

## Who Are You Wearing – Tete Bang

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN: Hello there. Thanks for listening to me, Kiri Pritchard-McLean, ask the most stylish people I know, 'who are you wearing?' This is the last episode of series one of the podcast. I've had such a blast talking to our amazing guests.

This week's guest is an absolute tonic of a human with a wardrobe that is so good, if I had a nan I'd murder her to own it. That's how good it is. It is drag artist and presenter Tete Bang. Tete is obviously incredibly stylish, but I was amazed to learn that she makes so many of the looks she wears herself. Just mad skills. And you can see how much I covet the ability to use a sewing machine in this episode. I just want it so bad, guys. When's it going to happen?

This episode was recorded in June 2021. Tete was in her drag room in London and I was in my own much smaller drag room in Wales. There are so many wise, quotable moments in this recording. I really hope you find it as joyous and nourishing as I did. Please enjoy me asking Tete Bang, 'who are you wearing?'

TETE BANG: I think I was really lucky I was always encouraged to dress up. Um, my mum was a stripper through the 80s and 90s, and so I was constantly around women who used fashion as an armour or a persona or to get into character so to speak. And also saw them as quite a transformational thing, that you can be lots of different things. You don't have to be glamorous all the time. You can also be this other person.

But there was always a dressing up box. Um, I remember I must've been – well, it was the millennium. I remember that. So I was nine or ten. And we went to the market and they had these like holographic, um, halter neck crop tops that were like £3. And I remember being like, 'oh my god Mum, that is the most beautiful halter neck I've ever seen in my entire life. I need it.' Uh, and I remember wearing it on New Years Eve into the millennium. And I think that was the first time I was ever like, 'wow, this is – this is me. I am this halter neck.'

Um, also saying that I did have – my mum, when she – when she was a stripper she used to have this pair of shoes that were like, um, lilac and deep purple suede, chunky heel. Um, they were like – it was just after the Spice Girls, so it was kind of Spice Girly. And I remember my mum having them and being like, 'Mum, keep these for me for when I'm a grown up, because I want them.' Um, and I was just in love with them. And I just used to like play with them and put them on. And I think that was like my first – probably my first item that I was like, 'I am in love with this item.' And I actually got them as an adult and they didn't fit me because my mum's got smaller feet than me, so –

KIRI: An absolute travesty.

TETE: It's a bit sad. It's a travesty.

KIRI: You know when it comes to affordable body modification, I think being able to make your feet smaller should be an option.

TETE: Yeah. It should be an option. It's actually really hard having big feet.

KIRI: Um, you've reminded me about my millennium outfit. Um, because I had an outfit for it.

TETE: Yeah?

KIRI: And it was a, um –

TETE: It was a big deal.

KIRI: It was a big deal. We – we drove to Liverpool to watch the fireworks and they didn't go off properly. And everyone I knew was having a house party and I was about ten or eleven. I was probably too young to be going, but my parents were like, 'you can't go to that house party because we're going to Liverpool to watch the lights.' And I remember being absolutely furious. Anyway, so it was like a pair of classic bootleg black school trousers. Yes please.

TETE: Ooh.

KIRI: Um, but the top was from a charity shop and it was vintage but you, uh, you know those, um, sort of – I think they were sort of 1980s, maybe late 70s, um, sequinned stretchy boob tubes that were just like a tube.

TETE: Oh, yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

KIRI: Yeah, it was like a Aegean blue one of those and also a fur – a little cropped fur jacket, also vintage but from a charity shop.

TETE: Wow.

KIRI: Oh my god. Freezing my tits off on the banks of the Mersey. I looked absolutely incredible, babes. So good.

TETE: And we used to get Easter outfits, which I don't know – I think it's just a thing in the North, but it would be like, 'oh, have an outfit for Easter Sunday.' And again from the market. It was like a baby blue – a long waistcoat made of lycra, the cheapest fabric you could ever find, with a baby blue bootleg with like tiny butterfly white print up it. And I remember just thinking it was just so chic. And it was probably the – just the most disgusting thing you've ever seen. But I remember wearing that and I must've been about six. And I went out to play, like went to doss out on the street with my friends in this outfit and I was like, 'I look rich.' That's like –

KIRI: Yes. Yeah, I – well my friends, interestingly, my, um, the mother of my goddaughter, she's from Liverpool, and they – they go, 'we've got to have new outfits and new pyjamas for Easter.' So it is a – quite a Northern thing.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: I think that it's like, 'brand new outfit, brand new PJs for Christmas day.'

TETE: Yeah. yeah yeah yeah.

KIRI: Like it was a whole big ritual thing built by the Catholic church.

TETE: It is. My mum always gives me pyjamas on Christmas Eve. That's like – or we always get one present on Christmas Eve and

it's always pyjamas. And then they're the pyjamas you wear on Christmas Day.

KIRI: So cute. I love it. I absolutely love it. I also – it sounds like you had a similar childhood to me in that like loads of the clothes I got were from the market.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Um, because it was – there were a couple of quid and like it would be sort of adjacent to what was going on in terms of fashion and much more affordable. But ultimately very flammable.

TETE: Yeah, very flammable. Full plastic. Everything.

KIRI: Um, did you have, then, it sounds like you did – did you have a strong sense of style as a kid? It feels like you know what you liked quite young.

TETE: Yeah, I did. I really did. And I think looking back it – it was probably quite – it was controversial because I remember people's like parents commenting on what I would wear. Like I remember – because my mum had lots of fabulous outfits, school discos in like primary school, I would always wear a fur coat. And like – and like an adult's fur coat. And I think then people were probably a bit like, 'what is going on in this house?' Because people didn't really know what my mum did. And I would just be like – it was always like a reference to Kat Slater because it was that period of time. And I was like, 'I'm going to be Kat Slater. That's the icon I want to portray.'

And then Halloween school disco I remember dressing as a drop of blood because I had a red sequin dress I wanted to wear. And I was like, 'okay, we're going to make it work. We're going to bend the theme. I'm a drop of blood.' And I must've been about seven.

[Both laugh]

KIRI: Oh my god, I really hope there's pictures of that. I really hope there is.

TETE: I'm like, 'give me a break.' There is a picture somewhere. They –it's just me in a red sequined dress being like, 'yes, Halloween. Yes.'

KIRI: That is so lovely. Um, so – so you're taking influence from I see some – I hear some Spice Girls in there.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And your mum as well.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Um, but who – who was dressing you? Was it you, was there older siblings? Was there cousins around?

TETE: No, it's just me and my mum. Just me and my mum. So it really was just the two of us. Um, and so it was her. But she really just let me do whatever I wanted. She never gave me rules, she never tried to dictate what I wore. She always let me choose. Like I remember going to Woolworths and getting like this like puffer jacket that was like metallic blue and light-up trainers. And I mean Woolworths sold really good clothes back in the day, in the 90s.

There was some stellar fashion coming out of there. Um, but she always let me choose what I wore. And – and she's like a bit of a snazzy dresser as well, but in like a sort of, um, late 80s quite tacky mixed with like hippie new age. It's very interesting.

KIRI: Love it.

TETE: Yeah. Like her idea of like sexy is very like stripper shoes with ankle socks. It's quite like – it's quite tacky, but it kind of works.

KIRI: Yeah, it sounds incredible. Let's get –

TETE: So yeah, she kind of just let me do what I want.

KIRI: That's so good. Also metallic blue puffer jacket and light-up trainers, both things I could still see you wearing now.

TETE: I mean it's very now, isn't it? That's the thing. Fashion, it always comes back around. It comes back – right back around.

KIRI: Well in your mum sort of leaving you to it then, were you ever made to wear anything that you were like, 'I hate – I hate this. I hate wearing this.'

TETE: School uniform. School uniform was like my downfall. It's actually the reason I didn't stay in further education, was just because I couldn't bear to have someone tell me what to wear. I really like – so we – we lived in England until I was about ten and then we moved to Spain, um, because my mum likes to run away from her problems. So we moved to Spain and we ended up being there for five years.

And when I was in Spain you didn't have to wear a uniform. And that's where I got like into punk music and then I became like an emo. And I was wearing like tartan skirts and stripey knee-high socks to school. Um, and taking, you know, fashion risks as a teenager. And then when we moved back to England to do my GCSEs, so I was 15, then I had to wear a uniform and it was not good for me.

KIRI: Yeah, it – um, there's so much I think about uniforms now that I just didn't think about at the time, but like it – the – how badly they're made and how ubiquitous they are really informs the relationship you have with your body at a young age.

TETE: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

KIRI: And that's so difficult.

TETE: Especially in like PE. Like PE was the worst time for me. The fact that like you were a teenage girl and you have to wear a hockey skirt. In my school it was like the norm to wear a hockey skirt. And I was the only one who – I refused to do it and I wore like trackie trousers. Because the idea of like looking at my adolescent body that is constantly changing and then having to stand next to my peers and then having the boys also there like judging you and leering at you, I was – it was just like so detrimental to my mental health.

KIRI: Yeah, it's so grim. Did you find ways to make it more you?

