

# Who Are You Wearing? With Ian H Watkins

**Kiri** 00:00

Hello, I'm stand up comedian Kiri Pritchard McLean here to tell you that I'm on tour with my brand new show home truths. I'm going all over the country, wherever will have me. I'm touring right through the spring. And then because some of you lovely lot have bought so many tickets, I'm now getting to talk for the whole of autumn as well. If you would like to get tickets, they're all available on my website. Or you can go to [littlewander.co.uk](http://littlewander.co.uk) and get tickets there. I can't wait to see you. And I don't want to brag, but I've got one hell of an outfit. Welcome to the Who Are You Wearing Podcast. I'm Kiri Pritchard McLean and I am lucky enough to host this lovely little foray into fashion. Foray? I think its foray, isn't it? Well I've said it now. I'll pretend that foray is like a fashion delivery of that word. I basically sit down with very stylish folk and ask them to talk about why they wear the clothes that they do. And it is always fascinating, even if I do say so myself. This week's guest is popstar and welsh royalty, Ian H. Watkins. Yes. H from Steps, guys. Now, Ian, talked so eloquently about fashion and gender. And I think it's really magic to hear someone who's got this huge platform, thinking about how they can use it to be sort of an active champion of the LGBTQ plus community. And it's really fascinating to me to hear about the world of pop, and how fashion works, and actually how when it comes to steps, they decided to do things a bit differently. And it might have been for sort of a budget decision initially, but it also makes a strong case for sustainability too, which is not a conversation I expected to have on this episode. This is a one in a million chat, I think. And we recorded it in September 2021. I know you lot gonna love this. So please enjoy me asking, Ian H Watkins, Who are you wearing?

**Ian** 02:32

Oh my gosh. So I guess my earliest memory and I've not thought about this really. But my earliest memory is my mother taking me to school. And it was hammering down with rain. I mean, typical, welsh weather and do you remember those coats that were reversible? And it was a dark blue canvas on one side? And like this horrible slimy yellow material on the inside? Do you remember that?

**Kiri** 02:55

Yeah. I think you can just wear them now.

**Ian** 02:58

Oh do they? What they're back in? No, that's wrong. So I remember my mum putting that on me. And also feeding mittens, red mittens on a string through the arms so I wouldn't lose them. So that's my earliest fashion for buying but not by choice.

**Kiri** 03:17

Well did you have a strong sense of style as a kid then? Did you know what you wanted to wear, how you wanted to look?

**Ian** 03:22

I did but you know what Kiri, I always knew from a very early age that I was different. And I'm alluding to being gay. But being different was something to be feared and you were, you know pushed in a different direction. And today luckily that being different is celebrated. You know, being different is unique. We're all different. But back then I gravitated, I loved fashion. I remember one of my earliest memories. I loved A-Ha. oh my goodness me Morten Harket oh my guy would tell you what, jumped off a cliff for him! But I remember going to a charity shop with my pocket money and I bought a really bad faux leather jacket, a pleather jacket, and I cut this leather jacket up, this pleather jacket, into strands, lots and lots of different strands, I tied them all together and I made, you know the leather necklace that he wore? Used to wear like, remember that? and he put it all round his hands? and I was so scared that you know, the other boys would see me wearing this and you know, and call me the obvious names and I always remember once that I had it all, and I forgot I had it on and we've gone swimming and I like, fake being ill because I didn't want to get undressed you know with all my, you know my homage to Morton Harkets around my neck.

**Kiri 04:51**

Oh my god! Your heart just breaks for young you like trying to be themselves and find themselves and having to hide it and even having to pretend to be unwell to, to, I guess just save the bullying?

**Ian 05:05**

Yeah, totally. And, you know, recently my children, I mean my children are characters and they've come home and we, of course were having the talks about you know, different families because instantly they have a different family you know, I'm a gay dad and we've had the talk you know, boys can marry boys and girls can get to marry girls, but a pterodactyl cannot bury a triceratops. brothers can marry brothers? I'm like, no brothers can't marry brothers, that would be wrong. And so that, I was going down the route of school so they're already kind of forming opinions and they're listening to their peers, they're five, and they came home and they said, boys don't wear pink Daddy. I went Yes, they do. Yes they can. So the day after I dressed from head to toe in pink and took them to school just to prove the point. And then the week after they said boys don't wear skirts daddy. I went Yes they can. So if you look at our recent video for take me for a ride, that's my inspiration for that video. So I wear a skirt in the video and it's just me flying the flag, you know, for the, for the gender fluid, for the non binary, just that part of our community that gets ridiculed and overlooked and for my children as well. So I just thought you know, massive box ticked and now my boy wants to wear a dress to school. Why not?

**Kiri 06:35**

Absolutely love it. That's gorgeous that you can be that sort of like, I guess role model to them because who was, who was dressing you? Who was giving you your ideas as a kid? Was it cousins? Was it siblings? Was it, was it mum doing it purely? Or were you trying to lead the way?

