading Rose's book was an amazing, but hard insight into like, what working in an industry like Hollywood is and although when you read it it's very like "oh my God, this woman has been through so much". But then you realise, part of the reason why she wrote that is because it wasn't something that was rare, this is something that not just happens to Rose but that happens over and over and over, happens in *our* lives to more or lesser degrees. So I think it's really important to definitely keep re-engaging with these thoughts. And constantly trying to check that we all are still, obviously we are still thinking about it because a lot of us live it...

Alice: But just like tending to the garden, upholding the conversation, upholding that community and the strength in that is so important.

Ione: Rose is going on tour with Brave, which sounds sick, and like as someone who has been able to sit in front of her, I would definitely recommend the experience.

Alice: Yeah compelling, compelling.

Ione: And just like very interesting in many different ways for many different reasons. So that was Rose McGowan, and please let us know what you think we'd love to hear your feedback on Rose, on the podcast, on anything. Like, if you can leave us an Apple review that would be excellent, or if you just want to email us that's fine too, Instagram... You know where to get us. We'd love to hear you feedback, whether you'd love more random little episodes like this, whether you want us to just keep to the normal schedule. But let us know what you think because we'll be back with another new episode.

Alice: We're going to be chatting to our wonderful friend Misha

Ione: Misha was actually mentioned in the interview with Rose talking about the Hays Code and Hollywood, because Misha will be talking about the golden era of Hollywood and it's intrinsic relationship to the queer community. We will also be talking to Sirin Kale who is the Associate Editor of Broadly about her anti stalking campaign UnfollowMe and making a career change after a quarter life crisis. Sirin is an amazing journalist and another really good example of feminism put into practice beyond simplistic Instagram statements, is all I'm gonna say on that cause I'm sure me and Sirin will get into it a lot when we sit down with each other [both laughing].

Alice: You will get into it.

lone: So as always, thank you to Melissa, our partners for the series, yet again. You've already heard the discount code but if you haven't got it written down yet it's MELISSAPOLY30, you should definitely check out their website which we'll link below and if you buy a pair shoes please show us your looks with #MELISSASQUAD all in caps. So thank you again. I've been lone.

Alice: I've been Alice.

lone: And this is the Polyester podcast, Polyester is a feminist culture zine bridging the gap between URL feminism with the IRL world and we deal with a variety of social and artistic issues. I'm changing this every week, so maybe at the end we should have like, a bumper edition of everything I've said [both laughing].

Alice: Update the manifesto.

lone: Exactly.

Alice: Yeah, see you soon!

[Theme music plays]