

Who Are You Wearing – Aja Barber

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN: Hello, you're listening to the Who Are You Wearing podcast. I'm your host, Kiri Pritchard-McLean. And I'm delighted that you decided to listen to me verbally snoop through people's wardrobes. I am chatting to the incredible activist and author Aja Barber this week. Aja's book *Consumed* has just been released and I'm waiting for it to arrive, but I already know it's going to be a life-changing read.

This episode was recorded in September of 2021. Aja was at her publisher's office signing a stack of books. That's just the coolest thing ever, signing books. One day I'm going to sign a book and it's not just going to be something illegal I've done in a library. As usual I was sat cross-legged on the questionable leopard print carpet in the tiny room that I grandly call a walk-in wardrobe.

Now if you love clothes and fashion, there are some great tips here when it comes to buying and investing in amazing designer bits, if that is your thing. Oh, and excuse me during this episode, because you can literally hear how doe-eyed I am talking to someone that I think is changing the world. So with all that out the way, it's time to ask Aja Barber, 'who are you wearing?'

AJA BARBER: I remember the first time my mother let me pick out what I wanted to wear for the day, and I remember feeling so proud of myself because I'd managed to match the colours and create an outfit that she hadn't made for me before. Like she said, 'okay, well you can pick out your clothing today for the first time.' And I really was like, 'don't screw it up. Don't screw it up.' And so like I literally got this – this like shirt that was full of pastels and

paired it with like these periwinkle lavender shorts that also had the same colour. And I remember sort of coming down and feeling like, 'did I do it right?' And my mom being like, 'good job,' you know, like really proud of me. And so I think that was my first experience with like feeling really like kind of empowered through clothing.

But I would argue that I got very much into fashion because later on I found myself in elementary school being like made fun of for not having the right clothes, because I wore a lot of hand me downs from my older sister, who's five years older than me. And my mom was also always big on thrifting. She was always, um, somebody who was very, very frugal when it came to dressing, particularly dressing herself and dressing us.

And so I didn't have the right clothing and I sort of began to realise that like certain classmates were – everybody was buying their clothes from like this store or that store. And I would come to my mom and say, 'oh, well can – can we go shopping here?' And she'd be like, 'no, it's expensive. We – we can't afford that.' And so I think my first foray into, you know, wanting to know more about fashion came from a need to fit in through material items.

KIRI: That's so interesting. So as a kid then, it sounds like you off the bat had a great eye and a – a sense of how you wanted to look. But was that – how did that sort of, um, meet the expectations held by either peer pressure directly from your classmates or perceived pressure? How did that influence your style? Or did you just go, 'no, I'm going to do it my way.'

AJA: Um, at first I wanted to fit in. I wanted all the clothing from the same store that they all shopped at. But my mom was – she

wasn't going to do that. And, uh, I think when I got to high school I actually started to get really like rebellious. And like, 'fuck them, I don't want to be a part of their club, you know?' Like – and I – I think some of the most courageous fashion minds have always had very, very similar experiences to what I experienced. So I always feel like even in high school I began to sort of read interviews with people that I consider visionaries. And, um, it always seemed like the experience was similar, of like, 'no, I didn't have the right stuff. I grew up in this area, wasn't appreciated, that sort of thing, and now I am appreciated.'

And so I think in the back of my head I always sort of knew like, 'no, I think it's, you know, it's – I definitely feel like I'm onto something and they are the ones that don't get it.' But at the same time, I don't want to pretend like I was always like this. Like I desperately wanted to fit in in elementary school. And that was some of the earliest fights with my mom, was about me feeling like I didn't have the right clothing and you were getting me like made fun of.

Like in the book, like I write about how my mother made me wear my sister's sweater for like fourth grade school pictures. And there's a five year time difference between us. And five year age difference. And, um, we grew up in like the 80s and the 90s, and the clothing styles were so different in the 80s versus the 90s, so a sweater that was like kind of cool in 1987 was not cool in 1992. And, uh, I got ragged on relentlessly. And I think that was what definitely started some of my earliest fights with my mom, was like, 'you don't understand how it feels.'

And then that also would drive me to like, you know, I started doing like part-time work from a really young age. Like – and not like heavy part-time work, but like pet sitting, dog walking,

babysitting, and all of that money would go to like buying what was considered the right clothes. But you know what? At the end of the day, people that are mean to you, they're not going to be nice to you because you found the same clothes as them. And the sooner I figured that out, the more I was like, 'oh, okay, let me free myself of this.'

KIRI: Well how old were you when you kind of cottoned onto that?

AJA: I think I kind of knew in the back of my head by the time I became like 13, 14. But I don't think I started to really, really believe it until I got into high school, you know?

KIRI: Wow, yeah. I, uh, I think a lot of people have that journey of feeling like knowing this isn't them and they're like cosplaying as something that feels like will mean they get less grief, and it never does.

AJA: Yeah. Do you even like this stuff? And you know what? I think we're all guilty of it. Like honestly I think even as an adult, I know the power of like advertising and like, 'well the cool kids have this product.' And sometimes I have to stop myself and be like, 'do you even like that thing or do you feel like you should like that thing because all of those people like that thing?' You know? Like I – I have to like sit with myself and be like, 'I don't know, sort it out, mate,' you know?

Um, because like I – this was a chapter that was missing from the book, but like I wrote this chapter about how I wanted a Birkin bag from like the time I was a college student. As soon as I learned what a Birkin bag was, I wanted one. And the goal was I'll put my name on the list and then when I get out of school, hence us not

being in recession after recession after recession, I'll have a high paying job and it'll take me five years to get off that wait list. And by then I'll have work and then I can afford the bag that costs, at the time \$5,000. Birkin bags are more expensive today because of inflation.

It took me years before I was like, 'you only wanted a Birkin bag because you wanted what that bag says about you.' Today I don't even think Birkin bags are pretty. They look like a mini piece of luggage. I think they're ugly. But like we all fall prey to that, right? Like, 'I want this item because that person has it and that person has it, and maybe the world will treat me a little bit better if I have this particular item,' you know? And I – I don't think that – I think there are few people that are immune to that.

KIRI: Yeah, I totally agree. So when you were growing up as a kid then, who was dressing you? Because it sounds like it's sort of a three way thing between you, your mum, and your sister all having an influence in the final product?

AJA: Oh, well my sister didn't have an influence. It was just like, 'oh, I've grown out of this so put it in Aja's closet.' Um, my mother and then I myself, you know? Like I said, I started dog sitting and – and paper routing and doing anything I could. And then I'd go to the mall and be like, 'what can I afford? What can I afford?' And – and, you know, I felt like I could buy my way into like people being nicer to me. And that was just not the case.