**Ian 06:50**

We had, I mean, you know, we came from a very working class family, we never went without but we, our wardrobes consisted of hand me downs, you know our neighbours clothes, charity shop, the market. You know, I always remember I had a prize pair of stonewashed denim jeans, and I had Barney Rubble and Fred Flintstone on the other leg.

**Kiri 07:12**

Oh my God, I'd wear them now. They sound amazing.

**Ian 07:15**

Yeah, they were and of course when you had holes in, in your knees, or you know in your elbows then you didn't buy a new pair of jeans or buy a new jumper, your mum would you know, sew a patch on there. That's what happened. We couldn't afford new clothes. I mean today, clothes are so cheap and disposable.

**Kiri 07:34**

Yeah, but actually looking back that's a much better, long lasting sustainable way to be doing things, it's better for the planet actually. And now people are going back to like put a patch on it. Don't just chuck it away. So your mum was a bloody trailblazer? That's what I'm saying.

**Ian 07:51**

Three boys and she had three jobs to keep us all, how people did it I do not know, but as a parent, you do what you have to do to you know, sometimes I'm, my eyes are dragging on the floor I'm so tired, but you find it from somewhere you do it.

**Kiri 08:05**

Amazing. Can I ask you, so I know about your raincoat that you hated wearing, but did you have a favourite item of clothing as a kid that you just never wanted to take off?

**Ian 08:14**

I had, so if you remember there was a phase in the 80s and it was just before I was getting into music and popular culture. But there were jumpers that were on the scene and they were very 80s so they had like bright blocks of yellow or bright blocks of red and they had like flecks of like white salt through them. Do you know the ones I mean?

**Kiri 08:40**

Yeah I do know the ones you mean.

**Ian 08:41**

Yeah, I had oh my goodness. I had the most amazing one, a jumper and I used to wear this jumper with a mint green cardigan over it. And I had white slip on shoes.

**Kiri 08:56**

Genuinely again that would be so hip, the colorblocking now, that would be so hip, you'd look like you ran a gallery in like East London.

**Ian 09:03**

I would not take these white slip on shoes off and they had holes in them. They had my toes poking out of the side and I would not want to get rid of them. And I used to, I used to get a needle and thread and

sew the sides because I did not want to take the shoes off and in all my school pictures. All of the other boys are in your like, you know, checkered shirts, you know, rugby tops, and there's me in a mint green cardigan and white slip ons.

**Kiri** 09:27

Very much telling the world something about yourself. And of course I'm going to ask you for these pictures to put on our Instagram afterwards cause I have to see the white slip ons.

**Ian** 09:40

I don't think the world is ready for that.

**Kiri** 09:42

When you were an, when you were a teenager then, what were the big trends and did you go in for any of them? were you someone who was like bang on trying to look like everyone else or were you always marching to the beat of your own drum with your mint cardigan?

**Ian** 09:55

I was very, I was heavily into music. You know when I was a teenager and I guess the band of the moment and the band of my childhood, and they know they still have a special place in my heart, were Take That. Oh my goodness I just wanted to be Mark Owen and just marry Mark Owen. Especially, you know the, you know when did Relight My fire, when they did Babe as well, when they did Earl's Court, when they did everything changes and all of the, you know, the tan and the stonewash oh my god, it was just awesome. I lived for Take That. They did a whole section on Top of the Pops with vintage Adidas and I tracked down every charity shop for vintage adidas.

**Kiri** 10:38

I love it. Do you remember? There's two like iconic images I have fashion wise of Take That. Number one is, is a picture of Mark Owen where he's looking up. And I think it's like a Johnson and Johnson like baby's logo T-shirt. Gorgeous, and really androgynous like, quite, quite faime. And like Mark was the one that you know, like, I had lots of the gay guys and you loved mark, because he like, he had just had this a theory of equality. And the other one is I remember on Top of the Pops, Howard Donald singing never forget in a white sarong. And it being a big moment in my house, we're like farmers and my dad was like, why is that man wearing a dress? And I was like leave him alone. But like I knew I was watching something special I hadn't seen before.

**Ian** 11:20

It's like, those memories are just you know, they're imprinted in your brain. So so many amazing memories I've got of Take That, especially. So they went through, you know, a baggy white shirt for years with a wave skort and wearing lots of crosses. It was around about the relight my fire stage as well. And I always remember, so myself and my friend Adrian, whenever we were out in the bank in Pendre. I don't know if you've ever been, its still going. In the bank in Pendre and we would rock relight my fire on our knees and our best friend Bethan would come in and be Lulu.

**Kiri** 11:58

So were you emulating what you saw from Take That? Were you experimenting with those styles in, as a teenager?

**Ian** 12:04

Yes, very much so yeah, I mean, I again, I was always, I was different. I was known for being a little bit more flamboyant and fashion conscious. And I followed trends. I wouldn't say I set them as such, but I think the gay community as a whole they are a great barometer for pop culture anyway. They always latch on to things far before anybody else. So we're, you know, we're super, just saying. So I think, you know, I was, I was copying, I was emulating rather than being fashionable.

