

Who Are You Wearing – Laura Whitmore

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN: Welcome to Who Are You Wearing with me, Kiri Pritchard-Mclean. This week's guest is an absolute talent machine. She's a presenter on radio, TV, and her own podcast, Castaway. She's also an actor and her book, No One Can Change Your Life Except For You, is a bestseller. Did I also mention she is ridiculously stylish? Because she is. It is the amazing Laura Whitmore.

Now this episode was recorded in May 2021. Laura was in her home studio and I, as per, was in my cupboard. Laura is so smart and I really think that her resourcefulness and strong will comes over in this chat. The story about her being draped in a dress as a child is an absolute corker. We talk about all sorts and I'm relieved to hear that I'm not the only hoarder of clothes for sentimental reasons. I hope you enjoy this episode as I ask Laura Whitmore, 'who are you wearing?'

[Music stops]

LAURA WHITMORE: So I – I grew up with just my mum but I had these two cousins, Claire and Deirdre, um, who were a little bit older than me. Six years older than me. Six years and eight years older than me. They were like my big sisters. And I just remember – Claire was closer to me in age and just thinking that they were like the most stylish people ever. And I got hand me downs. To this day I still have clothes I got from Claire. That she probably thinks I'm mad. But I just – there's such nostalgia.

I always get really nostalgic with clothes and the memories that are kind of associated with them. And I just remember thinking, 'Claire is the most fashionable person ever.' She had – when she was 13 she got a perm. And she had a floppy hat like Blossom. Do you remember Blossom? So she – and she kind of had this floppy hat and like flowers and, you know, and all that kind of very 90s stuff was in, like a waistcoat. And I just remember thinking it was the coolest thing ever. So that was like the first kind of fashion icon in my life, my cousin.

KIRI: Yeah, I remember those floppy – I had a floppy felt hat with like – you'd hold it up with a broach.

LAURA: Yes.

KIRI: And –

LAURA: Or like a bit flower thing. Yeah.

KIRI: Oh, awful. And I had one of those dresses that buttoned down all the way. Now basically was like ten or 11 and I was dressed like a primary school teacher. What I now recognise to be a woman who works in a primary school.

LAURA: Or do you remember those matching – I had those matching bicycle shorts with the baggy t-shirt. And I had so – they were matching sets. They came in a set.

KIRI: I have a picture – I – I think they're still absolutely iconic. Because they would be like a really strong like either cycling shorts or leggings, really strong print, and then usually a t-shirt with some kind of feature of that print on it.

LAURA: Banging, yeah. Of that print in it. Yes.

KIRI: Loved it. Loved it.

LAURA: Like a suit. I love it.

KIRI: I've got a picture of my on the, uh, I – something – on a newspaper in one of those outfits with a hair bun that I've weirdly pushed forward so I've got a weird little quiff in one of those.

LAURA: Lovely.

KIRI: And it's, um, it's – I'll be honest, that's when I peaked style-wise. Um –

LAURA: It's all been downhill since, really.

KIRI: So you were influenced by Claire and – being incredibly stylish.

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: Did you have your own sense of style as a kid coming out? Because you are so so stylish now that I wonder like when – when did that appear?

LAURA: Well, it's weird because I grew up in this town called Bray in Ireland, and then we only had two clothes shops. So like everything you were getting were from those two clothes shops, unless you went into town, into Dublin, to the city centre. So that was – that was like over stimulated. So we had two shops. It was called – one was called 'In the Groove'. And 'In the Groove' had like – was kind of more like 'All Saints'. Like baggy jeans, the cool

girl. Do you know that kind of – so a lot of like, yeah, ‘Diesel’ brand. What else was kind of like that kind of brand back then? Um, and kind of camo, um, and little – little tops and then with these baggy things, like TLC. Um, I’m thinking of all the girl bands that I was trying to be like.

And then – then we had ‘City 2’. And ‘City 2’ was more like the little – skimpy little tops for a night out and kind of a little bit more dresses and stuff. So they were our two options, unless you were going to the sports shop. Because then we went through a stage of – do you remember rip offs? Do you remember those Adidas rip offs?

KIRI: Oh, the – yeah. Yeah.

LAURA: Those trackie bottoms that went the whole – the poppers? Yeah. We call them rip offs but they’re poppers. Um, so – and at one point they were kind of like a style. I think it was all – anything – I just wanted to look like I was in a girl band, basically. So they were – they were my fashion choices, and I couldn’t really leave that realm. That was it.

The only other time would be to go into Dublin, and then – I mean we didn’t have Topshop or anything like that. Like the height of fashion was Penny’s, which is Primark over here. Because that – like that had everything and it was huge, where we just had these small – so that was like if you were going into town, that’s where you could go and what you could afford. But like we didn’t have – yeah, we didn’t have the Topshops or the River Islands at that stage in Ireland. We hadn’t got that far. So I was limited.

KIRI: So were you being influenced then by – it sounds like girl – by the way, poppers came back – do you remember when Kim Kardashian wore them? Yeah, loved it. It was a great day.

LAURA: Yeah, I just hated them. Because people used to just – you'd be walking down the street and someone would just rip your trousers off. It was terrible.

KIRI: The Nike ones didn't even have one that held together at the top. So you –

LAURA: No, ripped the whole way off.

KIRI: Yeah, full – full monty.

LAURA: And then you'd be there like ages just trying to get them back in again.

KIRI: So were you – your style influences, it sounds like the popular culture, then. Seeing the – the girl band of the day and what was going on with the music and – and emulating that. Is that – is that right?

LAURA: Yeah. Oh, yeah. My style journey is just depending on like what type of music I was listening to. Um, so like everything from Spice Girls, obviously. Like 'All Saints', um, kind of – I went to the baggy jeans a lot. I just thought they were the coolest. Um, and TLC vibes. Then a bit of Alanis Morissette. Loved a bit of that. And then I remember the Avril Lavigne stage, and that's when I started like ironing my hair, which you should never do. This is terrible. And wearing too much eyeliner. And again the baggy jeans, um, and like the kind of rock tees and thinking I was like really cool, which I wasn't at all. Um, so yeah. I definitely feel like depending

on what type of music was coming out was who I was dressing like.

KIRI: So when you were a little kid, who was dressing you? Was it – was it Mum? Was it the cousins? Where's – where's the influence? Or was it you?

LAURA: Uh, bless – like my mum had any choice in what I what I was wearing. Bless her. She'd like – she always said like she gave up buying me clothes, um, a long time ago because she had no idea what I wanted to wear. But yeah, definitely the – my cousins. My older cousins. You kind of look up to older girls and just, um, and my friends. Um, people around me. Um, borrowing clothes. Did a lot of borrowing clothes.

KIRI: Oh really?

LAURA: And I think that was great. Years ago. We – buying clothes all the time, especially for like going to the disco on a Friday night, you'd just like borrow each other's clothes. You'd only have like – everyone would have their two or three good tops and if you rotate them enough, everyone will get to wear them at some stage. Um, so yeah. My mates. My mates hugely influenced me. Even though we were different like body shapes and sizes and had – had different – probably different tastes, but we still borrowed bits and pieces from each other, which is actually lovely and a trend I think we kind of lost for a while. I think we're coming back into that again. But it was definitely a trend that I feel like it's – we should always have. Borrowing clothes from mates.