But it did teach me like resilience. And it taught me like the value of things. Like that was the thing. I think, you know, a lot of kids – I grew up in a really affluent, privileged area – I think a lot of kids didn't understand the value of certain products and money. I remember this one girl, little brat, like she had like a sweatshirt

from The Limited. And like I wanted one of those so badly. It was like the – the product to have. And I remember her like putting it on the ground and like sitting on it. And I would never sit on something precious on like the muddy ground. And I said, ‘what are you doing? Like that costs money.’ And she was like, ‘it’s mine, I can do whatever I want with it.’ And I just remember being like, ‘bratty fucking kids, man.’ Like I remember thinking that as a kid.

KIRI: Yeah. But it also sounds like you are – I don’t know, it seems like that level of awareness that you’re applying to that, that feels like a – I don’t know, a – a slightly different relationship with consumerism to lots of children. Already it feels like you had something there.

AJA: I think I’ve always just been really hyper-aware of certain things. Like I don’t think that I’m like book smart at all, or like – like I bombed every like possible test you could bomb in school. But I think that there’s something to be said for like emotional intelligence. And like, um, you know, just looking at the world around you and being able to make an assessment and being able to really have like a bird’s eye view even though you’re in it.

And I think that’s something that I’ve always had a gift at. And I think my dad has the same gift. I don’t know, it’s like foresight and direction. Like my dad can be driving on a road in a city he’s never been in before in his life and he knows where that road will take him. He knows where it’s going to spit him out. And I’m the same. Uh, my partner calls me ‘the homing pigeon’ because he’s like, ‘go on, find our way home. Find our way home.’ Like if he gets a bit backed up, I’ll be like, ‘okay, take that left and I think it’s going to spit you out on this street. And sure enough.

And I think that that extends to like the ways I look at systems. The ways I look at the way the world looks. The ways I sort of started to be like, 'I'm not really feeling that great about fast fashion, man.' Like it's feeling – it's feeling a bit weird. Like I'm not – I don't know, I don't really like this whole disposable thing with my wardrobe and maybe that's actually going to become an ecological problem if everyone else is doing the same thing that I feel like I'm feeling compelled to do.'

So I think that in our society we really praise certain types of intelligence, you know? Literary and book and this and that. But I think that sometimes having the foresight to see things from a different perspective than maybe your peers can is something that we should also praise.

KIRI: Totally. Um, are you aware – sorry to go slightly off topic.

AJA: No.

KIRI: But there's a thing called the theories of, um, multiple intelligence. That there's about nine, um, but they think there might be even more. But generally financially we – we reward the ones that are, um, maths based, maths, science, and – and English based.

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: Um, but the ones –

AJA: Which will explain why I spent most of my life broke. Math was not my strong suit. It is not a Barber family trait, math. Like my niece and nephew are very good at math and I think they definitely don't get that from that from our side of the family.

[Both laugh]

KIRI: But one of the intelligences is, in it, is sort of existentialism and being able to see much further outside yourself of what is happening, and also where you fit in in the context, and – and what you're describing – and emotional intelligence is one as well, because some people can be so astute in that and have never passed a test in their life.

AJA: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: And – and but the problem is is the society. We've – we've decided there's just – there's the two type that we're going to financially reward, and everyone else just – you – you're not good at that stuff.

AJA: And I – I think that also extends to like jobs, for instance, right? Like I write about in the book how getting a visa to move from country to country to work is really hard to do. Because I've wanted to be back in London for years before I met my spouse. Um, and it seems like if you're in finance or IT or certain jobs, you can like move to any country in the world. But if you are like, 'I want to be a writer,' good luck getting a visa for that, you know? Good – good luck.

Um, and so yeah, I do write about that. Our world just values certain jobs and we don't value others and it's – it's a detriment to us, I think. I really do think that. I mean that's why people don't value certain work. That's why every graphic designer I know has to explain why they get paid what they pay – get paid. And that's also why people have lost disconnect with their clothing and value our – valuing our clothing and loving our clothing and cherishing

our clothing and having respect for the person that makes the clothing. All of this has to do with what we value in our society, I think.

KIRI: Totally. Totally. Even just like I – and even I thought I was more self-aware than most, but just even watching things like Sewing Bee, where it takes them – under extreme pressure they get given five hours to make something that won't be as good as the thing that you pay a couple of quid for in, you know, Primark. Because the – just the hours and hours, and I think if we all had a greater connection with that stuff, of craft –

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: Then – then the price should reflect that. But anyway.

AJA: And – and that's – that was totally it for me. Like I started, I – I was that person that would go into like a store that was slightly overpriced and go, 'I could do that. That's really simple. Why are they charging for that?' And so I literally got myself a sewing machine and was like, 'I'm going to learn how to do stuff.' And surprise, it's really hard. Like out of every project I made during that time period where I was making a lot of my own clothing, I would say every like – for every three items, two of them were absolute trash and unwearable. And then there would be one that would be like good. And it's like, 'yes, because making clothing is really hard.' Surprise.

But I don't think there's enough of that in our society. And I think – I think most school aged children should have to learn how to like sew and like take sewing classes and learn how to like prepare your clothing, you know? That should be taught in school. 'This is how you sew a button back on. This is how you do a few things.'

Because I – I do think I – I did take, um, they used to call it ‘home economics’, but now when I was a teenager it was called ‘modern teen living.’ And I took modern teen living and learned how to make a really not great pair of boxer shorts and a few other things. And, um, that was my first foray into realising that actually this takes time and effort and energy. And I think if everyone had to take that, maybe we would be looking at all of this differently.

KIRI: Yeah, that’s so wise. And I also absolutely love the phrase the ‘modern teen living.’ It’s so –

[Both laugh]

AJA: I know, right? Isn’t it so weird?

KIRI: So strange.

AJA: Like what sort of teenager is just going to be like, ‘oh yeah, so I know how to make a perfect pineapple upside down cake’?

KIRI: Real transferrable skill stuff. Um, you said earlier about you and your mum sort of having arguments around clothing. Were you ever made to wear something that you hated being in?

AJA: Yeah, that sweater in the fourth grade. And my – it’s in my fourth grade like school pictures. Hated that sweater. Because I knew it was dated. Like I knew I was going to get dragged the minute I got to school. So I was like, ‘please don’t make me wear that. Please don’t make me wear that.’ But like I would argue like most of my sister’s hand me downs were just incredibly dated. Like she was, you know, by the time I really started to get an awareness, which was like ages nine, ten, you know, she was nine and ten in like the 80s. And I was nine and ten in the early 90s.