**Kiri** 12:39

Yeah. Well, I think that is something that I really, I know from like consuming a lot of like queer media and you know, like lots of gay telly and things that like it is leaps ahead, like what, what the gay community are doing and seeing and, and being inspired by, the mainstream then follows and I'm not saying that being gay isn't mainstream, but it's certainly heteronormative the mainstream, so it's to be a part of that and to be part of like, I know you say you're not setting trends, but I bet you were back home. Do you know what I mean?

**Ian** 13:09

I guess, I mean, I was always the first guy in our village, you know, to wear bell bottoms or we used to call them wappers, do you remember wappers? So they were... (intelligible speech) I'm not familiar with those. So a wapper is there like a suede shoe that looks like a pasty on the tongue?

**Kiri** 13:32

Like a moccasin thing?

**Ian** 13:34

Like a crystal moccasin. We used to call them wappers for some reason. But I used to have, like them in every colour. My favourite were like bright purple suede. And these they get ruined in the rain. But I was absolutely wearing those to our school.

**Kiri** 13:48

Oh my god, I love it. What a strong look, what did you have then? Because you're really engaged in pop culture massively influenced by music as a teenager? Did you have a rebellious stage? And was it coming out in your clothes?

**Ian** 14:02

I guess the rebellious stage for me was when I, I was very aware that I was gay, and I wasn't out and I guess society around me suppressed that. So what I did, I actually turned my head on pop, and I pretended that I liked REM and Blue and Dinosaur Jr. So what I did I started to work docs and like baggy jeans and long tops and I grew my hair into a bob.

**Kiri** 14:36

Was this your way of managing your sexuality at the time? Is it your way of like?

**Ian** 14:42

I don't know about managing my sexuality but managing the backlash for what I presented, I guess. I very much toned everything down. And I put myself in a little box I guess. And thinking back on it. I've never really analysed it, but it was definitely a deliberate decision to not attract attention to myself.

**Kiri** 15:03

That so much to deal with as like a young person when you should be experimenting and finding yourself and you're going, well, I've got to survive here. Yeah. So how can I do that the best?

**Ian** 15:14

What's incredible these days, that there are so many safe spaces, especially in schools, you know, where you can be your authentic self, it doesn't matter what gender, what sexuality, what ability, you know what colour, you can find your tribe, or you can lead your tribe. I just think it's absolutely beautiful. What's happened and there's a wave of change. And it's just remarkable.

**Kiri** 15:36

Yeah, I hope so. I live in a very rural area of North Wales. And I'm not, I'm not confident it's permeated here. Yeah, I think in pop culture it has. But whether that, whether the experience of being a gay kid growing up in my high school would actually be any different. I am not sure. I hope it would be, I hope it would be.

**Ian** 15:54

I think I used to live in a rural community and I can understand where you're coming from, I guess where I live, or where I lived when I was a child was quite close to Cardiff. I mean, it was an hour, an hour away, you know, a couple of trains away, but you know, attitudes changed you know, every stop you made on the train. If there's no trains then you're probably good.

**Kiri** 16:19

Well, our next stop is Holyhead so I'm not sure about their attitudes there.

**Ian** 16:23

I like a bit of Holyhead but they haven't got mint green cardigans there.

**Kiri** 16:43

I want to talk about your current style, which, which I think you're always like very on trend without being that kind of like trendy that's just like mad going in for everything. But I also think what permeates through your, when I look at your clothes and what you wear, is the attention to detail that I feel like is a legacy of Steps, of like the level of polish and turnout. Do you know what I mean? It's someone who has spent however many years having 1000s of people look at them and also cause you tie together outfit wise so you've got to be aware of all the details because the devils in the details so the style that you have now, what age do you think that started showing up at?

**Ian** 17:27

I mean, thank you for that amazing review there. I would never quite put it that way. You know it's weird when we, when we get asked about steps and the style, they were like you know, what were you thinking you know, why on earth did you wear that? And I will never, Yes I look at it and kind of go, oh what, what, why on earth, but it has a moment in time, all of those things we chose and we had a stylist but we designed all of our clothes, they weren't enough, there's nobody else's fault. So we did it all ourselves and the idea was that every time we released a song we chose a colour theme, so for, I guess our fans will know, you know loves got a heart, got a hole in my heart is yellow after the loves gone is green, you know chain reaction is doctors and nurses, Deep Blue is you know the, you know the aliens in blue so you know everything has a time and a place, I'm super, super proud of that legacy and coming back you know I'm still doing it, it's our 25th anniversary, wow and to still be doing it is you know it's just insane.

**Kiri 18:35**

I was listening to Bonnie, brilliant interview she did on BBC Radio Wales and, and I think you're chatting to Lee from 911, and you said, one things you sort of mentioned in conversation is you've kept all your costumes.

**Ian 18:44**

Yeah, I've got all of my costumes all in boxes, one item I don't have and it's, oh I'm gutted I don't have it but we signed them all and gave them away, our Red Devil coats from the devil you know, oh, we gave them away as competition prizes but I have everything else and whenever there's an anniversary you know for, you know say Summer of Love, I dig up the top when I put it on and I go...

