

Who Are You Wearing? With Amrou Al-Kardi

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 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 podcast about clothes, style and fashion. This is Who Are You Wearing? This week, I talked to the phenomenally stylish Amrou Al-Kardi, creator of drag superstar, Glam Room. This is a great chat, if I do say so myself, because Amrou exists in so many roles and identities, not just professionally as a drag queen, comedian and themselves. But as a twin, as a non binary person. It is all fascinating, because their style plays a massive part in all of those roles, and identities. And you know what, I find it really fascinating when Amrou talks about the restrictions on women in Saudi Arabia, facilitating the need for expression through clothes, which is, you'll know anyway, if you've listened to this podcast before, one of the things I love most about clothes and fashion is I think it's the art that we choose to wear on ourselves. And it tells us a story worth, it tells people the story that we want to tell about ourselves. I think this is a really measured and thoughtful and introspective fascinating chat. Heads up there is some conversations about gender dysphoria. So just be aware of that before you go into it. And this conversation was recorded in June 2021, Amrou was in their place in London, and I was tucked up in my cupboard in Wales. Now I think lots of you will identify with Amrou's finding of themselves at uni. I think lots of us need to just move away from our family, or our local area or even just school and you know, the way you box yourself into an identity or, you know, a personality even at school that maybe you feel that you outgrow. So I think lots of us have that thing of moving away obviously it doesn't have to be just for university. Not all of us nailed colorblocking. But I think lots of you will identify with Amrou journey. So let's sit down and ask Amrou Al-Kardi Who are you wearing?

Amrou 03:13

I remember about sort of seven years old being really obsessed with a pair of sunglasses that I found and I don't know what, where I found them. They were my dad's and my mom's even, in the house. And they were sort of kind of matrixy. And I remember wearing them to school and lying and saying I needed them for my eyes so that I could wear them. And I think it wasn't really about what they looked like. But it was almost just the statement of like, this is a piece of clothing, that is different, that I was, that the first time that I would like, was using an item of clothing to sort of, I suppose just say like, here I am. I didn't obviously know what I was trying to say with it. Or you know, even if it looked good, but it was more just like this differentiates me, I remember being kind of really obsessed with those sunglasses. Yeah, must have been about seven because I remember when that was Bahrain. Yeah, I was about seven.

Kiri 04:26

Seven is young. So did you have a strong sense of style as a, as a kid?

Amrou 04:32

I don't think I actually did have a strong sense of style as a kid because I was really trying to just emulate what my boy cousins were doing, what my parents were telling me to do. You know, I was a real sort of family pleaser. I always really wanted to be you know, like a golden child. And also like just in our community, you sort of just do whatever anyone tells you to do. So, my style was sort of whatever I was told. I definitely knew that I was interested in. Like I was in a pantomime when I was eight. And they were in Dubai really randomly that I made, my parents made me audition for it, and there were drag queens in that. And they weren't particularly stylish, because it was like really panto drag, but I was aware of like, oh, there are other ways of dressing and I was always obsessed with what my mum was wearing, and to get me to eat chicken, because I refuse she would tell me that I would turn my hair gold, so that's how I would, that's how I eat my chicken. And so I know, I think I was obsessed with sort of fashionable, or feminine types. But no, I didn't personally have a style. I don't think.

Kiri 05:58

So was it your mum, who was dressing you and getting bits from family or?

Amrou 06:03

We would get bits from family, but yeah, she was sort of the architect of our image, I actually have a twin brother. So we would often get paired up in really similar outfits. I mean, you kind of see this in a lot of Arab families, but like, external presentation is really, really important, you know, sort of the community seeing you well dressed and your family looking, you know, expensive. And even if you have money or don't have money, you know, that kind of, that kind of pressure on sort of social performativity. And status was definitely very key for my mom, who's a very, very glamorous woman. And so I would get put in really, kind of crisp shirts, and, you know, really manly stuff. And I always felt quite dysphoric in it. To be honest, I really did not enjoy wearing it and would always just look at how fun and playful, my mom's outfits were and all the women were, well, we know, all the boys were kind of lumped to the side. I mean, having said that, you know, the men did have lots of privileges in the Middle East that, you know, like in Saudi Arabia, for instance, until recently, women weren't even allowed to drive. So I think for a lot of women there, you know, a lot of them who weren't working or maybe didn't have a lot of autonomy, expressing themselves in clothes was really, really key. I was also desperate to express myself and clothes was a way that I wanted to, but I was, I just couldn't,

Kiri 07:42

I'm trying to think about how that would have made you feel in terms of your, your relationship with your gender as well being dressed the same as, as a brother is must have been a tricky thing to be negotiating mentally.

Amrou 07:57

Well with hind, with the hindsight, maybe, but it's so tricky to know what like you were aware of at the time, I think, back then it was just boys have to wear these kinds of clothes and girls get to wear these kinds of clothes. And I didn't really question that, I don't think I particularly liked it very much, or was that sort of felt like, sort of embodied in who I was, but I didn't really, you know, I was in the Middle

East. And so there wasn't we didn't you know, like individualism is quite a western idea, to be honest. Definitely, like it's seen as quite like a Western capitalist idea. Even getting therapy is seen as quite a western idea and the Middle East, like, you don't really work on yourself as much as you work on sort of the community and the family. And it's much more kind of about, you know, your religious community and that kind of stuff. So I don't really think I had that articulated an idea of like, what I wanted to wear or be really, I just sort of went along with it. It was only when I moved to the UK. It was around 11 years old. And I started really thinking about stuff and being exposed to other things that I started questioning those kinds of things. But yeah, I mean, I was I think I was perfectly content to be honest.

Kiri 09:18

Did you ever have an item of clothing that you hated wearing that you were made to wear? Because I had lots as kids like I can viscerally remember.