And so like I really, really don't want to wear the clothing from the 80s. Because like that's what people rip on.

So yeah, all of that stuff I absolutely disliked. Disliked most of like the church clothing my mom made me wear. Oh god, my mom used to make us wear like stockings for church. And like I will never, ever wear a pair of stockings ever again in my lifetime. Ever. Never. Couldn't be bothered. So stockings for church and, you know, I used to have a little uniform because I was a church usher and I hated that too. So yeah, like I love my mom, but like man, nothing that she ever really picked out for me was – I would say we started to really make peace with like our sartorial disagreements when I was in my 20s.

I remember one year I wanted a pair of boots and she got me these – these boots and the first thing she said is, 'you – you could take them back if you don't like them. You don't have to keep them if you don't like them.' Because I could tell that like her feelings too had been sort of hurt through all of this. And I was like, 'no, I love them.' Like they weren't perfect. I would've liked a flatter heel, but I appreciated the effort that she put into like picking them out. And so I ended up wearing those boots until they fell apart. Because I felt like we had just come a really long way of like hurting each other's feelings in all of these conversations.

KIRI: Oh, that's so sweet. Um, it's – was there on the flip side of it then, was there an outfit or an item of clothing that you just never wanted to take off? You'd be like, 'oh, this is me'?

AJA: Yeah, I remember the first time I had something like that. There was this girl, once again, way more financial privilege than my family. I was playing at this girl's house after school and we

got really wet. I don't remember what we were doing, but we got like soaked. And her mom was like, 'oh my goodness, go and change, you two.' And I was like – she was like, 'you can wear something of mine.'

And she gave me this outfit and I was like, 'what? This is amazing.' And I remember it was the 90s, obviously, because I was a child in the 90s. It was these like orange biker shorts with like this really cool pattern on them with a matching top. The top was very high neck but also A-line, and so the biker shorts sort of stuck out underneath, and then the top was really A-line and orange and it matched and I just love that outfit so much. I was so obsessed with it.

And I remember at the end of the day I was like, 'oh god, I love this outfit so much.' And do you know like – I don't know if this is a testament to her being generous or her just being way more financially privileged than I was. At the end of the day, she was like, 'I don't even like that outfit. You can have it.' And her mom – she was like, 'mom, can Aja take this outfit home?' And her mom was like, 'I guess, if you really, really don't like it.' And I was like so happy, you know? And I wore that outfit until I could not squeeze into it anymore. I wore it like all day everyday. And so yeah, that was – that was the first time that I felt like I had something where I really felt, you know, this is how I'm meant to dress, you know?

KIRI: That's so lovely. I'm of course going to ask for pictures of all of these things because they just sound amazing.

AJA: I wish I did have a picture of the orange outfit. I don't know if my – I don't think my parents have one of it. But I wish that I had – I got better about like photographing things as I got older, but I

don't know if we have a picture of – I can see it in my head. High neck 90s classic.

KIRI: It sounds like it would be very cool now. Like everyone would be wearing something like that now.

AJA: Yeah, probably. Probably. Like if I like decided to make like a version of that as an adult, I think people would buy it.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: So when you were growing up then, what were the big trends? And were you going in with the trends or trying to work with the hand me downs to go with it? Or were you – by that time were you already like forging ahead and doing your own thing?

AJA: Originally what sort of launched it all was a Gap opened in my town and everybody had clothing from the Gap. And all I wanted was just a t-shirt or something and my mom was like, '\$20 for a t-shirt? No way.' You know? So – and I think the Gap has actually – I tell people this, but all of the brands that you see on the high street and in the malls have gradually come down in price because if you factor in today's inflation and the quality, Gap was actually very much on the high end in 1992.

Um, so that was the first thing. And it was also the Limited Too, which now the Limited Too looks like a rainbow barfed inside of it. But like when I was a kid, it was like just a shrunken down version of the Limited, was – which was the height of cool at the time. So it was very much like beautiful kids' clothes, you know? And today if you type in Limited Too it's all like bright, colourful, horrible, hurts your eyes. But back then it was like – they went through a

time period where it was all like muted, neutral tones, very cool. Um, so it was just like dressing like a mini adult.

And then later on, by the time I got to high school, I was really obsessed with Esprit de Corps. Now today Esprit is a completely different company. They basically sold the company to a group I think out of Germany and it's nothing like its former self. And I wouldn't even look in that direction because it doesn't appeal to me. But in the 90s, Esprit was the shit. It was so cool. It was so well-made, it was so beautiful, it was so ethereal. It was, um, it was just gorgeous. It was a gorgeous, gorgeous brand.

And so by the time I got to high school I was very much obsessed with that. And then I realised that, um, there was an Esprit outlet that was like an hour from my parents' house and I made them take me. And it was just like – oh, I remember I – I had like \$100 that I had just saved and I was able to get so many things. Pieces I still have today. Like I have a wrap dress that I bought from that Esprit outlet and I think it was like 1999, 1998 maybe. It barely fits.

KIRI: Amazing.

AJA: Like I say, wrap, and thank goodness for that. Um, but I got that dress. It had been like \$120, which let's remember in 90s money, that's a lot of money. Um, and I managed to I think get it for like 30 like at the outlet. And I – I still have it. It's hanging in my closet today. That I could send you a picture of if you wanted to see that.

KIRI: Definitely. Definitely. Because we'll pop it on the Instagram afterwards.

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: Um, that's so brilliant. And do you know what? It was you, actually, in an Instagram post you did a – a long while ago now, I think you were talking about a Zara dress, because I had been really struggling about – I was in –

AJA: No, no, it wasn't – it wasn't Zara for me because I – Zara has always made me feel like a fucking ogre, so it wouldn't have been Zara.

KIRI: [laughs] Okay.

AJA: Because that – they make some teeny tiny clothing.

KIRI: Yeah, they do.

AJA: And that's the one thing – even before I was not like off of fashion, fast fashion, I was like, 'no' to that store. Because every time I go in, I feel like an ogre. It's just like oh, you see something and you're like, 'that's cute.' And then you're like, 'do you have this in my size?' And they're like, 'we'll see. We'll see if we make it in an – in an extra large.' So like when you have too many of those experiences, you're just like, 'why bother?' So no, it wouldn't have been me if it was Zara.

