

Emily James Transcript

Emily James: It was really just the feeling of doing that, that drove me to keep going. After I had written my first properly structured song. I just loved it and haven't stopped since.

[00:00:15] **Bryan Smith:** Bryan Smith here and welcome to the dream path podcast, where I try to get inside the heads of talented creatives from all over the world.

[00:00:24] My goal is to demystify and humanize the creative process and make it accessible to everyone. Now let's jump in. Emily James is on the show. Emily is a Los Angeles-based singer, songwriter and performer who started writing songs at the age of 10, playing open mics in New York city at the age of 13, and recording songs in Nashville at the age of 17. Emily's most recent EP is "Wanted You to Know" featuring the song, "That'd be Alright", as well as the song. " Back in the Summer."

[00:01:10] At just 22 years old, Emily is one of those artists whose pensive lyrics and soulful voice belie her years. In this interview, we talk about Emily's formative years growing up in New York, what prompted her parents to move with her to Nashville in her teens, and what called her to Los Angeles, where she is currently writing and collaborating as an indie artist.

[00:01:31] We also talk about her songwriting process, what she has learned about copyright and music licensing and her plans. Now that music venues are starting to open up again. So without further ado, let's jump into my chat with the lovely and immensely talented. Emily James. Emily James, welcome to dream path podcast.

[00:01:51] **Emily James:** Thank you for having me excited to be here.

[00:01:53] **Bryan Smith:** I've been really looking forward to this.

[00:01:55] **Emily James:** Yay, me too.

[00:01:56] **Bryan Smith:** I've been listening to your music catalog and studying your discography and your history. So, where are you physically right now? Are you in Los Angeles?

[00:02:07] **Emily James:** I am. Yeah. Yeah. Out here in Los Angeles. Happy that we're back to sunny, warm weather as usual.

[00:02:14] **Bryan Smith:** So, how long have you been in Los Angeles?

[00:02:17] **Emily James:** It's been almost four years, which is pretty crazy. It's really flown by, but yeah, I've loved my time out here. I was in Nashville before being here and then New York before that, that's where I was born and raised.

[00:02:32] **Bryan Smith:** So, let's start with New York because I've only been to New York city one time in 2006, I believe.

[00:02:39] And I fell in love with the whole vibe of the city, but I didn't get a chance to really experience it like you did. So, you grew up in New York city, right?

[00:02:49] **Emily James:** I did, yeah. And I do feel very fortunate that I grew up right outside of the city. So, my family and I were always just going in and out of the city.

[00:02:58] And it's interesting because it wasn't really, until I left that I really understood why people love New York city so much. Because you know, that was just all I had ever known and what I grew up with and now I definitely have some homesickness for it. But yeah, it's, it's just, yeah, such a vibrant place.

[00:03:20] And I think growing up around. That kind of environment of, you know, between Broadway and all of the live music of different genres. I think that definitely influenced me from an early age.

[00:03:35] **Bryan Smith:** Then it sounds like your parents exposed you to that intentionally because you're in the heart of this cultural, iconic city, and your parents had a choice whether to take you to Broadway shows and send you to piano lessons. I understand you took lessons starting at age five. Tell me about your parents and their approach to raising you. And I kind of wish they were here to chime in on this, but you know, like how important was the direction that they provided to you in terms of where you're at today?

[00:04:08] **Emily James:** So important. I mean, they're definitely my parents and my siblings are just all my best friends. We're just a very close family and. Yeah, my parents just always raised all of us to dream big and work hard and go after those dreams. And any of us who express interest in anything, they were always just full support. Like, you know, as long as we were the ones driving it, they never wanted to be the people like pushing us into anything or forcing anything on us. But if we showed that we were really passionate about something and wanted to work hard, they were all in on helping us get there. So.

[00:04:49] **Bryan Smith:** So, you start taking piano lessons at age five, and I understand you start writing songs at age 10, is that right? What kind of songs were you writing, writing at age 10? I'm just curious.