**Kiri 19:07**

I love it. So coming back to the question how you dress now, your style that you have, how have we got there? The style that we see you have, that level of turnout that I see, what's the journey? When did this start showing up your style?

**Ian 19:26**

I guess we were all chosen as members of steps because we were all very individual, you know they were, they were, they were ticking boxes I guess when they auditioned us. Before the lineup you know today, there was actually a different lineup of steps, I'm not sure if you knew that, but it was myself and Lisa and three other members. They left because they did not want to be line dancing pop stars.

**Kiri 19:51**

They must be fucking gutted now babes!

**Ian 19:53**

Who knows! I would be miffed! So, um, so we, it was Alicia and I, and then we needed three other members, obviously. So we were at the audition and 1000s of other people auditioned. And they were very much ticking boxes. So I fit back then I guess, that blonde kind of big gob cute, you know, the Mark Owen of the group, I guess, if you want to call it that, we needed somebody completely opposite to me, certainly tick those boxes, we already had a brunette. So we, then we found Claire, and she was a blonde. And they were like, Oh, we like this blonde as well. But she was good, so we all were very

individual anyway. And we all brought something very, very different, you know, personality wise, style wise. And everything you see from day one is ourselves, we inject all of ourselves into our outfits. Everybody's crazy when you think about it. I mean, they had dreadlocks at one point, and then Lisa had blue pipe cleaners in her hair, what were we thinking?!

**Kiri 20:21**

But so creative that you were, you were bringing that level of creativity, we're just rocking up and putting on the clothes that someone told you, I didn't realise that you guys had a hand in designing your stuff and being across it.

**Ian 21:12**

You know what, because it was far cheaper to do that, than be given hordes of Gucci shorts. Or, or, you know, we used to see all of these, all of our peers rocking up. So you know, we had all sorts, we had five, we had S Club, they were all dripping in Designer gear. We never had that budget. We never had a record company that threw money at us. And looking back on it. In hindsight, I'm glad they didn't, because all of that money is recouped. So we never had, you know, a big cash cow. It was cheaper to employ a seamstress and we tell them what we wanted. And we made that outfit last for 20 TVs. I mean, people knew I've just had a flashback. We would like, I'm going off, I'm going off piste here. We were at one of the most iconic events in the sporting calendar, so we were at the World Sports Awards in Monaco. Every sports star in the world, they were moving was dripping with movie stars, you know, Boris Becker, John McEnroe, they weren't you know, like people at the top of their game. You had Catherine Zeta Jones, and Michael Douglas, you know, centre fronts, we opened the whole show, and the curtain goes up. We were dressed in bright yellow, we look like bananas and all I can remember was Catherine Zeta Jones and Michael Douglas's faces like that.

**Kiri 22:48**

Like aghast?

**Ian 22:51**

Yeah literally, they could not believe what they were witnessing. And we were like, Yes, Hi, we're steps!

**Kiri 22:58**

That's like your, because that was in, you're in the golden age of pop, steps a part of that like pantheon of heroes of, of pop, right when pop like really reigned supreme. But steps still were like, outside doing their own thing like so you're right. The others were sort of like guessing. I don't want this to sound offensive. But they were striving for something cooler, Do you know what I mean? They sort of wanted to be on the adjacent of cool whereas you guys were like, No, we are this and we're doing that. And we're going to pick a colour and it's going to be themed. And I imagine fans responded to that and would turn up in, in colorblocked as well. Like, that's, that's such a smart thing to do with a sense of community as well. And a sense of like, style. So like, is that coming from? I can't, What basically I can't believe that's being led from you guys. Like that's coming from you is amazing.

**Ian 23:47**



It was very much led from us. And I wouldn't say that, you know, we didn't mastermind, the whole thing. We did what we needed to do to survive. And I think you're right, you know, a lot of the stylists and the record companies they had so much money to play with. The easiest thing to do was to go down bond street, you know, pick something from every store and let the band choose, you know what they wanted to wear. And I honestly, no disrespect to my peers, because I'm still friends with so many people from so many bands. But all of those bands were targeted and marketed towards the teen audience, where as steps, people who was a very clever and very savvy man, he, he made sure that we crossed over. So it was parents, didn't mind coming to our concerts because their kids loved it. but secretly they loved it as well. Yeah. Those children will be with the guilty pleasure. And I, you know, that's not a negative phrase at all. I'll embrace that. That those children that came to our concerts now have children, and there's three generations coming to our concerts and they're all dressing up, as our videos seen in, I guess, in inverted commas, iconic looks, you know we get doctors and nurses coming up, like gold robots. It's just amazing.

**Kiri 25:13**

It's gorgeous. Now you put so much thought into your, like stage clothes and, and like your personal clothes, we can see that. Do you think of hair and makeup as part of the outfit as well?