KIRI: Okay, but it was you and it – you were talking about a – a – it was definitely a high street brand dress, and you were like, 'I have worn this so many times.' And I was in this weird bit where I was like – I couldn't quite afford to buy the sort of stuff that I knew was really eco and I was feeling very guilty. And I do get lots of stuff from charity shops, but – and you were like, 'listen, I bought this and I wear it constantly, constantly. And like – and that's how

we should wear our clothes.’ And that’s where I was like – it was like you had given me permission to – to understand how to try and work out my relationship with clothing.

AJA: Yeah. You know what? The problem is we all get like sold the marketing on Instagram. And Instagram will market something as what it isn’t. Like, you know, the – the people that have like the most like sustainable wardrobes, you know, they have like all the new like sustainable and eco trendy brands that everybody should have. Why do they only have that in their wardrobe when we know that everybody was buying fast fashion for like the last 20 years? I know very few people that did not get sucked into fast fashion. So how is it that this person is such a wise sage that they missed all of this? You know what I mean?

Like that’s what they’re not showing on their Instagram. They’re not showing the moment that they decided to bag up all their Asos and send it off to a charity shop, thus making it someone else’s problem. And that’s a little bit dishonest. They’re portraying to you a lifestyle, but that is not actually an attainable lifestyle. An attainable lifestyle is being like, ‘right, so like I know this dress is fast fashion, but it really serves a purpose. I’m going to continue to wear it. If a friend compliments it or something, I’m not going to be like, “oh, it’s – it’s H&M, hahaha.” I’m going to be like, “look, I don’t buy H&M anymore and here’s why. But if you really like this dress, it’s from this season. I bet you can probably find it on Ebay because I guarantee you they made millions of it.”’

KIRI: Absolutely. Um, did you have a rebellious phase when you were growing up, and did it show up in your style if you did?

AJA: Oh, I think the most amount of like rebellion was just fighting with my mom about like having the right clothing. But I would

argue, so my sister used to take me to like raves when I was like really young. Very underage. We all used the same fake ID, me and my sisters. All of us did. And, um, my sister used to take me to raves. And so I did start to dress very like raver-like, you know, when I was in high school. I had – and I still have a lot of those pieces. It was like classic 90s ware. The like really like long, iridescent skirt that I used to love.

And I had the like – today they're still, you know, this is popular again, which makes me feel like I'm too old to wear them, but the very high shoes. The shoes that were like, you know, you see people wearing these sneakers in Peckham and adds an extra like five inches to their, you know, those very high sneakers. I had those. I remember getting them. My parents being like, 'are those orthopaedic shoes?' And I was like, 'no.' Um, so – so yes, like I – I went through a time period where I think my clothing reflected what I was like getting into in the weekend. But I was never like super duper rebellious. Like I said, my relationship with my mom I think became fraught because of the clothing issue. So.

KIRI: Interesting.

AJA: She just couldn't understand why I didn't value, you know, why – why we had different values when it came to like clothing and money and financial stuff. She just didn't – she didn't get it. It was hard for her.

KIRI: But they've – it feels like they've aligned a lot more, right?

AJA: Well I think she's taught me a lot. Because the truth is, you know, for seeing, you know, getting me to like buy things from charity shops – and these were things I always kept secret from my like snobby peers – but like, you know, getting me into charity

shops and – and making me wear hand me downs was actually really good for me. Like that’s intuitively what we all should be doing. And so, um, I think she was really great in that way. And I appreciate that now. And like I remember when I got super into fast fashion, my mom being like, ‘why are you buying all this crap clothing? Like it’s crap. This is crap.’ And me being like, ‘you just don’t understand.’

And now she’s like – she’s so smug. Like I’m like, ‘you were right, it is crap.’ You know what I mean? Like – like she would literally like go to like her – her idea of like getting a good deal is going to her favourite charity shop and getting like a Patagonia jacket that somebody has like lightly worn, you know? And like that’s actually really cool, you know? It wasn’t cool when I was a kid, but like it’s super cool now. So I would say we’ve definitely like found our happy median after years of like bickering and not quite understanding each other.

KIRI: It’s so, um, when it turns out that your mum was right all along, it’s such a – such a big day personally to get there.

AJA: It’s so satisfying for her and it just makes me be like, ‘yeah, I know. You were right all along.’ Like it’s just – it’s insufferable. But yeah, she was right about a few things.

[Both laugh]

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Your – your style now, which I think is really – really chic, and not in the like, what I think’s quite a boring like – when I – when I think of like French chic of someone in a black turtleneck, it – it’s

chic in a – in a completely different way. When did that start showing up?

AJA: It's been cumulative. I think what it is, is you go through the years and you find clothing that you're like, 'okay, this really works on me and I feel really good when I put this on.' And so you start to sort of stick in your head, 'okay, these are – this is a silhouette that I like.' And then you see – I've always been also the type of person where like even in my 20s, part of the reason why I sort of came to all of this, was because it would be like, oh, I fell in love with like this designer's collection. Like this jacket that I'm wearing today. I saw this on the runway and thought, 'oh god, that's amazing. But it's also £2,000, so I'm never going to be able to afford it.'

And so I admire it and then I sort of move on with my life and buy the fast fashion version. But I never stopped looking for it on the RealReal. On Vestiaire Collective. On Ebay. And you know what? One day it shows up. And that's how – that's what people don't understand. Like they see my wardrobe as it is today and they think, 'oh, well she's clearly got a lot of money.' And don't get me wrong, my financial situation has absolutely changed and I'll always be honest about that.

But the wardrobe that I have was not an overnight like, 'oh, I'm going to have all the best designer pieces. I'll just get it all.' No, it was me literally being like, 'I love this designer's collection, so I'm just going to check every week on all of these sites for five years until something pops up. And lo and behold, it's actually \$100 and I'm going to pay that because I know that that piece costs two grand.'

And that also speaks to how we just devalue clothing after time, you know? Like we do – our society does this thing where you can have an item that was thousands of dollars, but if there's no demand for it, it virtually will go down to 90% of its price. And I began to see that early in when I started to sort of shop on like Ebay. Ebay was the first place I started shopping for like secondhand clothing. I began to realise that if we just devalue everything in our society and there's – we make too much of everything, so anything that you possibly could desire within your wardrobe, if you're patient enough it will show up in other places.

But also that patience is a lesson in realising that you don't have to participate in fashion in the ways in which we've been taught, you know, told that like, 'oh no, no, you just go to the high street and just buy all this stuff that you want and this and that and then dispose of it next week.' You know, you really start to just be a bit more patient and a bit more gentle and a bit more, 'okay, you know what? I'm not going to buy that because I don't actually want that. That's a short term thing. What I really want is this thing that I possibly can't afford and I'm just going to wait until I find something similar.' Perfect. So definitely buying clothing secondhand has totally helped me to slow down in general. And to really get the stuff that really, really matters and stuff that you feel really great in.