TETE: Um, yeah. It was all about the school bag, you know? It was all about like customising your school bag, making sure everyone knew what was going on. I wore eyeliner, um, I was a rule breaker. And so that was really my downfall, was because I – I was

dyeing my hair from when I was about like 13, 14. And then when I came back to the UK and they had this like no hair dye rule, um, you had to have a natural colour, at first I'd be like ginger. I was like, 'ginger is a natural colour.' And then it would be like black. Like it went very black for a bit with like a coloured streak. And then I'd wear like a scarf around it. Like a headband around the coloured bit to try and hide it. And then it – I just pushed the rules like to the real – the edge of it. To the point where they were like, 'you can't do your GCSEs with everybody else because your hair is too distracting.'

KIRI: That's just not a thing either. That's not – there's no child who's like, 'I would've gotten an A if it wasn't for that girl's distracting' –

TETE: It's not a thing. No, no, no, no.

KIRI: And I say that as someone with Attention Deficit Disorder. Like it wouldn't have been the hair that would've made me do badly in an exam. That is just a way of othering you.

TETE: Yeah, it was – it was really bad. It was when I went on like study leave for my GCSEs, and I thought, 'okay, school's over. Now I can live my life.' And so I dyed my hair turquoise and then when we had to go in for exams, we were about to go in for our GCSE English, and they were – they pulled me out and they put me in the room with people with learning difficulties to do my GCSEs. And I was like, 'I'm sorry, I'm a distraction to the mainstream class but not a distraction to these people here?'

KIRI: God.

TETE: It was just – yeah.

KIRI: That's so –

TETE: It definitely like coincided with me coming out in school. Because that also was kind of, you know, I was trying to explore myself and express myself with the way I looked. And – because that was really like how I wanted to express myself. Um, and also coming out at the same time, it is definitely a way for queer people to sort of like – it's like holding up a sign being like, 'I'm queer,' you know, we're signalling to other queer people that like this is – we're not the same as everybody else. Like it kind of is a way to distinguish yourself.

Um, and because my school didn't support me coming out, I felt like that was also attached to the way that they were telling me to dress, was like – I remember my head teacher saying to me, 'one day you will have to conform. You will have to wear a uniform and you will have to do as you're told.' And so it was really like interconnected, I think, like looking – looking back retrospectively, the – this sort of like them telling me to wear a uniform and, you know, conform, I felt like that was also an attack on my identity in some ways. That's really deep, isn't it? Fashion.

KIRI: Yeah. No, but that's – that's perfect. That's – it's so like I cannot believe your headmaster said that to you. Because also like where is this conversation happening? Like the 30s. Like it's absolutely mad.

TETE: Yeah, but, it's, you know, in rural – like it's in the Lake District, which is where my family originates from. And it is so isolated there. And there aren't like – you do – it is the type of place where when I was in secondary school you got shouted at for being a greebo or a goth. And – and there was physical like

threats towards your life because of the way you dressed. And so I can see why because they don't know any different. And they don't have people expressing themselves in that way so they don't think it's normal.

KIRI: Yeah, it sounds like we went to – because I'm from rural Wales and it was the same of like constantly in a fight of that whole thing of that – loads of my friends who went to school in cities didn't know about the dyeing your hair thing, but it was only natural colours and block colours. You couldn't have highlights.

TETE: Yeah, yeah.

KIRI: All that kind of – just anything to – you couldn't have any markings on your trainers. You'd have to – you'd put permanent marker on them. All this kind of like really, uh, authoritarian stuff to – to I guess – there's always the argument that like, 'oh, it's – it's to protect the poor kids.' But it's like the poor kids will get bullied whatever is going on.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: What you're actually doing is making kids who are usually from marginalised groups, who are trying to sort of – you're right, signal to each other, you're just making them feel even more like shit in a world that's already making them feel like shit. It's really – it's so –

TETE: Yeah. It's like of course there's sort of like, you know, the popular girls are going to thrive because they love wearing the school uniform and rolling the skirt up and, you know, they love that. But I don't want to do that and I don't feel comfortable doing that. So yeah, it does really marginalise you even more.

There was way more like subculture as well I feel like in the early 2000s. You know, it was like the sort of chavvy girls and then the goths and then the – you know, the – there was way more – like I feel like fashion now has evened out a bit and there's like different influences in mainstream. But it – it was way more segregated like 15 years ago. And I felt like yeah, you probably were drawn to people you had similar interests in, but it wasn't always good.

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah, no, I totally – because we were in the like – through the different ages like they called us goths but I guess we were skaters. And then sort of like emo-y and then more indie when I was in sixth form. But I remember just like every now and then something would happen like one of those girls who was like the popular girls – because they were sort of like the – what we would call chavs or townies, they wore tracksuits. And then there was the Topshop girls who just wore like bootleg jeans and strappy tops.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And like every now and then one of them would turn up with a pair of Vans and we were like, 'what the fuck is she doing? They're not for her.'

TETE: 'That's our thing.'

KIRI: And like just being like really – yeah, exactly. Being really outraged. And when some of it would sneak into the mainstream, I'd be like, 'oh my god, she's wearing a studded belt. Like she doesn't even know' – like, you know, just like – because what I

was doing is protecting my thing that you've all given me shit for for years.

TETE: Yeah, yeah.

KIRI: So I'm trying to protect this thing that feels so sacred to me and who I am.

TETE: I have to stop myself now like when I see girls wearing like Slipknot t-shirts that they've bought at Topshop I'm like, 'do you even know who Slipknot are?' And I'm like, 'you're not 15 anymore. This is not the way we do things.' But it is that thing. You're like, 'oh my god, I got so much shit for that and now it's like' – yeah. Which is a good thing. That's progress, right? But – but we still have trauma.

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah, I still hate it.

[Both laugh]

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Okay, what about, then, talk – tell us about your favourite outfit, either when you were a kid or a teenager or both, that you just – you put on and you just never wanted to take off and made you feel like you?

TETE: Oh, do you know what? I was always about like – as I got to my later teens, I was still all about accessories. Like I got – I went from being like punky and then it went to emo when emo was like really in its prime. And then I became like a scene kid. Do you know what they are? And it was like an offshoot of emo where you were emo but you wore like bright colours instead of like dark

colours. And it was lots of bows in the hair, lots of beads. Like I kind of still am a bit of a scene kid, but it was like back-combed hair, it was very Myspace orientated, um, it was really queer.

KIRI: Was it like Japanese influence? Like – yeah.

TETE: Yeah, like – like Japanese-y. Um, yeah. And so I used to wear like 50 beaded necklaces all at the same time. And I would like not wash my hair for like two weeks so I could backcomb it as big as I could. And it was like my – my crown. Like my pride and glory. Um, I got really into shell suits for a bit. They were like a big moment.

Um, but my favourite, I mean guess I had this sort of like Beetlejuice inspired like structured dress that I used to wear with – because it was like big black and white stripes, like Beetlejuicy, and then I'd wear like bright coloured tights with it and lots of beads. And I thought – it was quite 80s, actually, looking back. But I think that was kind of the time where I was like, 'oh, that was quite fun.' Like, 'you – you were having a really good time in fashion then.'

It wasn't like – at that point I'd come out of my GCSEs and I was in art school and I was definitely like taking a lot of bold risks. Um, whereas previous to that the emo thing definitely was a reflection of my mental health, looking back. I was – because when I do look back at pictures of me being an emo, I don't really think of them in a fond way. Because I do see like the sort of underlying mental health issues that were going on inside of me. But then when I translated to wearing colours, it got better.

KIRI: There we go. Cured it.

TETE: Yeah, just wear bright colours.

KIRI: But for me it's not a coincidence that the – the emo kids were also the ones who had a lot going on at home often, were often like – I now know as adults to be openly queer.

TETE: Yeah

KIRI: But certainly weren't when we were growing up. So it was like that music that's about expression and angst and pain, of course like these, you know, kids and young people are going to be drawn to that and the aesthetic. Because it's, um, it's – I guess it's telling the story of what's – what they're living.

TETE: Yeah, I think most of the boys that I knew that were emos were all gay in the end. Like we were all a bunch of queers. Because it was – and like it was – it was quite an open community in that way. You did talk about mental health a lot even if it wasn't for a good reason. You did talk about your feelings. Whereas it felt like sort of the townie culture, they didn't really talk about that. But at the time I don't think any of us realised how queer we were. There wasn't – it wasn't a conscious acknowledgment of queerness. It was very underlying.

KIRI: Yeah, that's interesting that – that you say about the feelings thing. Because I do feel like toxic masculinity had less of a grasp on the boys that I knocked around with than it did on –

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: The lads who'd – who, you know, were – just lived for sport. It felt like it had much more of a grip on them, you know?

TETE: Oh yeah, absolutely.

KIRI: It – even at such a young age. Um, guys, being emo saves lives.

TETE: Being emo saves lives. I look back now and I am kind of glad I was an emo. Like it was a moment. And – and especially now like you see it – I see it reflected in like mainstream culture all the time now. Like even in like hip-hop culture there's like aspects of emo. And like it's wild to me that it really was like a cultural phenomenon at the time. But we kind of forgot about it but it's still here.

KIRI: Yeah, well that's because it was – it sounds like we're – we're teenagers at the same time, so the big trends that were happening were definitely like emo and, um, were there any others that you went in for? Maybe earlier ones? How – how big did you go on the Spice Girls?

