

S10 Ep6: Lydia Millen & Her Purple Panic

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Charlie Hedges

I'm Charlie Hedges and this is *My Wardrobe Malfunction*, the podcast about our relationship with clothes – a relationship that's sometimes amazing and sometimes a complete disaster. By the way, we absolutely love hearing about your clothing highs and lows so please tag us @mywardmal or email help@mywardmal.com. On to today's special guest, she's an author and content creator with millions of people following her style advice, it's Lydia Millen. So let's grab the handles, open *My Wardrobe* doors and find out what's inside...

Charlie Hedges

Hi Lydia!

Lydia Millen

Hi!

Charlie Hedges

Oh my God, I'm so excited to talk to you. I mean, first things first, I feel like I need to start by asking how you would describe yourself. Are we going content creator, influencer, legend, where do we stand here?!

Lydia Millen

Well, first of all, I just have to say thank you for having me on because this is so exciting. I've been sat here for like 10 minutes ready to go, I thought I can't log on too soon.

Charlie Hedges

You should have!

Lydia Millen

But I probably would describe myself, it's a bit long-winded but I feel like everyone is nowadays when they describe what they do. But I'd say I'm a content creator but I'm also an author and sometimes a little bit of a co-designer as well.

Charlie Hedges

And a legend!

Lydia Millen

Well OK – stop it you!

Charlie Hedges

So can I ask you, how did you first fall in love with fashion?

Lydia Millen

So my goodness me, this goes way back. I grew up in a little area called Croxley Green which is next to Watford and there was a shop on the high street in Watford called The End. And if anyone is from Watford they will know this store because it was kind of like ASOS but before the internet. They had all of the sort of styles from the catwalk before any other shop. And if you were wearing The End on a night out you got like a nod, a nod of...

Charlie Hedges

Really?!

Lydia Millen

Yeah yeah yeah. And I got a job there and honestly it was the best job in the world. I was working with girls that I loved, I was working for the owner who'd been a friend of my mum since I was little and I thrived. And I think that's where I found that I loved fashion. And it's funny because I only realised about 10 years later that they actually used to put me in the clothes and the clothes would sell out and so then they'd make me go into the stock room and get changed and I'd have to wear something else so it's kind of what I do now!

Charlie Hedges

Do you know what? That's mad actually because the fact that you didn't even know that and, like you're saying, you've I mean you've worked with some of the biggest brands there are so this is like a full circle moment which is... Big up Watford, by the way!

Lydia Millen

Yes, I think it is. I think sometimes I have to remind myself that, you know, that girl probably wouldn't believe that she's sat here right now talking to you about fashion. It just, it's unbelievable, especially when at the time it really felt like there was a glass ceiling. I was very much a retail girl and getting from from inside retail to that more sort of you wanted to move more into head office at that time. And it's now like I've sort of crafted my own route to things, which is so bizarre, because I never would have thought that there was a different way back then.

Charlie Hedges

This is probably a silly question, obviously, because I know what you do, but for everyone listening right now, how do you go from actually, like you say, working in the shop to then working with some of the most amazing luxury brands? Like, how do you even start?

Lydia Millen

Well, I think the main thing is just starting. Like, I think that's the hardest part. I think so many people think about it and they worry about what people are going to think and their friends and their family. And let me tell you, everyone laughed at me when I started. Everyone, all my friends, they all thought it was hilarious. 'What's she doing?' I used to hang clothes on my university bedroom wall because I thought that looked better than any pictures and they just always used to laugh at me because of that. And when I was

taking my pictures in my university bedroom, they all laughed. But they're going to. And then you get to this point where it sort of stops being a bit cringe and you're actually doing things and you've stuck at it. And it's at that point that you go 'I'm so glad I didn't listen.' You just have to believe in yourself a little bit. And I think that's really hard nowadays. And it definitely feels like the stage is a lot bigger nowadays than when I started because it was like probably nearly 15 years ago that I started now. But it was bizarre because no one knew what it was. And so that's the main thing I would say is just start, but also be yourself. because I think that's the thing that makes this industry so wonderful is that there's literally space for everyone and there's going to be someone out there looking for your style or your quirks. And I always use people like Sammi Jeffcoat, who's one of the most incredible creators, and her style is so different to mine. She's so edgy and so cool. And then there's Jamie Genevieve with her tattoos. There's all of these really different girls and there's a space for everyone. And so if you're sat there thinking 'I don't see anyone doing it or getting dressed or wearing the clothes that I wear, maybe there's a space for me' then I always say 'Just start.'