**Ian 25:26**

I guess for the boys, it's a lot easier. It's kind of you know, just, just to get a gel on it and go. But the girls very much so I mean, they, their, their hair is very much part of their looks. And I guess because we are a lot of us are nearly 45, you know, we, we've been around Kiri. So it's, we're on that, it's that fine line between, yes, we want to express ourselves and have fun and play, but do we want to you know, be age appropriate as well? You know, it's and some people go screw age appropriate. You know, I'm gonna wear, you know, do that probably, I should wear lavender, you know? So that's, I think you get to an age where, especially the girls because they're parents, they very much and they very consciously don't wear miniskirts or shoulder midriiffs, you know, because they don't want their children to see that. And I totally get that. He says, you know, getting this topper on Instagram. And I've worked I'm still single Jesus.

**Kiri 26:31**

Well, the mission of this podcast is to get you paired off.

**Ian 26:36**

Answers on a postcard.

**Kiri 26:38**

Because also, the other gorgeous thing about steps is and I want to make sure that we're talking about your personal style as well. But obviously, you're in such an iconic band, it's hard to not talk about it. But you went through like, you know, with each album and thing there's, there's a theming, are there any trends that you've repeatedly tried to pull off that you're just like, it's time to walk away from that, it's time to let go, It's not happening for me?

**Ian 27:02**

I don't know about trends, but I mean, we you know, like I said, we identify every campaign, every single campaign with a colour so, and the yellow was definitely a no, no, that was a faux pas. I remember, we were in the most beautiful location. We were filming the video, or at the ? hotel in Cannes, and we were there, literally look like tropical fruits on the end of the pier. It was awful.

**Kiri 27:30**

I love that. I'm obviously going to ask for a picture of that as well. Yeah. Do you feel about, because I know you've got your costumes, but is there an item of clothing that you've had for ages that you, that you still love that you've hung on to?

**Ian 27:44**

Oh I do, do you know what I've got an amazing, and this contradicts everything that I said, because it's a label, I've got a beautiful Gucci shirt, which I bought myself actually it wasn't a stylist. And we did a show called steps into summer. See what we did there. And we had like, it was like our own variety show. And we had Lionel Richie on and he sang all night long with us. And I got to, I got to sing a duet with Lulu. And we sang I don't want to fight anymore. And I wore this. It's like a chiffon Gucci shirt. And it's beautiful. I tried it on the other day. That's my one. I just I adore that just because of the memories attached.

**Kiri 28:25**

That's gorgeous. Now, is there an era that you wish you existed in just for the fashion? But I feel like you existed in your perfect era.

**Ian 28:34**

I don't know about that. I mean, some people definitely disagree. I love the 80s, I loved how flamboyant and how outlandish the 70s were, you know, incredible people like Ziggy Stardust you know David Bowie, Mark ball and the stones you know, they were at the top of their game and not afraid to be flamboyant and experiment and I just love that.

**Kiri 28:59**

I totally agree. So many of my style icons are men from the 70s. So like Elton John and Freddie Mercury and everyone you've just mentioned that I'm like, Well, that's the look I'm going for is a, is a rich man in the 70s.

**Ian 29:11**

Have you seen the new Cruella film, which is iconic.

**Kiri 29:15**

I haven't but the costume designer is Joe, you know, Joe Lycett?

**Ian 29:21**

I do yes, he messaged me saying this is...

**Kiri 29:24**

Yeah, and it's, she's amazing Jenny, So I've been, I follow her on Instagram. I've been looking at it but I'm saving up Cruella because I can't wait to see it, because the costumes look like something else.

**Ian** 29:34

Totally influenced by Vivienne Westwood, you know, the iconic looks so exquisitely done. Very, very.

**Kiri** 29:40

I love it. I want to ask you, if you've got an item of clothing other than your Gucci shirt that you put on and you just immediately feel amazing and it can be a pair of trackies but you just feel like, do you know what I feel like me in this?

**Ian** 29:52

I'm a very tired dad Kiri. So, and it sounds really boring. But my onesie, I love my onesie.

**Kiri** 30:01

Right, paint the scene. What's the onesie look like? We need colour we need sizing.

**Ian** 30:04

I've got a plethora of onesies. I don't know what the collective term for onesie, onesie, I don't know.

**Kiri** 30:11

I think it's an exhaustion of onesies.

**Ian** 30:14

Okay, yeah, I've got a camo print one, I've got a ? one, I've got a teal one. I've got, you know, your bog standard grey. So you know depends on what moods, but generally I'm in a onesie.

**Kiri** 30:25

A onesie for every occasion. I love it. So what's your relationship like with shopping? Do you, because you are very like fit you're like, built for fashion like you know your, you're like, you're slim, you're trim, you've got a great figure. So to me, I'm like, God, he must love shopping. Because everything will look amazing on you. You're like the perfect body to hang clothes on. But, no but it's true like, it's to me, I'm like, Oh my God. Yeah, that will be, you just wander in and grab what you like, but like, Are you someone who likes going in there? Do you want to touch stuff, you want to try stuff on? Or is it like, Oh no, I love a bit of online? Or do you actually just hate shopping?

