

Who Are You Wearing – Kris Hallenga

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN: Hello and welcome to the Who Are You Wearing podcast. I'm the host, Kiri Pritchard-McLean, and this podcast is just an excuse for me to pester stylish people about what they wear, and more importantly why they wear the clothes they do. This week's chat is really lovely, and it's a woman I think is incredible. Not only is she a founder of a charity doing immeasurable good, she's now a Times bestselling author and she's also the owner of one of the most relaxing voices I've ever heard. It's Kris Hallenga.

This episode was recorded in August of 2021, so before Kris's book, *Glittering a Turd*, best title ever, was released and became a bestseller. Kris was down in Cornwall and I was sat in my walk-in wardrobe, which I recently accurately described as a 'panic room for a drag queen.' It's very likely you will be aware of Kris's charity, CoppaFeel!, but not everyone knows the stylish, fun woman behind it. So I think you'll really enjoy this sgwrsio – sgwrsio is Welsh for chat, by the way.

Um, heads up, we do talk about cancer, so if you need to duck out, just do what's right for you. If you stuck around, lovely stuff. Prepare to be charmed and relax – her voice is so lovely – as I ask the stupendous Kris Hallenga, 'who are you wearing?'

KRIS HALLENGA: The gymnastic outfit that I begged my parents to buy me, like it was so colourful. And like I didn't feel like a gymnast until I wore this leotard. And then I felt like, 'this is me.' I mean it didn't last. It lasted like five minutes. But you know when you just want something so bad and – because all the other girls

had these incredible outfits and I got this leotard and it was just like – I thought, ‘this is it. I’ve arrived. This is what I’m meant to do.’ Um, yeah. So it’s – it’s amazing. Even if I saw that outfit now, it would bring back those same like – the same memories. Um, isn’t it amazing that your brain can store those things? So I’d say I must’ve been about – I don’t know, like six. I could say about six.

KIRI: Wow.

KRIS: Um, and then also – so again, because I grew up in Germany, um, you don’t wear school uniform, um, and they make a massive deal of your first day of school. Like it’s huge. You go to like church for some reason. Um, and then you have like a celebration with your family at home. You get given loads of presents. Um, it’s really weird. It’s like when I moved to – to England I was like, ‘what, you just literally just go to school and learn stuff on the first day? Why would you do that?’ Um, so yeah. Um, and you obviously dress up for the occasion as well.

And my sister and I wore these incredible like velvet silk dresses with these big puffed sleeves. So I had a purple one and my twin had a like a pinkish one. And we just looked amazing. Um, and you know, I don’t know why, because like, um, you know, you’re young, why would you even care about those sort of things. But I guess that was the first time where I was like, ‘okay, now I’m comparing myself to other people because I’m going to school now, I’m around people that I’m going to make friends with, like what I wear maybe matters.’

And I – like I’m still quite conflicted about whether I prefer school uniform or non-school uniform, because in a way when I moved to England I didn’t have to think about clothes anymore. I just had to wear my uniform. I didn’t have to feel like I had to fit in or like

wear something cool. Not that I really thought that in Germany, but it's definitely there. Because everyone is starting to express themselves, aren't they? And you – you can express yourself through clothes.

Um, yeah, and I didn't – I just wasn't aware of that until I came to England and I thought, 'oh, what a relief. I don't have to think about this very much. I can just literally put the same old shit on everyday and no one cares.' So that was quite nice. So yeah, I'd say they – they were my two statement pieces as a kid.

KIRI: Love them. Absolutely love them. What did – what did the leotard look like? What were the colours on it?

KRIS: Just multicoloured. It was amazing. It's like literally globs of different colours. Um, I mean it's amazing. I – I remember more about the outfit than I do about any of the moves I learnt, any of the classes, uh, it was just that outfit. It was amazing. It was epic.

KIRI: I could also see you absolutely wearing that now.

KRIS: Uh huh. If it fit, I absolutely would. I bet my mum's still got it somewhere because she stores absolutely everything.

KIRI: We are obviously going to ask you at some point for a picture of those so we can put it on the Instagram because they sound amazing.

KRIS: Okay. Sure.

KIRI: Um, so did you have – so you've got this colourful leotard, um, that helps you feel more like a gymnast, which I love, and you've got these amazing velvet and silk dresses, um, that you

and your twin have got different colours of. So did you have a strong sense of style as a kid, then? Of what you – what looked good, how you wanted to be seen?

KRIS: Well, I guess – I don't – to be honest, I'm not sure how much, um, like – I don't know how much I really said to my mum like, 'I – I want this outfit to be like this.' So I – what I failed to mention is that my mum made the outfits. Um, so she – the dresses she made herself. Um, and I can't remember ever like sitting down with her and going, 'so what colours do you want? What fabrics do you like?' Um, it was very much like what Mum puts us in is what we wear. Um, but still feeling amazing once I did.

So, you know, I was – I was quite a bit of a tomboy. I spent a lot of time outside. So it was more like practical clothes back then. But, um, it was just those special occasions. Like Christmas or – or, uh first day of school or, you know, um, uh, performances with school or things like that, that were I guess made an occasion of because our mum made us these outfits. So we saw her slave over them night after night, you know? Until her fingers bled from the sewing machines. Like and she did – she worked so hard on all of our clothes.

Just – and I don't – yeah, it was like her way of like – well I think it's just – it's just that generation of like, 'if we – if I can't buy it, if it's not in the shops there and then, I may as well make it, you know?' Um, and she was incredibly good at it. And so I think you learn to appreciate those clothes more because you've seen the labour behind it. You've seen that your mum is like sweating at night trying to make this zip fit or whatever. Um, and then she kind of makes you feel like, 'I should be bloody grateful because she slaved away at it.'

Um, so yeah, I think that's what made me think about those items of clothes a bit more. And also with the leotard, like my parents couldn't just go out and buy whatever I wanted. Like they had to be considered. Like, 'does she really need it?' Like there were so many items when I get older, so when we moved to England, where we had less money because our parents divorced, etc. My mum was trying to keep her kids under a roof and stuff.

And I'd see kids wearing like, um, I'm going totally off piste here, sorry. But like I'd see kids wearing like cool, um, Adidas tracksuit bottoms and, um, those cool kicker train – like kicker shoes that they wore to school and stuff. And I would go like to the market and get like the cheap version. Because I wanted to feel like I could still wear those clothes, but I couldn't – like we could not afford the right – like the expensive version. Um, I don't know why – I don't know why I felt that way. I – but I never felt like I had to fit in. Because like I – in the – like in the way of like what I was wearing, um, but I must've been slightly aware of what other kids were doing and feeling like, 'well, maybe if I wore those clothes I'd be more accepted.'

There must've been some conscious decision in that. Otherwise I would've just rebelled against it and said, 'sod it, I don't want to wear those trousers anyway.' Um, so I – there was definitely a sense of like, 'oh, I wish I could have those things.' Um, but yeah. I think when we were little it was more about like clothes that our mum made and made such a hooaha about. And then we pranced around in them. Um, I loved it. Absolutely loved it.

KIRI: It's so lovely. I've, um, I don't know if you're the first twin that I've spoken to on this. Um, because I'm always – when I was growing up and I'd see twins dressed the same, I just thought it

was the coolest thing in the world. But I don't know if as a twin you feel like that. Or are you like, 'please stop dressing us in the same thing'? Like did you dress yourselves or was it your mum or was it your family?'

KRIS: I think as soon as we could, we dressed ourselves. Um, and I think a lot of people, yeah, assume that twins wear the same clothes. But actually we have an older sister, so it was a – like a lot of hand me down clothes. Um, clothes from friends and stuff. So they weren't always the two of the same thing. So like again, special occasions. Like but we'd wear the same but there'd be this like – a slight – like they'd be in a different colour or some – there'd be just something different about it.

Um, and then at school like we wouldn't like make sure that we wore the same things on like special days or anything like that. It was just whatever we could wear. Um, but yeah. Now I think when I see little – like little, little twins in the same outfits, I'm like – I go, 'that is so cute.' But at the time you're like – you obviously don't appreciate it because you don't know any different.