KIRI: Totally. I – that – yeah, that's something that I've come to as well. And I'm totally with you on the Ebay thing, that I'm – like – like my partner would be like, 'oh, I used to have this shirt and absolutely loved it. And I don't know what – I don't even know where it's gone. I must've left on holiday or something.' And I'm like, 'tell me about it because I will find it on Ebay. I promise you.' I just play the game.

AJA: I will find it for you. Yeah. And, you know, even my partner, I mean when I met Steve he was just wearing, you know, fast fashion and clothes of the rack, you know? He had a wardrobe of like, you know, just fast fashion. I remember the first like when we – when we went to Japan together, that was the first time that he really started to see men’s clothing. He got this vintage Comme des Garçons jacket and it’s so good on him. And now he’s like, ‘oh yeah, um, maybe like you could find me some more like secondhand Comme des Garçons pieces. They really work for me.’

KIRI: He’s got a taste for it now.

AJA: Yeah, exactly. Like it’s very hard, I think, when you change your way of like looking at fashion and style. It’s really hard to go back to like the old way, basically.

KIRI: Totally.

AJA: But we’re not buying anything like new off the rack just like that. Like that has happened like probably once or twice for me, but, um, I – I just, full disclosure to people, like if you see someone like me with a wardrobe that you admire, ask about the story but do not assume that this stuff was bought full retail price, because I can’t afford that.

KIRI: But also I think it’s an interesting thing that I guess by having a platform, people do assume. People always massively over-assume people’s income and their assets or familial wealth or whatever. And –

AJA: Yeah. You know what’s the problem? The problem is there’s class confusion because we don’t talk about class privilege and wealth in honest ways in our society. And that’s something that I

talk about in the book. It's just – everybody is – people are confused but I also think people that are our peers are like wilfully a bit deceitful. Like there's such a thing as like, you know, lying by omission, I think.

Like when you've got like – when you're like complaining about like paying rent and, you know, you've got a friend who you know their parents like bought their house just like that and they're like, 'yeah, you know, like it's really tough out there right now.' And you're just – I think that's kind of lying by omission. Because it's like you don't even understand what I'm complaining about. Stop it. Like stop trying to feel like you're the worker when in actuality you're the boss. And I think a lot of people do that within our society and I don't think it's very helpful.

I always try and be extremely honest about like, 'these are the privileges I have, these are the privileges I don't have, you know? This is how much I have paid for this item, but I also paired it with this item. And while that is a designer piece, I managed to buy that secondhand on this site and this is how you can do it too.' You know? But like I – I think that within our generation there has to be more honesty surrounding these topics, you know?

KIRI: Yeah, because also then otherwise you're just perpetuating – it is – it's just another way of encouraging consumerism and this just absolute worship of money and things.

AJA: Yeah, you're perpetuating it while also making your friends feel like shit, because maybe they don't have the same sort of privileges as you. Like for the people that I'm close friends with, I'm like brutally honest about like, you know, what we, you know, where I'm at financially. If a friend asks me like what I got paid for something, I will totally tell them. If they ask me. You know, but

I'm obviously – there is some discomfort with like shouting it from the rooftops on your whole platform about like money and financials. But I – I would like a bit more honesty. Because I do think that some of our peers be like – be like lying by omission about shit. And I don't think it's very helpful to a productive conversation.

KIRI: There's a really interesting conversation happening. So I'm a stand-up. Amongst female stand-ups, where we're kind of – lots of us are going, 'let's talk about what we're being paid for stuff.' Because we're finding out we're not being paid the same as the boys or that they're, you know, that they're just – and – and basically we need to know our own worth and, you know, as a marginalised group within comedy, that there's some solidarity in being informed.

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: And there's some strength in it as well, so.

AJA: If anybody comes to me on any gig, like and I had to learn this – I don't want to say 'the hard way,' but like I've done things before where I've found out that like people that I, you know, know didn't – didn't make what – what they were worth. And so now anytime I'm going into something where there's other people involved, I will actually message people and be like, 'hey, what are you making for this? This is what I'm getting paid.' You know?

Because I just want a fairer landscape. That's really it. I just want things to be a little bit more fair. And it doesn't hurt me to tell people what I'm being paid or to be honest and open about that. And people will come to me now and be like, 'hey, what should I

charge for this?’ I ended up giving out advice about this all the time. And it’s good. It’s good. But I think we just need to be more honest.

If somebody wants to write for a – a group that I’ve written for before and they come to me and ask me about payment, I’ll be like, ‘well this is what I made. I don’t think you’ll get that only because of this reason, but I see no problem with you asking for this amount of money. Like I have a bigger following than you and so maybe I got more – paid more money because there’s an expectation that I’m going to promote it. But, you know, I think that you should ask for this and they’ll probably say yes.’ You know, so like I really do want to make like, um, I want to make things more equitable and more fair. And I’m – I really want people to just start coming correct about like how we do that.

KIRI: Yeah, I totally agree.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Can I ask, do you think about hair and makeup as part of your outfit?

AJA: Well actually if I had known this was a video call I would’ve actually put on a face. I was planning on doing that, but I was also running late this morning.

KIRI: I have nothing on, so.

AJA: Um, I don’t actually, um, I’m not really a big hair and makeup person. My hair is very low maintenance. And thank goodness for that, because I don’t have the patience for it. And as far as makeup goes, I pretty much wear the same products all the time.

Like maybe I might get like a little wild and do like a – an eyeliner that's like a bright colour, but generally I really am very, very same old, same old in my makeup. And that's fine because I feel like my really bright knitwear speaks louder than the makeup, you know?

KIRI: Absolutely. Um, is there – and over the years, as someone who clearly loves clothes and fashion, are there any sort of trends that you've gone in for that's just not happening for you? That you've had to go, 'okay, I'm going to have to make peace with that'?

AJA: Oh, I think that for me was a moment where I realised like there were certain trends I – I would say for me, the moment where I started to say, 'I'm not going to do that,' was like, yes. Like and for me I think the one trend – wet-look leggings. Everybody was doing the wet-look leggings, and I was like, 'I'm going to look like a seal in those. I don't – no. You know, that's not for me. They don't look comfortable, it doesn't look like something I want to wear. It's just not for me.' And that was a freeing moment. And then I was like, 'yeah, you know what? I'm going to say that more often. I'm going to say, "you know what? That's great but it's not for me."'