Amrou 09:28

I really didn't like wearing my ?, which is like a, it's like the male equivalent of the burqa, which is like the white robe. We had to wear that for like specific religious occasions. And I was always quite iffy about religion. Just because I think like I was always quite bright not saying that people who are religious aren't because I know a lot of people, but I was always just reading and questioning things and religion and was always very good at school and was always like, like reading after school. And so I think I just had a sort of immediate, like, question mark around being told stuff, and all, and with religion as well, you know, you're told quite fantastical stuff that, you know, doesn't feel scientifically true. It's quite magical. And I believed a lot of it, but I was also like, not 100% sure. And so I think I probably like, was like, Why am I being forced to wear this? I remember really not liking having to wear that.

Kiri 10:34

And you think it was, it wasn't like it feeling restrictive or not liking it was the fact that it was associated with a religion.

Amrou 10:42

I think it's so hard to know, I feel like, I mean, it's quite an awkward thing to wear, you're wearing like a white robe. And it's a uniform, and everyone else is wearing it. And, and you don't really get a choice in it. Like with the other stuff that, that my mom picked out for me, you know, she was a stylish woman. And she always made me feel like the stuff that she was getting was really, really gorgeous. And was that the best and it was nicer, whatever than what everyone else had. And so, you still felt a bit special and a bit like, oh, well my mum bought these for me. But with the ?, it's almost like it's a uniform that everyone no matter. So I think maybe it was more that like, why am I having to wear what absolutely everybody else is having to wear? And what does this really even mean?

Kiri 11:31

Oh interesting. So did you have a favourite outfit then that you love that you never went to take off as a kid?

Amrou 11:37

Oh, I actually can't think of one. I remember having a framed outfit from when I was like three that apparently my parents said I was obsessed with which was like a sort of, I can't even remember it was like a rabbit uniform or like kind of like a, like a really silly uniform that apparently when I was like three just never, never took off. And that was framed above our bed, but I don't actually have any recollection of wearing it.

Kiri 12:25

So when you're a teenager, what were the big trends? And did you go in for any of them?

Amrou 12:31

What were the big trends when I was 11, Vito trousers? Is that what they're called? Yes. Vito like the ones with this, the ones with this, this squiggle on the back? Yeah, I remember, like, those were a huge sign of status. around the school, and I begged my parents to give me a pair of those. Some other trends were Maharishi trousers, which were like green or brown sort of cargo trousers. But then on one side, it would almost be like a dragon. Sort of a dragon. Like it's sort of trying like a dragon thing. Those I remember were like two really big ones. And Timberland boots. I remember were quite cool as well, if you have those who were like, seeing is really cool. I mean, I had really bad style then because I just didn't know, I mean, you don't really know what your style was. So I would just wear whatever looked sort of out there. And just you know, I remember the first party I went to at 12, I wore like a string vest and then like a shirt with Japanese Sumo wrestlers all over. I don't know what, But yeah, I remember Vito trousers or whatever they're called, were real, really hot. I remember those trousers. I had completely forgotten about them. But you're right. There was a period where that was the thing to have. They had like that big white squiggle. Yeah you could get them in different colours as well on the back pocket. And that was sort of like a signal that like, you know, you could afford these amazing trousers.

Kiri 14:06

I love the idea of you being like a party in a string vest and unlike it, and this, this shirt as well, I love that it's, it seems like from what you're saying that when you start to get a sense of style, it was always to start to stand up to differentiate yourself?

Amrou 14:22

Yeah, I think it was like especially coming from a culture that's really uniform and you know, and also being a twin where we have to dress the same and that kind of stuff. I was quite eager to be like, I am my own person and I'm an independent person. And so whenever we went shopping, I never went for the most stylish thing I'd always you know, if we were going shoe shopping, I just find the brightest coloured ones or the, or the weirdest looking ones or I just wanted the one that stood out the most regardless of how I actually looked.

Kiri 14:53

I love it. So did you have a rebellious phase and was it showing up in what you're wearing?

Amrou 14:57

Yeah, I did. Yeah, I did. I had a really rebellious phase. I mean, I couldn't wear crazy stuff at home because my parents are quite strict. But like, when I go out and stuff I would, I am just trying to

remember, like, really weird stuff like, I would go out in all pink, you know, and it didn't look fashionable, you know, like a pink waistcoat with pink trousers and pink shoes, or really randomly wear like a suited waistcoat with crazy jeans and like, chains coming off the jeans and boots, you know, just like really, I just wanted to put loads of random crap together. I really don't think I was fashionable, like, now when I look back, I just looked a bit slightly ridiculous to be honest. But I mean, it was a way to sort of start just saying like, This is who I am. And oh, I would go to, what's that place called American Apparel? Is that what it's called? Yeah, you know how they did a lot of like, colour, I would just buy one outfit all in the same colour, you know, what, like, or a lot of all camouflage sometimes. Yeah, a lot of head to toe in the same print, that kind of thing I would do, and it was just a way to annoy and my parents would just hate what I was wearing. With good reason.

Kiri 16:21

Did you?... It's interesting that you're because that to me seems quite far removed from your style. Now. So what age did that, your style that we see now? What age did that start showing up?

Amrou 16:35

Um, I think when I was like 16, 17, and you know, would start going out like clubbing and that kind of stuff. I started being exposed to like, just contemporary fashion and, and realising what just, aesthetically I was drawn to, or what I found, looked interesting. I think when I went to uni, and I was 18, and I was fully sort of, 19 actually, when I was fully away from my parents and was on my own at a university. It was sort of like, what do I want to wear, what do I want to wear to make me feel sexy when I go out on a date? Or what do I want to wear, that's going to be kind of comfortable and cool looking at a party. And like, you know, I am naturally quite creative and was always interested in drag and that kind of stuff. So I think, like, but yeah, it took a while. I mean, you know, I think it really didn't start around going out dancing and clubbing, and actually just being immersed in like, a social world that wasn't just like home life. And then school, it was about, like, sort of going out into the world. And like, I don't think my fashion style got. I mean, it's always changing. But yeah, I think, yeah, I suppose around around that point of sort of being an autonomous adult.

