

S10 Ep4: Grace Davies & Her Melting Mitts

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Charlie Hedges

Hi everyone, I'm Charlie Hedges and this is *My Wardrobe Malfunction*, the podcast about what we wear, why we wear it and those moments when it all goes completely wrong. Before we get on to today's guest, just a quick one to say that we would love to hear about your wardrobe malfunctions and any other clothing stories. You can tag us @mywardmal or email help@mywardmal.com.

Today's special guest is singer-songwriter Grace Davies. Now you may have seen her on *X Factor* a few years ago and she's now an incredible solo artist. So, let's grab the handles, open *My Wardrobe* doors and find out what's inside...

Hi Grace!

Grace Davies

Hello, how are you?

Charlie Hedges

I am really good, thank you. How are you? Can I just say I'm loving the microphone. You look like an absolute pop star!

Grace Davies

I am podcast ready!

Charlie Hedges

So, listen, let's talk about last year, first of all, because your track, *Illuminate*, was the official song right for the Roma 2024 Athletics Championships, which is mad.

Grace Davies

Yeah, what a title, right?

Charlie Hedges

Do you know what? I had to actually write it down because I'm like this... I mean, it's hard enough saying that and I'm drinking water, but that after a few gins is going to be an absolute disaster. So, how did that come about? That's huge.

Grace Davies

Honestly, an email that I thought was spam! It was an email that my management got and they were like 'So there's a guy from European Athletics that's asked you to write the official song,' And I was like 'Yeah, next joke' but yeah it kind of worked out that that

was obviously correct and he'd been a fan of mine for quite a few years. And it was wicked, he flew over from Switzerland to come to mine and my producer's studio where we were at the time making my album and just kind of gave us a brief and was like 'Go ham, like it's your song you own it, do what you want but just kind of make it athleticsy.' And, yeah, it was really really cool, like one of the coolest things I've ever done.

Charlie Hedges

I love that you had some creative freedom in that as well, because just hearing that, I would have just assumed that you wouldn't have that much scope, but that's amazing that they just let you do you.

Grace Davies

I mean, there was like a tight brief on like it needs to be inspiring to the athletes and, you know, kind of give an empowering message. But what I really liked was the guy was like 'You have been through this journey that's quite similar where you've got like one shot to deliver a performance and you're either in or you're out sort of situation. So you can relate to the athletes on that side of it. And it's not always good news, actually, there's more losers than there are winners. So don't feel like you need to be overly positive or anything like that.' I was like 'OK, that's good because I'm good at writing a sad song!' So, yeah, no, it was it was really, really cool. And it was actually the first song that... we wrote three and it was the first one. He was just like 'That's it. There you go. Done it.'

Charlie Hedges

What did you do with the other two then?

Grace Davies

They're just sat on a hard drive like most of my life! They might see the light of day one day.

Charlie Hedges

Are you like, how much music are you making constantly? Are you literally always in the studio?

Grace Davies

Yeah, I mean, to be fair, I like to separate my life in kind of songwriter Grace and artist Grace. I find it really hard to do the two things at once. So I'll often do like a year to two years in the studio and then I'll go into release mode where I'm like 'Don't put me in the studio because I can't concentrate.' But I've got a backlog of songs, like it's wild. They're just all sat there and will never see the light of day probably.

Charlie Hedges

Listen, you never know, you never know. A lot of, do you know what, a lot of artists that I've interviewed over the years, it's quite often the ones that they wrote like five, six years ago that then end up, you know, having a resurgence. So we heard it here first, get those backlogs out!

Grace Davies

I'll see you in five to six years, yeah!

Charlie Hedges

Let's go back a little bit, because I know you just made reference, I'm assuming, to *X Factor*, which you was on in 2017. And, you know, I can't even imagine being on the show, well, I can't imagine being on a show like that cos I can't sing so that would be a bad idea. But you were mentored by Sharon, who, oh my, it must've just been the most bizarre, but unbelievable experience being on *X Factor*. Like, what was it like to be on the show?