[00:05:02] **Emily James:** Just kind of a mix of, you know, like a little love songs or whatever was going on in my life at the time. Like this person being mean or whatever, and I think I just. I just kind of, I'd been listening to a lot of music, obviously throughout growing up.

[00:05:23] But at that time it was kind of the first times where I was really listening and studying the songs and the structure of a song. And what does it mean to have kind of a, B a B, and then there's this other section that doesn't sound anything like everything else. And then you come back to the chorus. So, I was kind of messing around with that. And then it was really just the feeling of doing that, that drove me to keep going. After I had written my first kind of properly structured song, I just loved it and just haven't stopped since. So.

[00:06:03] **Bryan Smith:** That's interesting that you were at such a young age, focusing on the structure of a song that's really pretty technical and advanced for a young child because you know, playing piano is one thing. Playing guitar is one thing, but actually writing a song is a completely separate skillset in my opinion.

[00:06:20] **Emily James:** Yeah.

[00:06:20] **Bryan Smith:** So, what guidance were you getting from your teachers about song structure?

[00:06:25] **Emily James:** If anything, it was mostly like taking piano lessons, you know, knowing that there was a certain kind of melody or thing that I would be playing for one part, and then you'd go into a different section.

[00:06:39] So, maybe kind of that seeping in, and then I was taking classical training, but I kind of convinced my teacher to throw in some pop songs as well. And so I think getting those songs into my fingers and the melodies, and learning that just kind of found its way to showing me how to do that myself, so I feel like it was a pretty organic process that way.

[00:07:06] **Bryan Smith:** And so, did you have siblings that were also playing guitar and piano that were inspiring you or giving you ideas on where to go with music?

[00:07:16] **Emily James:** Yeah. I mean, I think I started piano from such a young age because all of my siblings were taking piano lessons and have been taking piano lessons. My sibling that's closest in age to me is about five years older than me.

[00:07:29] So they were all kind of doing things long before I was, and I always wanted to be doing what they were doing. So, yeah, I definitely looked up, I still look up to them so much and just kind of follow their lead. And my older brother is an amazing musician and he was always, he would just kinda like, you know, be sitting on the couch, like fiddling around on the guitar.

[00:07:52] And I'm just like, how, how do you do that? So, and there was just always music around. So, I think we're all drawn to it in our own ways in the house.

[00:08:03] **Bryan Smith:** Looking back on New York. What did the city itself provide to you in terms of a formative experience? If anything, as opposed to just, okay. I have piano lessons with this teacher.

[00:08:15] I have my siblings that are good musicians. I have music that I'm listening to Fleetwood Mac, I understand it was one of your inspirations, Adele, but the city itself I'm really interested in as a source of formation as an artist and inspiration. Can you tell us about that?

[00:08:32] **Emily James:** Absolutely. I started, when I was a teenager, I would go to kind of open mics or writer's rounds in the city. And it was really cool to just kind of be surrounded by people of like so many different types of music. And, you know, you'd go to these open mics, and they were just very, I have some very interesting stories of the performances and, you know, it's just like, Shows you, you can do anything. And if you're believing in it and you're following it, then people are going to connect with that too.

[00:09:06] So, I think I just love like the weirdness of New York city. And I think that kind of just growing up, seeing that all the time, that like, there's always going to be someone doing something even more out there than you and, in that city, just kind of inspires you to just push the limits and try different things.

[00:09:26] **Bryan Smith:** Right.

[00:09:27] **Emily James:** Yeah.

[00:09:27] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. If you're worried about being weird in Kansas city, you might have a justified concern there, but you're never going to be weird in New York city compared to other people.

[00:09:38] **Emily James:** Definitely not.

[00:09:39] **Bryan Smith:** So, I think I read that you did your first open mic around age 13, right?

[00:09:44] **Emily James:** Yeah. About that time. Yeah.

[00:09:46] **Bryan Smith:** Did you have stage fright issues at 13 or were you too young to even appreciate? It's that issue.