KIRI: Were you ever put in anything that you hated then? That you just felt, 'ugh,' in?

KRIS: Um, no. I don't think so. I don't think so, no. Um, apart from obviously having to dress for – dress up for Christmas and deciding I didn't want to and then wore my shell suit instead. I think that's the – literally the only time where I felt like I need to decide what I'm wearing today.

KIRI: Do you have, um, when you were growing up as either a kid or a teenager, did you have a favourite item or outfit that you would – you just felt like a million dollars in?

KRIS: Oh, fancy dress. Fancy dress.

KIRI: Okay.

KRIS: I think brought me way more joy than anything. Any other normal clothes. Um, and again, Mum made us all our fancy dress outfits. And in Germany they have this thing called Carnival and, um, you just dress up however you want to. Um, this – they have this thing called – I mean you've heard of the term 'Carnival' before, but they do this Carnival thing in Germany.

And certainly where I grew up. Um, and all the kids wear fancy dress to school and you have like parties all day. And it's so fun. Um, and Mum made us these like, um, almost like 'I Dream of Genie' outfits. Um, yeah. It was so cool. Um, and they were – yeah, she made them out of silk and she – we had little hats with the – you know, with the little like, um, uh, like the mesh underneath our chins.

KIRI: Oh my god.

KRIS: Like she went – she went absolutely to town in those outfits. And like when – when they were done and we'd worn them to school, that – I mean, I felt like the absolute shit. Like I – that was it. And Maren and I, we were wearing the same outfits, but she made them in slightly different colours. And we just felt so cool. So yeah, it's never been normal clothes that have made me feel amazing. It's very much been fancy dress. And I'd say the same in adulthood too. But then where – where is the boundary between normal clothes and fancy dress, you know?

KIRI: Well I – I think so, I –

KRIS: What – what – where’s the line?

KIRI: When – I think people who are experimental and have, um, you know, a certain sense of style –

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: I – I think what they would consider wearing is what other people would think is wild for a fancy dress.

KRIS: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I just think whatever you fancy. Like if you fancy – if you get up in the morning you’re like, ‘I’m going to put cat ears on today,’ fair play.

KIRI: Um, I know that you’re saying that because at some point I definitely think you will have worn cat ears.

KRIS: Absolutely. Yes.

KIRI: So when you were a teenager then and growing up, what – what were the big trends? Did you go in for any of them or were you sort of marching to the beat of your own drum a bit more?

KRIS: Um, to some extent marching to my own beat because of what we could afford and what I like – I don’t know. Like, um, I wasn’t heavily influenced by what other kids were doing. But it was the 90s. And like obviously there was a trend. There was, you know, there was the crop tops and the, um, the striped trousers and stuff like that. And the kicker shoes. Um, and I definitely wanted those things but couldn’t have them most of the time. So obviously had to wear whatever I could.

I do remember this one time when we got to go to New Look. There was a – you can always tell what kind of town centre you've got by the shops that are there. We had a New Look and that was about it. We just had a New Look and a Dorothy Perkins. And our mum took us to New Look one day and I remember thinking, 'I love this crop top.' And I was like, 'am I a crop top person? Like can I pull that off?' And I remember buying it and thinking, 'maybe I am a crop top person.' Um, and then, uh, but then I was never like – when it came to like Mufti Day, uh, non-uniform – non-uniform day, I wasn't brave enough to wear it. So I only wore it at home. Yeah.

KIRI: No.

KRIS: I just like – there's some – yeah, I just didn't – I just didn't have the confidence to do it. Um, so I wore something else. Um, yeah. I think I – do you know what? I'm so lucky that I had a like – my teenage years were filled with silliness and not really caring about what other people think too much. Like I had a great group of friends who were more into playing with our hamsters and guinea pigs and, um, making funny videos that are like home videos, um, at home and like – like our favourite show was Smack the Pony. So we would do like Smack the Pony sketches ourselves and film ourselves and make adverts, TV adverts and stuff like that.

And I was like a real – like I loved school. I loved all my – like my projects and stuff. So I just – I feel really lucky that I was part of a, um, like there was no one who made me feel like I had to be something or wear something or – or become something. I think the only thing that really stands out in terms of like a statement that in my teenage years, is when I started wearing like liquid eyeliner. And, um, I remember this girl who was nice to us when

her friends weren't around, but as soon as her friends were around, she was a real bitch.

Um, and but in a way like my friends and I, like my – when I say my friends, it was me, Maren, and another girl called Fay. That was the sum total of it. Um, we would kind of look at her in a way of like, 'oh, she's like –' we – and we always wanted to bring her under our wing as well because – so whenever she was mean to us, like we wouldn't let it get to us. But equally when she was – when she let her guard down around us, we're like, 'maybe she can be a nice person.'

So I don't know where she's ended up, but I really hope that she's ended up going down the nice person route, not the bitch route. Anyway, so she decided to actually help me one day put this eyeliner on. Um, and it was like such a moment to be like – almost feel like, 'maybe I can be cool and wear makeup like the rest of these girls in school.'

Not that that really – it wasn't a defining moment of like, 'yay, I – now I'm like a woman or now I'm like cool.' Like to me cool didn't really mean much, but it was just like this, 'oh, this is great.' Like, 'maybe we can connect on this like weird level of eyeliner.' Um, and, uh, yeah. Worn it ever since. Not wearing it today. But I – I do wear it a lot. I think, um, and it's one thing that has just always been with me, is this liquid eyeliner that has been part of me.

KIRI: I love that.

KRIS: So it's not so much clothes but in makeup. Yeah.

KIRI: That's so, um, that's such a sweet story as well of this girl that – also your friends just seem so lovely, that you weren't, you

know, when this girl was not being very nice to you, your – the reaction that you have is one of empathy.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: Of like, ‘oh, she’s good inside and – and hopefully she’ll find the friends she can be comfortable around.’ It’s so sweet.

KRIS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I know, there was this one, uh, school project that we had to do, and we were desperate for her to be in our group because we knew that she would then do well. We wanted her to be like, ‘come with us and we’ll do this. We’ll boss this project together.’ And I think she was so scared to almost work with the – the boss in the group because of how the – her friends would react. But she did and it was – I think that was quite a brave move for her to like kind of go, ‘well fuck you, I want to do well.’ Um, yeah. I wonder where she is now.

KIRI: I mean we all want the follow-up podcast to find out where she is. That’s all.

KRIS: Yeah I know, right? I don’t know.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: So when you were a teenager and there’s all these trends going around, obviously you’ve nailed the liquid eyeliner, but did you have a rebellious phase and did it show up in what you wore?

KRIS: Um, I think Avril Lavigne has a lot to answer for. Um, honestly without her, wearing ties with absolutely any outfit, uh, wasn’t a thing until she came around. And wearing really long socks. Like colourfully striped socks were not a thing either. Um,

with like torn up trousers. Um, so yeah. I think she very much influenced like my like 16, 17, 18 year old self. And I think it's – and that's when I sort of branched into – I mean you can't call her music rock music, but to me it was rock music. Um, and just a bit like – a bit different. It wasn't pop. It was just like – it was a bit, you know, it's like, what do you – rock pop. Pop rock? Is that a thing? Yeah, it is.

KIRI: Yeah, pop punk I think she was sort of. Yeah.

KRIS: Yes. Pop – more pop punk, you're right. Um, and that's when I started to wear the same sort of things. Um, and I wore loads of shag bands. Um, I don't know – do you – you know what a shag band is, right? Yeah. Yeah. I bloody love shag bands. Wore loads of shag – shag bands, um, and wore lots of, um, like denim skirts with long stripey socks.

And I remember going to Germany, so our dad still visits, um, our dad was still living in Germany after our parents divorced and we moved to England. And he was a teacher in his school, uh, at this school. And, um, he was quite a stern teacher and this one day, I don't know why, we were visiting, um, I decided to go into, uh, his school with my older – elder sister and teach. Like help him teach an English class. And I remember wearing this like very Avril Lavigne-esque outfit and thinking, 'I look so cool.' Um, only to be like confronted with lots of laughter and people calling me Pippy Longstockings or Pippy Langstrumpf as they call it over there. And I was like – I was devastated. I was devastated.