Grace Davies

I mean, I would say bizarre is a good word to sum it up! It's weird because I think you know it was almost eight years ago so for me I feel like that's a completely different person and it's sort of like a weird fever dream now. But at the time like I was 20 and this was like the show that I watched growing up, like my whole generation was like fixated on *X Factor* every Saturday night, so it was yeah it was quite a big deal. But for me you know I was such a young new artist and I come from a very small town in Lancashire and I had no idea how to break free of that and so for me going on a TV show to get me and my songs out there was the only route into the industry at that time. This is obviously before it became so accessible with things like TikTok and stuff so you know it felt like the right thing to do and I think it took a lot of kind of bargaining with the team of like 'If I'm gonna do this I want to sing my own songs because your platform is incredible but I want to show people who I am as an artist.' Because I think often with those shows you're expected to do things like rock week and big band week and this and that and it's like actually artists write their own songs and they often come on with a personality and they're criticised for singing the same thing every week but that's just what artists do when they know their genre. So I really just wanted to like take that platform and kind of use it to my advantage of like 'Here's me and here's my songs and this is who I am and I'm not going to allow that to be changed.'

Charlie Hedges

Would you do a show like that again, knowing what you do now?

Grace Davies

No!

Charlie Hedges

You didn't even have to think about that! You're like 'Absolutely not!'

Grace Davies

No way, no! I think you know I was very naive to the fact that it is a reality TV show as much as it is a singing competition. They want the drama and I'm not about that life. So it gave me an incredible platform and I don't think I would be sat here talking to you without that whole experience but yeah, very not my world.

Charlie Hedges

You've ticked that box, you're done.

Grace Davies

Yeah! Done it now.

Charlie Hedges

I read that actually at one point, and I don't know when this was in your career, but you actually thought really hard about quitting the music scene altogether. Was it just was it you know too many pressures was it just a lot?

Grace Davies

I think, so this was 2022, so just over two years ago, and I had gone through obviously the show, got signed to Syco, which was Simon Cowell's label, and then I was held back for a couple of years and then started releasing in January 2020, and we obviously all know what happened in that year. So it was a lot, and then during that year, the label shut down and it made me independent. And I think just kind of picking up the pieces from that and going 'OK, I can either sit here and wallow or I can just crack on and throw every penny I've got to my name into my job and just release, release, release.' And that's what I did. And I think, by the end of 2022, I was just dead. I was so tired and my bank account was completely drained. And although we'd achieved some incredible things... to think that I had like a top 40 as an independent artist, I'm like, I never thought I would be able to do that, but you kind of hit a point where you're like 'How long do I keep reinvesting in myself?' So yeah, I was very, very tired and was definitely ready to quit and then wrote a song and went 'Well, I'll just do an album!'

Charlie Hedges

I love that! But d'you know what it must be amazing like to be an artist like yourself and be able to put real life into all your music. I know you said at the start of this chat that you know you like to write a lot of sad music but d'you know what, like sad music, we're all drawn to it because you're chatting about a lot of people's experiences and there's always something that, you know, that makes us gravitate towards that style of music. So I'm guessing it's just a constant diary for you just writing, singing and it's basically your real life diary?

Grace Davies

Oh yeah, I don't need therapy any more! You guys can listen to my therapy sessions – it's all there! Yeah, no, it's an incredible way of just kind of documenting my feelings. Cos I'm also not a big talker when I've got things going on. So I think just being able to put that into music and also have people listen to it and go 'Oh my God, me too' makes you feel like way less alone. And you're like 'Oh, I am normal.' Like we're all going through the same stuff. So it's an incredible thing to be able to do.

Charlie Hedges

Let's talk about style, shall we, for a bit?

Grace Davies

OK.

Charlie Hedges

I mean, you obviously always look amazing, but did you have any style icons growing up yourself? Like, who did you look to?

Grace Davies

Oh, style icons growing up. Do you know what? I remember when Anne-Marie first came on the scene.

Charlie Hedges

Yeah.

Grace Davies

And this is like what, 2016? She was so cool. And I just remember being like 'Wow'. She wore like really bright colors and like fluffy textures and big – I mean, she still does it now – like super oversized like textured things. And I was like 'That's really cool'. I definitely went through a phase of wearing weird stuff that my body did not belong in. But yeah, I remember that. I mean, obviously you look to kind of the greats of fashion of Lady Gaga and people like that. The meat dress aside! But you know, I've always wanted to be that cool, but I think I'm just not someone who can execute that.

Charlie Hedges

Oh be quiet! Course you're cool. You always look amazing.

Grace Davies

Yeah, I think I've always been a little bit more chill and, if I feel comfortable, I can perform better and just generally be myself a little bit more. So as much as I'd love to come in in seven-inch heels wearing a meat dress, it's not gonna happen!