KIRI: Yeah, it's so interesting because I – you saying that now, I remember doing that for school discos. It would be like, 'what are

you wearing to the school disco?’ And it would be a six week long conversation and then it was like –

LAURA: Oh yeah.

KIRI: ‘Well I’ve got these, um, I’ve got these lilac boot cut trousers I want to wear, so what have you got that goes with it?’

LAURA: Oh, sounds great. Yeah.

KIRI: But that’s now what we’re looking to with like Rent the Runway and – and places like that.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: That’s it, isn’t it? It’s – we realise that we don’t need as much and we can – and sharing, there’s no stigma attached to it I guess.

LAURA: I love that. I remember when I first moved to London and I got this like really glamorous job on MTV but had fuck all money. I had no money. And MTV weren’t paying a lot of money, because it’s a great opportunity and I didn’t have like a stylist or a budget that way. And I remember the first MTV Awards I did, the Europe Music Awards, and I was interviewing on the red carpet and, you know, all of the big stars. And like I had to get my own outfit.

And my friend Maeve, who’s Irish, she was over in London. She was one of the few people I kind of knew in London. And I borrowed her skirt. It was like this polka dot skirt from Topshop. So I borrowed that skirt and I had, um, I basically pretty much made – put the outfit together. One – there was like this little black top which I think is from Penny’s. Like Primark but Penny’s in Ireland from years ago. And I had that on and then I had this

corset that I'd gotten for free from a – a shoot I did that they let me keep. So I had this mixture and matches, but like – and then the shoes I think I borrowed from Maeve as well. So it was – it was such a mixture of clothing.

At the time I was mortified by it. I was happy with how it turned out, but I just didn't tell people where I got it from. And now I look back and I quite love that, that I borrowed it. And that – and then Maeve had just given me this whole stash of clothes because I'd been on MTV I think for a few weeks at that stage just doing the news, and I'd run out of all my own clothes. I'd gone through all my clothes, so I was going off to – to do the MTV awards and I just went to her house and raided her wardrobe and I had this new wardrobe of stuff I was bringing over. And I do love that now looking back, and I think we should be doing more of that.

KIRI: Yeah. Also fair play for you for like hustling and – and still turning a look and – because you're – it's so difficult, isn't it? That you're in that world of being ultra visual that what you're wearing is part of what you're doing, but you're not necessarily getting the financial and structural back-up to play that part.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: So fair play for you and Maeve for like, 'we're going to make this work.'

LAURA: Putting it – putting it together. I also – I remember working at the Elle Style Awards, um, at the – early on in my career. And I was wearing this white, creamy, fluffy puff jacket. I think I must have got it in Camden market and it was like 20 quid or something. And then Courtney Love shows up and she's like, 'darling, you're wearing the Balenciaga jacket.' And I was like,

'yeah. Sure.' She's like, 'no, I know this jacket.' And I was like, 'yeah, that's exactly what I'm wearing.' People don't know. People don't know.

KIRI: Oh god, that's so good. That's so good. So you said that your mum gave up trying to dress you.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: So were you ever put in anything you hated then?

LAURA: Mum says – and this makes me sound like such a terrible child – Mum says when I was younger, I must have been like really small, like three or four. And she wanted to put me in a dress but I – I refused to wear the dress. And they wouldn't leave the house. I think it was the only – I think maybe we were in holidays because it was the only clean outfit left. So she said she left the house in the buggy with the dress over me because I wouldn't put it on me. So it was just – it was just on top of me, like – like you would those – you know those, um, stick-on clothes for those cut-outs, where you just stick them on top.

KIRI: Yeah, where you fold.

LAURA: And then I think we were out and there was something I wanted, like a pencil or something I'd seen in a shop. And she's like, 'until you wear that dress, you're not getting that pencil.' And in the end I put the dress on. Um, oh my god, I was such a naughty child. I like – actually I was a really well behaved child unless it came to fashion because I kind of knew what I liked and I knew what I didn't like.

KIRI: That's amazing.

LAURA: Unless I got the pencil.

KIRI: I love that you're lying there like you're – this is quite a strong comparison, but it reminds me of when I was writing stuff about the suffragettes and being like force-fed, and they would just go – you're like that with fashion.

LAURA: Exactly the same. It's exactly the same, Kiri. I was ahead of my time. Suffragette. Yeah. Later in time.

KIRI: Did you then – as a – as a kid or a teenager, did you have a favourite bit of clothing or an outfit that you just never wanted to take off?

LAURA: Oh my god, yeah. Like I really – some – I wish people had told me to take stuff – certain stuff off. When I started in MTV, again I didn't really have much clothes and I didn't have much money, and especially trying to pay for rent in London, which was expensive. Um, so I used to always wear – and anyone who will know from watching MTV News years ago, I just wore the same outfit all the time. I always wore this denim skirt, a Levi's denim skirt. Um, I had the – I had a few – it wasn't just one. There was like three of them. So they were on rotation. And I got them in 'Beyond Retro'. And they were like – they were jeans that were cut into a mini-skirt.

KIRI: Yeah, I know exactly the ones.

LAURA: So I had them and I always wore them with like a pair of – oh god, I went through a phase of wearing leggings. Do you remember when there was like tights which were like leopard print and it was like pink ones? And I was like, 'oh, if I just mix up

the colours of the tights, you won't notice that I'm wearing the same skirt.' And then I'd wear a band t-shirt because I had like loads of band t-shirts. So they were – that was my look, but like I kind of just wore that for at least three years. And that was it.

KIRI: Did you have a studded belt with it?

LAURA: Oh, I had a studded belt, yeah.

KIRI: Yeah, I think I've seen pictures.

LAURA: Yeah. Oh, you know the look. Yeah. You know. You know it. You know it.

KIRI: I had that sort of – that look as well of like, yeah, a vintage t-shirt or a band t-shirt that I'd found from somewhere and those – I know exactly. Those adapted jeans that – yeah, from –

LAURA: Yeah, they were just cut across.

KIRI: And then trying to make them myself. Yeah, cut across, and yeah, a studded belt. And – and loads of eyeliner and straightened hair.

LAURA: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was a strong look, but like I – I definitely kept it going for too long.

KIRI: When you hit that look, did you feel like that was – did you hold onto it because you were like, 'this is me?' It's like, 'it shows my music taste and it shows the –' because that wasn't actually what most people were doing fashion-wise.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: Like, you know, like if you went into Topshop, it wasn't actually a reflection of that.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: You were pushing forward and being stylish. So did it just feel like it had – it had – 'this is me,' then?

LAURA: Um, yes and no. This is all I had in my wardrobe. And I was doing – especially when I was doing telly like five days a week on MTV News and couldn't be buying different outfits all the time, and I was in like the Camden scene, there's a lot of band t-shirts. And especially if you went and interviewed a band they'd give you a t-shirt. I'm like, 'that's another outfit.' Um, so – and – and there was something to it as well. When you know what you like and you know what you kind of feel comfortable in, it makes it easier in the morning as well because you know what works for you.