TETE: Oh my god, I went big on the Spice Girls. Like I was traumatised when Geri left. I remember like watching the news and – and telling my mum, 'Mum, I'm not going to stop staring at this TV until Geri Halliwell joins the Spice Girls again.' Because for some reason I thought like – I didn't know – my brain couldn't comprehend it. It was – I still love the Spice Girls so much. They – they were girl power to me and they still are. And the ethos lives on. Forever.

KIRI: Also just love the fact that they're basically like – they're kind of presented like a drag troupe.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like they – they had these characters and they had really over the top dress sense and, you know, like an element of costume. They weren't doing – because when you look at later girl groups like All Saints and even Girls Aloud, they just look like stuff you could get on the high street.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Whereas like you couldn't get a Union Jack dress.

TETE: No.

KIRI: Where you could literally see your fanny in it on – like they were doing something different.

TETE: You couldn't even get like buffalo shoes in those shoes. Like those were rare. And now they're like everywhere. But the Spice Girls made those a thing. And they were wearing custom everything. Like I look at photos now, I'm like, 'that's custom. Everything is custom. That's amazing.' They're like a real pop group. That's how it should be. I want manufactured content. I don't want relatable.

KIRI: Someone told me that they were, um, sort of invented to sell Pepsi. They wanted to sell more Pepsi, so they invented the Spice Girls. But I – I don't know how true that is.

TETE: I don't know about that.

KIRI: Yeah, either way, like I'll keep my brand loyalty to Pepsi if I get the Spice Girls.

TETE: But they sell everything with Spice Girls. Like I was – I looked – I saw a meme the other day and it reminded me about these like fake head mics that were lollipop holders that the Spice Girls did. And I was like, ‘oh my god, I had one of those.’ Like they sold Impulse body spray. I had like a Spice Girls like dinner tray table. Bedding, wallpaper, like there was everything. You just – you don’t get people that do that now.

KIRI: Yeah. No. No, the – the Impulse, I maintain, is a lovely smell. It’s like tangeriney, right?

TETE: Yeah yeah yeah.

KIRI: I thought it was great. If they brought that back I’d buy it.

TETE: Bring it back. Do you know what? They’d probably sell out because they’re still culturally so relevant.

KIRI: Definitely. Um, so did you have, then, a rebellious phase? Was it when you had this time where you thought, ‘I’m done in school now’? And – and it sounds like it was showing up in your style, right?

TETE: Yeah, I mean, do you know what? I feel like the rebellious bit probably was when I was an emo because I like started getting piercings, I was really into piercings for a bit. And like getting them kind of underage. Because my mum did let me do what I wanted to do. So when I was like 15 and I was like, ‘I want my lip pierced,’ she was like, ‘okay.’ And so I would get it and then I’d go into school and they’d tell me off. And like I did that – I had like four lip piercings at one point. And like two in my nose and like – because that – it was like the only thing I had control over. Like I couldn’t

really control anything else in my life. And I wanted people to know – it was like a shield. Like a – like stay away from me.

Um, and yeah. I got a lot of shit looking back. You did get a lot of shit for being an emo. So I think that was maybe where I was rebellious. Because I had rules that I was meant to abide by, like the school rules, and I like purposefully made sure I wasn't playing by those rules. Whereas like when I went to art school and I sort of started playing with fashion, it was probably rebellious for the mainstream but I felt like I was having a good time. So I was happier. I was much happier because I could like be out.

And I was like – I told everyone. I was like, 'I am the gayest person you'll ever meet.' Like it was very that. I was – it was very that for a while. Um, and I – yeah, I cut my hair off at one point. It went from being like the long, sceney, back-combed hair. And I – when I did come out I was like, 'I need everyone to know that I'm gay, so I'm going to cut all my hair off.' Um, that was a real moment and it really didn't suit me. It didn't feel authentic to me. But I felt like I had to do it so that people knew.

KIRI: Yeah, for sure.

TETE: Um, I don't know whether rebellion is the – I mean it was – I'm still rebelling. I'm still in the rebellious phase.

KIRI: I love that you're – I could just imagine you being like really blossoming, especially doing art as well. Because I – I remember the – the people who went and studied Art Foundation in the college, they were always the ones I would be like, 'that's the bar,' for keeping up with what they're doing fashion-wise as well. Because they were just surrounded by creative people, and as

soon as you are, your idea of what's extreme or interesting levels up.

TETE: Yeah. Yeah, goes – yeah.

KIRI: Whereas I'm like – I'm in sixth form with all the – all the boring cunts. So like what are they doing over there?

TETE: I mean also my high school was in Carlisle. It's not like a big city. It's Carlisle, which is like a glorified town. So I mean yeah, it was all about bright 80s jumpers and like metallic leggings. Um, yeah. I really – I did blossom in art school. I didn't learn anything. I was just drunk the whole time. Like that's all I did. But in terms of fashion, yeah, that was where I started to really go for it.

KIRI: I think Carlisle is really similar to Bangor, where I'm from in North Wales, where I went to school and stuff. And it – were you like me in that when you started to get aware of like fashion and – I wanted like vintage stuff and I wanted retro because it was different to everyone else, I just went hog wild for the charity shops, which were great up here.

TETE: Yeah. Oh my god, it's all about the charity shops in small towns. Like I made a fortune while I was doing my A-levels as well, buying stuff in charity shops and then selling it on Ebay.

KIRI: Same.

TETE: Like I made a fortune just like – because I had an eye for, 'oh, like this could be an old lady's outfit, but it also could be really fashion.' And so I remember buying like an – a vintage Adidas like sports bag, like a leather one, um, in a charity shop for like 6 quid and selling it for like £200 to someone in Japan.

KIRI: Amazing.

TETE: Because you've got all these like – all these like vintage – well, what we call now vintage, but like old stuff from charity shops, from old people's houses, that actually if you go to like the city, would sell in a vintage shop for like 50 quid.

KIRI: Yeah. And also I'd get really – when people are like, 'oh, you should go to blank area because that's where all the – like there's wealthy people around there.' I'm like, 'yeah, but they're getting rid of like Next and Marks and Spencers and Whistles.' If you go to a shithole town they're only just getting rid of the stuff from like the 80s and 60s.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And that's the stuff I want.

TETE: Yeah, exactly.

KIRI: It's – charity shops in rubbish towns are the best charity shops ever.

TETE: Yeah, are the best. And things are actually cheap. Like things are 50p, whereas like in cities you don't get that anymore.

KIRI: Yeah. No.

TETE: Things are like £6 and it's like something from Primark. And you're like, 'this properly was £6.'

KIRI: Yeah, exactly.

TETE: But you can get a dress for like £1.50. Or they have like – I love it when they don't have prices and you can just ask.

KIRI: So good.

TETE: And if there's cats in the charity shop, even better. Because you know it's a good one.

KIRI: Oh my god, this is – you are speaking to my soul in that I'm like, if we drive past a charity shop and they've got a rail outside with 50p on, I'm like – and there's too much stuff in the window, I'm like, 'that one's excellent.'

TETE: Yeah, that's it.

KIRI: And if we walk in and there's a cat, I'm like, 'we've hit the fucking jackpot here.'

TETE: And if it smells awful, you know it's going to be good. You know it's going to be good.

KIRI: Yeah. Oh, we've got to go charity shopping together because I think we're very on the same page about where and what is a good charity shop.

TETE: Yeah, we should.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Let's talk about then your – your current style. What we see when we see you now. And you can talk about on stage and – and

off stage as well. Where – where did this style now that we're seeing appear?

TETE: Uh, this appeared probably like – probably really 2015 is where it all comes together. Um, I – I was doing drag. I started like going out to clubs and – when I moved to London when I was 18, I then started like going out. I was looking for nightlife, I was looking for cabaret. I knew it existed. I've been on Myspace. I know that drag queens are a thing. I know that there is like a queer community somewhere, and so I really just went out looking for it.

And because I was always dressing up, I – I just wanted somewhere to go where I could dress up. And I knew from like my mum's nightlife experience that you could go to clubs and dress up. Um, so I started just going out. And I was wearing like basically things I'd bought in charity shops. Nothing that interesting, but I definitely had a use of colour that I noticed not everyone else was willing to do, I guess. A lot of people don't feel comfortable wearing a lot of colour, and so I realised that that made me different.

Um, and then I – when I was just like doing drag, I had pink hair from the beginning, and then when I started buying wigs and hair pieces, I had to keep buying – I had to keep my hair pink because all my wigs and hair pieces matched my hair. And so the pink hair kind of just became the brand, just because I couldn't afford to buy new wigs all the time. So then I stopped really like playing around with my hair and I was like, 'okay, this is I think where I want to be.'

Um, and I went to – so I went to Japan like five years ago and that was like my dream because I loved Japanese street fashion, like,

um, that whole culture of Harajuku. And so it was my dream to get to Japan. And I'd just booked like my first big like corporate DJing gig in drag, and it was – it was with – the worst people. No, they're really lovely. Um, no, it was for Google. And they paid me a fee which I had just never had that much money before. And it wasn't even like a lot of money, but it was like four figures. And I'd never had a four figure sum in my bank account, um, because I'm really working class and I just had been living from, you know, hand to mouth constantly.

