

# Speaking to Angela Barnes ahead of appearance at The Stand next week

By Veronica Lee

Her new show is called *Rose-Tinted*, which suggests Angela Barnes is a glass-half-full kind of woman. Yet the stand-up, while being bright and cheery in person, admits to being a pessimist. “I come from a family of pessimists, so maybe it rubbed off,” she says with a laugh. “But yes, I get accused of being world weary and it’s a pretty fair assessment.”

The show’s theme came about, she says, after spending much of the past two years doing topical comedy shows – as presenter of Radio 4’s *Newsjack* and a regular on *The News Quiz*, as well as appearances on BBC1’s *Mock the Week* and *Live at the Apollo*.

“Doing those shows you have to be across the news and read a lot of newspapers. The last two years have been an exciting time politically but it does get you down, writing jokes every week about Donald Trump, Brexit and North Korea. For a lot of people 2016 was an awful year.

“Career wise, though, things took off for me in 2016, and I was being offered all this TV and radio work, so there was this strange disconnect between the personal and professional and I wanted to dig into that.”

But she makes no claims about solving the world’s woes. “I’m a

clown. If you're looking for me to present solutions you've made a terrible mistake. I can't solve a Rubik's Cube. I want my audience to go away thinking, 'Thank God that's not me'. By looking at my idiotic life you can feel better about yours."

With her career bump came another level of fame. "I knew it would happen, and I knew social media stuff would happen – Twitter is just a human bin fire of negativity – and I would get horrible things [being said] if I dared to be a woman with an opinion on telly.

"I had a bit of a wobble and had to question if it was what I wanted. So I wanted to do a show about the good stuff happening where I least tried to look on the brighter side because the world feels doomed at the moment to so many people. I wanted to look at whether I could put on my rose-tinted glasses and see it differently."



Rose-Tinted also addresses the advent of the #MeToo movement in 2017, a response to the daily misogyny that women experience, and in the show Angela describes her own upsetting

#MeToo moment on the Tube in London in 2016.

“I realised that all women have their own story, but it was #Me Too that that made us start talking about that stuff with our men,” Angela says. “My partner is one of the good guys – it hadn’t occurred to me that this stuff doesn’t happen in front of them, so they don’t witness it.

“I don’t beat my audience over the head with it, but telling my own experience is also about saying thank you to the good guys.”

The Tube experience and the murder of young Australian comic Eurydice Dixon when she walked home from a gig in Melbourne last year sparked a need to do something positive. So Angela, together with fellow stand-ups Sameena Zehra and Pauline Eyre, set up the Home Safe Collective at the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe. She explains how it came about.

“A WhatsApp group of female comics started talking about what practical thing we could do. We set up a taxi account with a company that uses police-checked drivers and we got about £5,000 from donations, so any female comic could use the service if she didn’t want to walk home from a gig late at night and couldn’t afford the fare.”

The initiative was recognised with the prestigious Edinburgh Comedy Awards panel prize, which is worth £5,000. “It was such a wonderful surprise, and fantastic to receive it – and the prize means we can do Home Safe again this year without fund-raising,” the comic says.

Angela, who worked in health and social care for more than 10 years before she became a stand-up, says starting in comedy later than most means that – despite her natural pessimism – she really appreciates what she has. “I have the best job in the world because I know what it’s like to have a proper job, to commute during the rush hour, to work really hard to fill someone else’s pockets, to go through the daily slog.”

She adds that turning 40 has been liberating. “I’ve got less time to spend worrying about things I can’t control. I think when you’re younger you think you can take on the problems of the world. I used to have real problems with anxiety but now I think: if I can’t change it, I don’t worry about it.”

Writing *Rose-Tinted* has had an unexpected side effect, she says. “My partner is an ultra runner [running distances longer than a marathon] but I’ve always rejected any exercise. So I thought I would try and I started running, and found it was helping my state of mind.

“I sort of sneered at exercising before, but annoyingly it turns out that it really does raise your endorphin levels and makes you feel better, so I’m going to have to keep doing it.”

Angela often takes part in a ParkRun (which take place on Saturdays at 9.00am), so you may see her at your local event. “For a comic to achieve anything before 10 o’clock on a Saturday morning is amazing, and that feeling of having achieved something carries you through the weekend.

“Exercising won’t solve the world’s problems, but it clears your brain and allows you to see the roses growing through the s—.” And then she checks herself.

“It was a horrible discovery to make because I wanted to be able to justify being lazy for the rest of my life.”

[Tickets here.](#) The Stand Edinburgh 21 May 2019

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