KIRI: Very empowering moment brought on by some wet-look leggings. I love it. Um, what is your oldest item of clothing that you've had for a very long time and you still love? I think I might've seen this on your Instagram the other day.

AJA: I did that – yeah, so I did that last week on Instagram. It is a thrifted denim shirt. And it's not like the most loved item in my wardrobe, but it is the most worn item in my wardrobe. It's a thrifted denim shirt from the Gap, which I bought in the early 2000s and it was very oversized when I bought it. It no longer is

because bodies change as we grow older, and that is completely normal and natural. So now it doesn't shut, but like a long time ago it was very oversized.

And the cool thing about like, you know, clothing from chain stores is that they generally do date it. And so if you look underneath the tag it will tell you the year and season that your item is from. And that denim shirt is Fall 2001, which makes it 20 years old. And we are – we are coming up on an – a hole in the armpit, which means I might have to repair that, or it might just be time for something new because I would actually like – I'd like it to be oversized again and it just isn't, you know? It's really – it's more like a shrunken denim blazer, but that's okay. We had a really good run together 20 odd years.

KIRI: That's a lovely – it's like you're saying goodbye to a boyfriend, you're like, 'oh, we just fell out of love.' Like as opposed to an acrimonious break-up.

AJA: Yeah, I mean I still love it, but like – like I said, there's a hole coming in the armpit, the elbows are starting to get very, very like threadbare. Um, so I think its days are numbered. But like 20 years is a good run. And the problem is so much of the fashion that I now see in stores in general won't last you 20 years. And that's the problem.

KIRI: Yeah, yeah. I agree. Um, is there an era that you wish that you existed in just for the clothes alone? For the fashion?

AJA: I love 60s style. I do. I love – I love the 60s. Um, but I have to say like as a black person, when people say, 'what era would you go back to,' I'm like, 'none of them. None of them.'

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah, fair point. Fair point. Yeah, but as a white person, I'm like –

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: A cis white lady, like I can pop in anywhere and be fine.

AJA: Yeah. You could pop in anymore. I mean there were times when things – shit wasn't great for you either but, you know, times like today even for like some people when it comes to things going on in Texas. But, you know, I – I generally am like, 'uh, time travel, ugh.' I think, um, the show *Lovecraft*, uh, *Lovecraft County* really does a good job of talking about how like time travelling as a black person can be kind of conflicted.

But for clothing I do love the 60s, and I love the 90s. Like if I had had like all the money when I was like a teenager, oh my goodness. I just – I loved it. I love that time period of dressing. It wasn't because I loved being a teen, I just liked the clean lines. I love the minimalism, I'd love the mixing of the 60s with the minimalism. I just thought it was cool.

KIRI: Yeah, I think I used to when I was growing up not like it at all, because it was sort of, I – I was born in 86, so when I was getting into clothes it was like, 'ugh,' you know? Like if you wore that that was the old fashioned thing.

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: And now I look at it, I'm like, 'this is great. Why was I such an idiot as a child?'

AJA: Yeah, yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. No, I just – I think all of us, I – I was 82 and I think the decades are – it’s interesting. There’s always a time period where like some decade is getting like slagged off. And then later on we’re like, ‘actually it was kind of cool.’

KIRI: Yeah. Have you got an item of clothing that you put on and you just instantly feel amazing in?

AJA: Some of my like vintage Marimekko dresses do that for me. I feel like their – their designs really – they just get me. They just – they just get – they get women with what they’re going for. So yes, I have a couple of Marimekko dresses where I always feel really, really good when I put them on. Um, what else? Hm. Knitwear. Like my – my Lora Gene pieces, I think. Those knitted pieces, they are so me and they’re just so comfortable and – and well-worn and well-loved. So yeah.

KIRI: That’s lovely. Well I – I’m interested in what your relationship is with shopping. Because I know that you are – I – obviously I’m clearly obsessed with your Instagram and everything you have to say, um, but about – it was really interesting what you were saying about not being online as much and then not feeling as, I guess, compelled, or –

AJA: Pressured?

KIRI: Yeah. Pressure, that’s it. That’s exactly the word.

AJA: Yeah.

KIRI: Um, so what is your relationship with shopping? Is it – do you want to – is it online? Is it in person? Do you – do you want to

touch the stuff? Is it only secondhand? Is it – how does it work for you?

AJA: Um, it's a bit of everything. So I do love to go to like – and this is like the total privilege of living in London. I love to go down to the – the Libertys and the Selfridges and just poke around and look at the stuff that I cannot afford.

KIRI: Same.

AJA: But just look how it's made, feel the fabric, you know, just check out new designers. Like that is a privilege of living in London. I will never, ever ignore that. Um, but as far as like actual shopping for myself, I tend to sort of just keep an eye out on brands that I know that I like. And I tend to sort of – I'll mosey over to like the secondhand site, I'll have a peek around Vestiaire Collective, I'll favourite some things.

But I tend to shop in – I try and be very, very, very intentional in how I shop. And I generally will not bring something into my closet now unless I know that it's going to go with at least five different pieces. At least. At the very minimum. It doesn't come in my closet if I don't think it will last 100 wears, which is hard because a lot of things aren't that well-made anymore, so I am very – I almost overly scrutinise any clothing item I buy now. Because now that I understand the scope of all of these problems, I feel like you're a custodian of that item if you bring it into your wardrobe.

You are the one that has to figure out what to do with it the end of its life cycle. You are the one that is responsible for the repairs. You are the one – this is your item. So you have to care for it properly and you have to love it properly and you have to give it a

good life. And if you don't think you're going to do that, then you shouldn't get it. And so I am very, very – I don't buy a lot of clothing these days. But also we're in a global pandemic. What do you need? Nothing. You know?

KIRI: Yeah, you're not wearing anything out, are you?

AJA: This is the first time – I'm at the Hachette offices today and this is like the first time I've been in an office building in probably years. And it feels really weird but also cool because I've got a big pile of my books, which I'm going to sign. That's exciting. But, um, yeah. It's just, um, things have changed. And I think naturally we all should probably slow down, because we didn't know but now we're starting to get the numbers, now we're starting to understand. What do we do next? We slow down.

KIRI: Yeah, absolutely. About that and buying secondhand, what's the best item that you've ever thrifted or got – or got secondhand or off Ebay or?

AJA: Hm, I had a jacket that I wore so much. It was a thrifted jacket, it was like an old lady's like quilted jacket. And I wore it in high school. It had like butterflies all over it. And, uh, I got so many compliments in high school and – and I was like, it was like my Friday jacket. It was my Friday outfit. And then I came to London in 2003 and I brought the jacket and people here were like, 'that's amazing,' you know? And so it was just the jacket that always won me likes. Today I cannot squeeze in that jacket. But it's still hanging in my parents' house and I don't know what to do with it. But it's like the magic jacket.