Charlie Hedges

Damn it! How would you actually describe your personal style then?

Grace Davies

Well, I think the style that I have in my head and what I actually wear on my body are two different things. I love colour and I love textures. I'm like really into latex gloves and things at the moment. I wear a lot of those on stage and a lot of like oversized stuff. But I think I have a real battle of like what I want to look like and what I actually genuinely can pull off and can afford! So, yeah, it's I think it's always comfort is key. And if you catch me like in the studio or in a meeting with my team or anything, I will genuinely look like any person off the street. I've definitely not got that kind of like 'screams artist' look, but I think that's just what makes me feel comfortable.

Charlie Hedges

I think like you're saying if you feel comfortable surely that's you know in terms of performance you're going to get the best out of you. If you're on stage and you don't feel 100% or you don't feel your best then you can't yeah you can't do that you've got to do whatever works for you. Which leads me nicely onto your comfort blanket, so like one item of clothing or an accessory that is like your comfort. I feel like you're going down the gloves route at the minute but maybe not?

Grace Davies

Do you know what? I have two sides of it, so first of all, you will always catch me in an oversized hoodie. Always. That is my comfort blanket that I will dial it up with some cool accessories, or I will just look like a slob at home in it. Always the same. But yeah, no, I love a glove. I just think that it elevates every boring outfit. You put a nice glove on: 'Oh, chic!'

Charlie Hedges

Do you know what? The maddest thing is I love the glove look, but I would never ever think to wear them because I don't think I can pull... But you're right.

Grace Davies

You can't unlock your phone either so...

Charlie Hedges

You have to get the fingerless ones, just one finger!

Grace Davies

Exactly that! Try that in a latex glove, let me tell you! Also, like I, so I wore red latex gloves for the performance for the European Athletics in Rome. And honestly, it was like 40 degrees outside and my manager was trying to slide on... You've got to like lube them up first, you've got to lube up your arms to slide your hand in them. And then she pulled them off and it was just like all of the sweat went everywhere. I was like 'I've been so uncomfortable.' And now these gloves are in a museum inside the Olympic Stadium in Rome.

Charlie Hedges

No they're not?! No they're not?! Do you reckon they kept the sweat in them, or do you reckon they give them a rinse first?!

Grace Davies

Probably! Can sell them for more with my sweat on I suppose. Get an extra three quid!

Charlie Hedges

What's the most extravagant outfit you've worn, because I know you said a minute ago like you've worn some stuff in the past that you don't think suited you necessarily, but like what would you say is like the maddest thing that you've worn out?

Grace Davies

So there was a performance on *X Factor* where I essentially looked like Big Bird from *Sesame Street*.

Charlie Hedges

I bet you didn't!

Grace Davies

No, I did! I've seen the memes online, I love it! But it was like this jacket that had bird feathers and it was like bright yellow, bright red and black, and it was huge. And yeah, it was giving Big Bird really a lot.

Charlie Hedges

Would you say that was a wardrobe malfunction or have you had worse?

Grace Davies

Oh! I mean I've had like genuine malfunctions where...

Charlie Hedges

Come on then!

Grace Davies

Like, so I used to wear a lot of like not capes but sort of like a long sleeve like trainee kind of jacket and one got stuck, as I was being lifted through the floor of the arena, one got stuck in the floor. I was like pulling on it like 'Come on!' But yeah I've had a few things like that but I would say that that's probably an outfit the Big Bird thing is something that I look back on and I'm like 'Why? Why did we do that?!'

Charlie Hedges

But don't you think you have to, everyone, and especially everyone listening to this, we all have to have some kind of wardrobe malfunction or wear an outfit once in our life that we look back and just go 'You look ridiculous.' Because at the time we probably, you probably felt like you looked amazing or maybe not, maybe not with this outfit, I don't know?

Grace Davies

Well...!

Charlie Hedges

Did you get a say in outfits for *X Factor*? Because I know obviously you would have had wardrobe people, but did you have a, did you have any say?

Grace Davies

Yeah, we did but I think because I didn't really have this kind of like sense of who I was to look at as an artist and I was also a plus-sized girl, they really struggled to dress me. And so often we'd go to photo shoots for like OK! magazine or something and the young girls would be like dressed up to the nines and they'd be like 'Oh, this is like the only size 16 thing we can find' sitting there and I'm like 'That's ugly!' So we did get to kind of have say but sometimes I'd be like 'Is that the best you can come up with?' That's being a plus-sized girlie though it's a real... it happens everywhere like going through any shops or anything like that it's like all the boring fits are for the bigger girls. It's a nightmare.

