

Interview: Coroner's Serinda Swan and Roger Cross

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Even more than our [previous chat](#) with Serinda Swan and Roger Cross from *Coroner*, our latest sit down conversation with the winsome duo was an absolute blast. Although this should probably be called an interview with Serinda Swan featuring Roger Cross (who's always fantastic to talk to), that's okay because we are seeing Serinda's face all over town for the series (the most watched new show in Canada last year), and we're hearing some incredible buzz about Swan receiving

a Canadian Screen Award for her performance as Dr. Jenny Cooper (plus, she is the titular *Coroner*). We highly encourage you to watch season two of the series when it premieres on CBC tonight at 9pm.

The following is a condensed and edited version of our intimate conversation with *Coroner's* lead actors Serinda Swan and Roger Cross during CBC's recent Winter Media Day.

Brief Take: Serinda, at [this time last year](#), we discussed the significance of cutting off your hair and what that means for you and for your character. Now it's a little bit longer, which is still representative of what Jenny is going through on the show.

Serinda Swan: Exactly. It's a little bit longer, it's a little bit lighter, and six months has passed since the first season to the second. Things have softened in her a little bit with the truth of knowing actually what happened, the *fight* for her truth isn't as strong because she now knows, but now it's sort of that grey area of "Now you know, is it better or worse?". And realizing that your physicality, your body, your energy has the capacity to be able to destroy another life and a life that was so close to you, your sister, and what does that mean for your father lying to you this whole time and the protection that he had for you to make sure that you didn't know, was that self-serving? Was that something that was easier for him as well

as for me? But now that he has dementia, how do we deal with that, how do we talk about it?

So there's all these aspects within Jenny's life this season that are sort of coming to a head, and you watch her trauma spring up in new ways. She still deals with quite a bit of mental illness and she's trying to figure out how to get through that, and that was something that we talked a lot with the creators about what's the through line for that? Because when you know the truth, the truth doesn't always set you free, it potentially shows you that you can fly, but you have to learn how to fly again.

Roger Cross: And you're now free to deal with all the other stuff.

SS: With *a/////* that. [laughs] You're now free to deal with all of your personal shit. Congratulations. That's this season – diving into her own personal truth as much as she can and then watching the world around her and still doing all the coroner stuff.



BT: On this first episode of the new season, you may be past the trauma of the first season, but you aren't sleeping.

SS: That's what we have as human beings every day and we have to compartmentalize everything. We have to watch Jenny try to compartmentalize, and when she badly compartmentalizes, when you show up at work, you have to be the work person, or at home, you have to be the home person. Sometimes when you show up for yourself, you're like: "Don't have the time or energy or the bandwidth to be able to be *anybody* right now. I'm going to have a drink or I'm going to take my Ativan or zone out." We dive into *everyone's* worlds a little bit more this season. We learn more about Mac, we learn

more about Liam, we see a lot more with Gordon. Everything that we touched on in the first season now gets a little more space to breathe, which is important I think. That's what I enjoy doing with shows, I enjoy doing the character work and the story work.

BT: And this show feels like it's for a grown-up audience and plays out like it should, instead of being...

SS: ...if it was shiny.

RC: That's what's great about what they created – they didn't want a pretty little thing, they wanted to deal with the real issues, whether it comes to mental illness or dementia, or all of these things with which you have to deal.

SS: Or PTSD.

RC: Or PTSD! And we've dug into...

SS: Indigenous rights...

RC: Indigenous rights...

SS: And the history behind it...

RC: And the history behind it. When we're shipping these kids into foster homes, we touch on some amazing topics this season, and I think that we deal with them in a great way and it's not prettied up or it's not dumbed down. The search for the

truth of it all.

SS: Yeah, that's in my scripts. I always have a meaning behind all things, and it's like: "TH", and it's like: "What does TH mean?" and I'm like: "Truth Hunters". You can see when Jenny goes into 'Truth Hunter' mode, and then she's like *in it* and it's never usually for herself. That's sort of the arc – in finding truth for another, she will inevitably find truth for herself – but I think that in the upcoming season, she'll have to start hunting for her own truth.

RC: It's easier to distract yourself when you're listening to other people's things. That's what's kind of fun for the audience and is interesting to watch, these people are good at their jobs and they're doing their jobs and we have great stories, but personally, they're also...