Um, but I've also gotten some amazing like secondhand designer pieces. Some, uh, Junya Watanabe, some Comme des Garcons.

And those are also pieces that every time you wear it, you're going to get – people are going to come up to you and say, 'oh, that's really nice.' And then you get to sort of have a little story about how like, 'oh yeah, I tried this on in the store and I could never afford it. But then I just waited and waited and waited and then it came up and it was kind of expensive, so I sent the person a message and said, "I only have this amount of money but I really love it. And if you would be willing to part with it, I'd be so grateful but I totally understand if you don't." And then they wrote back and were like, "yeah, sure.'" And it's just like, 'yes! Yes!'

KIRI: Oh, I love it. That's so – and like if you had have been able to buy that full price at that time, there's no joy.

AJA: Would I appreciate it in the same way?

KIRI: Yeah, there's no joy, there's no story, there's no like – it must – must like a win every time you put that item of clothing on.

AJA: It's a win every time. It's a win any time I find something that I thought I could never ever, ever afford. And it's suddenly hanging in my closet. That is a win. And I get a lot of joy from my wardrobe. But once you start to collect enough of those pieces, it takes time, when you're wearing them you go into like a store where you used to frequent in your 20s and nothing stands out. Nothing. You're never – you're never going to be like, 'oh yes, I really like this very cheap dress that I don't need,' while you're wearing like a beautiful jacket that you waited long and fought hard for. You're never going to have that.

And so that's the point I'm at, where I still go into, you know, fast fashion stores to have a little nose around. I always want to see who's like getting ripped off and like what colours they're pushing. And I feel like today I can't even – I couldn't buy it if I wanted to because the quality is so different from what's in my wardrobe. And I also get that from shopping slow fashion brands, you know? You get – you start shopping enough slow fashion brands, your item comes, it's wrapped in tissue paper with lavender dried leaves. It's so beautiful.

And then like you go back into like a fast fashion store and you're like looking and everything's just polyester and it doesn't feel nice, it doesn't smell nice, and you're just like, 'I can't go back to this.' So people will say like, you know, 'I'm really, really into fast fashion. How do I – how do I get out of it?' And I'm like, 'you just have to like take some time off. Because the more time you take off, the more you go back to it and you start to see the glaring flaws that we talk about.'

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. It's, um, the only equivalent I have in my life is like I used to drink loads of fizzy drinks and then I stopped drinking them, and now if I drink them they taste like chemicals. Whereas I didn't notice that before because I was drinking them all the time, so.

AJA: Oh my god, it's the same with, um, certain like – like products like Little Debbie snacks in America. I know that we don't have those in the UK, but in America Little Debbie was like the things that I wanted so badly. They made like cakes and like just, you know, people that were really lucky got Little Debbie stuff in their lunch and my mom never bought it because she was like, 'that stuff's not very good for you.'

Anyways, I bought some like zebra cakes when I was home recently, like with my sister. We were like, 'yeah, let's get some zebra cakes. They're amazing.' And they just tasted like chemicals. I was like, 'what?' But I also – I make that similar analogy with fast fashion, right? So if you're buying like once a week, once a month, whatever, you are on this constant loop of being fed fast fashion, right?

And it's the same with sugar. Like I love sugar, and in America we put a lot of sugar in the food. You notice – you don't notice it when you're there. When you come to the UK, you notice the absence of sugar and you're like, 'I crave sugar. Give it to me. Give it to me.' And then it tapers off after like two weeks. Now when I go back to the States, I go and order something from a restaurant that was like perfectly fine for me, and I'm like, 'there's a lot of sugar in there,' you know? Like you're a bit like surprised by it because you've taken that time off.

It is the same with fast fashion, right? If you're constantly buying, you're never going to notice the quality or the weird smells or the fact that maybe it's not the thing that you actually need. But if you take enough time off of it, when you go back you're just like, 'wow, you light a match and this whole store goes up flames,' you know what I mean? But you don't notice that when you're just in the cycle.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Can you see your style and like – do you think this is your style now? Or do you think it's going to evolve or change radically?

AJA: Yeah, no, I think I'm – I think – I think I've reached my, uh, my full bloom at middle age. I always say I was born middle aged and I do feel that way. And I'm just like, 'yeah, this is me.' You know what I mean? Like, yeah, some things will change, but I think I've started dressing in a way where I really aim to get longevity out of my wardrobe.

Because that was another thing I hated. In my 20s, it was like everything was – I wouldn't say it was skin-tight, but it was very fitted. And so if I put on five, ten pounds, there goes your whole wardrobe, you know? And so now I don't dress that way anymore. I love – I love a muumuu. I love a frock that's a bit, you know, big in shape. I tend to make clothing where if you change size you're not going to be completely sized out of your dress. That's what I – that's what I aim to do with Lora Gene. And so I don't buy things that are like super duper overly fitted right now, because I just don't think it makes a lot of sense.

I know that I've changed size five times in my adult size. I have uterine fibroids, I maybe want to have a kid one day, and so I need a wardrobe that is really going to just last me through these changes that my body will go through. And that's how I shop now. I don't shop to be like, 'I want something overly fitted that if I, you know, change size a little bit I'll have to get rid of it.' I don't want to live like that. It's not fun.

KIRI: No, it's really not. And you have just made me think then about what things have I bought being like, 'this is – I'm the cusp of this fitting,' but if – if your weight fluctuates, which it does, in you know, in one direction, that's it.'

AJA: It's done, yeah.

KIRI: It's done. Like that's such a stupid position to put yourself in. Because also I can't help. I'm trying to get there.

AJA: But also our society – our society makes the clothing, you know what I mean? Like it – this is something that can be fixed by design. People could make shirts that had extra panels of fabric so that you could let it out, you know? Like these are all issues that could actually be solved by design, but fashion is pushing certain things. So don't blame yourself for that.

KIRI: Great, that's exactly the – the get out of jail free card I needed.

AJA: No, it's true, though. Like I think there are so many issues in our society that could just be fixed if people put a little bit more time into it. And, you know, if we had laws. Like if you make a pair of shoes and they're so uncomfortable the person can't wear them, they can return them and you have to give their money back, you know? Like that would definitely change the, uh, scale of uncomfortable women's shoes being made for sure.