KIRI: That's the worst thing.

KRIS: Because like – I mean because I was like, 'I – have you heard of Avril Lavigne? She's like really cool.' Um, but obviously they

hadn't. And it was – yeah. That kind of put me back in my box a bit.

KIRI: Ugh, but that's so brutal as a teenager.

KRIS: I know, oh god, it's the worst.

KIRI: When you've got that thing of like, 'I've nailed this outfit.'

KRIS: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: And them openly laughing at you. It's brutal.

KRIS: Yeah. Yeah. Uh, and I – you know when you're just like – you're the pet – you're the kids of the teachers at this school. Like you're going to get some kind of respect. We got none. Absolutely none. Um, yeah. So I regretted that decision. But, um, yeah, so I'd say that – that's not really rebellious, but I thought we – and we were – we almost felt like we were the first people to like Avril Lavigne because we'd been to Canada and where – where she was already so cool. Because obviously she's Canadian.

And then we came to England, uh, came back from our holiday and, um, we were like, 'oh my god, there's this girl called Avril Lavigne, she's really cool. She's got this amazing song called Sk8ter Boi.' Um, and everyone was like, 'what are you talking about?' And then next thing you know, she's everywhere in the UK too.

And that was what – the first gig that Maren and I ventured to, was an Avril Lavigne gig in London. Um, and it was the best thing ever. And that – and that's when I felt like I'm like – this is – this is life. This is life. Where you get to go and do cool shit like that. Um,

and we met – we met up with this guy that we met on internet – on the internet, on this chat room. But our mum spoke to his mum first. So we got to meet this random guy – I think it was even at the Borderline in London. To watch Avril Lavigne, that no one else had heard of. It was just like – I think that's quite – pretty cool for a 16 year old.

KIRI: It's really cool.

KRIS: But I don't know. Maybe that's my level of cool.

KIRI: No, that's great. And also like that 16 year old boy, just like he must've been – just the bragging rights he must've had and been like, 'yeah, I'm taking these two girls to see Avril Lavigne.'

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: Obviously he wouldn't have said, 'Mum signed it off first,' but I think it's so cute. It's adorable.

KRIS: It is really cute. But he was such a massive disappointment. Because he was not everything that he was portraying online. So he was like so chatty online, per usual, and then as soon as we met him he's like mute. And it was so hard to hold a conversation with him. And so Maren and I, we – as soon as we got into the gig, we were like almost separated from him because he was like so boring. And I felt a bit bad.

But he was coming back to our house to stay at our house, because he was all the way from Scotland. He had travelled all the way from Scotland to come to this gig with these two random girls in London. I mean when I say it out loud now it sounds absolutely mad and something that I cannot believe my mum allowed us to

do. Um, yeah. So he came back on the train, back to our house in Northamptonshire, and he stayed on the – like the camp bed in the – in the living room. And then he – but he literally said like two – two words the whole time. And I swear he didn't go to the toilet the whole time. And he didn't eat anything the whole time. And we're like, 'who is this guy?' And then he went off back to Scotland the next day. And it was so awkward. The whole thing was so awkward. But we got to see Avril Lavigne and it was the best.

KIRI: What a poor love. I bet he's been like – oh god, he's probably just so shy and anxious.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And – and he's like, 'yeah, and I'm going to meet these girls.'

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And then as soon as he sees you it just falls apart for him.

KRIS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

KIRI: Oh my god, I'm – again I want a follow-up podcast. What happened to him?

KRIS: Colin, where are you? Um, yeah. I – I mean I don't know if he does still follow me. And he's just like somewhere there in the background. Quite voyeuristic about it. Um, but then after that he sent us this – this massive box arrived in the post and it had teddy bears in it and lots of love heart sweets.

KIRI: Bless him.

KRIS: I know.

KIRI: That's so cute.

KRIS: It's so precious. Um, yeah. So that. It felt so badass to go to London and do that with this weird guy from Scotland.

KIRI: It is still badass to do that now.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And I would still want my mum to phone their mum and check that they weren't going to murder me.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: So thinking about now and your style now, I don't see loads of Avril Lavigne. When I think of you and your style, I think of colours and I think of a lot – indie businesses.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: Which means that your stuff is not stuff I've seen elsewhere before, and loads of great accessories. So that style, when did that start showing up?

KRIS: I didn't realise that I dressed the way I really wanted to. It was – it really wasn't that conscious until maybe, um, when I was 23. Not long after I was diagnosed with breast cancer and I was going out – started going out with this guy. And he said, 'I – what I really like about you is that you don't care about what you wear.'

[Both laugh]

KRIS: And I was like – and I – and to this day, I don't know if that was a compliment. Or what if he was saying like, 'your – your style is quite unique.' Um, um, and that's when – that's what made me think, 'oh, okay. Interesting.' Um, but like I – I just feel so lucky that I haven't really made that many conscious decisions about it. Like I love – I think I was way more conscious about these things when I was living in London. So in London, when I'm in London I feel – I feel so aware of what I'm wearing compared to when I'm in Cornwall.

KIRI: Wow.

KRIS: Um, because people are looking so cool, they have, you know, they are just like so – I feel like they're so liberated in what they're wearing. And like they just are free. Um, and I feel like down here people conform to it – a bit more of a like a seaside country look. And everyone looks quite the same. Like I went to Brighton the other day, and I swear every second person I saw was wearing a Lucy & Yak dungarees. And I was like, 'wow.'

KIRI: Yes, it's the uniform.

KRIS: It is. It very much is. Um, I was like, 'fair enough. I mean, they're cool.' Um, yeah. So I – I'm glad that when you think of me you think colour. I'm glad about that because I – I do love to wear colourful things. Because I think – I just – just bring me joy. I like clothes that bring me joy. I like clothes that have cats on because I – I'm obsessed with cats. Um, I like – when I just see something and go, 'that needs to be in my life.' And it's – it's not anymore considered or thought out than that. Like it's just literally, 'that needs to be in my wardrobe. I'm buying it.' Um, and yeah.

I think most recently I've – I'm trying to stay more away from the high street, you know, quick, fast fashion stuff. Because I really want to start, um, enjoying my clothes more. And I – I'm guessing a lot of people have said this to you, that the pandemic has made them look at things that they own in a different light and – and I've definitely made – it's definitely made me think, 'I've got enough. Like I have enough of –' that I've got more than what I need and I want to start enjoying what I have a bit more. And I wouldn't – because I – I just wasn't shopping. There were – like I like going into shops and I wasn't going into shops, so therefore you kind of have to look at your wardrobe and go, 'oh, I got these cool things already. I don't need more.'

Um, so – but, you know, every now and again I do love a splurge and I buy something that is just like great. Um, so, uh, yeah. And – and I like glittery items. I like wearing sparkles and sequins and for no other occasion than to just – it's a Tuesday, maybe. It's a Tuesday, let's wear glitter. That's basically me.

KIRI: Is that – has it always been that case? Of always been like – because I think you dress like a – like it's – like you're – I – I think if you compared to what you wear to what normal people in inverted commas wear –

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: You would think if someone went, 'oh, she's just off to a something.' Like some kind of celebration. They'd go, 'oh yeah, that makes sense.' Whereas I think – I think you – yeah, your – how – how you dress is very celebratory. But I'm so – I'm like, 'am I projecting onto that a narrative because I know everything that you lived through?'

KRIS: Yeah, maybe.

KIRI: But I just think there's something – it's – do you know what, it's always – there's a like an undertone of festival to what you're wearing. Like –

KRIS: Oh, good. Thank you. That's so – that makes me so happy that you've said that. Um, yeah. I think, uh, being at festivals, um, that's when – I don't know, like you just go even wilder with your clothes, don't you? I don't know why it's at festivals that we really feel like we can wear absolutely any old shit and it looks cool. Like I just love that, though. Um, and I've – I've bought some epic outfits and stuff at festivals.

Um, there's a dress that I – I wear like a lot. I've worn it to death. That I bought at this random little stall at a festival. And I just love the story behind it as well. Like if people ask me, 'where's that from,' I'm like, 'this is from this epic festival, and it was just such a good time.' And, you know, I just love when clothes or things in your life like come with like so many great memories too.