Kiri 18:08

It feels like it would have been quite a big, big moment then, because most people go to university as a big sort of coming of age moment. But there's usually been sort of forays along the way of, you know, like, it's like, oh, everything's gonna come together. But it feels like it's real big move for you to be like, how you're thinking about yourself and how it relates, how you relate to the world as well.

Amrou 18:31

Yeah, I sort of really savoured the university experience, you know, that sort of feeling of being able to live as a gay person without like parental repercussions. So, you know, it was a lot of dating and figuring out what I liked doing in the bedroom as well as like, it was the first time that I started doing drag, because I couldn't really do it when I was at home because of what the repercussions would be. So I started dragging at university. I started like a lot of things that are really integral to my life now. I really do think I was sort of like a hamster on a wheel at uni because it was just like, such a massive relief and a release to get away from home where there were all these pressures on what I should wear and who I should be and how I should behave. And so I was just, it was all that stuff that was, nothing

was really that new. Like I didn't come out at uni, I just was able to actually live as a gay person at uni and it's not like I discovered that I was a drag queen at uni because I'd always wanted to try it. It was just like I was just finally able to do it. And style was something that I was playing with so much at university and also like a lot of tight, like there's a lot of stuff that I wore, I see now that I wore, like I did sort of colour blocking faces, like one week I would dye my hair bright red and only wear red for the term, and then dye my hair bright green, and would only wear like all green. And some of it didn't look that great. And I actually remember not really caring if it looked that great because I was like, really scrawny and not that sort of, like, that, that sort of worried about being attractive in terms of sex, in terms of dating as a gay person, you know, people can be quite shallow and they want muscles and, and because I wasn't that confident sexually, then and didn't really care if people found me sexually attractive, because that wasn't my priority. I actually wasn't really that, that worried about you know, what should I wear for boys to find me, like sexy or muscley at the club. So I was just wearing, I would just try out the most crazy, crazy stuff like, you know, just women's jumpsuits for lectures and like, absurd dungarees. Like, to the clubs to like long robes and this huge cape, that I would just walk around with a huge velvet cape. And it was just, I really was just sort of experimenting, sartorially, I actually think my fashion sense has become a little bit more concerned with like, will I look cute in the club now just because like, it's taken a while to get to that level of sort of, oh, actually, maybe I do want to date, or I do want to find a boyfriend or I do want to feel sexy. And obviously, I now have a drag career where I can sort of really deposit all like my interests in crazy style. And that kind of, I can really put it in there and really experiment. So yeah, it was just really a lot of experimentation. And people would often say like, well, you don't look great right now. But you look kind of I can't, I just would really love wearing whatever I would love just going to vintage shops and just finding the most random shit and just seeing if I could pull it off.

Kiri 22:05

I love it. I love it. It sounds like it's got such, sounds it had such a sense of fun about it as well that some people skip out, that bit of experimenting of like trying on all the hats and just seeing, it seems like you really sort of lent into that, which is gorgeous,

Amrou 22:21

I guess it's also easier to do at university because like you don't have a job. And it's slightly safer as well than like walking around London. You know, universities like a small town, everyone's a student, I kind of miss how freeing it was being a student where you don't really have to worry about the repercussions as much. I can now if I was going out in that landish outfit, I would use and I do sometimes but I sometimes have to sort of think 'God, here we go, here is going to be all the looks from everyone on the tube and everyone on the bus' and sometimes actually don't have the energy for that. Whereas the university's like, wake up, put on something random, all you have to do is walk five minutes. And then you're at the lecture and then that's kind of it you know?

Kiri 23:13

It sounds like you've experimented and played loads and, and are still playing with your style. But when you created Glamrou, was her style just exactly on, I know what she is straightaway, or is it been the same journey? Because when you talk about her, there's such a clear vision.

Amrou 23:30

Yeah, it has been the same, I mean, in slightly different ways. I mean, Glamrou is not as interested in sort of fashion in terms like, as Amrou, I'm quite interested in like, contemporary designs and new way of thinking about clothes or as Glamrou, who is really interested in kind of traditional Arab beauty, you know, looking at kind of historical Egyptian icons looking at my mother. So she's a bit more kind of, a kind of classic Arab beauty. Whereas, as Amrou, I'm quite interested in that really contemporary sort of gender bendy clothes, whereas Glamrou, yeah, is she's a little bit more sort of, I'd say traditional in a way if that makes sense.

Kiri 24:21

Yeah. Because that feels like a suffering in two very different areas. And often, people who have a stage persona, it's a turned up volume of what they are off stage, but this feels really delineated.

Amrou 24:33

Yeah, I think she's sort of like my chance to feel like a proper sort of star I suppose. Or like a red carpet queen or a sort of fantasy that takes me out of my everyday life. I mean, in terms of like me as a performer and as like as a comedian. They are actually quite similar because obviously it is just me up there using my own story and using my own comedy and, and using my own experiences, but I really like to feel like when I'm in drag that I am in a kind of fantasy mode, you know, not like one step removed from reality, but like a neat, like kind of, a kind of new universe. And definitely, when I was living in, in Arab countries, you know, I had to wear quite boring clothes, because, you know, I'm assigned male at birth. So I was having to wear really dull clothes that, you know, people would decide that I had to wear and all the women and my mother, were wearing these gorgeous, gorgeous kind of opulent materials, that, you know, arab femininity is sort of really sumptuous. And so it's really nice to sort of wear a version of the Middle East that I wasn't actually allowed to wear when I was raised there because of gender rules and that kind of stuff. And so it really is a space that I don't really get to live out when I'm in the Middle East visiting family as Amrou, but on stage, I can kind of be a sort of Arab queen that I sort of was obsessed with as a kid. So it is a fantasy in that way. I mean, there are some drag queens or drag performers who, there isn't as much of a distinction. But I definitely like to travel like to the Middle East, when, when I go in drag.