[00:09:53] **Emily James:** Yeah, no, it was definitely, I was definitely nervous, and I still get super nervous whenever I perform. I think sometimes I'll be like, oh no, I'm good. Like, I don't feel nervous. And then right before I go on, I'm like, wow, I'm really nervous. But I think those formative years of having such a supportive audience and a supportive community just encouraging me and afterwards.

[00:10:19] Everyone would just kind of talk to each other and complement each other and be like, oh, I loved this part of your set. Or I loved when you did this. And just that kind of encouragement and supportive environment just helped me to keep going and not be afraid of doing more. And, you know, once you get a taste of it, it's very infectious and you just want to keep doing it. So, I'm so excited to get back to live shows once it's safe again.

[00:10:47] **Bryan Smith:** Well, it sounds like if you're not in a city that has that type of culture where you can do an open mic, you're really losing out as a musician on that experience.

[00:10:58] **Emily James:** Yeah. It's just nice to find other people who are doing what you're doing and just kind of relate to each other in that way I think.

[00:11:07] **Bryan Smith:** So, tell us about the move to Nashville. What called you to Nashville?

[00:11:11] **Emily James:** Yeah, I just fell in love with the way that you could just drive down a street and there would just be live music after live music. It was like a movie you would just be driving, and it would just be one song and then another song, and. Just the, the emphasis on songwriting there. I think the other thing with some of the places I would perform in at New York was there were a lot of covers that'd be performed, which is amazing. It's so cool to see people, you know, having their own, taking their own interpretation of a song. But I just loved that when you went to writer's rounds in Nashville, it was just one after another people playing their original music.

[00:11:55] So I was really drawn to that. And, I had been making trips there, and doing some recording and was just so in love with it. And fortunately, my parents were supportive and me being the youngest and the last one in the house, they were like, yeah, we're down for an adventure. Let's just go. So, we moved there and yeah, there were some really formative years of my life as well. I feel like I grew a lot while I spent my time there.

[00:12:22] **Bryan Smith:** Then you got a chance to record there. I understand.

[00:12:24] **Emily James:** I did. Yeah.

[00:12:25] **Bryan Smith:** With some pretty great producers.

[00:12:27] **Emily James:** Yeah, I know. I feel very lucky.

[00:12:30] **Bryan Smith:** Tell us about the interaction with a producer when you're a young songwriter and performer, and you have this producer that may have worked on a Kacey Musgraves album, I think it was one of the producers you worked with Grammy-winning/Grammy-nominated folks, high-level people, and you're new to the business. How did you interact with and work with producers to write songs and record songs?

[00:12:55] **Emily James:** Yeah, so I had a lot of these songs that I had just written in my bedroom and recorded some work tapes of piano, vocals, or guitar vocals. And I had a vision for how I wanted them to sound but didn't have the tools accessible to me or really the knowledge of how to make that happen. So, I really appreciate that in those early days when I came in as somebody with no background, that Ian was just so open to hearing my ideas and we would just kind of, you know, go off of each other's ideas and build, and it was a true collaboration and I always felt safe and respected with voicing my opinion and my vision.

[00:13:42] And that would be, you know, definitely taken into account and we would move in that direction. So that's definitely just learning from those people that I worked with, and there, you know, that kind of respect just gave me the confidence to then move forward and start producing myself. So, I definitely attribute a lot of that to working with those people.

[00:14:09] **Bryan Smith:** And when we're talking about production, are you talking about the engineering side of things? Like just the technical recording and also, does that include help with actually, I guess, fixing problems with songs, making them flow better or maybe more appealing to the masses?

[00:14:27] **Emily James:** Yeah, it's interesting because I feel like, I don't know if it's a change in the industry as a whole, or just the change from my own location of, from Nashville to LA, but I feel like the role of a producer has really evolved and kind of become very blurry, in a good way. But in the, in that experience, it was like you had the producer who was. I mean, Ian is super talented, multi-instrumentalist, so he played a lot of instruments on the tracks as well. And, you know, they, they kind of are the one sitting there and thinking, and we did kind of sometimes work through the end of the song of how to adjust this ending so that it was kind of a.