Um, so no. I – I guess, you know, I think you're right. It has – it came at a time in my life where I thought, um, I need like – joy is paramount. And that was when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. You know, I just needed to know that there was still – still things to live for and things that, um, aren't affected by cancer. And clothing and the way you dress and things that you put on and things that spark joy in that way cannot be touched by cancer.

You can – you absolutely can polish that turd. You can – you can put on something that makes you feel good. And a – well, a – at

least a little bit better. Um, and cancer can do fuck all about that. And I – I like that. I – and I – I guess it's a sense of kind of rebellion and control over a very uncontrollable situation that I'm in. Um, and I try to bring that in – into, I guess, a few aspects of my life. Like, you know, what I eat and, um, who I choose to spend time with. Like or, you know, positive things. And that comes in the same way as clothes. So like positive clothes. Positive life. Positive outlook. I don't know. Maybe it's that. Um, but it's not every day. It's not every day I will go, 'today I'm going to wear this because I must feel more positive.' It's just like it comes way more natural than that to me.

KIRI: Yeah, and I – I wonder if it's you get to the point, um, where I think I'm at now. I've amassed so many clothes and I bought those things that make me feel happy, that now just everything I have, whatever I put together, even my tracksuit bottoms, I'm like, make sure they're fun and you feel nice in them, you know? Because that'll make exercise a bit easier.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: So now I can't fail to put stuff together that is – the – it's all mad.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: Because that's just how I bought it.

KRIS: Yeah, great. Why not mix and match all the goodness together?

KIRI: You – what is your relationship with shopping, then? You said you sort of, um, had a good think during the pandemic about

what you have and – and what you need. But are you someone who likes going in a shop? Or are you like me in that you're constantly – you see little pop shop things on Instagram and then you go down and find a new business like – or charity shopping I love as well? What's your vibe?

KRIS: Yes. All of it. Everything. Absolutely everything. I mean Instagram is so bad. It knows exactly what I like and it'll take me to the thing and the next thing, the thing is in my house. But so many times I have fallen down that rabbit hole of, 'look at this fancy outfit. It's very much like the other thing that you've got. Get it.' And it's – it's so bad. It's so good but so bad that – but I think I've discovered smaller brands because of it. And so I'm glad – I'm glad about that. Like I'm discovering way – like way more independent, smaller businesses that kind of need that support.

Um, and you and I share the love for Woo Woo Boutique, don't we? Like we both – and I just discovered them on Etsy. I was literally just on Etsy, browsing around, um, for a gift for someone else, and then I saw this outfit and I thought, 'my friend Fern would absolutely love that. She needs to have that.' Because she's – loves Bowie. Um, and it had the – obviously the big, um, like Bowie type, uh –

KIRI: The lightning bolt.

KRIS: Bolt. Lightning bolt on the back in glitteriness. And, uh, I just bought it and sent it to her. And she absolutely loved it. And I was like, 'this is great.' And then they were so glad that I'd done that. And I just really didn't think about that at all. I didn't consider the impact that it would have on this small business, but it – it has now. It's like really sunk in that for some businesses, like stuff like that is really key. Um, and yeah. And now like I own some of their

bits too and it's very cool. Um, and they – they – all those items of clothing come with massive amounts of joy, don't they? They are fun to wear, they're fun to look at, uh, fun to prance around in. Um, yeah.

So that – I've discovered things through pure procrastination online. Um, I think when – when shit hits the fan in my life, I do find that I do more online shopping, for sure. Like I need – it's – it's annoying, but it's that endorphin hit that I know is guaranteed. I know when something comes through my door, um, and it's new and it's shiny, um, and it makes me feel good, I just – I just know that I can get that guaranteed, like that it's – it's just a given. And all I have to do is mix a few clicks online and it's there. I mean it's a very addictive thing and I'm glad I haven't gone too wild with it, but, um, yeah. But I know that that makes me feel good.

Um, but equally like I've definitely missed going into shops. Like, um, when I go – when I go to the – the big smoke, um, back to London, like I – I do love it. And I – and I appreciate it more because I – I don't have it in Cornwall. They don't – there's just not that many shops to – to go in. Um, and it's nice to kind of appreciate it. When I – when it was on my doorstep – when I lived in London, I just didn't see it in that way at all. But now it's a treat. So if I buy something it's more of a treat rather than a – just a walking home from work splurge. Like it's – it means more and it has more value, I think. So I'm glad about that.

And also I'm actually have enjoyed moving to Cornwall and actually relaxing a bit more into like just not having to feel like I have to really think about what I wear because, um, when I was in London I was obviously going to the office everyday, and you're around people that are wearing cool clothes or whatever. And then, um, even though I wasn't necessarily, um, pressured into

wearing certain things, but you're just – you're just aware of it, aren't you? You're just aware that someone's got a new item of clothing and you're still wearing this same old wanky cat fur covered crap. Um, then you just like do something about it. But down here I just literally don't care. And it's so good. It's so good. I have literally – I have been to the shops in my pyjama bottoms. Um, yeah. I just don't care. And I – I love it. I love that I don't care.

KIRI: And maybe it makes as well, um, certainly the pandemic has felt like this for me, is – and moving to the countryside where it's less, I'd say, image-focused, it's what's comfortable, what's practical, um, when then I do get dressed up for like a wedding or something, it feels like a real occasion.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: Um, because I'm not trying the rest of the time and it's actually brought a bit of joy back to those occasions.

KRIS: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, absolutely. I'm having a, um, book launch party and the theme is glitter slash turd. So take from that what you will. Um, um, I'm ultra excited about what people are coming – going to come wearing. But also, um, I have had so many messages from people saying, 'I'm so glad that I have an occasion to wear this sparkly item too because it's been sat in my drawer wardrobe for the last 18 months and I've had nothing to wear it to.'

And, um, because like we all like got excited during the first few months of lockdown about doing like fun Zoom parties. Like I – I definitely got dressed up for some of those, but they died, didn't they? Very swiftly. And, um, it got dull. And so now to have a real live event to wear something to, I'm just so glad that I'm making

that happen for people, let alone the fact that we're celebrating my book, like I'm so glad that people get to dress up and express themselves through clothes again and wear something that really brings joy. Um, and dance the night away with me. So yeah, I'm happy about that. And I'm – I'm very lucky that Rosa –

KIRI: That's so lovely.

KRIS: You know Rosa Bloom, don't you? The – the tree goddess that is Rosa Bloom.

KIRI: Yes. Yeah, I've got loads of their bits, yeah.

KRIS: Yeah, so I met Rosa at a festival years and years ago and, um, she has lent me some amazing items for my book launch party, which I'm excited about. But I've decided that – and I asked to like, I'm sure she would've like gifted them to me, but I don't – I don't – it's come – kind of come to the point where I just don't want to necessarily own these items. I want to wear them and feel massive joy in them in that moment and then give them back. Because like they've – they've done their thing.

I mean I'll be giving it back very sweaty but, um, I want to give these items back and like give someone else the chance to wear this thing. Because otherwise it's just going to sit in my house and I'm not going to wear it because they are – those – they are definitely not pieces that I'd just wear down to the supermarket. They are epic. Um, so yeah.

I – I think the whole, you know, I think we're moving towards this like, um, borrowing clothes and renting clothes. I – it's so brilliant. Like rental of something – like rent something that you're going to wear once. And then give it back. And let someone else have a go

with it. That is – I think that’s brilliant. So good. They don’t have that service down here in Cornwall yet, but I want it.

KIRI: Totally. Oh, it won’t be long.

KRIS: No.

KIRI: Because also it’s that thing of if you wear it and you love it, and you think, ‘I can’t not have that in my life,’ then you can buy it, you know?

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: If you can think of another – however many occasions you’ll wear it for.

KRIS: Yeah, yeah.

KIRI: But you’re so right that I think we’ve got this really, um, not very great habit of having something brand new to wear for – for every occasion. And that’s not sustainable.