I always find it really overwhelming when – when there's new trends coming in. You're like, 'how am I going to pull off the harem pants?' Do you know there's a new trend? Or 'how am I –' Like I like a – I don't really like high waisted jeans even though they're really in. I just feel like they make my ass look massive and they just don't suit me. But I'm like, 'they're in now, so they're going to be everywhere.' And it's like, 'do you know what? You don't have to follow trends. Like you can find what works for you.' Um, and although that particular look was questionable, it worked for me at that time and I felt – I felt comfortable in it. Because I was so nervous interviewing people and being on telly, that you don't want to be uncomfortable in your clothes. Um, it's just another stress.

So I always think when you're doing a red carpet, or like you know, big red carpets like the BAFTAs and it's intimidating and there's all these, you know, a-listers walking the carpet and then me walking along and then doing interviews, the last thing I want to be thinking about is my clothes and being uncomfortable in my clothes. I want to feel good so I can kind of worry about my work, um, and I always think for me that is a success story, is when you go to something and you feel good in it that you – that you don't have to think about it.

And it's happened where, you know, clothes throughout my work and throughout my career from doing the BAFTAs to the Love Island final last year, I remember just saying, 'I don't want to think about my outfit on the day. There's so much stress around the show that I just want to be comfortable and not have to think about what I'm wearing.' And in the end I wore this suit and I was so comfortable in it that I didn't have to think about it. And for me that is a success story when it comes to clothes.

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah, that's so so true. Is that I think we can all think or remember an occasion where you – you go out and it's something you should be – like say a wedding or something.

J: Yeah.

KIRI: Like something that – you should be excited and you spend the whole time like pulling something.

J: Just fixing yourself and – yeah.

KIRI: Yeah. Fixing yourself, yeah. Or like –

J: Boob – the boob popping out or you’re too tight on your tummy and you’re eating and – yeah, there’s nothing worse. Or I went to a wedding once and I had this top on that was like off the shoulder. It was really lovely. But on the dance floor I had to dance like this.

[Kiri laughs]

J: Like because I couldn’t put my hands in the air. And I was like, ‘this is fucking shit.’ Like I was just doing this all the time. I’m like, ‘this is not a practical – it’s a nice dress in the pictures, not practical for a night out.’

KIRI: That – I feel like that, if I was going to ever write a book, would be the – would be the title of my book, is ‘nice for a night out, it’s not practical.’

J: Not practical.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: So when you were a teenager, what were the big trends then? And did you really lean into any of them?

J: Oh yeah. Like when you’re a teenager you definitely want to fit in. It’s weird. When you’re younger you want to fit in and when you’re older you don’t want to fit in, you want to stand out. Um, and, oh, like definitely. Like there was the ironing of the hair, I mentioned that. Like that was just – we didn’t have GHDs at that stage, so we were just like ironing our hair and my friend Sinead I remember had like an iron mark on the side of her face. It’s so bad.

KIRI: Oh my god.

J: So bad. It's terrible. Don't – don't try that at home, folks. So that was a trend. We all had like the dead straight hair. Um, and then obviously wavy hair came in, so like definitely – hair probably more than clothes.

KIRI: Did you, um, did you have a rebellious phase? Because I – and if you did, did it show up in your style? Because I'm thinking you – you moved away. You were so young when you moved away.

J: Yeah.

KIRI: Did you even hit that rebellious bit? Or was moving away the rebellion?

J: I was like such a nerd. I wish. Yeah, moving away. I was really funny. When I got the MTV job, and I think I was 23 when I got that job, and MTV – it was back when MTV was still relatively cool, um, and we were showing music shows and things like that. And it was such a great opportunity. It was a cool show and I kind of did shoots in magazines. And it was – yeah, cool would be the word. I was not a cool person. So I remember like even my friends – I went to a convent. Like that – like nuns taught us sex education. I was, you know, I was definitely not in the cool group in school at all. At all. Um –

KIRI: Really?

J: Far from it. So I think it was really funny when I got that job. Because people in London didn't really know me, or people in the UK didn't know me. But in Ireland like my friends were like, 'how

the fuck did you get that job? Like do they know that you were in the debating society?' I was like, 'no, they don't. They don't know I'm in the debating society, French and Irish.' Do not tell them that. So, um, yeah. So I – I guess I was – I wasn't even rebellious. Like moving to London was probably the most rebellious thing that I did.

KIRI: Yeah. Um, and it sounds like you were just striking it out in your style anyway. So a rebellion – like what is a rebellion? You were just doing your own thing since you were – since you were lying there with the dress draped over you.

J: Laying the dress and refusing to wear it. I do remember – I remember when I was younger, there was – in my hometown, besides those shops that I mentioned, those two shops 'City 2' and 'In the Groove,' and, uh, there was like quite a few charity shops. Um, and I actually worked part-time volunteering in one of the charity shops because I always got first pick of the clothes that came in.

KIRI: Do you know – so jealous.

J: Um, so I was like volunteering. So I was doing it for free and I was – it was a really – you know, it was for, um, cancer research and it was a great charity. But the selfish side of me was I was getting dibs on – like I was buying them, but I also got to pick the best stuff.

KIRI: Yeah. Do you know what? Sometimes even now I love charity shops and I try and go every single week and most of my stuff is from – from charity shops or small businesses.

J: Yeah.

KIRI: But even now that I'm like, 'oh god, I wonder if I should just volunteer like two days a week to get' – especially if I find a good one, I'm like, 'I would get – I'd still pay for everything like you say, but I would get the first pick of everything,' and that fills me with absolute joy.

J: Well when I first moved to Camden, uh, for MTV because that's where the studios were, um, like Camden has loads of charity shops. Loads. But then one of my mates was like, 'don't be going to these charity shops. Go down to Chelsea. Go down to King's Road. Go to those charity shops because that's where the rich people live and they're just giving away their designer stuff. That's where you find cheap designer stuff. Go to the rich areas.' I'm like, 'oh, great.'

KIRI: That's such a good tip. But then I think when I go to places where it's a rich area – here's my thing, is I like charity shops in shit hole areas because they're only just kicking out their stuff from the 60s, 70s, and 80s.

J: Oh true, yeah.

KIRI: So it's – it's much better for like – it's newer season, the designer stuff.

J: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

KIRI: Like the older stuff.

J: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: Um, so let's talk about your sort of style now. Because I find your style is just always really chic and really just bang on. And, well, in fact, ahead and then everyone else kind of copies.

J: I'm going to take that. Oh. I love that.

KIRI: Yeah, but it is – but it's amazing. And so when did that start appearing?

J: Well do you know what? I – and I can't like – I mean I do work with stylists sometimes, which is amazing, um, because do you know what a stylist does? Um, I'm very particular. Like even with the Love Island final outfit last year, I picked that myself and my friend, that's my friend's design. So I – that was – I know very much what I like, but sometimes you need someone else to kind of help you.

When I first started MTV, I hated my legs. Like I never showed my legs. I always wore jeans or trousers. I never wore a skirt. I – like I'm quite fair, I'm pale, and like I never really got skin out that much. And I remember working with a stylist, um, a few years into, um – it's when I did I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out of Here, where there was a bit more budget and they offered me a stylist. And I was like, 'what the hell?' Um, because I never had a stylist for MTV. And, uh, she was like, 'okay, you're going to be doing it in Australia. You can't wear leggings. You can't wear pink leopard print leggings.' And she's like, 'you've got good legs.'