[00:15:15] More satisfying ending or whatever. And, you know, it's just kind of the over, you know, looking down at everything and then you have the engineer who's doing all that technical stuff, and then it goes to the mixer. So, it was very like kind of formulaic that way. And then now when I collaborate with, you know, a producer-writer and we're writing a song, in a session it's like, we're writing the song.

[00:15:40] It's, you know, that person may be working on the track while I'm working on the lyrics. And then we kind of are like, oh, where are you at? And they're almost like mixing it and producing it and engineering it all at the same time. And it's just all kind of blurred together. So, it's been really cool to see how that can kind of change, based on the situation.

[00:16:05] **Bryan Smith:** I interviewed a songwriter performer named Kylie Rothfield.

[00:16:10] **Emily James:** I actually listened to that podcast. I really enjoyed it.

[00:16:14] **Bryan Smith:** Oh, I'm glad you got a chance to listen. And so you probably heard her talking about the difference between how the split of the royalties was looked at in Nashville versus Los Angeles.

[00:16:27] Did you experience that as well? That it was like a very communal experience in Nashville in terms of songwriting and whoever's in the room basically is in, on the business aspect of that song as well.

[00:16:39] **Emily James:** Right, I actually didn't do a lot of co-writing in Nashville. So, with the songs, it was mostly just ones that I was doing on my own. And then I really started co-writing once I came out here. But, you know, there was so much conversation about co-writing and collaborating in Nashville that I always kind of took that away as well of anyone who's in the room. Gets an even portion of it just because the song wouldn't be the same if that person weren't there, even if they're not necessarily doing much, just their presence is affecting the way the song is being written. So.

[00:17:21] **Bryan Smith:** That makes sense.

[00:17:22] **Emily James:** Yeah. So, I kind of took that with me. And so now I, I approached that in my collaborations out here as well of, you know, if we're creating something from scratch, we're getting an even share of it.

[00:17:35] **Bryan Smith:** Right. You took that Nashville vibe with you to Los Angeles and impose it on everyone that's in the room with you. That's great. I'm sure they appreciate that. Yeah. So, the business aspects of songwriting are fascinating to me because I'm sort of like an outsider looking in. And so, I don't know a lot about what happens when you write a song, it gets recorded and it's put out there into streaming, into CDs or albums or whatever there's copyright, which is the song writing. And then the publishing, right. I'm just starting to figure this out. And I'm an attorney and I don't know anything about the legal aspects of some of songwriting. So, are you starting to figure that out yourself, like how to protect yourself legally and make sure that you're treated fairly in terms of compensation for the art that you put out there?

[00:18:28] **Emily James:** Yeah. I mean, I'm currently a hundred percent independent, so I own all my publishing and all my masters. And so I know it changes when you're with a label or with a publisher, but I think in those situations, it's, it's like, You have to kind of know going into it. It's kind of the whole, like, you can have a hundred percent of, you know, the smaller amount or 50% of a potentially bigger amount.

[00:18:59] So, you just have to kind of decide what you're looking to achieve. If it's. To maintain ownership a hundred percent of something or is it to go into a partnership and maybe relinquish some of that control, but in return you may kind of be more fruitful in your endeavors. So, and, you know, being independent, you have to kind of there's you own everything, but at the same time, like you then have to do everything. So, you just have to decide like, what kind of path you want to do? What do you want to focus on the most? Because obviously you can't physically do everything and put a hundred percent into everything. So yeah.

[00:19:45] **Bryan Smith:** As you may have noticed. There are great resources and advice mentioned in all our episodes.

[00:19:50] And for many of them, we actually collect all of these resources for you in one easy place: our newsletter. You can go to dreampathpod.com/newsletter to join. It's not fancy, just an email about each week's episode, featured artists and resources to help you on your journey. Now back to the interview. So, the singles that you are putting out, for instance, the cover of The Scientist in 2017 and also the Ed Sheeran song Perfect.