**Ian** 31:01

Because I'm a parent. And my time is valuable. I just don't, I don't have time to you know, to indulge in shopping. I don't. Before children, I would go for hours on end and have a little lunch. You know, I'd have their lunch and another lunch. But now I tend to do stuff online. But I go to designers that I know. I like and I know that fit my frame as well. So can we talk designers?

**Kiri** 31:25

Yeah of course you can. Yeah, yeah.

**Ian** 31:27

Okay, there's one I use a lot for stage as well, is there's an incredible company called Ortu (O-R-T-U). And their stuff is just so, it's a bit gender fluid. So it plays on the non binary. You know, they have like kind of belts that look like skirts and chiffon tops and incredible kind of bags that look like harnesses and you know, it's Oh, yeah, I just I absolutely love it. I wouldn't wear it on the school run.

**Kiri** 31:57

Unless, of course the boys come home and say, Daddy, someone in school said that boys can't wear belts or like skirts you were like, hold my drink.

**Ian** 32:06

As long as it's not a harness. We've, we've, we've gone down the Fetish routes quite a lot recently with our, with our last album. So we've been wearing kind of, you know, like harnesses and holsters and I don't know whether that's been mainstreamed before but what somebody else said to us on a reconciling recently. You've made harnesses mainstream.

**Kiri** 32:31

But it is, it's like it's Oh, it's so, it's so good but you're right, maybe not right for the school run, although very practical imagine all the school bugs and like P.E. kits that you could clip on couldn't you?

**Ian** 32:42

I was going to say something really...

**Kiri** 32:53

So I love that you were like nosing through the charity shops as a kid and and cutting up that leather jacket is that like, how do you feel about secondhand stuff? Thrifting vintage clothes thing, things like that, is that, is that something that you, are you someone who likes to dig around? Or you're like, Oh God, no, that'll just do my hair in?

**Ian** 33:07

My friend, My friends call me a sceptic. that's what I do. I can't, I cannot pass a skip without having a nose. a charity shop, a vintage store on architectural salvage. My house looks like a junk shop, I've ringed it in a little bit. I collect circus art and fairground art. So my bed head is a Wazza panel. Just to the right of me. I've got a carousel horse you know I've got lights from Blackpool illuminations, it looks like, you ever seen gods own junkyard?

**Kiri** 33:35

Yeah I love that.

**Ian** 33:36

It looks like that. Yeah, I've got an original Stage Door sign here from the West End theatre and stuff like that. It's, you know i'm a bit eclectic.

**Kiri 33:44**

Oh, I love it. But, but you're not like, let's talk about clothes with that though. You're not in there buying a ringmasters outfit are you. Although I can absolutely see steps wearing them.

**Ian 33:51**

I used to, so because of the job that I do, I will go to charity shops and I'll see something and I'll take a picture of it and send it to our stylist and go, right I want this to go with the next lot, because generally will have things made now depending on you know what kind of creature or alterego we are, on the last video we had, so have you, so there's an incredible outfit that Trinity the tuck wore on all star, she's in this kind of lime green, radioactive green outfit, spiky outfit, you know what I mean? Yeah, and I wanted that in the right colour combo for the last video and our stylists made it. So they had like a bolero jacket, a spiky Bolero. And I had this kind of cyber erotic porcupine on my arm.

**Kiri 34:42**

I love it, so you're picking your influences from from everywhere then from from dry grace from a shirt in a charity shop. You just always sort of like Magpieing about the place. And this is what's interesting to me is that you've got such a good eye and such a creative eye. Do you ever pump it into like Ian, or is it all being pumped into H?

**Ian 35:03**

I guess H is my alter ego, that's the guy that can express to the fullest. Because I will repeat, I can't wear a harness on the school run.

**Kiri 35:14**

Ian is an accident in a onesie? He's not in a harness.

**Ian 35:16**

Exactly. That's the day where up at night he comes alive.

**Kiri 35:20**

I love it. What is your, do you think about, because obviously, actually getting stuff made by someone who's an expert is, especially for those that you're not, well made things that you're gonna get a lot of gigs out of, and things that's quite sustainable way you know, it's we're not one of 1000 with lots of, that are then going to be sent to landfill if they don't cite it's quite sustainable way of doing things, do you, because you're in the world of like, pop and as fast fashion is linked to that and turnover and things are you, how do you feel about sustainability and things like that? Is it something you think about? Or is it like, I mean, we've got enough with, with twins?

**Ian 35:54**

We are very, I guess, eco friendly with, we recycle costumes. We have a core wardrobe, well its a core room of rails and rails and suitcases, our stylist who's incredible, a guy called Frank Strachan, and he has a room dedicated to us, and kylie.

**Kiri 36:14**

What a house. Let me go spend some time there.

**Ian 36:18**

Yeah, he was saying that a couple of weeks ago, you know, I found that no girls allow dresses from the promise and I was like what? They're iconic, what?! so yes, yeah, amazing. So with our costumes, we recycle a lot, you may not see it or know it, but we do, so especially with custom pieces so like shoulder pads or harnesses or belts, there are certain ways you can actually just, you know, rip a layer off, and then they're covered with jewels. So I wore something recently on drag race actually and we recycled that to do Graham Norton with Michelle. So everything is kind of mished and mismatched, nothing is made completely new for every performance.