KRIS: Yeah. No. No. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. And I’ve, um, I’ve worn something recently. I think because we’re – we’re going more towards like WeWork, like, keep – you know, re-wear your items and like it’s – it’s cool – it’s almost like cool to do that. Like to – to hold onto something that’s, uh, that means something to you.

Um, I wore something recently and I’d worn it before. And I think I wore it on telly or something. And I was like – and I’d worn this outfit before, and I just felt like quite proud of myself for like wearing, uh, the same outfit again. Or even like going to a

wedding and – and wearing something you're worn before. Like no one cares. Literally no one. Everyone's thinking about their own outfit. They don't care about your outfit. Um, yeah. And I think just – yeah. Try and find the joy in these clothes again, because it – it can be reignited. It can. Um, so I'm going to – I'm going to try to do that a bit more.

KIRI: Do you think about sustainability and things when you're – when you're shopping, then? Is that – is that part of your draw to small businesses?

KRIS: I think it is now. I'm trying. I'm trying to, uh, be better at that. Um, it's – but it's just sometimes so easy just to go on Asos and buy something real quick because it's so quick, the – delivery wise and it's the price point, isn't it? It's if something's so cheap you just can't argue with that. But then equally it's cheap for a reason. Someone has been shat on from a great height to get it to that price. Um, and it's not – it's not right. Um, so – and I'm glad that like now I follow a lot of, um, uh, people on Instagram that remind me of that and remind me of like this utter guilt that I feel when I buy clothes like that. And it's – it's good.

I think that's, you know, social media's good for that because you – like it helps you kind of recalibrate your – like your moral compass, I guess, in – in certain things. And like so like Aja Barber, like she's very good at speaking out about, um, the inequalities and – and, uh, you know, the – the trade and, um, and also Venetia Falconer? Is that her name? Venetia? She's also really good at, um, just making me more aware and just like I'll – I'll sit and read their stuff and I'm like, 'oh, they – I can't argue with that.

Like that is – like it’s so good to be reminded that these things – and everything that we own comes at a cost to someone, um, and a lot of the time it comes at a cost to some poor human being or the planet. And like it’s just not worth it anymore. So, um, having said that, you know, it’s very easy for me to say that. I’ll buy more expensive items because I’m in the position to be able to do that, but not everyone is. So it’s like it’s a – you know, it’s an ongoing battle, I guess. But someone needs to start doing something about it and I’m so glad that people are making us more aware of the situation.

But I – I genuinely do love buying from smaller brands now. And I want to try and make that – and – and obviously buy items that I – that are better quality as well, that last longer, um, that’ll see me through many years and therefore, you know, it’s worth the – the cost that you pay for it. We could all bloody try, can’t we?

KIRI: Exactly. It’s all about just trying, isn’t it? Um, now I know you have your liquid eyeliner, but do you think about makeup as part of your outfit?

KRIS: I don’t go anywhere without mascara. Ever. Literally ever. Um, but, um, I guess when, um, it depends where I’m going, really. But on a day to day sort of thing, it’s mascara and liquid eyeliner. Is my go to. Um, so no, I don’t – I guess I don’t really, but like, um, glitter has played a big role in my life over the last few years. Um, and if I’m going to a festival or even going to a – a party, a party or a wedding, um, then I will like wear like an eye gem or something like that because I just love wearing them.

And that makes me feel like a little bit more like – I don’t know, maybe I’ve just – I’ve upped the game in my outfit. So even if my outfit – if I’m not completely 100% on my outfit, if I’m wearing

eye gems, then like I'm okay. Then I'm happy and I've – I've pulled the – the outfit off. Um, I don't think it needs to be a – necessarily be a very special occasion to wear like, you know, glitter and eye gems for, but um, yeah. I'd say that was the only other thing that I would do. And then some – sometimes if I'm really daring, I'll wear like a loud lipstick. But lipstick and me just don't really – it ends up all over my face.

KIRI: Same. Teeth and face.

KRIS: Um, yeah.

KIRI: Like, 'how did it get there?'

KRIS: Yeah, exactly.

KIRI: On the microphone that I'm using. It just gets everywhere. Yeah.

KRIS: Exactly. Exactly. And you have to keep like reapplying it and stuff. It's like a lot of effort.

KIRI: It's a commitment.

KRIS: It is. Like maximum effort, minimum reward. I think lipstick is.

KIRI: I've just realised, because I was thinking about your makeup when I asked you that question. I was like, when I was – when I imagine you in your makeup, it's always glitter and jewels. But I realise it's because that we've always met at CoppaFeel! or a festival, rather.

KRIS: Oh, is it? Yes, yeah.

KIRI: So it is a festival.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: So I've seen you in full festival face.

KRIS: That's very true. That is very true. And I'm probably wearing pompoms and yeah. Oh, no, you've not – you've not seen my dress down days. Um, or maybe today I am. But, um, yeah, exactly. Like I've – we've seen each other in those environments where I will go to town on the face.

KIRI: I love it though. Is there an item of clothing you have that you put on and you instantly feel just amazing in?

KRIS: Well apart from the Rosa Bloom items that are like head – you know, head to toe massive sequins, which you can't help but feel amazing in, um, I would say that it was a dress that I bought, um, pre-pandemic, pre-mastectomy. So I kind of bought this dress in anticipation of having a completely flat chest. And then the pandemic hit. I had nothing to wear it to, but not only that, um, the operation was delayed by about six months.

So I had this dress hanging in my room, nothing to wear it to. And also I didn't want to wear it because it's like – so the reason I liked it and wanted to wear it and it was so different from everything else I'd ever had, it had a very – it's got a very low-cut v, um, v-neck. And, uh, with one boob or – or both boobs. Like your boobs are just poking out.

And I would – even when I had both boobs, I would never wear something like that. I just wasn't confident enough to do that. I didn't want to have my boobs on show like that. But, um, and then with one boob you just look – it's like too obvious that you only have one boob. Not that I really cared, but to me it was like just – it just felt uncomfortable. And also with a bra, it just – it just wouldn't work. It just wouldn't work. Sort of like a dress like that.

But I knew as soon as I had a flat chest, it would look cool. Because to me, little boobs and like flat chested people, I – I love that look. I – I think – I've always admired, um, like almost that androgynous look but also just little – little boobs. Little boobs I think are actually so sexy.

Um, and, uh, I just wanted to wear this dress. And it – obviously it's quite obvious that I have no boobs, not that I really care, but it was almost like it just – I just would feel so satisfied knowing that both sides were flat and I just felt good in this top that wasn't, uh, that was – that I had – there was no risk of a boob poking out. Because there were no boobs to poke out. Um, and I could show like a lot of flesh. Um, in a way that I just was really happy with. Um, anyway, so that was – got delayed, and then by the time I did get to wear it, like it felt really good.

And I guess that's a moment of feeling like, 'this is an item of clothing that I've been wanting to wear and feel really good in, and now I finally got to wear it.' Um, I didn't wear it to anything special. I just literally wore it like within days of having the operation and feeling really good in it. Um, and I think sometimes you don't need to – an occasion to wear something to make you feel good in it. Like you can literally just put it on on any old day and you can feel great still.

Um, and it's same – same goes for other items of clothing that – it's almost like I got to, um, it's almost like suddenly after my operation, things started looking different on me. So it's almost like I was being reintroduced to my whole wardrobe, because clothes started – they just hung differently on me or sat differently on me. And I was like suddenly like, 'I'm literally like – these are – all these clothes are new to me now because my body's different.' Um, and it was really great. And some things, I was like, 'no, I can't keep this anymore. This looks shit now.' And some things I was like, 'this looks even better now.'

But I had no idea until I had these boobs removed. So actually like I didn't – I didn't need that mastectomy for any other reason than to, um, feel better about my chest and how I wore clothes. Um, and I'm so glad that I put that need, uh, to such a forefront, because for so long I think when you are diagnosed with a terminal illness like the priority is always survival, survival, survival. Don't die, don't die, don't die. Have a treatment, do this, do that.

And never are you allowed to really consider quality of life. Like what does it mean to still be here in this body? What is this body doing for me other than wanting to like shut down and die? But like there are still moments of like feeling like I like being in this body. And if you can get to those moments and if it takes an operation to get you there, then fucking do it. And like it should totally be more prioritised. Um, but, uh, it's taken – it took me eleven – eleven years to get to that point of realising that I could put my – my – I – I guess aesthetic needs first, um, above everything else. I was quite glad about that. Yeah.

