

THE RESISTANCE – EPISODE 22

Rosi Golan interview – Episode Transcript

Matt: Rosi, I'd love to start where we always start, which is with our source material. There's a book by Steven Pressfield called *The War of Art*. In it, he begins like this, and I'd love for you to respond to it. He says, "Most of us have two lives: the life we live, and the unlive life within us. And between the two stands the resistance." Rosi, I'd love to know from your perspective, what form resistance is taking on, or even as you described chipping away at new songs, what resistance are you feeling right now?

Rosi: Yeah, that quote is intense. It really spoke to me, actually. Because I think that, especially now, and maybe even my school of singer-songwriters, I think I put my first record out maybe in 2009, I think that's the year I put out *The Drifter and the Gypsy*, and obviously music has evolved and changed so many times since then. The way we release music has changed, and the way people consume music has changed.

I can't tell you how many times I sit around and daydream about what else I would do with my life if I wasn't doing music. And I feel like I live a whole 'nother unlive life in my mind, in the spaces between releases [laughs] of just what would I do with my life if I didn't do this? I haven't gone so far as to actually entertain the ideas, but I do think that, I don't know, that's kind of how that spoke to me—just thinking about how else I would lead my life if it wasn't with music, because it's all I've ever done.

Normally, I think, even just in trying to do other things, fear is a pretty big factor, but also, just still feeling inspired and passionate about music. I think that's my thing is as long as I continue to feel that way, I can continue to create as well.

Matt: You mention fear and other things, which sort of implies maybe a lack of fear in what you do primarily. How much fear is present for you in the music-making process?

Rosi: Oh my god. So much. Currently, I have a single, it's ready. I wrote it a year ago, actually, this month. It's probably been ready and produced for the last like 5 months, and I've held back on releasing it, because I have other songs that I kind of want to make sure are in a place where they are ready to follow up the single, but I feel so close and so strongly about this song, and I can't wait to play it for people.

But again, like I said, the way people release music is so different these days, so I think part of what holds me back from releasing it, or what has, is knowing that once you release a single, that's it. It's out there, and swimming in a sea of singles that come out every week. The fear of getting lost in the shuffle is so real these days, because there is so much content out there.

But I know ... that's just fear talking. Because the truth is, all of it is different. I'm releasing something that is unlike what anyone else is releasing. And they're releasing something that is unlike what I'm releasing. So the fact is, it will find its way into people's ears who want to listen to it. But that fear still sometimes whispers in anyway.

Matt: You mentioned the group of songwriters that you kind of came into all this with. It's been a decade now. How much of the fears, or maybe the resistance that you felt when you were first starting, is still present? And how much of it has kind of faded with experience and having been through this cycle a few times?

Rosi: In a way, I think I had a lot less fear when I first started, because I was young, and I had nothing to lose, and I just literally gambled everything I had on this one thing. I was like, "Okay. I'm not going to

school. I'm going to wait tables. I have no backup plan. This is it. This is what I'm doing." And I didn't even think that might be such a crazy thing to do.

The first time I did earn money, I took every single penny and I invested it in an album, even though it was, even at that stage, a large sum of money. I wasn't smart in the sense that I didn't like save half of it or anything. Even though I had negative money in my bank account, I just said, "Okay, well I'm going to take this big sum of money, and I'm going to make a record. And that'll pay off, right?"

If I went back now, with the knowledge I have now, I don't know. I would definitely make the same gamble, because it paid off for sure, and I'm so grateful it did. But I actually think that sometimes, the more you do something, and the more you know about it, the more hesitation you can kind of have, because knowledge sometimes just creates that. Sometimes when you know too much about a thing, you can create false scenarios in your head, maybe.

So in that sense, I have more fear now than I did then. But in others, definitely, even though there are times I say to myself, and I think most songwriters, we have these conversations often... I say to myself, 'What am I even doing? People are going to figure out I don't know what I'm doing.' But then there are other days when I write a song that I just know in my gut feels so good, and I am so connected to, and I think, 'Oh, okay, cool. I got this. I know what I'm doing.' I feel the years of hard work that I've put into it, and I'm stable in the sense that I belong exactly where I am. If that answers your question.