[00:20:21] Which you recorded on YouTube and it's like off the charts popular, I think it's half a million views at this point or, or more than half a million. So, how do you approach the business side of that? Because you're covering someone's song, you're doing it in your, your, your own unique take on it and it's super popular. What happens when you monetize those songs in terms of your relationship with, you know, the publishing companies for Coldplay and Coldplay, the band itself?

[00:20:49] **Emily James:** Yeah. So, my decision to put those out was really based on, I had been doing a bunch of YouTube covers and saw that people were really liking those certain ones, so then decided to put them on the streaming services. So, it was kind of more of a decision of like, oh, people are liking this. I'll, you know, make it available on more platforms. And in order to do that, you need to get a certain license, to be able to distribute that. And so the songwriters and publishers will collect the royalties based on the actual lyrics and melody of the song.

[00:21:34] And then the royalties for the performance would then go to me because I'm. It's you have the two different copyrights of the song, the lyrics and melody, and then the actual recording of the song.

[00:21:48] **Bryan Smith:** That is fascinating. You sound like you're a lawyer at a seminar teaching people about copyright.

[00:21:57] **Emily James:** I, I have very minimal knowledge, but what I do, I would like to share, so.

[00:22:03] **Bryan Smith:** That's awesome. So, have you, like when you were recording *The Scientist* or *Perfect* by Ed Sheeran, were you reaching out yourself since you're on your own? You don't have a label at this point. Were you reaching out to get that license yourself? Or how did you go about that?

[00:22:19] **Emily James:** So, there are places like Harry Fox agency where you just kind of pay a fee to have the license of a certain amount and then you get approved and then you're free to distribute it.

[00:22:35] **Bryan Smith:** So, you have to record it first and then submit it to get approval.

[00:22:40] **Emily James:** I don't know if you have to submit the recording, I think it's more just. You may have to, I can't really remember because it's been so long, but I think you just kind of like fill out a form and maybe like pay a fee and then they allow you to do it. But, you may have to submit the recording. I'm not sure. Yeah, it's a, it's a pretty simple process.

[00:23:04] **Bryan Smith:** I interviewed a number of folks who moved to LA to be a songwriter or a performer. And I always ask this question because I'm wondering how necessary it is, especially after the pandemic where people are really discovering the best ways to collaborate with each other online. How important is Los Angeles right now for songwriters and performers?

[00:23:29] **Emily James:** I would say at this very moment, it doesn't really matter where you are because of the technology I've been writing with people across the country, in other countries. So, I think until things open back up again, and it's safe to have in-person sessions and play shows, you can kind of just work from wherever as long as you have the technology that allows you to do so.

[00:23:57] So, yeah, I'm really grateful that I was able to kind of continue to collaborate through the pandemic and through quarantine. I mean, I can't wait to get back to in-person sessions because I just miss that kind of energy in the room of being with somebody and just being so excited. And I just loved to be hanging out with people in general, so. I think that was the hardest thing for me, but I feel very fortunate that if that was the hardest part of this time for me, then I know I'm doing pretty good. So.

[00:24:31] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. So, what are your plans for live performances now that things are starting a little bit to open up. I'm seeing performers on Instagram doing like outdoor shows at wineries and things like that. What are your plans?

[00:24:43] **Emily James:** Yeah, it's still in the works, but hoping to get out there as soon as possible. So, if not, if it doesn't work out for the remainder of 2021 based on, you know, however things open up and work out, definitely 2022, we'll be doing a lot of that. So.

[00:25:02] **Bryan Smith:** Can you tell us how you approached your EP, "Wanted You to Know?" the reason I asked that is that there's a change in the percussion that's used the, I don't know, there's just a, an evolution I would call it. There's a sophistication that I'm hearing. And I don't know what to attribute that to. Is it just your evolving nature as a

songwriter that you're just doing something different, trying different things, working with different people? How did you approach the album?

[00:25:31] **Emily James:** Yeah. Well, I appreciate that. Thank you. I would say probably so half of the songs on there were collaborations and half of them were ones that I wrote and produced myself just in my bedroom. So, I would definitely attribute, you know, the kind of different sound to collaborating with a variety of people.