And I decided that with that money I was going to go to Japan and – because that was my dream. And I was like, 'if I can do that, then I feel like I've done it. Like I've done everything I wanted to do.' My dream was just to go to Japan. Um, so I went by myself and after I came back from Japan I decided I was never going to wear black again, I was going to get rid of all colour. I found it so inspiring in terms of fashion and the diversity of fashion and the street fashion and the culture there.

It's just so amazing that I don't know, I just absorbed it. I just like – I just came back and I was like, 'I know who I am now. Like I've got it figured out.' I – and yeah, and then I guess like that's when Tete Bang really rounded out into this sort of like character, persona, style. I don't know if that makes sense.

KIRI: No, totally.

TETE: But that's – that's when I felt when it really come together, when I felt like I'd completed my circle.

KIRI: Wow. And yeah, because Japan is – is a really inspiring place aesthetically and there's so much going on and yeah, because I –

I've had a few friends who've gone over there and also come back with suitcases full of stuff as well to wear.

TETE: Yeah, I mean I literally just shopped the entire time. I just shopped. Because the – even the high street there is just so much more diverse than here. Like you go into a shopping mall, because they have shopping malls, and every single shop sells a completely different style. Whereas I feel like when you go on the British high street, you go into all the different shops and they sell like the same thing over and over again. And it's all the same colour tone, it's all like what they say is in fashion. There's no room for individuality. Whereas there there just was so much more subculture within fashion and people really expressed it. And especially men. Like the men's street fashion in Japan is amazing. Like they're not afraid to carry a pink clutch, you know?

KIRI: Love it.

TETE: They're not afraid to wear like a full PVC jacket and look stunning. And it just like really inspired me, I think because I'd just got so probably bored with British fashion and like even in London, like you do see people that like express themselves with their fashion, but there is definitely still boundaries and like rules, I guess, that people stick to.

And it's – I don't know, it just like – I found it just so inspiring. And I – yeah, I think it really changed my personal style, going there. Because – maybe it just like solidified in me that it was okay to like – because I saw other people being really colourful and like having a similar aesthetic to me. That I was like, 'okay, you are allowed to do that. That's okay.'

KIRI: That's so interesting. Are you think – do you think you'll go back to Japan every few years to sort of top up on your inspiration?

TETE: Do you know what? I came back and I booked flights immediately to go the next year.

KIRI: Love it.

TETE: It was so – and then I didn't spend any money on the – on the high street or like on clothes for a year and I saved it all. And then I just went shopping in Japan.

KIRI: That is so bougie. Yes.

TETE: It was. It really was. But do you know what? I'd never done – I'd never – like I still don't, I'm like – my partner tells me off for it all the time, that I won't buy anything for myself full price, even if I really like it. And I blame it on like working class guilt. Like it's this like, 'I'm not worthy of that thing.' And even if it's like trainers, like I won't buy trainers at full price even if I like them.

And my girlfriend, she's like a shoe collector. Like she's really into trainers and like keeps them in the box and that whole lifestyle that goes around that. And even if I'm like, 'oh, I really like these,' she'll be like, 'why don't you buy them for yourself?' And I'm just like, 'no, they're – they're £75. I couldn't possibly do that.' It's so weird but yeah, I think it is – it is like a working class guilt thing. But I'm trying to get over it, so –

KIRI: Yeah, it's, um, I'm not working class, my family is. I'm not. It's a slightly complicated situation. But I had that with clothes and yeah, buying things full price. And it's so weird because I will

spend 75 quid on petrol or train tickets to get to a gig, you know, or to do stuff like that.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: But I would never – if you – if I went to Topshop or whatever, something I love for 75 quid, I'd be like, 'I can't pay that for it.'

TETE: Yeah, no.

KIRI: It's so weird how money means different things.

TETE: It's so weird. Is it self-worth? I don't know, where you're like, 'oh, I'm not – I'm not worth spending that money on?'

KIRI: Do you know what? With me I think it comes from the fact that my dad's a bit of a wheeler dealer, so he just would – like hates the idea of spending the – the full ticket price on anything.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And also I get such a kick out of – that's why I love charity shops.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like getting something for cheap is like the ultimate buzz.

TETE: I love telling people as well, like, 'yeah, this was 50p.'

KIRI: Yes, also when they go, 'where'd you get that?' And you're like, 'charity shop.' Because what you're saying is, 'you can't have it.'

TETE: 'It's just for me.' I do make a lot of clothes myself now and I definitely make more now than I used to, um, probably because I've had more time in lockdown. But I do sew a lot as well and I like alter things or – like I just play a lot of the time with my sewing studio. Where I'm like, 'I'm going to just experiment and just look at my things and make something. And maybe it'll be fun and maybe I'll never wear it.' I do a lot of that.

KIRI: Oh, amazing. Sounds great. Um, oh my god, please just set up an Instagram live so I can watch you do that. So good. Um, well I wanted to ask you – talking about your hair, do you think of hair and makeup as part of the outfit then?

TETE: In drag, yes. Absolutely. Um, in my day to day life I actually wear less and less makeup now. And I – I think it is because of drag. I don't know. I think it's not good for my skin, first of all, is my excuse. But I feel like because I have drag as a way to express myself, I do feel like I don't have to make such an effort out of drag because I know my potential. Like, you know, I'm like I know how good I can look. I don't need to prove it to you in my day to day life. So I'm definitely like getting lazier with my day to day clothes. But quite a lot of drag queens do that. Quite a lot of us like don't dress up super super loads. When you're working a lot you just don't have the energy to put into both things.

KIRI: Of course.

TETE: But when I'm in drag, like quite often it will start with the makeup because that's the first thing I do. Unless I've made something special to wear or I've got a special outfit to wear, then I'll match the makeup with the outfit. But sometimes I just like do my makeup and then I'm like, 'okay, what colours have I used

today?’ And then I look at my wardrobe and then I’ll decide what to wear.

KIRI: Oh, great. Love it. Um, I wanted to ask about being in – in drag, which is obviously – drag queens are a marginalised group, and then being – being like – like you are a marginalised group within that, and does that – does that ever affect the choices that you make on – on stage with the clothes that you wear?

TETE: Absolutely. Like absolutely. Do not like get it twisted. I get scrutinised twice as hard as any twink in a leotard. And I’m very aware of it. And actually as sort of like the more well known I’ve got, I put more pressure on myself. Because obviously we live in the culture of Drag Race now, and so you’re being compared to this thing, which is television, which we all know is more effort than just a cabaret show. Um, and so I absolutely, like I absolutely now put way more pressure on myself to look a specific way or to take it to a certain level.

KIRI: Wow, it – it’s sort of slightly reminiscent to me of being like a female comedian and being like, ‘I know I’ve got to go out there and show – like there’s loads of people who think I shouldn’t be doing this and I can’t do it.’

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: ‘And I have to be twice as good to get half the recognition,’ is what it feels like. And there’s like – and –

TETE: Absolutely. And I think like a lot of people think that drag is different to every other workplace as a woman. And it’s not. Like it is a male dominated industry. And cis men predominantly are in control of the hierarchy in this situation. So like yeah, everybody

thinks that especially like gay men are unthreatening and like they're a girl's best friend. But there is still a patriarchy within this system.

KIRI: Well that's what – I thought it was really interesting, because I loved Drag SOS that you did, and I think it was Cheddar Gorgeous who was talking about it was really important that – that you were part of the team as well, because they – they were sort of saying that like, 'oh, like cis male gay guys have had plenty – taken up plenty enough space when there's – when our like – our community is much broader than that.'

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Because I don't think I'd even properly realised, again because through my ignorance of mainly accessing drag through Drag Race, that like there were – that there were female drag queens. Like it just didn't like kind of occur to me. And then I was like, 'oh, of course. Like of course.' And then seeing you operating as well at such – I mean, it's the pressure, you're putting yourself at such a high level and doing it, it's – and it being so clear that it's drag as well, as opposed to like, 'oh, she's just got a nice dress on. It's just a night out.' Like –

TETE: Yeah. Yeah, it is. I don't think – yeah, people don't realise like how much work you have to put – it is a lot of work, you know, to do that. But like I love drag. Like I fucking love it. Like it is – my entire life is built around me doing drag. Like everything else is – that is at the core of what I do. But I also recognise that now like with the level of – like the privilege of the exposure that I've had, I do have to keep it at this level.

Because there is an entire community behind me who is not getting this platform that I am on right now, and I need to make sure that I'm being loud enough for them to be heard as well. And like it's hard. Like there's times where I've been like, 'fuck this, this is – I'm over it.' Like there was so many times.

And especially around like the season when Drag Race comes out, I find it so dysphoric. Like it makes me like doubt myself so much on a level that like is actually like really unnecessary. And like if I didn't live in the culture of Drag Race I wouldn't be doing it. But because I do, you know, I – I don't mind having conversations about it all the time, but I do feel like it's my duty also to do that. And, you know, I have to talk about it because if it's not me then who else is it going to be? Um, and yeah, it's a double edged sword.