KIRI: It's so interesting to hear you talk about it in – especially talking about that dress, which you're going to have to describe

for us in a second because I'm very excited to hear about it, and it being like low-cut and not having boobs as a – as a very empowering thing. Because we're so often taught that if you have boobs that like that's your sexuality.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And that's your way of being empowered and things. So to – to hear you talk about not having boobs.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And it being an empowering thing, is just – just amazing, really. Incredible.

KRIS: Yeah, I felt definitely twice as empowered having no boobs than having one boob. Um, I mean, and like I had a prosthetic boob for a while and then got bored of wearing that. So I was lopsided for a really long time. Um, and I was fine. But it's only until you really ask yourself, 'are you fine? Or are you just saying that because you're trying to convince yourself and others that there are no rules? There's no set, uh, picture of what a woman should look like.

And you're trying to defy this, um, like – I don't know. This, uh, always like trying to hide the trauma of breast cancer from other people because they can't deal with it. It's like – it's how other people are dealing with your illness rather than how you're dealing with it. Um, and – and putting a prosthetic boob there is almost like putting it away. Like don't – don't deal – like this is another thing that we don't have to deal with right now, because it's like you're hiding what is actually a massive thing in your life.

And I didn't want to do that. And I didn't want to hide it anymore. And I don't want to hide, um, how I really feel about it. And it was like actually not making me that happy. And I wanted to be completely flat. And I guess in some – in some cases people go the other way and go, 'actually, I want an – I want another boob there now. And I want to have reconstructive surgery,' which is such a big deal because it's such a massive operation. Um, but I'm lucky that I felt confident enough to say no. I just want no boobs. Like for me that is empowerment.

KIRI: Also you've got the world's best tattoo.

KRIS: Well yeah, I do. I do have a great tattoo.

KIRI: Um, it's so good. It's, um, how – how do I describe – describe it to people? It's on your – it's sort of – incorporates your scar, right?

KRIS: Yeah, so that's from the first mastectomy on the left, which I had done 12 years ago. And then a few years after that I decided to make a feature of the scar, um, so at the moment I have, um, 'at the moment,' it's not going to change. I have, um, I call her Tina. She's called Tina the Tightrope Walker and she's walking along the scar. Um, I think a lot of people, when they want to do something with their mastectomy scars, they try and cover it up.

But I was like, 'no, I'm going to make a feature of it. Because like – ' and there's something about like her balancing on a thin line, you know? She's – and it's very much like representing the way I'm trying to balance my life and everything I want to try and achieve with it still. And while still, you know, being very unwell. Um, and yeah. I quite like the meaning behind it. I just love

everything about it. Um, so I'm quite glad I – I got that done. I'm really happy about that.

KIRI: It's amazing. It's beautiful. Um, the dress that you, um, that you wore, it's not the Mary Benson one, is it? Because I saw you in a beautiful Mary Benson dress.

KRIS: Yeah, I do love that dress so much. Actually yeah, I'd forgotten about that one. Oh god, there are so many great outfits in my life, actually. Um, and I – but I'm –

KIRI: That's why you're on the podcast.

KRIS: I know. It's just so good that you're making me think about this stuff. Um, the Mary Benson dress, I haven't actually worn out yet, but I'm going to wear it to – so I'm having two, uh, book launch parties, because why not? Um, so I'm wearing that to my second one. Rosa Bloom for the first and then Mary Benson for the second.

No, the – the dress with the low v is, um, literally a dress that I picked up in Zara. And there's me saying that I'm trying not to buy things off the high street. Um, but it was one that I saw in the shop and thought, 'that's the one that I want to wear once I've had the operation.' And it was one of those like – I felt guilt at the planet, so I even thought, 'this is what's going to make me feel really good about myself again.'

Um, and, uh, it's pink and it's like, um, it's knee length and it's almost like this velvety but not. It's like very soft material. And it's quite a heavy material, so it hangs really well. Um, and yeah, I love it. It's like – goes really well with like boots, um, so yeah. I haven't – I haven't worn it too much, actually, and I want to wear

it a bit more. So I'm going to stomp around in it over the next few days maybe.

KIRI: And the Mary Benson one's beautiful as well.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: That's a pink with sort of, um, puffed sleeves that have got a sort of a – a skirt at the bottom of them.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: Like a big frill.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And with gold stars on. And those colours on you, you look absolutely amazing. You look stunning in them.

KRIS: Oh, thank you. I do – I do quite like those pinks on me. Because I – a few years ago, I was like, 'I don't like pink. Pink is always so associated with breast cancer. Let's kill that stupid trite narrative, all the rest of it.' And then I was like, 'actually, but I really actually like pink.' So I can't deny the fact I actually really like it. But I wish it was not so heavily associated with breast cancer, to be honest. But hey ho.

KIRI: Well I definitely think that you are very well on your way to reclaiming it in that dress.

KRIS: Okay.

KIRI: Like I don't look at you in that dress and think, 'breast cancer.' I think, 'that's an incredible outfit.'

KRIS: Okay, good. Okay, thanks.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Do you hold onto clothes for a long time? Like what's the oldest item of clothing that you have?

KRIS: Oh yeah, I actually really do. I mean this jumper that I'm wearing, uh, is like maybe eight years old. So I mean – I mean what do you think is a really long time? What to you is a long time?

KIRI: Well I think I'm a hoarder, so yes I've got, you know, I – I will have things from when I was sort of like bought when I was sort of 16.

KRIS: Okay. Amazing.

KIRI: Um, and I'm what, 34, 35 now.

KRIS: Oh, great.

KIRI: I'm 35 now. Not everything.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: Um, and then I've got like a cardigan I'm going to wear later is one that my nana knitted. So I do hold onto stuff and I like charity shops.

KRIS: Yes. Yeah.

KIRI: But I also have lots of new stuff as well, so.

KRIS: Oh, amazing. Um, yeah. So yeah, I have old stuff. But do you know, the stuff that I haven't hold – held onto is stuff from, um, 2009, the year I was diagnosed. Because they have such strong – they hold such strong memories to being like – well, going through a really traumatic time of that early diagnosis stage, um, that you – it was – I didn't get rid of them straight away, but it was a few years later that I was like, 'I remember wearing this the day I was diagnosed. Why the fuck have I still got – why have I got this?'

Because I don't – like in the – in the book I even describe what I was wearing that day. Like for some reason, when something – when it's the – such a traumatic event happens, for some reason you remember what you bloody wore. Like I remember the – that outfit choice so well and I don't know why. Like I don't remember what I wore like this time last Thursday. Like I cannot tell you. But on that day, for some reason I know exactly this little mini skirt that I was wearing and the top I was wearing and the cardigan I was wearing on top of that.

Like – and they're all gone. I got rid. Because I just didn't want to be reminded of that time. And also weirdly there's smells associated with as well. Even though obviously you can wash clothes, there was something about the smell of the clothes from that time and, uh, from going to the hospital a lot that sort of just clung to me. And everything about like – just clung onto everything that I owned. And so I actually got rid of quite a lot of those things as well. But again, not like straight away. It was only like a few years later where I was like, 'why – why are you keeping

this stuff?' Like it actually like triggers something that isn't very nice, um, like, uh, and it was a great excuse to go shopping.

KIRI: Yeah. Lovely excuse. Um, what's the best thing you've ever got from a charity shop, then? Or thrifted from a secondhand place?

KRIS: Um, it's not so much thrifted from a secondhand place. More thrifted from my mother.

KIRI: Love it. Even better.

KRIS: Um, she wore this killer outfit to this wedding. My, uh, uncle's wedding. Um, and I was – must've been about two. It was this like two piece number which she got from a place called Country Casuals. Um, I don't know if you remember that. It's a bit like C&A. Doesn't exist anymore. I loved C&A so much. Um, um, and, uh, yeah. So it's like a – it's like a – like a pencil skirt, which I don't, that – I don't wear that bit. But I wear the jacket that comes with it and it's red. And I still wear it today. And it's like one of my favourite items. Um, so I'd say that was my best – that's my favourite secondhand item.