Charlie Hedges

Out of interest, you've, when, because obviously, you know, like we said, you've collaborated with a lot of people. Do you think it's so important to also work, when you get to the position that you're in is it really vital to work with brands that you 100% believe in? Because do you think you can see through people that might not necessarily live and breathe that brand? Do you think it's really important to stick to your guns with that?

Lydia Millen

Yeah, I think the reason why this industry became as big as it has done is because of the authenticity that's in it. And so I think that's really important. I think that there's also ways to show different price points as well. So that's important too, because not everyone has the same sort of disposable income for fashion nowadays. So whilst I might buy a really lovely Suzannah London outfit, I still want to be able to show people that there might be alternatives on the high street perhaps. So I try and do that too, but when you're working really closely, especially in the way that I work with brands like Fairfax & Favor and Karen Millen, I think it's super important that there's that authentic relationship there. And I think that's why these relationships work so well, because my audience will have seen my journey and my love and my discovery of these brands. And that's what's super important in this industry is always authenticity.

Charlie Hedges

I'm going to be so honest with you, the first brand that you mentioned, I don't even know what that is. But this is why it's so fascinating to speak to someone like yourself, because, you know, there'll be one brand that you work with that someone like myself, I'm a big high street person, someone like you, I'll gravitate towards your style for certain things. But then you also open up the world for the higher end for a lot of other people and also bring us into that world. And like you're saying, find affordable versions to look exactly like you do. Because you know, your Instagram's amazing, you're a beautiful, beautiful lady. Like we all want to look like you. Well, I do anyway. I've been screenshotting your Instagram. I hope you can't tell when people screenshot because that would be weird! But it's great.

Lydia Millen

Well, I would say judging by that gorgeous blazer that you're wearing, you would very much like Fairfax & Favor's pieces. They do the most incredible boots, blazers, coats and also a very, very lovely handbag collection coming in collaboration with me so I think you'll really like their stuff so you should definitely check them out.

Charlie Hedges

I'm going there right now – not now cos I'm talking to you but straight after this! You're an author as well so tell us about that side of your career and your and your life?

Lydia Millen

Well gosh, I wrote the book *Evergreen* two years ago and it's basically centred around finding the joy in the seasons and so what I wanted to do was put together a book that could help guide people in finding more of the joy in the seasons through a lot of my own life experiences. And it is my proudest achievement to date – I love that book so much and I just love that I get to talk about it. So thank you for giving me an opportunity to talk about it some more, because I never get bored!

Charlie Hedges

Of course, my gosh, it's an absolute pleasure. I would like to ask you about King Charles. You've met him a few times, is that right?

Lydia Millen

Yes, I've met him twice. I'm very, very, very honored to have met him twice.

Charlie Hedges

Do you love his style or does he need a bit of Lydia?!

Lydia Millen

Oh, no, he is absolutely perfect the way he is. He is a style icon.

Charlie Hedges

Are there any other members of the Royal Family that you look to and go 'Do you know what? They are incredible. Their style is amazing'?

Lydia Millen

Oh, well, I think it would be wrong with me to not give a nod to the Princess of Wales. I think that she is just elegance personified and she's so inspiring. And the way that she dresses is a huge, huge inspiration to me.

Charlie Hedges

Can we talk about your community, your fans, the people that support you, because you've got a really loyal community and a lot of people that support you and obviously follow you. Without those, I mean, I'm guessing you wouldn't be doing what you are now?