Charlie Hedges

Do you know what? Your followers, they really dedicate themselves to you, don't they? So I can imagine you're so inspiring to so many people, not just for the music but for image as well. It's so important and I know you've got hardcore fans. And do you know what, even just from a personal level, it's so nice to see someone come out their comfort zone but also go from major labels to being independent. You're speaking volumes for so many artists and also for a lot of people that probably want to get into the industry as well and don't necessarily know where they fit. So what advice would you give to someone listening right now that really wants to get into the music industry?

Grace Davies

First of all you have to back yourself and I think that's something that I've done like a whole like actual 360 where I've kind of gone through stages of being like 'Oh this isn't meant for me' and 'Oh I'm rubbish' and then I've come full circle. But you always have to back yourself and your gut is the strongest telltale sign of anything. Every time I've listened to other people's opinions and been really against it it's never gone well! So I've

just learned really to like if I feel very strongly about something or if I really want to do something then you have to do it for yourself and give it everything. I could have bought a house by now but I haven't, I've made an album and I think that's a sacrifice that hopefully in 20 years time I'll be like 'I'm glad I did that' Because I've always put my career first and done everything that's possible and I think that's the most important thing, particularly as an independent artist like you've got to give it everything.

Charlie Hedges

Love that. I feel like the birthday suit question that I've got for you, this is an item of clothing or outfit that makes you feel amazing, I feel like I would know the answer, you're gonna go for a baggy hoodie, or are you not?!

Grace Davies

Yeah. Do you know what? I mean, it does make me feel amazing, but I have this one pair of black velvet three quarter length trousers that have got tassels on the bottom.

Charlie Hedges

Ooh, nice!

Grace Davies

And they've got like a really nice kind of glittery sequin pattern down the sides. And this was the first thing I bought for myself after *X Factor* when I was 20. I'm now 28 and do I fit in them? No, but I will. And when I was 24, I fit back in them and I was so happy and they're still in my wardrobe. And I genuinely like hang them up because I'm like 'One day I'm going to get back in these.' And they are like my favourite thing in the world. So yeah, I would say that that's my like, my special like birthday, occasion outfit. Like I will be back in them one day.

Charlie Hedges

I don't think you should get back into them. I think you just stay as you are and you get those tassels and you add them on to something else.

Grace Davies

Yeah, it's so true actually. Was a bit of a waste of money.

Charlie Hedges

Yeah, why do you wanna fit back into them?

Grace Davies

Aw, they're so nice though!

Charlie Hedges

I'm trying to help you!

Grace Davies

They're so nice!

Charlie Hedges

Do you know what? I had a friend of mine who saw a pair of shoes online years ago. I think they were two sizes too big these shoes and she bought them because she loved

them. And I mean, she could never wear them because she was never going to be that size shoe but she just bought them. She's like 'Do you know what? I'll just keep them on my... I'll keep them on the shelves.' She used to put them on her shelves.

Grace Davies

Yeah, just to look at.

Charlie Hedges

Yeah. Why not? Maybe I should start doing that.

Grace Davies

Whatever makes you happy. Absolutely that. We should all buy shoes two sizes too big!

Charlie Hedges

What's your hand-me-down? So something that you absolutely love. It could be an item of clothing or an accessory that you would hand down to someone else. Or maybe you've been handed something down?

Grace Davies

So I am a collector of Doc Martens

Charlie Hedges

Yes! Love that!

Grace Davies

I love a Doc Martin and I've been wearing them for like 12 years now, but I really like collecting kind of like their collabs. So I have quite a few, like with Lazy Oaf and things like that, where they've got like really cool patterns on them and stuff like that. And I think if I can cling on to them and be like 'You won't be able to find these anywhere' to my nieces or my nephews or my future children, then that would be really cool. I've got some weird ones. I've got some red velvet kind of low fur Doc Martens that very much look like a Hugh Hefner slipper.

Charlie Hedges

Oh, I bet they're banging though.

Grace Davies

But they're cool.

Charlie Hedges

I'll have them!

Grace Davies

So I would say, yeah, my Doc Martens collection is cool.