I'm like, 'no, I would never show my legs. I've quite skinny legs. I like don't want to get them out. They're not shapely.' And she made me kind of wear shorter skirts against my will. Not against my will, but just – and she was like, you know, 'have you tried wearing like this shape or this shape?' And sometimes like stylists

are brilliant. They can see body shapes and – and she really helped me. Because I get my legs out now and I hadn't up to that point.

And I think that was really a turning point as well, to kind of understand your body a little bit more. Because I spent sometimes a lot of time covering my body, the bits that I didn't like rather than accentuate the bits you do like. And you don't have to hide the other bits, but you can just kind of wear different shapes. And finding the shapes that work for you, um, and that was really interesting because I didn't really like the top of my arms that much and there was like – but I didn't mind the bottom of my arms. It was like – because everyone has those bits and it's kind of working with someone to go, 'well you should wear this because this will work for you.'

Um, so I really felt that opened me up to wearing different types of clothes I'd never worn before. I could get away from the denim skirts and the leggings because – because there were more options for me, um, and also, you know, the luxury of when you have a job and you're getting paid or there's a stylist that you have more options to pay for stuff and buy nicer things.

And – and the irony as well that, you know, the bigger jobs I got and I had budget for clothes was when designers start giving me stuff for free. It's like I was like, 'where were you a few years ago when I had no money?' But that – that's the irony. When you can afford – like when you can actually afford to buy stuff, you get given stuff, which is still lovely, I'll still take it. Um, and I do. So I think having more options is really helpful. And living in London was lovely as well. Like moving to London. London isn't England, London is this like melting pot of like cultures and different people. And like this – for me, openness.

I could – I remember I had these – I had them before I moved to London, these pink boots and the inside was leopard print. So if you pulled them back you could have leopard print at the top. And I wore them when I was in the MTV competition before I – I won, uh, my job. I won my job, sounds weird. Um, and I remember going back to my hometown and just wearing those boots down the main street and someone being like, ‘ooh, look at her in her boots.’

Well I – another day when I was in London, I was going to an 80s – 80s – what was it? A roller disco but it was 80s themed. And I was on the tube and no one batted an eyelid. No one gives a shit because you can wear whatever you want in London. And I think that really helped with my confidence of just being able to wear whatever I want without judgement because there are so many different people doing their own thing in London. And I think that’s kind of when I started finding my style and kind of not caring so much what other people thought.

KIRI: So – and were you inspired by what you saw in London as well? What you saw – especially with living in Camden, right?

LAURA: Yeah, yeah. And my best friend, um, was – was doing an internship initially, um, with a magazine over here, and then she was working part time in Beyond Retro. Um, so she would be great as well. I remember she found a Givenchy dress that – it was an old, it was like from the 60s or something. Because they get so much stuff in there. So she’d hold a few bits back. And I remember she found a Givenchy dress that didn’t cost that much to buy, which was great. Um, so I think that really helped me as well because there was so much choice. Like the charity shops in

my hometown compared to the secondhand and vintage shops in London, which is a whole other ballgame.

KIRI: Yeah, of course. Do you think then your relationship with your body, especially working with stylists who can see what you can't see, do you think your relationship with your body has changed over the years and clothing?

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Um, I don't care as much. I remember being really insecure, especially when I started. Again, going back to never showed my legs. And I remember doing a lot of festivals. I used to wear a lot of like leggings and prints and things like that. And a lot of it was a distraction from things I didn't like about myself. And I remember being backstage and I was waiting to interview I think maybe Robyn for MTV, but Alexa Chung was interviewing her first for T4. And like Alexa has the most beautiful tanned skinny legs that just go on. And I remember just being like, like feeling like, 'I just do not fit here. Why am I on television when, you know, people like this are on television?' Um, and huge insecurities.

But like you don't talk to people about – then I didn't talk to people about it because you're just doing that whole faking it till you make it. Um, and it's really interesting now talking to – I think we've all become a little bit more open. An you know, I've talked to a lot of pop stars who I would've talked to back in the day at the beginning of MTV and now talking to them now, and they all had those insecurities. Like we've all had those like imposter syndromes and not fitting in and feeling like our outfit isn't, you know, going – going to an event and like you're there in secondhand and someone else is there in designer.

Um, and it's just – it's weird because we all feel insecure, even the people who you think – I'm sure Alexa probably has felt insecure at a time – time as well. It's just part of it all. Um, and it's a funny one, but it's – I definitely feel so much more comfortable. I also feel more comfortable since having a baby, which is weird as well. Because I mean your body just does mad stuff and you have this new appreciation for your body.

Uh, also like I never really bought maternity clothes. I just kept wearing my normal clothes when I was pregnant, even if I had to – like I squished it over the belly. Because I was like, 'I'm not buying maternity clothes and then not being able to wear them again.' So anything I bought new I can wear now still. Um, because I think sometimes I know a lot of maternity clothes I found were quite frumpy looking or they just looked like you were pregnant, they looked like you were wearing a tent. So I just kind of like, 'I don't care. I'm just going to squeeze this sample size dress over my bump and it's fine. It works.'

KIRI: There's an amazing – I think it's from Celebrity Juice, an amazing picture of you in an orange dress.

LAURA: Oh, yeah.

KIRI: And you were –

LAURA: That just – that's a normal sample size dress that they – bless them, they had got me a maternity dress but I just didn't like it because I just felt like it was too big, too frumpy. It just – it was all about the – I was like, 'I just want to –' and – and it was quite a stretchy dress. And I'm like, 'do you mind me stretching it over the bump?' And I looked – that was one of my favourite things I wore when I was pregnant and, um, do you know? That brand,

um, is it Natalia and Anna I think it's called? A woman – if you go on their Instagram, some elderly woman is wearing that dress. The same dress. And she looks amazing. She's really glam. She's put an orange hat with it and it's the same dress.

And I love that. I love that a dress can be worn by different generations, different shapes and sizes. And for me that's what good fashion is.

KIRI: Absolutely. Absolutely. I used to love that. The Guardian did a thing where they would talk about like whatever, you know, they would be talking about like mum jeans and then they would show – there'd be a load of models and they – there was always one they used who was this older lady with like waist length white long hair. And I just thought she always looked the fucking best in everything.

KIRI: But it just shows you if you get something that's got a good cut or a good – it's just a good bit of clothing, it will look brilliant on everyone.

LAURA: Yeah. It can work – yeah. It can look so good on everyone. I think that's another narrative as well that I think is changing as well. Just when you were talking about the magazine and the – all the different looks, um, that whole, 'who wore it best', I fucking hate that. And I – I actually wrote about it in my book. I remember when I started in MTV there was a 'who wore it best' and it was me and Fern Cotton were in this outfit. And it was like they kind of go, 'well she wore it with this bracelet and these shoes that made it pink. And then she's wearing it with this so who wore it best?' And they kind of did this vote and then all these different people like speaking and judging.