Kiri 26:47

That's amazing.

Amrou 26:48

Like, you know, Glamrou initially was just, while I totally didn't really feel sexy out of drag, especially to gay men who are kind of obsessed with sort of muscle and that kind of stuff. And I never really felt sexy or like, as you know, someone male, like I just did not feel like sexually attractive for a long time. Initially Glamrou was just a way to feel like a really sexy, confident woman to be honest. And I know that probably sounds really reductive, but I liked wearing, I just wanted stuff, because I, masculinity was something I felt not really comfortable in. And masculinity is sort of seen as sexy in the gay community. But femininity was so natural to me that in drag, I was really kind of hyper feminine and would wear you know, at first it was really like big blonde wigs, really body con dresses, really sort of sexy bikinis, like I just was like, well, if I'm not going to feel sexy as a boy, and I was fully identifying as a boy, back then I

was like, Well, I will feel sexy as a girl, which is kind of you know, I was 19. But it was just very, like, whatever makes me feel like a hot girl was basically all I really cared about, a lot of hot pants, and that's how it was for a couple, for a while. Initially, you know, my drag wasn't really thinking about the Middle East or wasn't really thinking about Arab identity, because I was still sort of wanting to be quite far apart from it, for sort of emotional reasons, and I hadn't resolved a lot of things with my parents and my family and that kind of stuff. And so, initially, my drag felt so completely separate from, from the Middle East. Sorry it's my dog, felt so, thank you, it felt so completely separate from the Middle East and from, from Arab culture, that it took probably like five years, six years before, I had, as Amrou, sort of made peace with family stuff and my Arab, with Arab and sort of was getting re kind of acquainted with Arab culture, for me to actually realise, oh, Glamrou is a place that I can really explore that. And so yeah, I mean, she's changed massively. I mean, she's always been very confident and sort of sexy and and a servic and very sort of cutting and all that. That's always been there. But yeah, I mean, she was definitely went from looking at Western images of femininity to really historical Arabic ones, and she'll probably change even more, but that has been really organic and slightly separate, which is kind of interesting,

Kiri 30:04

Really interesting. Has one journey been quicker to happen than the other?

Amrou 30:08

Well, I mean, I guess with the drag, it's obviously like condensed, you know, the timeline is condensed. And you do it, obviously, less than just being out of drag. And you think about it a lot more, because like, drag is so sort of the, you know, it's so kind of primarily visual, that you are always thinking like, what am I going to wear? What am I going to look like, to the audience of what do I want to say with it? That, I'd say that it is quicker in that sense, because like, you know, it's almost like a study and aesthetics, as well as, you know, comedy and that kind of thing. But definitely, the major sort of, sort of shifts in glamorous aesthetic have been really tied to big kind of emotional revelations, out of drag, for sure.

Kiri 31:05

Wow. Oh, that's so amazing, because I bet you could look at the pictures and the timeline, and know exactly what's going on.

Amrou 31:15

You can you know, there are key shows and key outfits that you go, Oh, that was sort of after that family wedding, or that was after this breakup, or that was after, you just sort of, you can kind of, Yeah, you can definitely chart things through your drag.

Kiri 31:40

Do you think of hair and makeup as part of your outfit? Because you talk about dyeing your hair, and it being a whole part of the look as well. And you've got your hair is so gorgeous, you keep playing with it. And I'm like, look at that hair! You're so in love with it. But yeah, do you, because your hair is just beautiful, it seems like without doing anything to it. So how?

Amrou 31:59

I was quite lucky, actually, to be honest, out of drag, I don't really do anything with my hair, just, I have quite thick Arab hair that just grows very easily. And I'm very lucky that way. And I sometimes wear makeup when I'm out of drag. But I mean, with drag, it's so key. I mean, the makeup is actually the thing I'll do first and that can take you know, two to three hours. And you can sort of dictate the sort of mood of the outfit and the sort of, the sort of journey of what you're about to do that show by your mate, you know, really, your eyebrows are the kind of, because you know, if you go for an arched brow, you suddenly look a bit kind of more sort of sinister, or if you go for like a softer or a curved or, and what colour palette you're using, you know, if you'd be using more kind of Middle Eastern golds, and a black Egyptian, Wisp, that definitely dictates the out, so, so the makeup and hair with drag is just like, it's like part of the clothing. It's probably the most important thing I'd say actually the makeup because it's like you literally change your face. And whatever decision you make will sort of, no matter what you wear, will, it will always, you know, it will always read and so yeah, I'll spend a lot of time on that before I get to the outfit. But with that out of drag I, I'll go with what do I feel like wearing today, and then that will dictate whereas with, with Drag, its like, what do I feel like looking like today, if that makes sense, In terms of makeup.

Kiri 33:43

Yeah, really interesting, really interesting. And over the years as you've been finding your style, are there any trends that you've tried to pull off, but it's not happening?

Amrou 33:53

I try. I've tried to pull off like stringed jump, like a lot of people I'd see out gay clubbing would wear sort of vests that was stringed or like shirts that were string but they just don't look very good on me. And I actually did, I just don't think they actually looked that good, really. But I tried to kind of emulate that for a while. I really tried dungarees for a while they just don't suit me. They're just not like, there'll be two sort of art teachery for me, I've tried hats. Hats don't work on me. Really? Just don't. I think it's mainly because it's like, I've got quite a long face and a lot of hair. But I tried caps for a while and they just really didn't look good at all.