KIRI: That's so interesting. So interesting.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: With your personal style now, like over the years as it – as it's evolved and is evolving, are there any sort of trends that you've tried to pull off that you're like, 'babes, what was happening there?'

TETE: Um, I never make fashion mistakes. [laughs] Everything is amazing that I wear. No, I'm sure I – I'm trying to think. I mean loads. Normally like if I'm doing drag on a Sunday and it's been a long weekend, there might be some choices where you're like, 'oh dear.' Like I look – I do think my makeup has definitely got better. You know what? I stand by everything I wear. I've got no regrets. Everything is a learning experience. I own it all.

KIRI: Yes. Love it. Um, what is your, um, in terms of – because you like vintage stuff as well, don't you?

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: So what is your, um, oldest item of clothing that you've had, uh, that you still love to put on, and then oldest in terms of vintage as well. And it might be the same answer.

TETE: I have things in my drag wardrobe, though, that I have literally had for like a decade that I've never worn.

KIRI: Really?

TETE: And that is probably like one of my biggest sins. Because I do buy things sometimes where I'm like, 'one day I'll wear this,' and I've never ever worn it. So I have one dress that is the oldest thing I own that was like my great auntie, who lived in Maryport. She did – she never had any children, and then when she passed away I was given like three dresses by – from her. And they like all had the dry cleaning tags on from like the 1950s. They don't fit me at all. Like they don't fit me at all.

But I've got one which is like a sort of – it's kind of like a 1920s style embellished beaded cream with like bead – glass beads all over it, which I've never worn because it doesn't fit me. But I keep it because I feel like I don't have a real like strong connection to my family heritage, but when I saw my great auntie's wardrobe, and the fact that she hadn't had any children, I was like, 'I feel like if I was going to be like anyone it's probably you. So I'm going to keep this because this is my history.'

Um, the things I have – I do still – I do have this like waistcoat that I used to wear when I was like an emo punk. And it's got like patches all over it and studs all over it. And it's really disgusting and it smells so bad. I don't even know how many gigs it must've been to. But I actually wear it as like part of a costume for this Tank Girl act that I do. And like I really love it because no one else knows the history surrounding this of like the things it's seen, but I don't think I'll ever get rid of it, even if I – I mean I don't even do the act anymore but I just have it because I – it's like a bit of an – it's like an archive.

KIRI: I love it.

TETE: I'm convinced I'm going to have an archive one day.

KIRI: I will buy one ticket for that, please. Um, I would love to see the archive. Um, is there – in terms of like vintage fashion then, is there an era that you would love to have existed in just for the fashion?

TETE: Oh, the 60s. The 60s and the 70s. Like get me there. Get me those prints. The colour, yeah. That era. I will be right there. I love it.

KIRI: It is so gorgeous. And I'm really glad that more of the 70s stuff is coming back as well. Um, the colours and the shapes. Because I also think they're much more flattering as well.

TETE: They are.

KIRI: Like –

TETE: Like an a-line skirt is great for me. Like I don't need it to be fitting. I don't need it to be shorter than the knee, you know? I don't want it – like I buy so – because have quite a – like big hips and a small waist, I find it so hard to find like clothes on the high street that fit me, because the cut is just not right for my body shape at all. Whereas with vintage clothes, they just have like a better understanding of the shape of a woman.

KIRI: Yeah, totally.

TETE: Or maybe because they're not being made for unrealistic beauty standards. I'm not sure which one it is.

KIRI: Uh, yeah, I totally agree. And like flares are back and they are like so much more flattering. If like – I've got – again I've got a smaller waist, big bum.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like it just, you know, balances everything out and yeah, and – and also, do you know what I was thinking about recently that I was like, 'she does not get enough credit for how amazing she was,' did you ever see *The Good Life*? Um, and Margo in *The Good Life*? She was, um, there was like Felicity Kendal and Richard Briers. It was about a couple who like moved to suburbia and start a farm in their back garden. And then there's this really posh neighbour who's played by Penelope Keith. Google her because like all her outfits are like that – you know that Pucci sort of like flowing prints and like everything's flowing, there's loads of chiffon, there's like, you know, there's just always an appendage.

TETE: Is she like a good character or is she like a mean neighbour?

KIRI: She's a mean neighbour, yeah.

TETE: Because why is it that in like film and TV, the – the evil characters always have the best fashion?

KIRI: Best fashion. Best fashion.

TETE: The best fashion. Like a villain always looks just perfect. Snatched. On point.

KIRI: Yeah. Ursula is like one of the most solid looks that we have in cinema.

TETE: And like – yeah, I just watched the new Cruella film. But the old one, like the – Glenn Close in 101 Dalmations, that fashion, like that made me want to be an evil bitch. Like just so I could look that good. So it's always mean characters that have the best outfits.

KIRI: It's true, yeah. The – like I wish some kind of like design house would do like the villain range.

TETE: Yeah. 'One of each.'

KIRI: And I could just be like, 'great.' Throw some colour in so it's not all black. Um, is there an item of clothing that you have that you will put on now and you just instantly feel amazing in it?

TETE: Everything. I – do you know what? I love dressing up. And like if I'm doing a gig, for example if I'm doing like a go-go gig and I've got to dance for like five hours, I'll probably have like three or four costume changes. Like every time I put an outfit on, I feel like it gives me new life. And you can take on such a different energy

and feel such a different way about yourself when you put something on.

I have like this like tropically, um, ostrich feather green, lime green, yellow, orange, like bustier thing which I just love wearing because it makes me feel like the fantasy. Like this is the count fantasy. With a thigh-high patent yellow boot. And I feel gorgeous.

Um, but then I equally love like being on stage and wearing nothing. Like I love – I love being naked all the time. I did a gig like the other night and it was like my fourth gig back, and literally halfway through the show my tits were out. I was like, ‘I’m sorry, Bethnal Green Working Men’s Club, I’m naked now.’ Because I just love getting naked in front of people. Um, I have like quite a few like 70s day dresses that are like amazing prints that whenever I put those on I always feel glam.

Oh, and I also have a pair of cowboy boots that my girlfriend got me for my birthday like two years ago. And they’re Muppets cowboy boots.

KIRI: What?

TETE: They’ve got Miss Piggy on and they’re like denim, sequin, there’s a little bit of faux fur, and they’ve got pictures of Miss Piggy on. And I call them like my gallery boots because I wear them when I go to a gallery, because then you can like clop – you can clop through a gallery. Um, and when I wear those I feel like I embody Dolly Parton. Like her spirit comes through me.

KIRI: Oh god. Miss Piggy as well is sort of painted as faintly villainous, but like she's the best dressed bitch on that cast. She's so –

TETE: She wears Vivienne Westwood all the time. I'm like, 'how is that puppet being dressed by Vivienne Westwood?' She's such an icon. She's had so many looks. She's so versatile.

KIRI: She's great. I love her. I love her so much.

TETE: I love that we live in a world where like a puppet can be a style icon as well. Like what a time to be alive.

KIRI: Um, I wanted to ask you about, what is your relationship like with shopping? Are you, 'I want to do it in person?' I – like do you like it online? Or do you want to touch the materials and do you try and – it sounds like you – like me you try and avoid the high street.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: It doesn't really work for you, and –

TETE: I go to the charity shops like every other day. And I'll go to like the same charity shops like every other day because you just don't know what you're going to get. You just don't know. Um, I do like to shop in person, to be honest. There have – have been phases of my life where I've been really into Ebay, like in a big way. But it was mainly when I was younger. I feel like Ebay was more of a treasure chest like ten years ago, when it was sort of like – I think also younger people now are getting onto the idea of like secondhand shopping, whereas I feel like when I was younger it wasn't as cool to shop like vintage or secondhand.

KIRI: No.

TETE: Um, so you could definitely find more treasure than you find now. But I do love to touch something. I like to try it on. I'm a curvaceous lady. I need to try it on. I need to. I'm not a bog standard size. Like it – it changes.

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah. It changes from shop to shop, it changes from time of year for me. Everything.

TETE: In person. Absolutely. Everything. Everything can change.

KIRI: And also fair play to my body for being able to – stuff that shouldn't be able to fit I can quite usually pull myself into. Push.

[Both laugh]

TETE: I always get so scared of getting stuck in things. Like I feel like it is a constant fear I have of getting stuck in something.

KIRI: Yeah, I mean concealed zips I think are the bane of my existence.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: They're so bad. Yeah.

TETE: They're so hard. They're so hard. And why are so many zips on the high street so shit as well? Like how hard is it to put a good quality zip in something?

KIRI: It'll just be the profit margin, won't it? It'll be the difference between like – it'll be a few pence on each thing and they're like, 'yeah, we'd rather have the few pence.'

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: 'And they will have to immediately repair this dress and feel bad about themselves.'

TETE: They're out to get us.

KIRI: Yeah. So – so when it comes to charity shops, thrifting, car boots – love a car boot – secondhand stuff, what's the best thing that you've ever got?

TETE: When I used to sell things on like – things that I'd bought, I used to be really good at finding like designer stuff. Um, and I – the Adidas bag that I found, I made a – a killing on that. I also found like a Le Perle leotard once, which is like a very, very expensive underwear brand and I bought it for like £2 and I sold it for like £75, which is quite a big profit margin.