Lydia Millen

That's exactly right. I really do feel like the luckiest girl in the world to have been doing this as long as I have, to still have an audience that continues to grow and an audience that trusts me and supports me and cheers me on. Honestly, I always try to put this into

words, but it is one of those things that every so often you sit back and you think 'My gosh, that's a lot of people.' And they're all so lovely that I'm just sort of like 'Oh my gosh!'

Charlie Hedges

But do you know, I'm a massive believer in what energies you put out, you get back. And I know this is obviously the first time that we've met, but I feel like you come across so lovely online that that's probably why it's reciprocated by the people that follow you. Because it's so important.

Lydia Millen

Well, I think that's the loveliest thing that anyone has ever said to me. Thank you!

Charlie Hedges

Well, it's the truth. 'Not really everybody, she's an absolute cow!' No, I'm joking!

Lydia Millen

But you're so lovely too as well, it's so lovely to have someone so bubbly and full of energy like on the other side of the camera.

Charlie Hedges

Oh thank you, I'll take the compliment! Do you find what you do high pressure? Because from people that don't know your industry and don't work in your industry, from the outside it all looks very glossy, it all looks very, I don't want to say easy, but I don't think a lot of people understand what work goes into what you actually do. You know, you're a boss, you do a lot of stuff, do you find what you do quite high pressure?

Lydia Millen

I think in the early days it was probably a little bit more high pressure then. But as I've gotten older, I think every day I just feel so grateful that I get to do this and that I try and find a way for each project, each video, each post to make it a little bit more enjoyable. And I know that might sound like a bit wishy washy, but I really like enjoying as much as I possibly can in life. And I think if I start worrying too much about things and I'm just gonna be stealing the joy of my life all the time. And so I try and work with really lovely people and I feel like I'm so lucky. And like you've just said about my audience, I've got the most incredible audience of people cheering me on. So I feel like if I was to say that I felt pressured, it's not the right word, I just feel so lucky.

Charlie Hedges

Love that. Once you post something online, are you constantly checking like for likes, comments, or do you sort of post and then take a step back or do you like dip in and out?

Lydia Millen

Well, I love the community element and I really love chatting and I love the chatting that happens in the comments section and I think it's really lovely to hear what people have to say. The likes, for me, it's more, I try and post things that I really believe in and enjoy posting. And so likes don't mean as much to me as they used to. I kind of try to aim more about what I'm putting into my content and the value there. And some of my favourite things to post maybe don't get the most likes, but they do get loads of shares or lots of

direct messages where people maybe don't feel so comfortable to comment but want to share their own experiences there. So there's different ways to gauge how well your content does, but I just like things to sort of start a conversation and chat with people, which is really nice.

Charlie Hedges

What's the most extravagant fashion purchase you've ever made?

Lydia Millen

Oh my goodness, the most extravagant fashion purchase I have ever made. Well, I would like to say that this is, it's extravagant with a different approach because I was very, very... I was recently given the opportunity to have some wool that was produced, shorn and woven in the UK. And then I was able to take that wool and have it made into a coat by my tailor. And I think that for me, that's probably one of the most slow and meticulous and special processes I've ever been a part of because I think we're so used to seeing fashion really quickly. And this coat took months, months to make. And I can show you it if you want?

Charlie Hedges

I was just gonna ask, have you got it?

Lydia Millen

Yeah, one sec! So this is the coat.

Charlie Hedges

Whoa! Oh my gosh, that is beautiful!

Lydia Millen

And I literally only got it before Christmas and it's completely undyed. And I just think that this is like a real testament to British crafts. And so it may not be the most extravagant in the monetary sense, but the amount of time and hours and love that has gone into this, that's pretty extravagant to me.

Charlie Hedges

I would use that as pyjamas, I would wake up in that, I would go to bed in that, I would eat my breakfast, lunch and dinner in that!

Lydia Millen

Oh thank you!