Matt: Yeah, very much. Very much. Can you take us back to that? I love the innocence and the, when you were describing that story of getting started, can you take us into some of those details? How old were you, and what was happening for you to take those first steps into making music as a career choice?

Rosi: I didn't actually start playing guitar or singing, I didn't actually figure out I could sing until I was 21. So for all intents purposes, I was kind of late to the game compared to all my friends, to be honest. I just, I had no idea. I figured it out one day, and then I bought a guitar, and six weeks later I played my first open mic, and I waited for like 4 hours to get up there, and I played this random one song that I wrote in the six weeks that I'd learned three chords. And I was terrified.

I wish I had a video of that first open mic, because my lips were just quivering the entire time. I could not stop shaking. But I also had the most exhilarating time, and I knew. I was like, "Okay, this is the thing that I've been searching for when I didn't know what I wanted to do yet with my life." So I found that quickly, and then I just dived head in. But just like with anything, nothing happens overnight, so it was years of writing and developing and learning, because I was so new. And I didn't end up putting my first record out until I was 27. But it takes years. It takes a lifetime to write your first album. So I was right on schedule, really, I guess.

Matt: I guess, I feel like I'm still missing something. Were you at least writing poetry, or something in that? Because the impulse there sounds, the drive sounds disproportional to the scenario that you're describing. Like if someone picks up a guitar, and six weeks later they're waiting hours and hours to play something on that guitar, it feels like there's got to be something informing that drive in some way.

Rosi: Yeah, no. I definitely toyed around with poetry when I was a kid. Nothing groundbreaking, I promise you. I've just been going through a bunch of boxes of stuff, and I found old diaries, and they're so silly. It's really funny, actually, to read back.

When I was a kid and people asked me what I wanted to do when I grow up, I always said I wanted to be an inventor or I wanted to be a writer. And so I definitely stuck with that plan. I just didn't know how it was going to manifest itself. I knew I loved writing. I used to do theatre when I was a kid, so it wasn't so

strange that I ended up on stage. I just had no idea that I could sing. So music was not the thing that I envisioned, and I didn't really know what songwriting was.

The way I kind of stumbled into it was getting my heart broken and just being very emo by myself in my bedroom one night, writing a poem about him, and somehow I found myself putting a melody to it. And then the next day, I called my friend, and I asked her if she would come over, and I sang it to her a cappella, which, looking back, I'm like, wow that's embarrassing. But I did it. And I was like, hey can you do me a favor? Can you listen to me do this? I think I can sing, but I'm not sure. And she sat there and listened to me. And she's like, 'Yeah. I think you can see. I think that was in key.' Because neither one of us really had before. And that was honestly how it started.

Matt: Have you always sort of been that way, in terms of a willingness to put yourself out there, even as you shrug while doing it? 'I don't know if this will work, but here we go.'

Rosi: Yeah, I guess so. Everyone is, kind of, right? You never know what something is going to turn into until you try. That's really the only way with anything. Whether it's tasting something new, whether it's making a new friend or whether it's starting a new career, at some point -- you only have two choices in life. It's either roll with the punches and go with change or stay put in one place. And that was something I was never good at anyway.

I've moved around my whole life and change is something that is so constant in my life. I never was one of those people who lived in one place their whole life or had the same friends their whole life. My parents moved around a lot, and I've also moved around a lot. So I guess that I just was already kind of built that way from the beginning, just in the way my parents kind of set the scene for me.

Matt: You said, "Isn't everyone wired that way?" And I'm just thinking, 'No! No, not at all.' I know myself, or plenty of other people who have varying degrees of that. I think that, maybe based on your background of moving a lot, that's a really positive way for you to channel those experiences and to maybe adventurous self.

Are you thankful in some ways for the unorthodox entry into the music industry? Like you said, "Most of my contemporaries were plying their trade long before I was, and I didn't really know what songwriting was. I just knew I wanted to be a writer. Are you thankful for that?"