And then I did buy this like denim dress from a, uh, secondhand – like one of those upcycled shops, uh, like charity slash upcycled so they've done something with it, uh, for like £10. And it was like such a bargain. So I really, really love wearing that. And it's a great dress because you can wear it in summer and autumn. Like because you can layer it up. Um, so I – yeah, I've had that for a few years.

And actually, um, I put on weight over the last couple of years and I got a big tear in it because, um, it's got a slit in the denim bit.

The – the denim skirt bit at the bottom, and, um, it got like – the slit just grew massively. And for so long I just didn't wear it because of this massive hole. Um, and then I got my friend to fix it. And now I wear it again. And I was like, oh, I was so happy when I got my friend to fix it. Because she's – well, she's an amazing seamstress, so it took her no time. If I have done it, it would look absolutely awful.

But – and it's – and I – again, I was like – I was so happy that I'd done that and I'd gone to the effort of giving it to her and making her do it. I'm like 'effort,' it's not that much effort, but like we just put things to the side or get rid of it or chuck it and stuff so easily when we could just fix things and wear it again. And, um, yeah. And because I'd taken so long to actually do that, it was so nice to wear the dress again because I hadn't worn it for so long.

KIRI: I love that, when you get something repaired that has been sat there for sometimes years. And it's like getting a brand new item of clothing.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: You're like, 'this is free shopping.'

KRIS: Yeah. Absolutely.

KIRI: Can I ask – because you have – lots of the things I see you wear have a vintage sort of twinge to them at least. Is there an era that you wish that you existed in just for the fashion?

KRIS: 80s.

KIRI: Love it.

KRIS: Very much 80s. Yeah. For me 80s like, um, shoulder pads. Love shoulder pads. And, um, colours. Lycra. All that stuff. Yes. And wearing like ponytails high up on your head. Great. That's – that would be the time that I would truly come alive. Um, so I'm – I'm gutted that I was like so little in the 80s that all of it passed me by. I mean I had really cool 80s baby clothes, I have to say. Like very cool. Um, but obviously didn't appreciate it at the time.

KIRI: It's wasted on a baby. I've always said that about great baby clothes. Absolute waste.

KRIS: It is. It is. Oh, you're – you're so right, but I do – I very much love buying clothes for my nephew, Herbie. Oh my god, I'm obsessed. Actually I've spent more money probably on him than I have on myself over the last two years for sure.

KIRI: Yeah, I've just got a little niece and, um, baby clothes are so good. Because even like designer baby clothes, you know, like – because everything's so small, and sometimes it is like 50 quid but I'm like, 'well it's 50 quid,' and I'm thinking it's the same. 'Oh, well I would spend 50 quid on a top that I really liked that was designer.'

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: And be like, 'yes, Kiri, but it would be 950 quid if you were buying it and you wouldn't fit in it for a week.'

KRIS: Yeah yeah yeah. Um, no, I – yeah, I'm the same. I just seem to be able to justify it so much when it comes to, 'oh, it's not for me.' It's like it's a gift for someone. Um, I love dressing him up. Oh, it's my favourite.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: This style that you have now of being sort of like eclectic and colourful and joyous, I think joyous is a great, great word, um, do you think that's – that's here to stay? Like that's – that's your style? You're settled on it now?

KRIS: Yeah. Except there'll be moments where I'm like, 'maybe when it comes to winter – maybe it's a winter thing where I feel like, "oh, I just really would like to be more monotone for a bit.'" Um, and I'll probably buy myself like a – like a black jacket or – or a black and white scarf and think like, 'this is me now.' And then five minutes later I'll be wearing some technicoloured dreamcoat.

So like I – it's – I think I'm allowed, you – you know, I think it's fun to have phases. And, uh, and to wear something a bit different to make you feel like you are something else for a bit. But, um, ultimately I will come back down. I will come back to cat items and colourful things, no doubt – no doubt about it. I think that is very much here to stay. And I – if I – if I see my old days, my old age days, and I really hope I do, then I hope to be like, uh, head to toe in colour still, head to toe in glitter, um, like I – I want to be one of the like – almost like the Golden Girls and just like – just shuffle around in glorious knitted colourful items, lots of pompoms, and holding a glass of champagne at 9 am. Like that's what I want. That's what I want.

KIRI: That sounds delightful. Absolutely delightful. Um, is there an item of clothing you can always see yourself wearing?

KRIS: Probably this jumper. I can't ever imagine parting with this, uh, jumper with cats on. Um, I just – it's just that like I've probably

looked at it a few times and gone, 'do I still – yes, I still need this. Yes, I –' because I don't wear it all the time, but, um, um, and probably the grey pants in the bottom of my pant drawer, that I swear I'd get rid of. They're probably be there till the day I fucking die. Just don't – yeah.

KIRI: Yeah, that grey pants where you're like, 'you're back. I'm sure I burnt you under a full moon.'

KRIS: Yeah. Yes. I think they are like cockroaches. They will stay forever.

KIRI: Um, are there any trends that you're hoping don't come back?

KRIS: To be honest I quite like all the 90s styles that – that are around me at the moment, but I just – I don't wear them because I – I cannot wear a crop top. Um, and so I kind of – I wish that – there are so many great tops out there at the moment, but they're just not long enough. I need to cover my kidneys. My kidneys get cold. Um, so, uh, I kind of – for me the crop top can go now. Please.

KIRI: It's had its time.

KRIS: Yeah, it has. It has. I – I do feel like the 90s stuff is lingering, don't you?

KIRI: Yeah, I – it's been coming back for a while, right?

KRIS: Although, um, for so long – right, so I wore a lot of bell bottoms. A lot of baggy bell bottoms at a time when they were not cool. So, uh, 15 – 14, 15 year old me was walking around in

bell bottoms, getting them – dragging them through puddles, like sopping wet. I was that person. Um, with little bits hanging off the end because I'd worn them so much. Um, and so many people around me said, 'they are not cool. They are not – they are from the 70s and they're – they're never coming back. They're never coming back.' And I was like, 'pft, you're wrong. They're coming back.' And would you believe it? They're back. And I'm glad. I love a bell bottom.

KIRI: I think they're great. I think they're really flattering as well. I think they look good on everyone.

KRIS: So flattering. You're so right. They're so much better than fucking skinny jeans. So much more comfortable as well.

KIRI: So much more comfortable. Except, you're right, when it rains and then they just sort of soak up the water up to about your knee.

KRIS: Yeah, yeah. The amount of times I have spent with wet ankles because of my trousers, but defying the people that tell me that they're not cool or they're not ever going to be cool again. Showed them, didn't I? Showed them.

KIRI: I think most of us who were like sort of skater-y kind of emo-y teens –

KRIS: Oh, yeah.

KIRI: Had a mild case of trench foot from sort of British winters in baggy jeans.

[Both laugh]

KRIS: You're so right. So right. Ah, but I loved being an emo. I loved it so much.

KIRI: It was good that, wasn't it?

KRIS: It was so good.

KIRI: And do you know what? Interestingly, because it wasn't the biggest – in my school there were emos and then there was sort of everyone else. They were a small group.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: Nearly everyone I've spoken to my age on this podcast was an emo. So I think there's something about an emo that's experimental and stylish that leads to very stylish grown-ups.

KRIS: Yes. Great. I love – yes.

KIRI: Great theory.

KRIS: I'm – this is a great observation and I'm glad I'm a part of that. For sure.

KIRI: Um, final question. What outfit would you want to be buried in?

KRIS: Um, firstly I don't want to be buried. Do not put me in the ground in one piece, thank you very much. Um, this is like – it's like a –

KIRI: Got it. Got it.

KRIS: So when I get cremated, um, I – do you know what? I would say probably a Rosa Bloom. Put me in sparkles. And do you know what? Those – those sequins probably wouldn't burn. Only there would be a massive plastic fume, um, that would poison everyone in the vicinity. So –

KIRI: They're going down with you.

KRIS: Yeah, exactly. Um, no, definitely something fun and sparkly. Um, and maybe, uh, some cat ears as well.