Um, but for my personal day to day wearing of things, I've got quite a lot of like fabulous 60s little go-go dresses. Like I've got quite the collection now. And I love all of them. And when I find a new like go-go dress, that feels like I'm winning. It really does. I've also got a floor-length, um, baby pink fur coat that is amazing. But I didn't find it in the charity shop, my mum found it in the charity shop.

KIRI: Charity shop?

TETE: Because she also buys – yes, in a charity shop. And it was like £10. And it's like full J-Lo Fantasy music video baby pink. It's quite fabulous. That's probably one of the better things I've found. That was an item where I was like, 'you're never going to find this again.'

KIRI: No.

TETE: This is like – they don't make these anymore.

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. These have been discontinued.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: So do you ever think about, um, when you're buying stuff or making stuff or with what you're using, about environmental impact and sustainability, things like that? Is that something that's in your – in your head?

TETE: Yeah, absolutely. Um, when I go fabric shopping, I mainly go fabric shopping in Walthamstow Central, which is like North London. There's this one street where they have fabric shops where everything is like £1 a metre or 50p a metre. And they're like dead stock. They're like the end of season, like – it's kind of like the charity shop but for fabric. Like you don't know what you're going to find until you're in there. It's never the same, so like you can't – you have to bulk buy something if you see it. Because you're never going to see it again.

Um, but I definitely do try and – I don't throw anything away. And I don't know if that's because I'm a hoarder, but I like to think it's because I'm environmentally friendly. Um, I just hoard shit. But I – yeah, I don't really buy a lot of brand new fashion. It's mainly

charity shops. Um, I do like to pass things on after I don't wear them. I – I am due a drag clear out, actually. And I will kind of give stuff to like baby queens, like people that don't have a lot. I give it all away.

KIRI: Oh, that's so lovely.

TETE: It's hard though. I feel like you can do a lot to be sustainable, but so much like is going to happen whether you're there or not, it feels like. And like I really hoped that the younger generation would be more into it, but then they like, you know, this whole like Misguided fast fashion culture is still such a thing. And you're like, 'I thought you guys cared. Like what are you doing? Come on. You have to like keep pushing this thing.'

KIRI: It's so hard.

TETE: So yeah, the fashion industry has to take a lot of responsibility.

KIRI: And also like we've just been programmed since the 60s, really, since they were like, 'you are consumers,' that we've been programmed that we like need things and acquisition means a lot to us and gives us all kind of like chemical rewards. So even if you unplug your brain in my case from like, 'well don't buy fast fashion, don't do high street', you know, like – but I'm like, 'okay, but now I've got the privilege of money, I still buy loads of stuff, I just spend more on it.' Because I'm like, 'well it's not from Primark.'

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And it's like, 'yeah, but it's just from – it's from somewhere else. You're still buying loads too much.' But it's, um, it's a – it's a lot to undo, isn't it?

TETE: Yeah, it is. But you can like – I do think everybody should like try and learn the basics of sewing. Because you can make so much from what you already have. And like especially in the beginning, in the first lockdown I really went through – I was like, 'I'm going to give my wardrobe an overhaul.' And I like got the dyes out and I got the bleach out and I hand-painted things and I just like spent time like upgrading my clothes, basically, the things I already had with the things I had around me to make them more fabulous. And I feel like you can do that, you just have to be a bit imaginative.

KIRI: That's my – it's been on my Christmas list for like four Christmases, is like a sewing course. Because I've got a sewing machine, I just – I'm terrified of using it. And I don't even know how to like – you know, like – I'll be like, 'oh look, I'm sewing,' and then I'm like, 'oh no, the tension.'

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And it's all sort of like hanging out underneath. So yeah, my – my dream one day is to be the kind of person who can look around and be like – because I'm also bad with being like, 'I've got nothing to wear,' when I've got a wardrobe full of shit.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Um, and I think having your kind of skills would really help alleviate that, so –

TETE: Yeah. Do it. I mean I – I did not study sewing at all. Like I literally – my mum used to have a sewing machine and I remember watching ‘Gone with the Wind’. I must’ve been about 12, and you know when she makes the dress out of the curtains? It’s like – it’s so gay. It couldn’t get any gayer.

And I really had this like dream when I was a kid of being a bridesmaid. Like I really – I thought like, ‘if I get to be a bridesmaid, that is the best I’m ever going to do.’ Because I just wanted a big dress. Like I just wanted a gown. And I didn’t know that’s what I was craving, I just thought I wanted to be a bridesmaid. And so I remember watching ‘Gone with the Wind’ and being like, ‘I’m going to make myself a bridesmaid dress.’ And I must’ve spent like – I don’t know, probably a couple of – a week, a couple of weeks, making a dress out of some old curtains that was not really a bridesmaid dress but was just sort of like a tube with some straps on it.

But – so I’m – I’m completely self-taught. Like I did one short course, like a five week course in pattern making, because I was making like everything – literally making shit up. Just like copying around clothes I already had, um, like adding bits in and taking bits off. But not like making things from scratch, really. Um, and so I did a little course in like pattern making, just so I could understand how to make like a basic pattern. And just doing that like completely opened up my mind to like the world of possibilities, of like what you can do. So you should do it, babe. Just do it.

KIRI: Yeah, that is exactly the pep talk I needed to go and spunk a load of money on a sewing course.

TETE: You can get them really cheap. You can.

KIRI: Okay. Okay, I believe you. Um, there's – I've got a friend called Twin Made who is really creative and made some amazing – oh, here somewhere – dungarees for me and she's down – she's down in South Wales but I was just going to go, 'could you just teach me over Zoom because I would love to be able to just even make a cushion.'

TETE: Yeah, you can learn some much on Youtube. Yeah. I made a couple of tutorials in lockdown. I made one on – on how to make dungarees that you can go and watch. It's very simple and all you need is like a pair of jeans that fit you, and you just trace around it and then you can just make really, really basic dungarees. It's – it's much more within your ability than you think it is.

KIRI: Well you say that, but what I – I fall at the first hurdle, which is, 'find a pair of jeans that fit you.'

[Both laugh]

TETE: Oh, yeah. They don't have to fit. You can kind of go around it. But you – babe, you can learn so much on Youtube.

KIRI: Okay. Alright. Well I – I feel empowered by this chat. I appreciate that.

TETE: Good.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Do you see your style changing as you get older? Or do you think you'll always be in bright colours? Do you think you'll always be desperate to get naked? Like –

TETE: Oh my god, I can't wait to get more eccentric with age. Like I think that is one of the best things about like being a person of a certain age, is you can – like you don't have to impress anyone. You can do whatever you want. And I love that. I love – like I love women who are in their 60s who are really loud and eccentric and like still dye their hair bright colours and do pottery. Like I want to be one of those women.

I just – I think you can take more risks. And I think our generation probably will. I think like the generation before us – before us, there was this like real expectation on women that when they get to a certain age they have to like disregard their identity. And like cut their hair short and dress a specific way and conform to this idea of what an older person is. But I feel like we have the power to just completely get rid of that.

KIRI: Yeah, I agree. That whole like 'grow old gracefully' and like, oh yeah, you're right, you can't have your hair long and all this kind of stuff. And, 'you shouldn't wear this after this age, you shouldn't' – I think – I'm hoping our generation is like, 'fuck that. I've got too much nice stuff.'

TETE: Yeah. And I think it is like – I do think it's a thing about women stripping themselves of their femininity after a certain age, um, because they think that, 'okay, I'm no longer sexually desirable so I don't need to be feminine.' I – I think it's like really subconscious. Like it's a really subconscious like primitive thing that – or maybe it's just a patriarchal thing that women do from a certain generation. But I do think we will change that. I really hope we change that anyway. Because I mean things like, you know, all the fabulous people in New York and that whole –

there's like a whole culture around it online of like older people who are just snazzy dressers still. And I want to be one of them.

KIRI: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. It's so – because also rather than feeling like I'm hoping that as – as a woman any – rather like than hitting the menopause and feeling like my desirability and my femininity has died, be like, 'oh, I've been alleviated of sexual harassment,' is my dream.

TETE: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: And like, 'now look at what I can do.'

TETE: Now I can start walking around in a g-string.

KIRI: Yes, finally I'm as invisible as I want and I now can be as visible as I want to be.

TETE: Absolutely. I think that the – it's going to be a fabulous time. We're all going to blossom.

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

TETE: I think I'll always wear a fabulous head scarf. Like I think a head scarf can really change an outfit. Like I think you should have them in every colour so that they go with everything and then no matter how drab you feel you look, if you put it on people are always like, 'ooh. Oh, that's fun.' And so I think I'll always channel like – it also hides a multitude of hair sins. Like if you're having a bad hair day you just put it on and you don't have to worry about anything. It's very like – it's quite old Hollywood. It's – yeah, I'm – oh, I think I'll wear a head scarf forever.

I hope I wear cowboy boots forever as well. I don't even wear cowboy boots that often. But in my mind I'm somebody that wears cowboy boots. Like I have like two pairs and I'm like, 'you're somebody that wears cowboy boots. You are that girl.' But I actually don't. But maybe when I'm not wearing heels all the time, when I'm an older person, I'll wear cowboy boots more.