**Kiri 36:57**

Amazing. That's so exciting that you're taking those really, because also, that's the thing of having a well made piece, isn't it, that you can actually be like, well, the foundations and the skeleton of this is strong, we can just change what goes over the top that is so exciting to hear.

**Ian 37:11**

I also have, I've got some, because Lisa lives in Dubai, she leaves a lot of her costumes with me. So a lot of them now are in my children's dressing up box. So they often come out with like gold shoulder pads, with feathers hanging off it or a pink bejeweled belt.

**Kiri 37:33**

I want to see it, you're going to have to whatsapp Mia, who wore it best, I really want to see that! Do you see your style changing and evolving all the time? Or you're like, you know, this is me. I feel like me in my onesie and my sort of very, very turned out look as Ian and definitely as H, like, do you see it changing? Or are you this is who you are now?

**Ian 37:58**

I guess I'm at, I'm at a bit of a crossroads in my life, where I'm very aware that I'm 45 I'm not, I'm not spring chicken anymore. But also, I want my children to be as expressive as they want to be. So why should I suppress my creativity when I want them to just lap everything up you know to experiment and be the beautiful people that they are. So part of me says, screw it I'm going to keep on doing it. But there's a bit of me going you're a little bit too old for this.

**Kiri 38:32**

Also I quite like to wear something comfortable.

**Ian 38:35**

Could we wear that for one for sorrow?

**Kiri 38:39**

I love it. Yeah.

**Ian 38:40**

There you go! that's the title of this podcast.

**Kiri 38:45**

Now is there an item that you can always see yourself wearing, whatever you age you are, you'd be like, you know what, I'll always find it an occasion to throw that on.

**Ian 38:53**

Oh, I mean I've got lovely Blazers, standard blazer you can wear with anything so your shirt, you know T shirts, a vest or if I'm feeling daring, I'll just put a waistcoat under it so yeah, nice blazer with arms pulled up.

**Kiri 39:04**

Oh love it. Like my Miami vice, rolled up sleeves, love it.

**Ian 39:09**

Yeah, exactly yeah, sadly I'm not Don Johnson.

**Kiri 39:13**

Are there any trends that you're hoping never come back?

**Ian 39:15**

I mean, as, as, as much as they affected my, my youth, I guess the 80s were lots of fashion. I mean, the frizzy perms weren't good. Oh my gosh, I just remembered, I combed the back of my hair to look like Duran Duran.

**Kiri 39:33**

I'm also going to demand a picture of that love, I've got to see that!

**Ian 39:38**

I don't know if any exist but yeah, I used to have, I used to have a perm on the back. Bless my mother she let me do it.

**Kiri 39:43**

Oh love her. Now I've got one final question. It could be seen as a bit sombre, but actually I think it's a nice uplifting thing. So we're not, we're not here forever. You've moved off this, this, this world into the next one. So what would you wear to be, to be buried or to be cremated? And what's the final outfit that you would go for?

**Ian 40:08**

Oh my god, I guess well, if you have a legacy, if my legacy is going to be, I guess steps, right, because I've been part of that for more time than I've been on this earth. So, the, I guess the t shirt. The image that everybody knows me for is the monkey T shirts, Do you remember the Paul Frank t shirt? Yeah. And I literally was obsessed with them. I had them in every colour. And people always say that they

remind me of you. So I guess that is the definitive outfit for me I guess, you may see it on the next tour, you know?

**Kiri 40:45**

Oh, I love it. I had a pair of Paul Frank pyjamas. They were purple. And yeah, and they had the monkey face woven. I mean, I remember paying, saving up and this is when I was like 15 or 16. Maybe working as a washer up and I say there were 90 quid, which was, its a lot of money now for a pair of pyjamas and it was fucking mind blowing back then. But I was like, You know what, I'm never not going to love these. And I've got them stowed away in a drawer somewhere because I can't get my ass in them these days.

**Ian 41:14**

I thought you were going to say keep them for best, I never keep anything for best. It's like you know when you get a really nice bottle of champagne or wine. Or you have a suit for best. Don't keep things for best. Get in them, enjoy them.