KIRI: Absolutely love it.

KRIS: Yeah, I think that was probably my outfit of choice. I'm – but I'm really glad that you've asked that, because I don't think it's been – it's not talked about enough, is it?

KIRI: No.

KRIS: Your death outfit. What's your – what's your death outfit?

KIRI: Well it's interesting you say Rosa Bloom, because I, um, because I've got a few Rosa Bloom bits, in fact some are behind me now. Because they make this beautiful – they do like leotards and – and shorts and jumpsuits with these massive, very shiny disc sequins and, um, when I really started feeling a bit happier in myself, I got a Rosa Bloom jumpsuit. And I wore it to – playsuit, rather. Uh, because they do this amazing playsuit with a cape at the top. So it's like a built-in cape. And I wore it to host the main stage at Latitude. And I just felt so like me. And it was – it was a lot of money for me at the time. You know, I had to save up a decent chunk to get it.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: Because they pay their workers well, and we all know that that stuff costs more money.

KRIS: Yes.

KIRI: Um, and so I just think that feeling of feeling totally like you and like, you know, you're powerful and in control.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: That's a really good thing to be cremated in or buried in.

KRIS: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: To feel like you're at your apex.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: I think is a – is a lovely idea. So definitely something very, very shiny, I think.

KRIS: Yeah.

KIRI: I – weirdly, I ask people all the time and I've not thought about it myself. But yeah, I don't think you're very far off with your outfit.

KRIS: Yeah. Yeah. But then in a way, like it was a bit of a waste. Someone could've worn that and now it's burnt.

KIRI: Not as well as I would, babe.

KRIS: True. True that. Um –

KIRI: Or they'd wear it better and I would rather see it burnt than someone pull it off more than me.

KRIS: Well, good. No, that is a good point. That is a good point.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Oh, Kris. What a brilliant babe. There was so much that resonated with me in that chat, in particular about dressing in the countryside just being a bit easier. And I think in that way, maybe it's more – I don't know, more authentic? I don't know, I'm just – I'm trying to make it deep here when what I really mean is, I love wearing trackies.

But I also love a sequin and I thought – oh my god, I sounded so Welsh there, didn't I? 'I also sounded – love a sequin.' Um, I'm not even from that part of Wales. You're going to leave that in, aren't you?

I thought this week's indie biz shout out was an absolute no-brainer. It's Rosa Bloom. Kris and I are both fans. So Rosa Bloom make stunning sequin clothes worn by icons like Taylor Swift, Donna Porter, and me. [laughs] I've got a fair bit of stuff now, some new, some secondhand. But I can truly say the quality is – is genuinely amazing.

The sequins are hand-stitched by a group of artisans in Bali who Rosa has worked with since 2010. And you'll find the name of the woman who stitched the garment on the label of the item that

you buy. Um, the women are paid fairly and there's constant consultation about their wages as well. And then Rosa Bloom has worked with Fashion Revolution, so they can identify areas that they can improve on as well, which I think is great that companies – I guess there's a lack of arrogance there that they're like, 'okay, yeah, teach me. What can we do?'

I'm going to read out a section of their website, actually, which I think demonstrates the company's sensitivity and transparency I found really interesting, so – following them talking about what they pay the women that work for them, it says, 'we would also like to offer more support such as health insurance and an education fund for their children – but it's really important that we make any changes sensitively and appropriately, so as not to have any kind of negative impact on the local economy.'

This sounds contradictory, but it really is so much more complex than we first thought. Especially as we are coming from one culture into a completely different one, and need to understand how that society functions before swanning in with our ideals based on our cultural background, which may actually not be appropriate in this new context. The more I learn, the more I realise that there is to learn – but we are making progress and I'm excited for future changes that we have planned!'

I just think that is such an honest, um, up-front, non-squirmy way of dealing with the, you know, complex reality of who makes your clothes and – and what is their life like and is their life better or worse for having made them? So yeah, I thought – I just thought it was very impressive level of transparency. So if you do want the shiniest outfits in town, Rosa Bloom do a main line in sparkles.

And I've also noticed their sizing is improving. It wasn't brilliant when I first started shopping there, but it goes up to now I think a XXL, which is a size 18-20, which obviously is not, um, you know, all the way up. But I would say their leotards stretch freaking loads. I have been much bigger than I am now. I've been much smaller than I am now, and I've always just worn the same leotard. Um, they're like, uh, I imagine them as – I bet there's a superhero who has like magical stretchy clothes that I can't think of now. It's me. I'm the superhero. That's the big reveal, guys.

Um, time for some messages now. We've had so much love for Sindhu's episode last week. Jojo said, 'brilliant episode. What an incredible, fascinating person Sindhu is. I could listen to her talking about her lives for hours and hours. Thank you.' Thanks Jojo. I totally agree. Like I've known Sindhu for years now, and just every – every chat I have with her, however trivial or sort of profound, always is fascinating.

And Carrie agreed. She said, 'I've always found Sindhu a great comedian, but what an interesting person too. Loved this.' I know, right? Aren't we all just desperate to read her autobiography?

Lou B said, 'brilliant. I laughed so much when Sindhu was telling about her mum giving her the emerald ring. This is a really great episode and I've loved them all. Thanks, Kiri.' Thank you so much for listening.

Now we've had a really lovely email from Lynn following Sindhu's episode. And she kindly said that I can read it out. So she says, 'I just wanted to say a massive thank you, Kiri. I've just listened to this episode at work under cover of hidden wireless earphones.' Lynn, spill your secrets. I didn't know those were a thing. And she says, 'and I had to absent myself for four cries. I beat you.' Well

done, Lynn. 'What a wonderfully moving listen. I discovered your podcast when you spoke to the indomitable Jones, Rosie, and have stayed because it was so wonderful. Currently working backwards.

It's certainly struck a chord and I think this episode in particular. We're currently reeling from a sudden terminal cancer diagnosis for my mum. And this chat has pushed all kinds of shock slash grief buttons, not least because we are, mum and me, due to go and see Sindhu's show in Hackney next week. And I'm currently not sure Mum is going to get there.

The space you gave her and the love you showed giving the unexpected turn of the conversation was beautiful. The way Sindhu speaks of her family with such calm, love, and realism and her no BS approach is certainly something to aspire to. I'm thinking perhaps I'm not quite there yet. Still weeping. So thank you for such a moving and healing lesson. I'm off to try and explain away my bizarre behaviour in the lab today.'

Lynn, I deeply hope that you don't get sacked, is the first thing. The second thing is thank you so much for sending that email. It's really – well, it's really powerful, um, as was the conversation with Sindhu. And I'm, um, obviously I'm absolutely gutted that any of it resonates with you, especially so close to home and so personally. But your words are so, so kind and really hope you guys got to go to Hackney together.

I know from like personal experience that like cancer being so close to home as well. My mum has had it twice. She's still with us. Um, but yeah. It's a really hard thing, especially, you know, your mum as well. They're your protector. So when mums get ill it's a really scary, scary thing. Because what happens when you're

ill or when you're sad? You go to your mum. So well done. You'll be okay. Whatever happens, you're going to be absolutely fine. Um, and just thanks for reaching out.

I got – do you know what's so hard about this? It's the same thing with Sindhu is I just want to run over and give you a hug. And the nature of Covid and recording everything remotely and this being an email and not a conversation means I can't. But if – if you ever see me, please give me a wave so I can give you a hug, because that's all I want to do at the moment. And sorry I can't do it.

If you want to write to us, you can email whoyouwearingpod@gmail.com. Um, you can follow [@whoyouwearingpod](https://www.instagram.com/whoyouwearingpod) on Insta. Um, yeah. It'd be lovely to hear from you. And if you're feeling really generous, you could give us a nice review because it means more people find us. Enough of my bullshit under a duvet.

Um, we are back next week with activist and author Aja Barber. There's some great tips in there about building a designer wardrobe, as in like bits that go in it, not like a physical one from Ikea. Um, have a lush week and, to quote Kris, 'even if it's a turd of a week, just sprinkle some glitter on it.' See you soon. Bye.

[Upbeat electronic music]

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.