And I was just thinking, 'I think we both look fucking great. Like we both look really good.' But do you remember that was such a – I don't think – I don't know whether they still do it. I don't really buy those magazines anymore. But I don't think they do it the same way anymore. I don't think they can get away with it. But that was just normality that you both couldn't look great. Someone had to be better than the other person.

And I think fashion needs to be inclusive, not exclusive. Um, and – and it should be made for – for people of all shapes and sizes, um, not just someone who looks like a model, not someone who just has the best accessories or – like some people are more stylish in that they can put an outfit together better than other people, but that doesn't mean that one look is better than the other because it – it's for personality. You dress for your personality. If you are someone – like some people look great when they wear big, loud colours because it suits their personalities. Other people aren't comfortable in that, and that's okay.

So I think we just need to be inclusive when we're talking about fashion and not just saying one person is better than the other, because I hate that.

KIRI: That's so grim, I completely forgot they used to do that. 'Who wore it best.' It was such a vile – also it was like let's call it what it is, it's pitting women against each other, uh, for looks. Like that's what it's about

LAURA: Yeah. They never did that with guys, did they? I've never really seen that with guys, no. No.

KIRI: No. 'Who wore those jeans and t-shirt better?' It just doesn't happen.

LAURA: Yeah, the white t-shirt and jeans. They're both the same.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: It's really interesting that – and I think it's stunning that you're being so open about – because we all live in a world that weaponises us hating our bodies because there's money in that.

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: And then people like you that people would look to and go, 'god, I would love to look her.' That you're living exactly the same life. And especially as a young girl was going, 'god, I'd love to look like her.' And I think that you being so open about it, I think is just so good. Because hopefully there'll be people listening and also, you know, people will understand that I – this isn't how I've got it with myself, is that everyone is someone else's target weight or look.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: And everyone else is coveting something else.

LAURA: Oh, yeah.

KIRI: And it's – it takes a lot of unprogramming, doesn't it? To – to learn like, 'this is me and this is fine.'

LAURA: Well it's like if you've got straight hair you want curly hair. If you've got curly hair you want straight hair. It's – it's just always going to be that way. Also no matter what any magazine says, no matter what any – any comment someone makes about you

online or even in a group of friends, no one's ever going to say something as bad as what you'll say about yourself. And that's what I've learned. Like no one will ever probably think about my body in-depth the way I think about my body in-depth because they're too busy thinking about their own body.

Um, and even things again, my – my body, again I was like really conscious of my legs. I felt like – I think maybe once someone said like I had chicken legs, and then that stayed in my head and I've like – 'god, I can't – I have to hide my legs. I have to wear baggy trousers and I have to hide it and this is what I have to do.' No one else has really thought about that in detail. It's – and I think once you understand that, it's really – it's actually really beneficial because you – you can control your thoughts. So you can go, 'okay, well maybe I'm going to stop thinking like that. And maybe I'll think about what I do like about my body.'

And again going back to the pregnancy thing, like the shit that my body has done this year, I'm like, 'fair play to you. Because I haven't always been very nice to you, but well done because I put you through a lot.'

Um, and we're – we're not very nice to our body. We say terrible things about ourselves. Like I do in my head. Like, 'ugh, the state of you. Ugh, that looks horrible. You need to like sort yourself out. Why would you wear that?' And I just need to start saying nice things about my body because, you know, it's keeping me alive. Um, this skin is really important. I hope it's with me for many years.

So, you know, rather than fashion. Rather than using fashion to cover up your body, like use it to accentuate your body and use it to show off your body in a way that you're comfortable with.

Whether it's – that's not about wearing skimpy outfits, it's just about, you know, you're using it, um, as a tool to – to kind of bring you confidence, not just to try and hide.

KIRI: Yeah, it can be a celebration, not an apology.

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Same way with makeup. For me I – I don't think makeup should be a mask. I think it should like accentuate and show off things you like. I wear a red lipstick. I feel bloody great when I wear a red lipstick. I keep it for those moments when I need it. It's not about hiding my face, it's about showing off my face.

KIRI: Do you think of makeup and hair as part of the outfit?

LAURA: Yeah, even – even now I did a big shoot this week for something and the stylist was like, 'can we get you dressed? Can we decide what you're wearing for us?' And I'm like – sometimes they do hair and makeup first. I'm always like, 'I need to decide what I'm wearing first.' And I always work that way. I always try on all the clothes, decide what outfit I want to wear for the shoot or whatever it might be, and then work the hair and makeup around it. And I think it's always been like that, even since the school disco days.

Um, so yeah. But hair and makeup still really important. Because if you've good hair and makeup you could wear a bin liner and look relatively okay. I do think that makes such a difference. Um, but it can add to an outfit and I think ultimately you need to feel comfortable in the outfit. Um, and if an outfit is very – sometimes an outfit's very glam or it can be – there's a lot to it and quite detailed, I'll just do more relaxed hair, while if it's a simpler outfit I

can kind of be more exciting with the hair. So it – they kind of all work together, I think.

KIRI: I wanted to ask about – I think you navigate social media so well. Because you have this level of fame that automatically brings a level of kind of judgment and lots of unhappy people will project stuff onto you to make themselves feel better. And I mean, and also this added thing of being a – a woman in the public eye, your appearance does naturally come under scrutiny.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: Like how do you negotiate that with social media? Because I – I love your – your Instagram is gorgeous and fun and – and you champion small businesses and sustainable stuff and things like that. And – and how – but how much of that do you – has it affected how you use it? Are you like, ‘I’m going to do less of that because I don’t want to engage in this stuff,’ or are you like, ‘no, I’m just going to do my own thing’?

LAURA: Yeah, like some things take more energy than others. And especially there’s – there’s things that I will be doing in the next year which I know are going to take up a lot of my energy and I have to prepare for that if I want to do it. If I choose to be in this career, um, and certain things that I really want to do. And nothing I ever do is forced upon me. It’s always, especially now at this stage in my career, anything I do has really been thought about and I really want to do.

Um, but I – I am aware that anything you do, you will get backlash to some degree. Anything you do. Like the good things and the bad things. Um, and that can be from – I remember like when Gina Martin, um, a brilliant friend of mine who – who spoke out

about upskirting, which is – now you think about it, you think, ‘how was that ever legal? Like how was that –’ Like that’s only a few years ago that’s come in, but she got huge backlash for speaking up and trying to change the law. And I remember I got backlash about stuff because it was like, ‘oh, you’ve worn skirts before and you’ve worn little skirts on TV and you’ve done these photo shoots and stuff like that. So who are you to say you can’t be upskirted?’

Like I’ve had it all. And I just think you kind of have to go through that shit for change. And I don’t – I can take it. I can take the shit if there’s a reason to take it. Um, and now you look back – and also people’s – you can change people’s minds. You can change people’s thoughts by just speaking openly. But again I’m a human and I’m a person with real feelings. And some days it’s not my fight and some days I don’t want it to be my fight. But some days it is my fight, um, and I’m okay with that. And I – and I will – I will take it on.

KIRI: Go back to that. Channel it and debate them in French and Irish.