Kiri 34:41

I would have thought you look great in a hat. Because it's so much drama and I feel like you have they're like the looks and like yeah, you're everything like your skintone everything is like, it's like this gorgeous, like glamorous drama to it. So I thought, but I'm imagining an enormous hat, like a California thing.

Amrou 34:58

Weirdly like, I just don't really have a connection to hands. Maybe just because they feel that you're covering up or something. I just don't, they're not for me, and I've tried them and they just don't really work. So...

Kiri 35:16

I'd love to see somewhere. If there's pictures of string vests? Is there? Is? Is there an outfit you've held onto, a piece of clothing you've held onto for a very long time? Or is there a vintage item in your life that's quite old?

Amrou 35:35

Um, I did have one that my mom actually threw away in what was one of our biggest fights, but it was, I bought it when I was 17 or 18. And I had it till I was like 26. And it was like a, like a, a huge red sort of cardigan. But it was like a head to toe cardigan that was just wrapped around. And I always just felt very safe and comfortable in it. And we'd always wear that, that was like probably the item of clothing that I was most obsessed with. Was really genuinely heartbroken when, when she did that. And I really I still to this day and look for something like it when if and I'd never found anything like it and didn't know, I love it when a piece of clothing is really dramatic, but also like really comfortable. Especially like these days, you know, like I really do want comfort in my clothing and, and that was like really epic and colourful but also incredibly, incredibly comfortable. I have a, I have a kind of pension for like silk shirts that I just find really comfortable. And I have some that I've had for years that, they're a bit too tethered now to like wear out, but I wear them around the house and they're incredibly comfortable.

Kiri 37:09

Lovely. Because that's another thing I think of when I think of your style, both on and off stage is there's, there's always texture to it. There's always, it's never, I've never seen one like a flat polyester.

Amrou 37:20

I do love texture actually, yeah, I love velvety silks and beads. And yeah, I think, I think that comes from the Middle East, to be honest, like, we just have so many textiles and textures, which are really opulent and dramatic. So I think I've kind of, that's probably where that comes from.

Kiri 37:37

I love it, and is there an era that you wish you existed in for the, for the fashion alone?

Amrou 37:45

I mean, the 70s is really cool. I just think 70s clothes are amazing. The 80s, not so much really. But like there's just something about the disco like yeah, it's I think 70s.

Kiri 37:57

I can absolutely see studio 54 vibes.

Amrou 38:00

Yeah, amazing colours, quite camp clothing on boys. Really interesting cuts, you know, flares. It's, I like the 70s.

Kiri 38:10

Yeah, and loads of texture again, like velvet, and even flannel. But you know, like stuff with interesting stuff going on.

Amrou 38:17

Totally, totally.

Kiri 38:17

Have you got an item of clothing that you put on, and it just instantly makes you feel amazing?

Amrou 38:23

I have, I have these sort of silky tank tops that I wear when I go clubbing, that like are really sort of sensual, and silky. So like they just made me feel like quite in touch with my body. They made me feel quite good. And then in drag, I have this sort of pink belly dancer, sort of two piece that's sort of like a glamorous staple that I've just been wearing now for like years. And I just feel immediately really sexy, and sort of defiant in it. I also have this, sort of like a dress, but it's, I wear it out of drag. It's almost kind of like a tunic. And it's really flowy and whenever I have that on, I sort of just feel a bit like a kind of Marilyn Monroe vibe. Like on the streets. I always feel pretty good in that.

Kiri 39:20

I like this. There's lots of stuff you're describing for yourself. Do you feel like something that like a Hollywood starlet would wear by the side of the pool? There's just like a glamour and a comfort and even though the big red cardigan and like oh yeah, I can see, you know, like a 50s star just reclining in something like that.

Amrou 39:38

That's a really, that's a really good observation actually. Yeah, glamorous comfort. I actually now really will not buy something. If it's not completely comfortable in the shop. Like I used to in my 20s just wear whatever looked grey, and you know if it itched or, you know I once had this sort of latex cardigan that was so, so impossible to wear, but it was mint, it was mint green. And it would sort of like stick to me in the club. And it was just a really unpleasant thing to wear. Now, I think like now that I'm 30, and, you know, like nights out, take it out of me. Like, I just know that like, even if it's the most beautiful thing, like, it shows a little bit, or just, it's a bit too tight somewhere. I know that like, I just won't pull it out of my wardrobe to wear it. I kind of feel like comfort is the most important thing now.

Kiri 40:34

Yeah, I do think you do get to that stage, when you're out of your 20s or heading out of them where you go. No, I don't have to feel uncomfortable. Like I'm not going to look as good as well, if I'm uncomfortable.

Amrou 40:45

Exactly, exactly. I mean, in drag, it's slightly different because it's all quite uncomfortable because heels are kind of intense and, but you know, I never really think about comfort in drag because adrenaline usually sort of, I was actually in drag for just a party the other night, like for friend's birthday, we you know, he asked us to go and drag and sort of sitting down for dinner and just sort of, was actually quite uncomfortable. Like with all that gear on and this huge wig, I just was like, Wow, I've never really noticed how much I sweat or how sort of heavy this is. Because on stage, obviously the adrenaline just makes you go, well, whatever. And then you just don't really think about any of that. But yeah, comfort is probably not something I think about in drag.

Kiri 41:32

That's so interesting that drag itself, because it's, because I think drag's counterculture and it exists in an area that's meant to make society question things and feel uncomfortable. And then the actual act of doing it as well. Because even if you're not wearing huge heels, you're under a mountain of plastic wig, sequins at preach like they scratch, they're not a comfortable thing.

Amrou 42:00

Yeah, I usually have quite a lot of cuts on me after like, like a week of shows. I'll be like, ooh, or like little bruises or, yes, you're right. It is not comfortable. Yeah, yes. It's not the point of it.