Charlie Hedges

You've got tons of new music coming this year. It's so exciting! What a great year!

Grace Davies

It's so exciting. It's so exciting.

Charlie Hedges

What are you most looking forward to?

Grace Davies

Honestly, like a debut album, like I've not even done any like sort of big, like 'Oh my God, I'm doing an album.' I've just been talking about it. There's no big announcement. I'm just like 'Yeah, it's happening.' But I, yeah, I think because there was a point where I didn't think that I would ever get to do that, I'm just like extremely excited to have like a body of work out there. And it's the best thing I've ever done in my life.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh, how many tracks are gonna make the album?

Grace Davies

There's 15 on there, it's a long one.

Charlie Hedges

Wow, that's blooming incredible. Good for you, that's amazing, that's so cool.

Grace Davies

Thank you. I think you know nostalgia is very much in at the moment and so the whole album's kind of like a nod to my childhood. And in that obviously there's like five minute songs which I don't think gets done often enough anymore because of radio edits and things like that so... and yeah I'm just excited to be like 'This was really self-indulgent but I hope you like it.'

Charlie Hedges

And I'm not being funny, Raye released music last year, I remember playing it, we played it on the radio and I think that was a good five minute track but it's, again, it's like, it's good to hear something a little bit outside the box and music's meant to take you on a journey right so it's whatever. Yeah, I mean I'm so excited to hear it.

Grace Davies

Wicked, thank you, I'm buzzing.

Charlie Hedges

We are going to do a 60-second quick fire-around with you if that's OK?

Grace Davies

Oh God, OK. My brain's really slow!

Charlie Hedges

Oh no, this is perfect, this is good. And all you need to do is basically answer the first thing that comes into your head, OK? And you've got 60 seconds' worth of questions. All right. So, good luck. Three, two, one... Socks with sandals, yes or no?

Grace Davies

Yes.

Charlie Hedges

Ooh. Sunglasses inside, yes or no?

Grace Davies

Yes.

Charlie Hedges

How many times is it acceptable to wear the same pair of jeans before washing them?

Grace Davies

Four.

Charlie Hedges

I love that you had a number! Heels or flats?

Grace Davies

Flats.

Charlie Hedges

Designer or secondhand?

Grace Davies

Ooh, secondhand.

Charlie Hedges

Sequins or glitter?

Grace Davies

Sequins.

Charlie Hedges

Baggy or tight?

Grace Davies

Baggy.

Charlie Hedges

I could have answered that one for you! Summer dress or winter coat?

Grace Davies

Winter coat.

Charlie Hedges

Hair down or up?

Grace Davies

Hair down.

Charlie Hedges

Ironed clothes or creased?

Grace Davies

Ironed.

Charlie Hedges

Your partner buys you a new handbag, they're now your ex. Do you keep the gift or do you sell it?

Grace Davies

Keep it! A bag's a bag. A bag's a bag!

Charlie Hedges

UGGs. Are they cosy or ugly?

Grace Davies

Er, cosy.

Charlie Hedges

Best colour to wear on a first date?

Grace Davies

Black.

Charlie Hedges

A trend that you're glad is over?

Grace Davies

Um, the side sweep fringe.

Charlie Hedges

And you, my friend, are done!

Grace Davies

Excellent! Oh God!

Charlie Hedges

Grace, thank you so much. You answered 14 questions. I think that's pretty good going, you know.

Grace Davies

That is good going, I'll take that. Also the side sweep fringe, we've all been there!

Charlie Hedges

Oh, listen, I had a massive fringe at one point. I don't even know, well, you couldn't even see who I was.

Grace Davies

My parting was like, it was above my ear, my dad used to call me Bobby Charlton!

Charlie Hedges

Grace, thank you so much. Honestly thank you very much for today. Good luck with all the new music the album is going to be incredible can't wait to listen and probably have a good old cry as well.

Grace Davies

Thank you so much for having me

Charlie Hedges

Thank you again Grace. Absolutely loved speaking to her and her brand new debut album, *The Wrong Side of 25*, is out now. You can find it at gracedavies.com and follow Grace @gracedaviesofficial on her socials as well. And of course you can find us @mywardmal on our socials, on our website at mywardmal.com and please do subscribe if you can, rate and review us on your chosen podcast platform.

That is it! Thank you so much again to Grace and to all of you for listening. Catch up soon and, until then, *My Wardrobe* is officially closed.