**Kiri 41:24**

Oh, H you absolute legend. Do you know what, I just love how being the best, most proactive role model to his boys is just at the front of all his decisions. I think that's gorgeous. And I'm so pleased that we got to have a peek into the world of steps too because I love how they sort of recycle and reuse what they have. Yeah, sort of consistently inventing and moving in different directions with their style, based on a single or an album they have out, I think is really invigorating to see people who've been in a creative field for a fair old time, still in full control and innovating and also taking joy from reinvention. I just think it's, it's really inspiring. Also another babe advising us to never save anything for best. And if Ian H Watkins tells you to pop on those pearls and a tail coat to go and do the big shop. It must be true. If you want to get in contact with us, we love having a chinwag with you. We're on Instagram at [whoareyouwearingpod](#) and we whack up pictures on there of that week's guests and their different outfits. Some of the clothes they've mentioned. Do we dig up stuff from their childhood? Absolutely. If you want a longer chat, you can email us at [whoareyouwearingpod@gmail.com](mailto:whoareyouwearingpod@gmail.com) We've had a lush email here from Laura who says, hello just to say I'm seriously loving the podcast, yourself and all the guests have got me so inspired and reignited my love of clothing after 18 months working from home and joggers and jumpers. Babe tell me about it literally the first 10-15 minutes my daughter is about this. Laura goes on to say, I also adore reminiscing about all the old trends and brands RIP punky fish, Paul Frank well you'll have loved this episode, Tammy, etc. It's a perfect Monday listen. I'm so glad, I think it's a really nice podcast to start the week, week with as well. Yeah. So Laura goes on to say, anyway, as a fellow charity shop addict, I often find it difficult to get secondhand basics. Preach, I'm more likely to come home with three jazzy blouses and have nothing to put them with. I'm also a big lover of eBay and Vinted. But I've recently discovered PreWorn.LTD, which is probably best described as a source of secondhand shopping. They have 1000s of items from high street basic T shirts to good old St. Michael jumpers, all at a ridiculously affordable price. Currently, everything is 50% off. Oh my gosh. Oh no, I'm finding my afternoon. And Laura says, oh, best of luck with your tour, gutted I just missed out on Reading tickets. Well, Laura, I think I'm going back to Reading maybe. Let me have a look now. Sorry, Joe, you can cut out all this waffle, but if I am, Hey Laura, I'm going back to Reading on the 16th of September at the end of this year. And because you've given me a great tip about shopping, Why don't



I sort you out some free tickets. If you email Joe she'll sort that out for you. My partner is looking at me over some pew, he thinks I give away too many free tickets. So thank you so much for that Laura, its a great email. Are we gonna get loads of emails from people who want free tickets? My partner is nodding in the background. Well, you know, so be it. I don't read them anyway. So you can't guilt trip me. It's got to go through Joe and she's got a heart of steel. No, no way. She just as soft as I am. Now then. We always talk about small business on this podcast. So I would love to introduce you to a business, which is Welsh, about half Welsh. We'll get to that. Please meet Inland Sea. Okay, so this is an amazing sort of half Welsh half monkey union company set up by, Oh, my partner is leaning over the bed and pointing because he's wearing the T-shirt right now. I'm getting distracted here. Sorry. Okay. So it's set up by a really brilliant man, guy called Adam. I know a man, he must be pretty special for me to even mention him. And he really is. So basically, Inland Sea was born out of Adam's time as a surfer, he noticed more and more plastic on our beaches. And that was just at the front of his mind all the time. So he went, he attended an event that Patagonia did. And at this event, they mentioned that they were using recycled plastic in their T shirts. And that's when he was like, Oh my gosh, that could be part of the solution. So he found this company in America that could make them, slammed a load of them on his credit card, paid loads in import tax and probably learned a valuable lesson there, and that is how Inland Sea was born. So he's got this amazing range of T-shirts made from basically plastic that comes out the sea, it's so good. I usually get them for presents for like men who are hard to buy for because they got really cool designs as well. Since then, he and his partner Vic, they've got a brilliant podcast together as well, it's called Things can only get Greta. about the environment. By the way, Vic is a brilliant woman that I'm lucky to know from my early standup days. So they become pioneers in manufacturing clothes out of seaweed. Incredible. I own one of these T-shirts. It's one that my partner just pointed to, he's wearing right now. It's beautiful, and they're really soft with great colours. And I just, I just think it's so exciting. They've also opened up a shop in Macclesfield. So follow them on Instagram, you can find out when that's open, I think it's got quite limited opening times but they're looking to expand and, and be open more. Do you know what, I just love that they're always pushing forward too, so they've got a ethical and affordable plus size range that they're going to be launching soon. I just think it's such a relief to find companies that really care about the world as much as you do. Like their clothes, they're made in Lithuania, in a factory that is the only factory to be accredited by Greenpeace. It's absolutely amazing. They sort of build themselves as the most like eco friendly ethical factory in the world. But obviously I don't know, Guinness World Records aren't involved in that yet, but that's what they're meant to be. And they've got just a really transparent section on the website about their products, how they're made, where they're made, what they're made from. I just, I just think honesty about the supply chain is so lovely and refreshing. So that is Inland Sea. Also check out their guide to great women T-shirt. I love it so much I have in two colours, and my partner has one as well. Thank you so much for listening and please join me next week as I have an incredible powerful chat with the amazing Susan Calman. It's, it's a really big episode and I think you guys are gonna love it. See you then. Do you know what that's such a beautiful sentiment to leave it on. And also the mental image of you in an open casket in a Paul Frank T- shirt, it's the funniest thing ever. I'd have platform shirt up and you're like put me in a Paul Frank T-shirt. You've been so good. This has been such a great chat. Who Are You Wearing is produced by Joe Southerd, the artwork is by Mary Phillips and the music is by Annie glass. This has been a Little Wander production.