LAURA: Exactly. Just speak – speak at them. Yeah, just go back to my debating days. You see? I wasn’t cool but – but it’s come in handy.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Is there an item of clothing, an older item of clothing that you’ve had for a really long time that you still wear?

LAURA: Oh my god, I – I’m such a hoarder. Like I – I hoard things. Um, uh, as – as I mentioned, like even stuff – like not even

expensive stuff, um, I have this handbag from Penny's, which is Primark, that's my friend, Dee – remember Dee? I said who, um, did I mention Dee already? She – basically she was over in London when I first moved to London when – when Maeve was there as well. So we were all there together.

KIRI: Right.

LAURA: And Dee's a stylist now. But she had this handbag that looked like a Prada bag, but it was actually from Penny's. And she said if I won the MTV competition I could have it. And I won it and she gave it to me and I still have it. Because it means I'm like, 'yes.' Um, so like I'm a hoarder because – I'm a hoarder because of nostalgia. Like I still have, um, I still have a top that my cousin Claire gave me when I was 16. I still actually have it. It actually fit – it was quite stretchy so I actually was wearing it when I was pregnant because it was really soft.

Um, uh, I have those pink boots, do you know? With the leopard print on the inside. Because I wore them when I won the MTV competition. So I still have them. I mean the heels on them have gone to shit. You can't really walk outside. But I've kept them. Um –

KIRI: So it's sentimental when you hold onto stuff?

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah. And I – because I remember like Mum – I remember looking at pictures of Mum in the 70s, and she had some great pieces of clothing but she kind of got rid of everything. She doesn't really have – and anything that she kept, um, because then obviously when she – like she was working in an office so she had a lot of suits, and I'm like, 'where are your flares from the 70s? Where is this dress?' And she kind of – she's like, 'oh, I kind

of like charity shopped it, or I'm' – so it's somewhere in a charity shop. If it ever comes back round again.

But – so now I'm kind of thinking, 'oh, I need to keep these items in case I ever want to hand them down.' I mean not that anybody wants my Primark Prada bag, but, um, but you know, they're these little pieces that really remind you of a certain time of your life, um, and for me, yes, the memories that's associated with them.

KIRI: That's so, so lovely. Um, a lot of the stuff that you wear is – feels at least if it's not vintage, vintage inspired.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: Oh, I can hear your lovely dog in the background.

LAURA: Oh, you bell-end.

[Both laugh]

KIRI: Is there an era that you wish you existed in just for the fashion?

LAURA: Yeah. Just for the fashion, the – the 70s probably. Um, when I watched that, uh, 'Once Upon A Time In Hollywood,' um, and the Sharon Tate kind of era, uh, and then I watched this, the – 'The Serpent.' Did you watch that on BBC?

KIRI: No.

LAURA: Um, it's about that murderer in the 70s. It's quite dark.

KIRI: Right up my street.

LAURA: Jenna Coleman's, uh, I love her fashion in that. So there's – I mean the fashion in that is brilliant. Um, it's quite heavy. He kills a lot of people.

KIRI: Sure.

LAURA: The – the storyline's a bit grim, but the fashion and the music – and the music, the 70s music, I love Fleetwood Mac and I love that style and Stevie Nicks and all that. Um, and the platforms. And the platforms the guys wore as well. Um, so I do love all that. But I kind of love bits from different eras. Um, even bits of 90s. Do you know you look back and you're like, the Spice Girls and their little string vest tops and things like that. Um, uh, and yeah, the way they used to do the hairstyles. But, um, I do think the prints and the floral prints of the 70s. I don't do it intentionally, but I do notice that a lot of stuff I wear kind of has a little bit of that influence. Um, I think that's just what my eye is drawn towards.

KIRI: I'd agree. That was – the 70s vibe I get from you, definitely. Yeah, definitely.

LAURA: Like Studio 54 and that, you know all those like crazy days. Love that.

KIRI: Is there, um, is there an item of clothing that you could put on and you just instantly feel amazing in?

LAURA: Do you know what? Like I love a pair of heels. I love a pair of heels. And I think when you wear heels, I wear like a lot of heels. Not so much in the last year because no one sees my feet,

but, um, I think when you wear heels it changes your posture. How you walk. Um, and I think that just as well kind of changes how you feel. Um, I love a platform because I think they're more comfortable. And then maybe that's 70s inspired, because I have some stilettos where it's just like literally your feet are like at an angle and it's like pain. If you have a good platform it's, you know, it's good on the base and the sole of your foot. Um, so I have quite a few chunky, um, there's a chunky Jimmy Choo, which I love. And I kind of wear them with everything. And there are a few kind of gold – I think gold shoes just kind of – they match everything, it's great.

KIRI: Yeah, totally agree.

LAURA: Um, and again it's very 70s. But yeah, I stick them on. You can wear them with anything. You can wear them with a tracksuit and you feel great.

KIRI: I want to see it. I want to see it on the gram.

LAURA: Well, yeah. It'll happen. It'll happen.

KIRI: I was thinking about your – the – the suit that you wore with the – the Joshua Kane, is it? With the heart.

LAURA: Oh, for Love Island, yeah. Um –

KIRI: Yeah, that was spectacular. Like I – I just had never seen a woman wear anything like that before and it was like the perfect mix of like – it's so bold with the colour.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: And it's masculine and feminine and there's throws to retro but it also feels really modern. Like you must have felt amazing in that, right?

LAURA: It was really weird because I mentioned like, you know, clothes you should be comfortable with. And – and for me, you know, Love Island, a show I love, it was a really difficult time at that particular time and the final was live. It was in Mallorca, there was a lot going on behind the scenes personally and I was an emotional wreck. And I was just like, 'I – I' – because I was supposed to do a fitting with him and that was cancelled because of stuff going on. And I was just like, 'I don't even want to think about my clothes.' And – and the thing is you do something on telly, everyone's going to judge how you look anyway, so I was just, like, 'I just want to be comfortable.'

And I love wearing a suit. I feel powerful in a suit. I love women in suits. Um, and I love a flare. Again, that goes back to the 70s. And he had – I'd – I'd kind of scanned through his Instagram, because I've worn a Joshua before. He's a friend of mine. And, um, he does mainly men. He mainly does men. He doesn't do that many women. But he styled like rock stars. I saw that like, um, Ozzy Osbourne had worn him before in the red carpet and I was like, 'yeah, I want to wear something like that.'

And I'd kind of scanned and like a few years ago he'd made this kind of red pattern love heart thing, but, um, he ended up making a waistcoat that fitted me because you kind of don't want to be worried about your boob popping out of a love heart or anything like that. And he'd made it but we didn't really have time to do fittings and stuff like that, so it was very last minute.

Um, but for me I felt really strong and powerful doing this live show, and I just didn't have to think about what I was wearing. I could – I could sit down and talk to an Islander and walk over here and do this bit and – and I just didn't have to think about it. And I think for me that was really important.

But like – a lot of time and effort didn't go into that outfit. It was just I saw it, I was like, 'I like that', he made it happen, we took the outfit, I think when we brought it over there it was a bit short because I wanted to wear the big, high platforms. Um, and then Emma, who was my stylist over there, she just quickly took them down. Like took down the trousers. It was really last minute. Um, and – and just, yeah, it was weird. It just worked.