[00:25:54] That's part of why I love collaboration. Is it just kind of forces you to like, do things that you would have never thought of by yourself? And just try completely different things and put yourself in a different wheelhouse and then to have the ability to also do something completely yourself and just kind of really look deep inside.

[00:26:16] And I think I, I approached the two situations differently and for the ones that I did by myself, it's very just gut driven and just kind of impulse. And, oh, let me try this. And, oh, that makes me think of this. And just kind of following my intuition that way. So, I think most of it is just coming out of trust and confidence in whatever it is it's telling me to do that thing in the creative process.

[00:26:45] **Bryan Smith:** What kind of response are you getting from That be Alright?

[00:26:48] **Emily James:** Yeah. I really appreciate that people have been liking that song. It was a song that I wrote with my collaborator over zoom and from start to finish, it was done virtually and yeah, it was just, I felt it was important to include on the EP because it's "Wanted You to Know" it's all these things that I just wanted to say. And, I'm just glad that people are finding happiness in it or finding comfort in that song.

[00:27:18] **Bryan Smith:** It reminded me a little bit of the Weepies. I don't know if you've ever heard the Weepies before, but they're like an indie band that they use a lot of layers and their vocals and the layering that you did was phenomenal, and really stood out to me. I liked the, the video that you have, I forget who posted it in one of the, interview articles that you have on the web, but you have all the lyrics popping up on the video as it's playing for that song. And it's a really unique, surprising song because it's different from anything you've done before.

[00:27:52] And, and I appreciate it, just because it's a great song and I'm like, this is definitely good. Be a hit, so, that's why I asked you what the response was. It's a fantastic EP. I hope my listeners will go check it out and download it and streaming on Spotify.

[00:28:07] **Emily James:** Thank you so much.

[00:28:08] **Bryan Smith:** The other song that really connected with me was Back in the Summer, which you recorded a video for, I think if I'm not mistaken. So, tell us, tell us about the video. I think I read that your mom shot some of it. So, tell us about that.

[00:28:24] **Emily James:** Yeah. So, that was at kind of the beginning ish of quarantine. So, I knew that I wanted a visual for when I put this song out but couldn't do anything big production. So, we decided to just go to the beach, and just kind of play the song and just,

you know. That was kind of the representation of the feeling of the song. To me, it was just sunny and vibrant and free and happy. So, I just wanted that to be shown and just not taking anything too seriously, just kind of. You know, having fun.

[00:29:05] **Bryan Smith:** How involved is your mom in the business aspects of your songwriting performances and also the videos and you've got social media accounts that have to be managed and cultivated? And, how involved is your mom and your family for that matter?

[00:29:21] **Emily James:** Yeah, she's very involved in, you know, helping me out. Like I said, being independent, I do everything myself, so I'm so grateful to have her, you know, helping me and talking things through. And she's always the first person I play a song for.

[00:29:39] And, you know, she just kind of lets me like, I feel like everyone kind of needs somebody to, you know, allow them to just talk out loud sometimes and just be that kind of person to bounce ideas off of. So she's definitely that for me. And just the most supportive, both of my parents have always been super supportive, and just my biggest fans. So, I really appreciate it.

[00:30:06] **Bryan Smith:** If they were the ones responsible for turning you on to Bob Dylan, Fleetwood, Mac Adele, they must be really cool people. So, good taste in music.

[00:30:17] **Emily James:** Yeah.

[00:30:19] **Bryan Smith:** So, you know, you seem very beyond your years in terms of your songwriting, your skills, your aesthetic. It's really quite surprising to listen to your music first. And that's what I did as I listened to your music. And then I looked at your background and I saw, I think you just turned 22, is that right? Like, wow. I think you put out that song bartender, right about the time that you were legal to go see a bartender. And, have you found that your age in any way gets in the way of being taken seriously in the industry?