Kiri 42:17

Can I ask what your relationship is with shopping? Are you someone who like loves it? Or you want to go into the shop? Or you do it online? Are you someone who loves like a charity shop? Or you know, going sniffing through Ebay? How and what do you like to do?

Amrou 42:33

I have probably quite an unhealthy relationship with shopping. I mean, I, I do. I knew, I know how to shop online well, because there are some websites that do clothes that I love. But I tend to buy stuff when I'm feeling quite low. If I've had bad news, like let's say, you know, I didn't get an audition or shows not gone well or whatever. I'm feeling kind of just low. I will go on a series of websites that stock really expensive, cool clothes that are like contemporary designers or just really interesting clothes or sales. And usually like in a more right mind where I wouldn't spend the money. But when I'm feeling low or worried about something else, I just kind of just go fuck it. I deserve this now. And usually the act of purchasing something that I can't really afford or is or is just really, really expensive, actually takes my mind off the thing that I was originally worried about. Because then I'm like, How did I just spend like 300 pounds on a pair of trousers? And then I just like I'm actually quite worried about what I've just done. And then you're feeling quite depressed in really beautiful clothes and it just is what it is. I'm not a sort of, I have to say, I'm not a kind of, a track around charity shops to find, I'm like when feeling, when having a terrible day. Like get the credit card out and just be really irresponsible and deal with the repercussions. That's how I shop.

Kiri 44:17

Yeah, I think that, that's, there's plenty of people who can speak to that experience. I did it the other day, I was feeling crap yesterday and I went and just spent like loads of money on earrings I don't need like the whole world I'm speaking to, the wall next to me is covered in earrings. I could, I could wear a different pair you know every day and never repeat it for a year. And I still went and bought like five pairs. It's ridiculous. But it does make you feel better.

Amrou 44:42

Its ridiculous. It does. It does and whenever I mean clothes can feel so healing especially. I actually really, I get the earrings thing because I have this ring that I love so much. And there's something about wearing a piece of jewellery that makes you feel a bit like it's like a bit of armour or something I don't know if you feel that but like, when I go out in my necklace and my, in my ring, I'm just a bit like, there's so much one step. There's like a layer between me and the world. I can't really explain it, but it feels almost a bit like a, like a, like a defence in a way that makes me feel quite powerful.

Kiri 45:22

Yeah. So what are the, my friends said that about his wedding ring. Actually, he was like, it feels like I've got this thing that's like, that's because it's, it symbolises his partner to him that he feels like it's this shield. So tell us a bit about the ring and the necklace because they, they're beautiful.

Amrou 45:38

Thank you. Yeah, well, the ring was, I was on this TV show called all that glitters.

Kiri 45:42

I loved it.

Amrou 45:43

Oh, thank you. And one of the designers, I didn't actually pick his designs for, he didn't actually do very well. You know, they were supposed to be making me a necklace. And then I was to choose a winner. And then the sort of person who made the worst pieces was sadly sent home and I'd chosen a necklace that I really loved. But there was a jewellery designer there who I followed on Instagram. I followed them all on Instagram. Sonny Bailey Ed? Yeah, who, did pieces that I thought were really beautiful. And so I spoke to him, and you know, he was able to help me out. And it's an emerald and gold ring that I sort of just got for myself, as during the pandemic, because I was like feeling so low and just needed, like something. And it really lifts me up every day. There's something just about feeling it on all the time. And just and also, I put on my wedding ring finger because it's almost like a marriage to myself and a kind of thing that I did for me. So there's that and I feel really like empowered wearing it. And then this necklace is like a little fish, a little goldfish that, that my friends got me as a present few years ago. Because I'm kind of obsessed with the ocean and the fact that loads of oceanic beings can kind of change sex and so colourful, and it's very sort of fluid and formulas down there. So they got me that, got me that and I haven't taken that off in years. And yeah, those are really good. And I have like little earrings as well. But they're not as sort of special as these.

Kiri 47:32

They're gorgeous. And they're such what I love about them is, they're the kind of pieces because they're like, they're like, I mean, it's not as a pejorative either, but they're quite quirky statement pieces that it's so nice that you wear them every day, that they're like everyday pieces for you because they're gorgeous.

Amrou 47:48

Thank you. Thank you. I can't really take this ring off. I don't know. I mean, I probably have to go get surgery to get the spring off at this point. It's so like, stuck to it.

Kiri 47:58

Why would you want to? Makes you married to yourself, you never want that to end. Exactly. I want to ask you about because you just talked about being in university and going through vintage shops and things like that. What is the best thing that you ever got you've ever got from a thrift shop or vintage charity shop anything like that?

Amrou 48:14

I found Glamrou good stuff at thrift shops. The boy stuff doesn't tend to be, it's just like a lot of, sort of moth eaten jumpers to be honest. But I found Glamrou some really cool sort of disco pants and and sort of vintage sort of prom dresses and that kind of stuff. Beyond retro has good stuff there. Yeah, I'd say stuff for Glamrou is better found in vintage shops.

Kiri 48:48

Yeah, because also that kind of like, high glamour and texture is definitely...

Amrou 48:54

Yes, there's loads of that. Totally, totally. I have looked for stuff out of drag from vintage shops, but it just hasn't tend not to be like, those things tend to itch a lot more because like of the fabrics and that kind of stuff. Whereas I don't really care about that when I'm in drag. So like, put like, gowns I will get from vintage shops. I think we even looked for wedding dresses for one of my drag sisters at a vintage shop for, for a night which was really fun. Yeah, and definitely would never buy that. From a designer. I would never because those dresses from designer shops are like 1000s.

Kiri 49:32

Do you think about in terms of with your drag and yourself, Because I know you like, like lots of contemporary styles and designers is, are you thinking about sort of sustainability and things like that in terms of what you're doing?