People would get real serious about comfort if they knew that we would be returning to them those shoes and being like, 'yeah, I wore these and they hurt my feet so I'd like a refund, thanks.' So like I do think that there are things that our society structurally can change to make a more inclusive, kinder, gentler world. And unfortunately that's just not happening. But maybe we are the leaders that we've been waiting for.

KIRI: Oh, that's amazing. I hope so. Um, absolutely behind you on the getting a refund on those shoes, by the way. That's such a smart idea.

AJA: And they're one time use shoes, like honestly. A pair of uncomfortable shoes are one time use because you know after they cut your feet up you're not going to be like, 'oh, I think I'll wear these today, you know?'

KIRI: No.

AJA: And you put them in your closet, they become covered in dust, maybe they get a little mouldy, and then one day you throw them away. Like that's a one time use product. And like you even see it when you go on like websites of brands and you'll see the reviews and someone will be like, 'these shoes were so painful. I really hate them.' But the brand isn't like, 'okay, let's yank this design because we're getting multiple reviews where people are saying it's uncomfortable. No no no, let's just keep selling them, you know?'

KIRI: Is there an item of clothing you can always see yourself wearing?

AJA: Always, always, always a dress. Always an oversized sweater as well.

KIRI: Love it.

AJA: And are there any trends that you're hoping never come back? That you're like, 'we – we've seen enough of that'?

KIRI: I think we overdid the cold shoulder top. I think – I think too many cut-outs on the arms. I just think we really – we really took it to an 11.

KIRI: I know. It's the ones that are mid-way down the arm as well that I find complete – because I'm like, 'that's the – the bit of my arm I'm most likely to want to hide, and then you've given it its own bit.'

AJA: I just remember being like, 'wait, what? And okay, why is it everywhere?' Like when I saw it I was like, 'okay, that's not for me, but maybe that's for some people.' And then it just went everywhere. And I was just like, 'no, okay, we need to stop. Like stop. Like it's fine if some people like this, but the amount of designers that should know better,' you know?

[Both laugh]

KIRI: Um, I've got one final question. It could be seen as a – as a bit sombre, but it's meant to be celebratory. So what outfit would you want to be, um, buried in?

AJA: Buried in. I knew you were going to say it. I knew you were going to say it. Oh, I haven't thought this far ahead. I don't – you know, I'm not sure, but something that will biodegrade. Because I want it to go when my body goes. I don't want to be, you know, I just don't want to have like my body decompose in an outfit made of plastic just sitting there 500 years after I am long gone and have returned to the stars as stardust. So something linen-y, something hemp-y.

I just, you know, I've really – I've reached my final self as the middle-aged art teacher I always wanted to be, and I'm loving life. So yeah, definitely something hippy-like. I haven't – I haven't gotten that far ahead, but it has to be something that will leave the planet at the same time I do. Leave nothing behind.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: I really love Aja. She's so elegant and straightforward in what she says. And it sort of makes me less terrified of confronting things like consumption and, you know, the carbon footprint of my wardrobe. Um, I'm hoping some of you are maybe the same and you're just a bit like me. I just feel so terrified, um, that it might feel easier to ignore the problems.

But whenever I read something Aja's written or listen to her speak, I think it always comes from a place of understanding without being fluffy and infantilising. And I think her book *Consumed*, which is out now, will be one of those books that people cite as a point that culture and conversation shift. So very exciting.

And I think I've found the perfect small business to bray about to you. Because I wanted to ask Aja to be on the podcast since I first came up with the idea, and I always planned to talk about this business because it is such a perfect fit. Um, it's sort of two businesses, so stay with me. They come from the same great brain, specifically that of Kalkidan Legesse.

She is the CEO of Sancho's, a beautiful shop in Exeter, and Shwap, which I'm excited to tell you about is an online venture. So let's start with Sancho's. High street shop of the year winner in 2020, it started as a pop-up shop in only 2014. Now Sancho's specialises in sustainable and ethical clothing and homewear, and they work with small and large sustainable brands with an aim to provide affordable, ethical fashion to you.

So you can search their website by your ethos too. So you can look for products exclusively from black owned businesses or that

are vegan, which is just amazing. And they also operate a transparent pricing policy with some items, so you can pay just what the item costs and the postage. Or you pay like the middle price, and that covers the aforementioned and the shop's overheads, or you can pay the top price and cover the overheads of someone who could only pay for the bottom tier. I just think that's so amazing because it can allow people to support other people making sustainable choices too.

Kalkidan is brilliant on social media too. I've learnt lots from her Instagram and discussions and she's recently launched Shwap, which is a circular sustainable fashion selling site, where amongst other things you can track your clothes to the end of their life. It's just really inspiring, so go and have a nose at Sancho shop and Shwap, because I – oh, yes, Shwap is spelled S-H-W-A-P because I think she's just doing amazing things.

We've had more messages from you, which is delightful. If you want to message us, um, you can write to us at whoyouwearingpod@gmail.com. You can also follow us @whoyouwearingpod on Insta. Um, so you can drop us a message there if you prefer.

Calathea messaged us on Instagram with just a picture of her looking absolutely banging in a jumpsuit. And she says, 'thank you for inspiring me to be comfortable in my own skin. Being a curvy, five foot 42 year old I can sometimes lack the confidence to embrace my quirky style. This is a cute little jumpsuit.'

It's absolutely gorgeous. It's like sort of like a, um, a purple with like a really great print on it. She said, 'I found it in a charity shop today for 8 quid.' Love it. 'I just need to change the buttons and

add a belt to complete the look.' You look amazing, thank you so much for listening.

Um, Suzy said – oh, this is so good about Kris's pictures from last week of her and her twin, especially in matching dresses. She says, 'my auntie used to make me dresses when I was little.' Cute. She said, 'she once made me a dress to match the one she'd made for me mam-gu. I hated it.' Mam-gu is South Walean Welsh for grandma. 'Like love the idea of a matching dress, not sure if I want me and granny stepping out in the same outfit.' God, love her.

Heather sent a lovely message after Kris's episode as well, saying, 'Kris is an absolute inspiration. This was such a beautiful episode. Really nice to hear you mention Fashion Revolution too.'

[Upbeat electronic music]

So thank you so much for all your messages, um, yes. Always nice to hear from you. And thank you to all the lovely folk who've given us a nice review. Now we're heading to the end of series one. It's been a blast. But we've got lots of episodes racked up for series two already, but we're having just a little six week break. It would be so lovely if you guys could subscribe straight away so you know when the next episode comes out. Um, and it really helps people find us as well. Next week's episode is with an absolute gem of a human and a deeply funny soul. It's TV's Steven Bailey. See you then.

[Music sotps]

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.