[00:30:55] **Emily James:** Yeah, that's a good question. I think earlier on it was difficult, especially being underage, not being able to perform a lot of places. So, I'm super excited. I obviously still haven't been able to do that because of. Quarantine. But now that I am of age, I'm so excited to get out to all the places that I wasn't allowed in, or I would have to just kind of like sneak in, play my set and then jump out, and not allowed to just kind of stay around and mingle or anything.

[00:31:28] But, I would say I never really felt that people look down on me because I was younger. I think again, it's kind of like, I like to think that people focus more on the music and again, as cheesy as it is, it's like age is just a number. So, it's however you kind of present yourself, and I think having older siblings, I've always kind of felt that I was older than I actually was, so, I think that contributes to it as well. And also, just my family always encouraging, like never being like, oh, you're too young to do that. It's always just been like. If you want to do something, go do it.

[00:32:09] **Bryan Smith:** I guess, if I really think about it, Adele was 19 when she put out the album 19, and I don't think anybody knew when they listened to that album, that she was 19

and it's just like, wow, really? And I think you have that same thing going on, which is you listen to the music, and you definitely don't attribute this to, oh, this is teenage pop, or this is a young person. That's like, this is actually someone who's lived life, you know, that's the vibe I get from it.

[00:32:38] **Emily James:** Thank you. Appreciate that.

[00:32:39] **Bryan Smith:** This is kind of a random question, but when I look at the timeline you were born, like right around nine 11, or maybe a year before, is that right?

[00:32:48] **Emily James:** Yeah, I was born in 1999. So, I was really little when it happened and yeah, I don't really have much memory of it.

[00:32:57] **Bryan Smith:** Your awareness of the world, I guess, was right about the time when. New York was still reeling from that experience. Do you think that nine 11 in a way, even though you don't remember it, but living in the aftermath of nine 11 in the city affected you in a formative way?

[00:33:17] **Emily James:** That's interesting. I've never thought about it. I, I mean, I definitely knew a number of people whose families have been directly affected by it, and then obviously, you know, higher security and things like that. But I think for me, because that was just. All I had known of how kind of the city or the world was working. You know, having airport security. I don't remember a time before that, so, I think for me, I'm sure it has shaped how I live in the world, but it's hard for me to say since I have nothing to compare it to.

[00:33:59] **Bryan Smith:** So, in terms of what's next for you, are you actively seeking some type of a relationship with a label or are you going to continue going on your own as an indie artist?

[00:34:12] **Emily James:** I'm really open to anything. I'm just kind of continuing to create music and put it out. And, if the right partnership is there, then I would be happy to pursue it, but until then still happy to just keep doing what I'm doing and growing. I'm really thankful for the opportunities I've had so far to kind of help that organic growth. Yeah.

[00:34:39] **Bryan Smith:** Gratitude is a good thing.

[00:34:40] **Emily James:** Absolutely. Yeah.

[00:34:41] **Bryan Smith:** And also, not chasing things too hard. Just letting things come to you organically, I think is a nice, healthy way to approach art and life. Yeah. Yeah. One last question. And again, kind of random, where are you with social media? I've looked at your social media accounts, but in terms of your philosophy on social media, the importance of it, the burden of social media, because I know a lot of artists struggle with the fact that this is the only way to be seen and heard sometimes when you don't have live performances, but at the same time, it's not the healthiest place to be, depending on the platform you're using.

[00:35:20] **Emily James:** Yeah. Definitely it's for sure a double-edged sword. There's so many positives of, you know, being able to interact with people who you would never have met in

person. And I'm so appreciative of. People reaching out to me directly and saying like, this song helped me through this experience. I mean, those are the things that really just, that's the reason why I make music is to hope that, you know, other people connect to it and that it benefits them in a positive way somehow. And then, you know, there's the part of it that it can suck up your time a lot. And it's hard to, you know, stay engaged on there, but also want to separate from technology sometimes. So, I think it's all about a balance, you know, setting limits for yourself, which is all a lot easier said than done. I definitely have to practice that myself. But I think, yeah, there's, it's the way that things are, and you can't ignore it. So, you just kind of have to figure out how to have, you know, as positive of a relationship with it as you can and figure out what works best for you. And I think it's important to, you know, everyone's doing their own thing on there and not to feel like, oh, this is working for that person, so I should be doing that. You just have to kind of stay true to yourself and do you otherwise, you're going to go crazy. Always trying to chase after this thing or that thing.