Amrou 49:45

I should be I mean, I don't wear fur. So there's something that I, and I do try and carbon offset anything that I buy online. And actually a lot of the new designers that I'm interested in. Some who actually make things for Glamrou to, you know, to show off on an ad on a shoot or on a show, I'm finding that the new wave of contemporary designers that are coming out of Central Saint Martins and that kind of stuff, they are just thinking a lot more sustainably anyway. I mean, I do think fast fashion, is slowly going out the window, especially with the pandemic, like it feels like people are really thinking about those kind of things. So yeah, a lot of the new designers that like I talked to, or I kind of get pieces from, like, it's not so much that I'm doing it sustainably but they are and I'm just buying it off them. Great. They commonly tend to be great. Yeah, yeah. I mean, I do have my vices. I don't go to Primark or anything like that. But God knows, I mean, I'm sure we should all probably more. More research, what we're buying.

Kiri 50:55

And it is, but it's hard. It's again, you know, when it gets put on the consumer, like, but it's, that's not we're trusting the people who are making this stuff not to be hurting or exploiting people or the planet. So like, we, and especially when, when designers stuff as well, when that you find that that's made, not ethically and you're like, What am I paying for that? Yeah, totally, because its being made in the same factory, as you know, high street shop. It's, that's, that was really annoys me.

Amrou 51:21

Yeah.

Kiri 51:26

So do you think with how you're dressing yourself? Do you think it'll constantly keep changing or you're like, oh, no, I feel like this is me, I feel like I've settled on how I want to dress?

Amrou 51:36

Um, I think it's really hard to know, to be honest, like, I think the vibe of like, I'm sure the style might change. Because styles do change. And there's always new new styles and old styles. But I do feel like the vibe is quite, I know what I like, what the brand is, or whatever that is, I mean, ever since like, I really like feeling gender fluid. Because that is how I just genuinely feel. And so when I'm feeling most safe and confident, you know, with people that I trust or whatever, outfits that sort of have a kind of flow to them, or just like a kind of a gender fluidity to them, regardless of what material or whatever, is what I'm drawn to. And so I feel like that feeling of like, the outfits sort of, kind of existing a little bit in the inbetween and sort of just not feeling inherently that male or female, or is something that I'll always just immediately be drawn to, but I'm sure the style might change. I don't think my love of comfort will ever go away now. So that is probably something that I'll be more and more obsessed with as I grow up. And yeah, and silks are so comfortable. It's just a shame. They're so expensive.

Kiri 53:09

And is there an item of clothing that you can always see yourself wearing?

Amrou 53:13

Yeah, I have. I have some pairs of trousers that are sort of silky. One of them's bright pink and one of them sort of multicoloured. And I've had those for years and they just go with everything and feel amazing and I always feel amazing within them. And I take them on every holiday and I bring them, I wear them whenever I can.

Kiri 53:36

So whenever I do this podcast and it's someone whose style I find like particularly inspiring I know because I'm mentally making a list of things to go in and buy. And in my head I'm like, I need more silks. I need more flowy like talking to you.

Amrou 53:50

You should look at Palomo, Spain is my favourite, gender fluid silky design? Palomo, Spain.

Kiri 54:01

Oooh I'm excited! I'm so glad that our mood has lifted up there because otherwise I would be sort of like sympathy buying myself loads of silks. Are there any trends that you're hoping never come back?

Amrou 54:17

I never been that obsessed with Birkenstocks. I just always was like, they just feel a little bit Duke of Edinburgh for me, just a bit too, I don't know, they're just a bit too... family camping for me. But whatever anyone wants to wear, it's fine. I really am not, I'm actually not a judgmental person. Ooh pointy shoes, for men, pointed shoes for men. I think those are criminal.

Kiri 54:51

I love that. You're like I'm not judgmental. Oh, that reminds me do, do end all pointy shoes for men.

Amrou 54:57

Yeah, that was a disaster. But other than that, whatever.

Kiri 55:00

Is that coming from a place of spite, though, because you have big feet and they make your feet look even bigger when you've tried?

Amrou 55:06

I don't actually have that big feet. I just, I've just, whenever I see them, I tend not to like the person attached to them. And I don't know why.

Kiri 55:15

I know exactly what you mean.

Amrou 55:19

I just, I just know that it's not going to work out.

Kiri 55:23

Oh, yeah, it's like a little red flag that people wear on their feet is...

Amrou 55:27

Yeah, that is a red flag for me. Yeah, that's my main one.

Kiri 55:32

Final question my love and slightly sad one. But what outfit would you like to be buried in?

Amrou 55:39

Oh, wow. Probably like an Islamic female sort of a buyer with de Montes and just sort of feel like an Islamic kind of mystic goddess I suppose in drag for sure. Definitely want to be buried in drag. Though I don't know who would do my makeup just as I wanted to. But, yeah, something. I definitely want to be buried as Glamrou.

Kiri 56:11

That's gorgeous. And any colours, you can see yourself in?

Amrou 56:15

I love emeralds, sapphires and rubies. I love those middle eastern jewels. Yeah, definitely one of those.