KIRI: Love it. Absolutely love it. The – the two together as well, I hope. Cowboy boots, head scarf, outfit on. Nothing else. You love being naked. Let's go.

TETE: Nothing else.

KIRI: I started – I bought – in a charity shop – is it even close to me? Here somewhere. Do you know what I bought that I was like – wanted to – I bought one of those – it was a vintage – where the fuck has that gone? Just in here somewhere. Turban.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like it's a bright blue velvet, you know, like would've had a big broach on.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Hollywood. And I just think, 'god, that –' when I looked at it, I was like, 'the hair days I could have underneath that would be amazing.'

TETE: Yeah, you can hide so much. And it really draws people's attention away from everything else as well. So like you can be wearing something really average and people are like, 'wow, that

turban. Did you see that turban? That is – ‘you should wear it. I want to see you in it next time I see you.

KIRI: I – the only time I – I sort of built up the – not built up the courage, I just think because I’ve got quite a round face as well, I – I just think, ‘what’s the occasion, babe?’ So the only time I wore it is to –

TETE: Everyday is the occasion.

KIRI: Everyday is the occasion. I deserve it. Um, the only thing I – oh god, I’m so annoyed. It was here. Because I always look at it when I’m doing this podcast. Um, the last time I wore it is when I was drunk and I was watching – there’s a Welsh version of, um, Eurovision called, uh, 103:25. And I was hammered and I was like, ‘do you know what this – I feel like I – I should be wearing a turban for this.’ That’s like the only time I’ve worn it, is to watch Welsh Eurovision.

TETE: Do you know what? I think – I think as women, like – I feel like, I don’t know if this is true, maybe I’m just – maybe I’m just judging people. But I feel like a lot of women aspire – this is out there. I’m going to say it. I think a lot of women aspire to marriage because they want to wear the dress. Because women are not given enough opportunities to – to draw attention to themselves and to wear something fabulous. Because so many women feel suppressed in the way that they dress and don’t even know it.

They don’t even know that they’re like editing the way that they present themselves because they have been conditioned to not take up space and not be visible. And so so many women – that’s why there’s such a whole culture around like wedding dress shopping and like wedding dresses. Like I got so into TV shows

about wedding dresses in lockdown. Like there's something so comforting about them because they're just so safe. Like they're really happy. I started watching this one called The Curvy Bride's Boutique.

KIRI: Yes, please.

TETE: And it's – oh my god, it's so good. It's on Discovery and it's like these two women in Essex. One of them is like a complete bitch and the other one is like the most nurturing like kind woman. And they're like the best duo ever. And they have this boutique which is a congregation of mobile homes that they've set up into a wedding dress shop.

KIRI: What?

TETE: And they specialise in plus size brides. And they basically give everyone exactly the same dress. It's amazing. But the – but it's always happy and there's always a dress moment. And I feel like in lockdown I really gravitated towards wedding dress, um, TV shows. But I think there is such a culture around it because women don't get that opportunity.

And I think more women just need to buy themselves a big dress. Like you're an adult. I bought myself a prom dress about seven years ago. Like this big pink poofy prom dress and it was £15 on Ebay. And I was like, 'I want that dress and I have nowhere to go.' And I just bought it. And when I was just having like a shit day where I felt really depressed, or like if I had to do the housework and didn't really want to do the housework, I'd put the dress on and just do it in the dress. And it just made everything so much better.

But then every time my friends would come round, they'd always be like, 'oh my god, can I try it on?' Because I think like we just have this huge – like this instinct to be drawn towards big poofy dresses. And so many of us don't get that opportunity to do it. So everyone needs to go out and buy themselves a prom dress or a wedding dress and just get it out your system and then decide if you want to get married.

KIRI: So great.

TETE: Or wear a turban.

KIRI: Would you – I was thinking about that the other day when I was like, 'oh, I wish my partner would propose to me.' And then I had a real thought about it and I was like, 'I do love him and I do want to be with him forever, but also I think I just want a nice ring.' I was like, 'I think I just want a nice bit of jewellery. And I – I can buy that myself.'

TETE: You can buy a ring. You can buy a ring.

[Both laugh]

KIRI: Yeah. Um –

TETE: Yeah, I think we like need to give ourselves permission to like wear extravagant outfits all the time, because it just does you the world of good.

KIRI: Yeah. And I – do you know I see a little bit of that release valve at festivals.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Where, you know, you get people who – who go, you know, they go – they plan their festival outfits. And it – and I think because I'm so lucky that I get to wear wild stuff onstage I think, you know, like when I see people going for it and you can tell that they're – they're tugging at things because it's not normally what they'd wear but I'm like, 'oh, god, love you.'

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like just lean into this weekend and hopefully if 5% of that rolls over into the rest of your life and – and one day you won't be able to tell the difference between your festival outfit and your normal outfit.

TETE: Yeah, I think we do forget like working in showbiz that so many people do feel like self-conscious about the way they present themselves. Like especially I think like cis women do. They feel like they can't draw attention to themselves, probably because of like the safety element of it, you know? You can't go around wearing a spangly bikini all the time because you'll probably get harassed.

KIRI: Yeah.

TETE: Whereas like in that festival it does create this safe space, which is – is a bit like a nightclub or a comedy club, you know? This environment where it's allowed to do it. But we forget that so many people going through their lives like never being given that space. And I feel like especially in like rural areas like where I'm from, like people live for the weekend. And they live for that moment to like dress up. They'll buy a new outfit, dress up and go out because they have an excuse. But there's – there's so many

excuses. You don't need an excuse. We should all just be wearing prom dresses to go to the supermarket.

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah. Me and my mates growing up in the countryside going to nightclubs that we'd go – we'd go out once a week to Monday night. It was a – a nightclub called Time. And we were like – we'd just go big. And we would wear these – you know, big vintage dresses that we found and like mad stuff because it was like – that was your one night to peacock and to let go and get hammered.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And dress like everyone that you saw in the magazines or the bands that you liked or, you know, like, you know, being obsessed with Debbie Harry, seeing what she wore and then trying to do, you know, piece together something from charity shops that was the same. But like you're right, it – it could just be everyday. It could just be everyday.

TETE: Yeah, it could be everyday. It can be everyday.

KIRI: You are living proof.

TETE: I'm living it.

KIRI: Um, I wanted to ask you, are there any, um, any little trends that occurred that you hope don't come back? That you – that you hope doesn't come around in a circle again?

TETE: Oh my god, do you know, I – do you know what I hate at the moment? At the moment I hate this beige culture. This like Kardashian, Kanye West beige that everyone's wearing. Because it

looks so awful. Like I tried to wear this beige jumpsuit and I actually look like an uncooked sausage. I was like, 'no one – like especially white people.'

Like it looks good on Kim Kardashian because she's gorgeous. Like because she is gorgeous and she's got the right skin tone. When I see people – like when I try and wear that colour, it just does – it looks not good. And I think we've all been brainwashed to think it looks good and it doesn't look good and we just need to remember it doesn't look good. Um, I hate it.

KIRI: I think – I think people think it looks chic.

TETE: It doesn't.

KIRI: And I think it actually very easily looks cheap. And you're right, the skin – the skin tone I have as well that's quite pinky underneath and –

TETE: Yeah, no.

KIRI: I haven't got a tan, I would just look like, 'oh god, have you had a stomach bug?' That's what I would look like in that colour.

TETE: Yeah. Yeah. It does look a bit like that.

KIRI: Like I've had the shits for three days.

[Both laugh]

TETE: It's so that. It's so that. It's like do fashion houses hate the average woman? Like I think they actually hate us.

KIRI: Yeah, I think they do.

TETE: Like I was – I walked past this lady the other day and she was wearing like this Adidas tracksuit that was that like fleshy colour. And I was like, ‘why did Adidas make that? Like why did they make that?’ Because now they think that they look good in that. But it doesn’t – it’s not bringing anything out in you. It doesn’t make you look happy or healthy. It just is a – it – I think they hate us. I really do think they hate us.

KIRI: Do you know what? I’m – I’m – I don’t disagree with you there too much. And that’s one of the reasons why I – particularly her older stuff, but like Vivienne Westwood, in that when she dressed women, especially for the red carpet, I’m like, ‘well there’s someone who doesn’t hate a woman’s body.’ Like she – do you know what I mean?

TETE: Yeah. Yeah.

KIRI: And whereas sometimes you see it and you’re like, ‘oh, why do you hate that woman?’

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like it’s so –

TETE: Especially like – oh my god, who’s – the worst one is Urban Outfitters do not make things for anyone over a size 8.

KIRI: No, it’s mad.

TETE: I’m like –

KIRI: I have to – the only thing I've ever got from Urban Outfitters is a fucking bathmat.

TETE: Yeah, cactus ones. I'm like, 'they hate people over a size 8. Like they don't like us. They don't want us there.' Bershka as well don't sell anything over a size 12. I'm like, 'you hate the average woman. Do you want my money? Do you even want it?'

KIRI: Mad.

TETE: It's just like offensive. I'm like they are – they're not even like being shy about like giving us all issues anymore. They're just being very brazen about it.