SS: Hot mess. Hot mess! [laughs]

RC: But it's easier to take care of others and so you don't have to take care of yourself in a lot of ways, you can deal with yourself.



BT: Also tonally, yes, it's dark, but it's a funny show.

SS: Yeah!

BT: It's a sexy show.

SS: This season gets a *lot* sexier.

RC: Yeahhhhh [laughs loudly]

SS: It gets a lot sexier this season.

RC: For both of us.

SS: Whew! I was reading scripts and I was like: "Okay!" That's what happens in our lives right now.

RC: Life would be too grim if it was all too somber.

SS: Oh yeah, some of the best laughs I've ever had is in my deepest cries. And those are the things that you don't always show on TV. As actors, we don't always take those moments to laugh at ourselves, like I remember crying so hard that I blew a snot bubble and I thought it was *hilarious* and I started laughing hysterically, and then I had that Oprah voice in my head: "Cry so hard that *you* get a snot bubble and *you* get a snot bubble", and I am literally sitting by myself with my hand up, going: [in a sobbing voice] "I feel you, Oprah!" Like *by myself*, but this is the thing, that all facets of yourself are present in every moment, or we hope to be, and that's in the highs and the lows, and you're going to be able to bring a multifaceted reaction to each moment. That's one of the things that's *very* hard to write, but we're able to play and I like that they're able to give us the room for *that* sort of character, so what's on the page and what ends up on the screen are usually [raises voice], *quite* different, quite different. [lowers voice] But they give us the freedom to be able to do that and I hope that shows by the humanity that you feel for the characters.



BT: What do you feel resonates so much from this series?

SS: For me, this is my first lead on a show. While it's very hard to remove yourself from completely wanting a result, because you feel a lot of responsibility a.k.a. fear [chuckles] it's a *scary* thing. It's a scary thing to say: "Yeah, I'm going to stand behind a project and really give it my all and then have no idea how people are going to respond to it". Especially because it's a new format for me. I haven't worked in Canada for so long now and it's like: "How are they going to receive me and what are they going to think of this odd character who has a facial tic?". I remember talking to Adrienne (Mitchell) and Morwyn (Brebner) and you go to some networks and say: "I'm going to give your lead female a facial tic", they'll be like: "Cool. Let's

take that facial tic and let's bring it to her toes. How about we do that? She has a toe tic and we're always going to put her in boots". It's a thing in which I was like: "How are people going to respond to this woman that's dealing with aspects that many people are not?". They're either going to embrace it and be like: "I see myself in this", or they're going to shun it and be like: "This is not for me", and to feel so welcomed and to feel so celebrated [chuckles] it's *really* incredible. But I was really scared to put myself out like this, to be honest. I was really scared. And the difference between success and failure is a very, very, very fine line, and every single person that watched it tipped the scales for us and it's been really cool. Like last night, I arrived at 1:45 in the morning, and there were people there to sign posters, and I was like: "What are you doing awake right now?". But I hugged them.

RC: How did they know that you were coming in?

SS: Because apparently I put it on my Instagram that I was coming to Toronto for 24 hours, so they waited in the airport.

RC: Woah! See, I didn't do that.

SS: And I come to them and I'm like: "Go to bed now, go to bed, as nothing is as important as sleep", and they were like: "You are", and I was like [sob screaming] "Ahhhh!".

RC: Were you sleepwalking when you were there?

SS: I probably was sleepwalking. Honestly, it feels really lovely to be welcomed back to Canada and around the world in this capacity. It's really nice.





BT: You're really leading the charge as a female-driven series.

SS: If you look at CBC's lineup right now, there's a lot of female-led shows, which is *amazing*. CBC is a really diverse group. If you look at *Diggstown*, if you look at *Schitt's Creek*, if you look at a lot of these other ones, you're like: "Okay!"

RC: Our show is also quite diverse without being mentioned, accompanying some *amazing* stories, and at the same time, we're not trying to put it in anyone's face.

SS: Or patting ourselves on the back, being like: [Using an exaggerated voice] "Look how diverse we are". No, it's that we're casting for Canada. And we're a part of the movement and I think that they did a great job casting it and I am proud to be a part of that movement. I am really proud to have a female-led show and I think that it's wonderful to have and I also think that I love working for men, too. I love that there's more voices in the pot, there's more representation, but it's not about the new one, like "Now it's this and it's not that", it's like: "No no no, now we're starting to make room for *everyone*", and that's really important and really exciting.