Kiri 56:26

Oh my god, like I think you're wonderful. But I'm like, I hope I get to go to your funeral. Just for the style tips. That's one of the best outfits we've had. So that was Amrou. Chicken makes your hair gold. You heard it here first. Not blonde either gold. I love that. It's just so extra. Do you know what? One of the things I just came away, I kept thinking about is, I love that Glamrou is a celebration of our beauty and fantasy and femininity. And also, it's so interesting to me that Glamrou, I feel like maybe I'm drawing conclusions here. But Glamrou has sort of grown out of? Well, it's a need, right, the sort of the antithesis of the plain clothes that Amrou was assigned growing up. And I just think that, when you see Glamrou, it all clicks into place, because there's such a beautiful celebration metaphorically and actually, of, of culture and identity and fashion, all coming together, absolutely stunning. Also, can we please give an honourable mention for a V su trousers, a brand and moment in fashion that I had completely forgotten. Also, I loved that I went through a colour blocking phase, please head to our Instagram because we've got so many great pictures of it. You can follow us at [whoareyouwearingpod](#) on Instagram. Now then the episode with Susan karma last week just resonated with so many of you guys as I knew it would. We've had so many amazing messages. I'd like to read some of them out. Daniel said I relate to Susan's interviews so much as a fellow plus size shorty. Why do they insist on making bigger clothes with seven foot tall Amazons? I know Yes. As a short plus size woman I absolutely feel that pain. And Danielle says also I can totally imagine Susan Calman aged 56 wafting around in Tallinn Vinyard in a tweet kaftan followed by an army of greyhounds. Absolutely. And you might think that's a bit hot. But as Tom Allen always says to me, Tweed is very breathable fabric. So yeah, I can see that as well. Thanks so much for that, Danielle. I think Angie summed it up for loads of us. And she said, Oh man, this one. This one has been all the emotions, I can't even work with the tears in my eyes. Susan has so eloquently expressed how I think most of us feel especially for the shorties. Absolutely and I think you know if you're a very tall person as well that comes with its own set of restrictions basically that unless you fit the sort of this, this dress size with these proportions and this height, the clothing largely will make you feel deeply, deeply unwelcome. Which is not right because it's the thing that should make you feel most at home in your skin, which is one of the reasons why I started this podcast. I'm going to finish off with this lovely message from blue skies and love on Insta who said, Kiri and Susan, this episode is stunning. You're both so gorgeously open voicing everything so many of us feel. Well, assuming others don't. Oh my god, don't we? We feel we trap ourselves in these prisons and feel like we're the only ones in there. Well, actually, we're all struggling with this stuff. Sorry, back to it. These conversations are so important. I'm so sad to hear Susan says she can't watch her most excellent telly. I know. I've heard Fearné Cotton say the same thing this morning. We do urgently need change. We're all beautiful. Fuck the patriarchy, that started out but I'm not a star in it. It's easy to say but I'm currently having major trauma over my ABBA opening night outfit in May. With my lockdown pork, lockdown pork. I love it. Why Lycra is so unforgiving? Love you both stay fabulous. Oh, mate, what a message. Yeah, I knew it would resonate with so so many people because Susan's journey. Well, I think so many of us are still on it like fighting to get to that point of acceptance when the world is telling you. You know, the complete opposite is really, really tricky. So I'm so glad that Susan was so open and has been able to sort of facilitate these chats. Also, wear the white lycra, I still maintain that lycra is flattering, I think anything that fits you really well is flattering. Whack on the white lycra. Like oh my god, you're, you're singing ABBA, you can't be like, you can't go half measures. And you would always regret if you ended up in them. You know, black polyester trousers in a waterfall cardigan. Absolutely lean into it, go for the white lycra and send us the pictures. We really love chatting to you guys. So if you want to get in touch, obviously there's the Instagram but you can also email us, you can

write to us at whoareyouwearingpod@gmail.com. Also, if you'd like to give us a lovely review on iTunes, I wouldn't hate it. You can just jump on there on your app or wherever you listen to podcasts. And there'll be a way of starring it and the more people that subscribe to it, or give it nice reviews, the more people that can find it, which means it's got a longer future which I would love. Now I get to talk about a small business. And I'm going to talk about a Welsh business I've loved for few years now. It's boutique Dinanath. So I've got a few pieces from them, and they are stunning, so stunning, I've currently lent one to a drag queen. That's the level that we're talking about. So BDN is as often known, is the brainchild of Yusra el Sadek, a fiercely impressive and moral woman who by day works in the NHS, and has two kids and on the side runs a beautiful, beautiful boutique, making short run sustainable, and unique clothing that just has this high end finish. Hence it appearing in Vogue Italia and showcasing at London Fashion Week. I honestly genuinely sit down, I go through, I always check in on their Instagram, every sort of few weeks. I honestly can't work out how they create genuine like showstoppers, from end of line fabrics and deadstock and even curtains. There's like an amazing piece they've got on there that's made from curtains. They are stunning. BDN are superb at blending cultures in their clothing, as well as taking inspiration from really beautiful places that I think mainstream fashion often ignore. For instance, their newest collection is called noir, and is inspired by the beauty of black women. And it's celebrating black beauty in the 70s. Oh my god, there's some delicious, delicious clothes on there. So lovely. The ethos of BDN feels unique too. So all the pieces are a celebration of where fashion and modesty intersect, which I haven't really seen before. So it means that people can observe modesty in respect to their religion or their culture or occasion, and still look like they're on a red carpet. And this is born out of useless inability to find fashionable modest clothes for herself. And you know what I, that's something I stumble across is every, every small business that I love every indie, Well, they might not even be small anymore, or the best businesses. They start with people going, I want this thing, and it's not made, maybe I should be the one to do it. Build it and they will come I reckon. So that's Boutique Dinanath, they're on Insta, they have a website, oh my god, get ready to drool over their clothes and their jewellery. And they do really short runs of things. So sometimes there's only one item or a couple of items. So snap that stuff up. I want to know as you may know, I'm on a no buying at the moment for six months, which is, this is so lame and shallow of me but I was like, I don't want to put the BDN in the podcast because then everyone will buy the things that I've always wanted to buy for the whole year and haven't got around to doing it. But because I'm a big person I'm experiencing growth I would like to tell you about them so that it's Boutique Dinanath. Now next week I'm chatting to an icon of tailoring and drag race Australia they're hilarious and stylish Reece Nicholson. See you then. 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.