And sometimes that's the – sometimes those fashion things, like not a lot of time and effort goes into it and they kind of – people remember them, um, and you kind of – behind the scenes you're like, 'god, that was just like a really last minute' – there was so much other stuff going on. For doing a big live show, we didn't spend a lot of time thinking about the outfit.

KIRI: Wow, that's incredible because the last thing I would think of when I look at that outfit is last minute.

LAURA: It's so last minute.

KIRI: It all looked so polished and stunning and like, 'well there's months of prep gone into that look.' Um –

LAURA: Yeah. Not at all. Not at all. But I – you know when you know what you like? I was like, 'I like this, it's a suit.' And you've got good people around you. You've got a tailor, you've got like a good stylist who on the day was like, 'stick your boobs in.' Like the

boobs were stuck in, like nothing was – nothing was moving. I could sit down, I could stand up, I could move around. Um, and also because we were filming in Cape Town, like Cape Town's really hot during the day but it's bloody cold at night time. It's really – and we were really high up.

KIRI: Really?

LAURA: So it was great. Like the Islanders were wearing dresses and freezing. Like I was wearing this suit and I was like, 'actually, I'm quite – like I'm quite warm as well.' I didn't want to be cold. Um, uh, so like you have to think of those practical things as well.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: What's your relationship like with shopping? Is it online? Do you want it to be in person? Is that why stylists are helpful? Because you're so busy as well. I imagine the actual leisurely part of shopping isn't something you get to like enjoy much.

LAURA: Yeah, like I do love popping into a shop, uh, I used to love when Topshop – I can't believe Topshop's closed now. Like 11am on a Tuesday. Because it's not a busy time. Because of my job I could do weird hours. And I could like go in 11am on a Tuesday because it would be quieter, and just kind of like browse. But yeah, I can't – I don't really have time to do that anymore.

And it's great working with a stylist. Uh, I'm working with Emma Lane at the moment and she's – she's just brilliant. And she'll just pick a selection of stuff she thinks I like, come to my house with a rail, so it's like a shop is in your house. And then just try it on. Because I'm not very good at – I love online shopping for random shit like homeware and bits and pieces, but for clothes I find it

really hard. Because I've bought stuff before and you can't see the material, you can't – I like feeling clothes.

I remember going into Topshop, um, the first lockdown when you couldn't touch the clothes. Do you remember that? You could walk in but you weren't allowed to touch stuff. You had to just pick it up and buy it. I'm like, 'I need to be able to touch and feel the material. Feel the quality. Will it be soft on my skin?' Um, and yeah. Now having a stylist to like actually bring you a rail and you get to select from it and you get to try it in your house, because some dressing rooms are just grim. Um, and some dressing rooms, I feel like they put bad lighting in there. Like I'm like, 'why don't you put – put good lighting in there. It'll make me want to buy the outfit. Stop making me feel bad about myself.'

KIRI: Amen. I've had this conversation with so many people that's like, 'make us look incredible in there and we will spend more money.'

LAURA: Yeah. I was like – I was going to bring up my own ring light just to make myself feel better. Um, but there is – yeah, I just – online shopping, as much as I love it, for clothes there's nothing like trying on the clothes for real.

KIRI: And do you think about – because I've noticed some of the brands that you work with and – and champion, and how you go about it.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: Is – is sustainability in your head within it? Because it seems like it is.

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Um, I also feel, though, I'm very aware of my privilege of like living where I live. Like living in London we have lots of choices. There's really lots of cool vintage shops. Like living in small – some small towns it's hard to get that. Um, and then, you know, I do love a lot of brands – sustainable brands. A lot of sustainable brands are quite expensive as I mentioned, you know? You pay – you end up paying 50 quid for a white t-shirt and you're like, 'why is it that much money?' And I can do that. I have – I have a good job, I can afford that. I buy it. I feel a bit better about myself. Um, uh, maybe it's a bit of a halo effect.

And – but it is something I'm looking at. And it is something I'm looking at for – for people who can't afford it. I think borrowing – going back to borrowing, there's nothing like wearing something from your cousin. A hand me down. That's the most sustainable thing that you can do. Um, but, you know, there's a lot of like where I grew up a lot of families that need to buy school uniforms and things like that. And they will go to those big places like the H&Ms and the Primarks and things like that because that's what they have to do. That's what they can afford. And the Marks & Spencers and there's nothing wrong with that and we shouldn't make people feel shameful if that's what they can afford.

I think it is – it's a duty of all of us as individuals but also for the big companies to be better. Everyone. Like we can all be better. No one's perfect. And it's – it's – you can be perfect when you're a small independent store but you're only selling like two or three t-shirts in a week. But if you want to kind of sell on a wider scale, by selling on a wider scale you can make things cheaper, you have to be better. And you kind of have a responsibility now to – to do what you can. Because you've got power.

Um, and – and especially for – I just think growing up in Ireland we – I didn't have a lot of choice. I don't have the choice that I have now in – in London. And I don't want to make anyone feel bad for not being able to buy sustainable clothes and for going for cheaper lines and stuff like that. It's – it's a mindset, though. It's the wastefulness. It's the – growing up and I felt, you know, did I need a new top every Friday for the school disco? And you kind of felt like you did.

But going back to that, why don't I just borrow from my friends, why do we feel like we need something new all the time? We do we need something new for a wedding? Why do we constantly just not want to be seen in the same outfit? And I think that's because society's put pressures on women.

There was this, um, study done in Australia, I can't remember what network it was, but the male and female anchor of the breakfast show, they did this thing where the guy wore the same suit every day for a year. Nobody noticed. The girl wears the same dress twice, everybody notices. Same thing when like Kate Middleton wears the same dress. And it's like getting rid of that narrative where you have to – just because something is cheaper doesn't mean you have to bin it off and buy something else new. It's like you can keep stuff forever and longer. Just buy – just buy what you need.

And I just think that just – it's all of us, we need to kind of change that mindset. I need to as well, but I still look at my wardrobe and I've got my favourite pieces that aren't necessarily expensive, but they're my like – I wear them, I feel good. It takes me back to that memory. Um, so sustainability's something I'm constantly thinking about. I'm not an expert. I don't pretend to be. But I know that I have a responsibility and I'm interested in it. And I care about it.

Um, and it's something I'm going to consistently do and look into. Um, I'm not really sure exactly everything around different brands, but I'm – I'm working on it. I do – and when I buy something I do try to look where it came from.

And there's a few brands that like being in this nice privileged position, you're on the telly, there's brands that want to work with you. And Kiri, it's – it's mad. Like I've had offers – I've turned down quite a few offers of working with brands. Because I turn around and I ask them a few questions about like, 'oh, so, you know, where are your clothes made? What's your view on this? What is your – your five year, ten year plan?' And I've had brands reply to me with double the figure of what they were first offering me but not answering my question.

KIRI: Oh my god.

LAURA: And I haven't worked with them.

KIRI: Of course.

LAURA: But I've had brands who have replied, and for me that's what I care about. The brands that are working towards something. They may not be perfect, but they're – they're owning it and they're trying to be better.