KIRI: You know when they go up to a 16 and then they're like, 'bear in mind our sizes do run up about a size smaller.' And you're like, 'well just do a 14 then.'

TETE: Well then just say that, yeah.

KIRI: Because if you're on a – if you're a 16 anyway, which I am, fluctuate between a 14 and a 16.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: Like you are like the – the work you've done to not hate your body being a 16 is quite extensive. And then if you put on a 16 that doesn't fit, you are back to square one again. Like –

TETE: And I'm sure we had a conversation about this like culturally like a few years ago. The whole like, 'plus size clothing, be inclusive' was such a moment and then now I'm going back on the

high street, I'm like, 'where's it gone?' Like, 'where are the size 16 and 18s on the high street now?' It's so weird.

KIRI: Maybe they've all just sold out. Maybe they have just like been bought.

TETE: Maybe. You know, that's it, I'm sure that's it. I really had this moment, it was probably like a year ago, where I wanted some like – oh, it sounds horrible now saying it as well – some neon snakeskin jeans.

KIRI: Love.

TETE: Don't know. I just really wanted some. I just had it in my mind. I was like, 'I want some neon snake – snakeskin jeans,' and the only place that sold them was Bershka and they just didn't do anything over a size 12. I literally wrote to them, I was like, 'just so you know, you've taken away my dream by not having the size I need.' It's just terrible.

KIRI: Did they write back?

TETE: No, they didn't. Unsurprisingly.

KIRI: I've – I've got some – you've reminded me of two things I've got behind me that you would like that, um, I've got these really good neon snakeskin tracksuit bottoms.

TETE: Oh my god, I love those.

KIRI: They're like – yeah, but they are like – I can – I can't move loads in them.

TETE: Yeah.

KIRI: And, uh, what else? There's a – oh, there's – this is – these are great. They're from this really good, um, uh, black-owned business of siblings called Elsie and Fred. And, um, they are like – they're neon snakeskin stretchy.

TETE: Oh, I've – yeah, I've seen this brand. That's so good. Do they fit you?

KIRI: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, they're great.

TETE: Nice.

KIRI: If anything they're a bit big, um, so yeah.

TETE: Ooh. Ooh.

KIRI: And they – they're – yeah, I just wanted to get that into the podcast, babe. Just so it's on the recording.

[Both laugh]

TETE: I must say as well, from being an emo, like when I was an emo I was like, 'I will never wear tracksuit bottoms. I will never wear a tracksuit.' Oh my god, in lockdown I got my first tracksuit. I've bought about five. I was like, 'I can't believe I've spent my whole life not being this comfortable.'

KIRI: Yeah, it's weird, isn't it? We denied ourselves.

TETE: The prejudice I had carried around. Exactly. I've – literally I've bought a full, um, tiger skin tracksuit. I look like Carol Baskin.

My girlfriend was like, 'why are you dressed like Carol Baskin?' I was like, 'I feel so free in this outfit. You can't tell me that I don't look great.' Who knew?

KIRI: I know.

TETE: Who knew sportswear was so comfortable?

KIRI: We should've looked at all the men wearing it and been like, 'well of course they wouldn't compromise their comfort. Like of – of course that it's –'

TETE: Of course. And pockets.

KIRI: Yeah, we're idiots.

TETE: They've always got pockets.

KIRI: Pockets.

TETE: Like what more do you want?

KIRI: I've got one final question for you. It's been so nice chatting to you. Um, I'm so interested to hear your, uh, answer to this. Now it's – it's slightly, um, slightly sad question. But, um, should you die, I won't say when you die, but should you choose to die, um, what will you, um, what would you wear to be buried in?

TETE: Does it have to be something I own?

KIRI: No, no.

TETE: No. Okay. First of all I don't know if I want to be buried because I don't know how eco-friendly that is. But –

KIRI: Okay, but like – this is just – this is just the coffin bit, where people are likely to see you.

TETE: Okay.

KIRI: You can be disposed of – you can be turned into a tree or a diamond or whatever.

TETE: Disposed. Okay. A diamond. Um, do you know what? I've got this fabric that I've been saving. Um, it's right there. I'm looking at it right now. It's turquoise crocodile patent leather.

KIRI: Can I see it?

TETE: Oh my god, it's amazing. I – I bought it in New York. Yeah. I got it from – do you ever – do you ever watch Project Runway?

KIRI: Yes.

TETE: Oh my god, I went to Mood, the fabric shop.

KIRI: Oh my god.

TETE: The fabric shop they go to. It looks like this. It's so nice.

KIRI: Oh my god, that is gorgeous.

TETE: It's gorgeous. Isn't it gorgeous? Um, I've been saving this, um, I would love like – would I want to be in a – a tracksuit? No, and would I want to be in a jumpsuit? I think I'd probably be in a

dress, you know? Why not. Like a structured – I'm going to go with a structured – a cone bra dress, probably. Similar to what I already have. But I love a cone bra. I think cone bras are the height of femininity. Like if you don't have pointy tits, what's the point in having tits? Um, so I'd probably - I'd probably go for something in this. So I'll probably save this until I die. And then can you just tell whoever it is that's burying me, 'put me in this,' okay?

KIRI: Yeah, no worries.

TETE: Oh my god, I'd love to be in drag when I'm buried.

KIRI: That would be so good.

TETE: That would be quite fab, wouldn't it?

KIRI: That's gorgeous. That would be amazing.

TETE: Who's going to do my makeup, though, because I do my own makeup? And someone will have to do my drag face.

KIRI: As your – say you get – I mean I hope this doesn't happen, but say you get some kind of long-term illness, you're going to have to start auditioning people to do the face. You know like, um, like RuPaul got someone from the show to do their face?

TETE: Yeah yeah yeah.

KIRI: I think you're going to have to start training someone up. That's that's how it works.

TETE: That's a good idea. I should probably start now.

KIRI: Um, thank you so much, uh, for chatting. You've been absolutely amazing, mate. I really appreciate it.

TETE: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

[Upbeat electronic music]

KIRI: Can you believe it took a whole series of this podcast for someone to finally acknowledge Miss Piggy for the style icon that she is? Oh, how wise is Tete? Just such a breath of fresh air and a massive warm, open heart as well. We hadn't met before this recording, and I immediately felt like I was chatting to a mate that I'd just known since I was a teenager. And to be honest, if she dressed in head to toe sequins and passed it off as a drop of blood as a kid, we absolutely would've been mates.

Now I always like to bang on about a small business because you know by now that I love them. I mentioned them in the podcast, so let me crow about Elsie and Fred. They make the most amazing like vibrant coordinates that are just so cool. And like I've got a really cool pair of sequin shorts from them with fringing on them. Just great stuff. And they've got a really cool sort of 70s inspired range coming out now. I don't know what it is I love so much about a sibling run business, but I honestly think it's so cool. So the siblings are from Coventry originally but are now based in London.

Yes, there's three of them, Natalie, Leanne and Ryan, but I am still blown away by how much they do themselves. They design all the pieces, they go out to the factories, make sure the working conditions are great there, they do the PR, the photography. They're such a talented, hard working bunch.

And they're making strides towards making their business greener too. They're really upfront about that on the website. They're like, 'hey, we're not perfect. There's definitely room for improvement, but we're working hard to get there.' So for instance like there's now no single-use plastic in their packaging. Um, their range is vegan throughout and they recycle collections throughout the year.

And I really love this statement on their website too. It says, 'we are pro-black, pro gay, pro liberal, pro human, pro be what the hell you want to be as long as you're being nice. If you're not vibing the message, we're not the company for you. We will never stay silent on things that – we will never stay silent on things that matter to us and we will continue to support the ones who are marginalised on this earth.'

What a great, great thing to say. And just – I know it feels like – when it's coming from a small business and you know that an actual human wrote that as opposed to sort of like a focus group in a marketing team, it just feels so much more genuine. And I think their clothes are really joyous. And that's why I think it goes so well with Tete's episode, because I think it was a joyous episode.

So we've had some really lovely messages, um, through. But there is one I wanted to read out in particular. So at the end of Kris's episode, we got a lovely email from Lynn, who contacted us to praise Sindhu talking so openly about grief, as Lynn's mother had recently been given a very sudden terminal cancer diagnosis. Now they were booked to see Sindhu but weren't sure if they were going to make it.

I am delighted to read the following out from Lynn. If you're anywhere near your period, you're going to cry. Just a heads up. So Lynn said, 'thanks to Kiri for the incredibly kind words on the last pod. More tears. Anyway, I just wanted to say we made it to see Sindhu. Possibly the most expensive cab ride ever across London, but so worth it. Here we are looking thrilled and excited. Thank you again for your wonderful kindness. Lynn.'

And then there is a beautiful picture of Lynn and her mother together in the audience of Sindhu's show. It is such a gorgeous, gorgeous moment. Thank you so much for sharing it with us, Lynn. I think it's beautiful that you got to see Sindhu together.

[Upbeat electronic music]

Now we'll be back in a few months with a brand new series. The guests we have for you, oh my gosh. Comedians, obvs, actors, pop star royalty, drag queens. All the best people, essentially. Thank you for supporting series one and if you've forgotten to give us a lovely review, consider this your reminder. See you on a Monday in the future.

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.