[00:36:55] **Bryan Smith:** That's never catchable and never achievable because it's not, it's not your path.

[00:36:59] **Emily James:** Exactly. Yeah.

[00:37:01] **Bryan Smith:** So, your songwriting process, I feel like I have to cram in all these questions before I say goodbye, because I don't know when I'm going to talk to you again.

[00:37:09] No I'm having

[00:37:10] **Emily James:** so much fun.

[00:37:11] **Bryan Smith:** I'm really curious about your song writing process. How do you start? Do you pick up a guitar, starts forming some chords? Do you write in a journal?

[00:37:21] I remember hearing an interview with Paul Simon one time and he said he writes his songs by taking like a racquetball or tennis ball and he just walks and bounces that ball. And he starts with the lyrics. Where do you start and how does that process unfold?

[00:37:36] **Emily James:** Yeah, it's definitely a variety of ways, but I think the most common one is either a melody with a lyric will just kind of jump into my head, and then I'll have to go and run and like get it down. And then it'll kind of develop from there. That's like, if I'm not. Intending to write a song and it's just kind of forcing itself upon me or, if I'm sitting down and just playing piano or guitar and just kind of like singing melodies and then kind of gibberish and words will start forming, and then, in those cases, like, it's really important for me not to judge what's coming out yet, because most of the time, what ends up coming out is something that I didn't even realize I was thinking about, but it was just kind of in my subconscious and it's not until I've written the song where I'm like, oh, wow, like that was really bothering me or, oh, I didn't know. I felt so strongly about that. So, it's kind of interesting that way.

[00:38:38] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. And I like your comment about not judging it as it comes out, because I think what stops a lot of songwriters me included when I try to write songs is when

it comes out and it sounds terrible, or it doesn't make any sense, you immediately judge it. And that inhibits the flow of additional ideas.

[00:38:57] **Emily James:** Yeah, absolutely.

[00:38:58] **Bryan Smith:** In other words, you have to allow yourself to be terrible.

[00:39:02] **Emily James:** Yeah.

[00:39:03] **Bryan Smith:** Give yourself permission to do that. Yeah. I was watching a documentary last night on HBO, on the Bee Gees, great documentary, by the way. I didn't know a lot about that band, but Chris Martin from Coldplay was interviewed about songwriting, and it was an interesting quote. He said something like "we are swimming right now. And energy that songs are there. You just have to listen and know where to grab them and harness them somehow." So, it's not necessarily us creating this song, but it is maybe capturing it, capturing that energy somewhere and just kind of listening and knowing where that's coming from. I loved the way he talked about that. Because it turns every songwriter in a way into like a coal miner or something like you're looking for those nuggets and you just have to know what you're looking for.

[00:39:55] **Emily James:** Yeah. I've often felt that I'm just kind of the vessel. I'm not the one writing the song, but there's a song it's just coming through me and yeah, I think I definitely agree with that, and sometimes, it's also kind of like, like a screw going into place. Like it might get caught sometimes, and then you have to undo it a little bit until it. It feel it, you feel it click and then you can kind of thread it through. So, sometimes that's where I think kind of, you know, writer's block quote unquote can come in because you're getting that kind of stuckness.

[00:40:30] And so you have to kind of rewind a little bit, unscrew it and then you'll kind of get into the, the right rhythm of it.

[00:40:38] **Bryan Smith:** Yeah. Well, Emily, James, thank you so much for sharing your story with us.

[00:40:43] **Emily James:** Thank you so happy to be here.

[00:40:46] **Bryan Smith:** Hey, thank you for listening and I hope you enjoy today's episode. If so I have a favor to ask. Can you go to wherever you listen to podcasts and leave me a review? Your feedback is what keeps this podcast going. You can also check us out on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook with the handle @dreampathpod, and as always go find your dream path. .