Rosi: Yeah. It's definitely a double-edged sword. In a way, I wish I had gotten an earlier start when it comes to playing guitar, for instance, which has never been my strength. I play rhythm, and I play to write, but I can't fingerpick or play solos or things like that. I never took to it the same way I maybe would have if I had a teacher when I was younger and started learning then. But at the same time, it was such a wonderful surprise to stumble onto something like that. I wouldn't have taken the path that I did if it hadn't started that way, so of course I'm grateful for that. I have no idea what the outcome would have been otherwise. Maybe it wouldn't have taken me to where I am now. So yeah, I definitely am grateful for it.

Matt: I know that, like on most recent recordings, you have picked up the electric, and maybe set aside the acoustic, at least to some degree. As you're working on these new songs, are you continuing to maybe work with new instrumentation or maybe challenge yourself in some new directions, musically or lyrically? I'm kind of curious about your own growth as an artist in that way.

Rosi: Yeah. In a way, I'm kind of circling back to the beginning of my roots of making things more organic and more singer-songwriter, and in a way I definitely am doing things a little bit differently lyrically, and definitely a few different sounds sonically. I haven't recorded a record the way that I did for

my first two, or my *Fortuna* EP in a long time, in the sense that with live instrumentation all together with a producer in a room. Part of that is financially, that sort of stuff is a lot harder these days. Studios are harder to come by, and affordable ones are hard to come by. And part of that is that I've just met a lot of really amazing producers who just do things a little bit differently along the way that I have wanted to work with, so I evolve with their methods as well. But I feel like whoever will hear some of these songs coming up, who's been a fan of mine from the beginning, will hear hints of sort of what I've always done from the beginning, and I think from my last release, I chose to do something a lot more pop, and I'm kind of circling back to my roots now.

Matt: By the way, in terms of lyrical or thematic, have you figured out kind of what direction you're leaning in these days?

Rosi: I've always said, this is something I say all the time, if it's true, then I'll believe it. If I believe it, you'll believe it. So usually anything I write comes from personal experience. So I still stick to that. The things I love writing about the most probably are death and love [laughs]. Those are the things I probably relate to the most, because I've experienced a lot of both in my life. And yeah, so thematically, I think, what's really interesting, actually, is that some of these songs that I'm writing are about scenarios from a very long time ago that I never wrote about, and they somehow snuck their way onto the page without me even really realizing it at the beginning. Which happens a lot, I think, to a lot of songwriters. We just process things, and it's such a delayed reaction. And then suddenly you realize, 'Oh, I'm writing about this thing that happened like 8 years ago. I had no idea.'

Matt: Is there a reticence to letting those things surface, at least publicly?

Rosi: No. I feel really good about it, honestly. I've always been very honest in my music. Whether it is about me, or whether it is about someone I'm close to, or something I've heard through somebody else. Anything that I've released on my own, for the most part, has honestly been that way. And I think I will always continue to do that.

Matt: One more for you. I just want to go back to something you said. You mentioned that you knew you wanted to be a writer or an inventor, which I'd be interested in knowing what you were wanting to invent, by the way. But when you say you wanted to be a writer, and now you're writing songs, is there still an interest to scratch that itch outside of songwriting? Have you taken steps towards that?

Rosi: Do you mean outside of music in general?

Matt: Yeah.

Rosi: I have a little daydream of owning a bed and breakfast one day in the countryside in Europe. That's kind of one thing I've always wanted to do. Other than that, honestly I know this is still within music, but I think I am interested also in the publishing world, because other than writing for myself and working on my own albums, I have also been writing for other people. And that's something that I have been working on specifically also pretty focused in the last 2 or 3 years. In doing that, I've started putting on some songwriting camps with a friend of mine, and we put them on in Italy. Doing the sort of administrative side of that has piqued my interest in publishing a little bit.

I'm not sure if it's enough for me to actually follow through with it, because it's a whole different side of your brain that as a songwriter, I'm not used to using. But I don't know. You never know. Eventually. I love the idea of helping to develop other writers and other artists and being involved in that process.

Matt: That sounds great. Rosi, thank you so much for being a guest for us today, and we're certainly looking forward to hearing the new songs in 2020.

Rosi: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

VISIT: [Rosi Golan](#)