KIRI: Yeah. I think as well, everything you're saying is so brilliant in that like it is largely, you know, when people are having these conversations, it is privileged people who are having them. So acknowledging that –

LAURA: Yeah, yeah.

KIRI: That like – because what you have to remember is like us talking now, our conversation doesn't relate to us growing up in the countryside where there wasn't much choice.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: And you wanted to – you know, you didn't want people to make fun of you for what you wore.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: So there's no shade towards –

LAURA: None.

KIRI: And also like – or plus size people as well.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: Who are given no choices to make themselves feel nice.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: And you're so so bob on with it has to be the businesses. Like we have people power but ultimately it's them who makes the decisions about how much they pay people and what they do, you know, in terms of the environment and things.

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: I think – well I think you're very wise, mate. Very very wise.

LAURA: I don't know, I'm just learning. It's all learning, isn't it? Every day you learn something new or someone tells you something that you didn't know.

KIRI: Um, I wanted to ask you, before we move onto the final section, um, what is the – knowing that you, uh, grew – grew up, uh, shopping in charity shops and worked in them, volunteered in them –

LAURA: Yeah.

KIRI: What's the best item you've ever like thrifted or secondhand or charity shop?

LAURA: Well one is my friend Dee, that Givenchy dress. Like wow. It was amazing. It was like cream, puffy sleeves, little bit of – little bit of sequins on it. You'd love it. Though it was coming off a little bit. Um, so that was – that was pretty great. And you know what? Back in the day those Levi's skirts. They – they served their purpose. They got a lot of airtime on telly.

KIRI: Can you see your style, um, changing as you get older? Or do you think, 'you know what? This sort of like bold patterns, shapes I like, you know, 70s inspired, that's forever'?

LAURA: I don't know. And that's the beauty of fashion, like it changes so much. Like and you can change. You can change – like you can change your mind about things. Like you can change your mind about like, 'I never want to show my legs,' to, 'fuck it, I'm going to get my legs out there all the time.'

Um, I think that's the beauty of fashion, it's constantly changing. And there's – you know, we're constantly using and inspired by

the past, but then there's also stuff we're taking from the future. Even when we go through like, oh, the 70s trend again, we're taking the flares but we're doing something from now with them as well. We're mixing it up. Um, and I think that's really exciting. That's what I love about it.

I don't know – god knows what I'll be wearing. Like mum jeans and – and sweatshirts. Like I don't know. Who knows. Uh, I mean who would have thought that I would have spent most of the last year in a tracksuit and activewear, you know? And – and wearing trainers all the time because I love my heels. Like that – who would've known?

Like in a pandemic you're like, actually – I don't even know if my feet will fit in platforms the way they used to. Um, I don't know. I don't know how I had – like I used to out for nights out and be in these crazy high heels for hours. Like eight hours at a time. And when I was filming Celeb Juice during lockdown, like I was sitting down in heels and I could barely manage it. Do you know? I don't know. Things are changing.

KIRI: Oh no, the cramp that I get now from wearing a heel for an hour is absolutely unbelievable.

LAURA: I know.

KIRI: The real victim of the pandemic is my calves.

LAURA: Your calves. They're the real victim. Real victim.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: What would you wear to be buried in?

LAURA: What would I wear to be buried in? What a grim question to end in. Although something we know will inevitably happen. Because that is life.

KIRI: Right.

LAURA: Uh, life is followed by death. Um, oh, that is a brilliant – I want the craziest shoes because I don't have to walk in them. I want something like so over the top because I'm lying down. Um, and, oh, that's a brilliant question. Something really uncomfortable and itchy. Some sequins. Uh, maybe a bit of double denim in there. I want all the trends from all the eras that I've been alive in in one go in one coffin. There you go. And a hat.

KIRI: I love it. And like a – so you're going to do down as in like a – these are all the things that you shouldn't wear together? Or is it going to be so crazy it just works?

LAURA: Yeah, all the different patterns and – I don't know, I'm still thinking about whether I want to be cremated, so maybe like something that gets a good flame going.

KIRI: Some magnesium. You get some colours.

LAURA: Yeah, yeah. Some polyester, do you know? That really just catches the flame.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: How good was that? I feel like we all need a Laura in our lives. Am I right? Give me a Maeve too. Thank you so much for

listening. I hope you enjoyed this episode. If you're anything like me, the crush you already had on Laura has doubled in size.

It's time to give a shout-out to a small business that I love, and I have gone for Woo Woo Boutique. You can find them on Etsy and Instagram and in many a vintage fair. Now Eva, the owner, is really something special. She's a real connoisseur of fashion and especially all things vintage.

You can buy wonderful secondhand pieces off her. But it's the new clothes that I really love, especially as a fatter lass. Like vintage isn't always our friend. So what she does is she takes end of roll fabric and deadstock material, which is often on its way to landfill, and she recreates vintage patterns in them. So you get the incredible cuts that you find in vintage clothing but in modern fabrics and you save them from being wasted.

She's also happy to adapt things if you send her your measurements, and she works with a seamstress in the UK who's paid properly, so no one is being exploited for your clothes. I've got some custom pieces from her, but I've also got some amazing premade stuff from her Etsy too. Oh, and she comes up with her own designs too, inspired by fashion icons like Bowie and Kate Bush. She even adapts and repurposes damaged wedding kimonos.

Have a nose at her stuff. I think you'll love it. You might have seen it on, um, Fern Cotton recently as well has, um, worn one of her jumpsuits, which I think then immediately sold out. So do check her stuff out. I think there's something for everyone in there, especially if you're like me and you love a jumpsuit in an animal print.

We've had some really gorgeous messages about the podcast. Thank you so much. Um, Jade Alexander said, 'loving this podcast. It's like Desert Island Disks but for clothes.' Yes, of course. Um, I should've put that in the original like pitch document when we were putting it together. Um, but it would probably mean that I would be sued by Radio 4 and I ain't got the money.

Um, Matchi B said – oh, this is after Susan Wokoma's episode. She said, 'I went to Pop Boutique after listening to that episode and I'd totally forgotten it existed.' Well you are welcome. I hope you bought yourself some nice vintage t-shirts. I can't remember what they sell there now. Cord flares, obviously for me to chafe my thighs through.

Claire Goodwin sent a message saying, 'this is amazing. I just got back into making my own clothes and this is the inspo I need.' Well interestingly, um, we're going to be talking to someone in the next episode who makes a lot of their own stuff. It's – it's getting me excited about that as well. I've never been able to use a sewing machine, but I think I might start, guys. I think that might be the way forward. Um, she says, 'already imagining the absolute state of the stuff' that she'll try and make.

[Electronic music]

If you're enjoying the podcast, can you do me a massive favour? Could you subscribe and give us a five star rating? It just helps more people find us and we're having such lovely conversations. I would like as many people to listen as possible. You can find us on Instagram at @whoyouwearingpod, or you can email us at whoyouwearingpod@gmail.com. I will be back next week as I ask cabaret darling and 'RuPaul's Drag Race' star Jo Black, 'who are you wearing?' See you then.

[Music stops]

Who Are You Wearing is produced by Jo Southerd, the artwork is by Mary Phillips, and the music is by Ani Glass. This has been a Little Wander production.