Charlie Hedges

Can I ask you about your comfort blanket, so do you have like an item of clothing or an accessory that when you put it on you're like 'Yep, this is good'?

Lydia Millen

Yes, well I have two, and I was going to go for one, I was going to go for my dressing gown but, in all honesty, this one that I've got here has actually been one of those items that I don't, I didn't think I knew I needed it until I had it because it's kind of like the dressing gown equivalent of a coat.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh, what is this?!

Lydia Millen

I think you're going to love this. So this is from Holland Cooper and this is their new colourway, I've got a very muddy one in the back of my car but this is like fleece lined and it's kind of like a duvet, look I'll put it on for you so you can see.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh, that is unreal! That looks so cosy.

Lydia Millen

But it's one size and it's massive, so it goes over every outfit.

Charlie Hedges

How long is it?

Lydia Millen

So it's really long but it does come in two lengths, so it comes down to your shins. But I've got chickens and I've got a horse and there is nothing worse than going outside in the rain when you've got to do your animals and you're not having the right weather attire and this just goes over every single outfit. You could have a going out outfit underneath this and it would just protect it and you're all covered and you just plod outside, do what you need to do. My husband stole this the other day and he was like 'Ooh, that *is* good.' So I would say this is one of those unsung heroes that everyone needs.

Charlie Hedges

For me, you need a long coat as well because there's nothing worse than going out like either going to a day party or doing something in the day where I'm really dressed up and it's midday and I look like I'm dressed for 3am, so a long coat is also good for that as well actually.

Lydia Millen

Yes, that's very true!

Charlie Hedges

Love it! Have you ever had a wardrobe malfunction?

Lydia Millen

I have. I have. I was thinking about this. And I really wanted it to be something quite, maybe this is dramatic but I don't know, this was a few years ago and I'd been invited to a very, very sparkly event and the only problem was is that we were moving the very next day after this event so I was incredibly stressed and I didn't know that one of the things that happens to me when I'm stressed is I swell. I just swell up, I don't know why.

Charlie Hedges

Do you?

Lydia Millen

Yeah I swell up all the time, if I have a glass of wine I swell up, all the time. And this was the first time I was ever getting to wear something very, very special to me because my

grandpa used to buy my grandma really beautiful pieces of jewellery and I've been lucky enough to receive some of them and so this was the first time I was ever wearing a very, very special ring that my grandma had given me and I was getting to wear it on the red carpet it felt very, very special and unfortunately when I got home I could not get the ring off my finger.

Charlie Hedges

Oh don't, I feel sick for you...

Lydia Millen

And my finger started to go purple. I'm pretty sure I have a picture. If I have, I'll send it to you.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh.

Lydia Millen

My finger started to go purple and I tried everything. I tried washing up liquid. I tried butter. There were these things about putting string around your finger and getting it, it just made my finger swell even more.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh!

Lydia Millen

So I ended up having to have the ring cut off my finger.

Charlie Hedges

No! You did not?

Lydia Millen

I did. And I can show you it as well because I've still got it here.

Charlie Hedges

You are kidding me?!

Lydia Millen

Because I have never felt comfortable taking it anywhere and having it out of my sight because I love this ring so much. So it is still cut. If I show you there, there's a little bit of sellotape that is holding together this ring. And I cried as they cut it off, but the nurse was so lovely. She was like, I was crying just sobbing as they cut it off my finger and she was so sweet.

Charlie Hedges

Do you know what? I'm sure she's super-duper confidential, but I bet that's a great story that they fly around their office!

Lydia Millen

'This girl with this beautiful ring just sobbing!'

Charlie Hedges

Would that ring be something that you handed down to someone else, do you think? Or do you have another item that in a wardrobe or an accessory that you would like to hand down personally?

Lydia Millen

Well, I'm so lucky that my grandparents, my mum and my dad have always been very, very stylish people. Whenever I look back at pictures of them, I'm like 'Gosh, you were so cool.' And so I thought, because I'm telling you the story about the ring, I have to give you something else. There's like a hand-me-down, but I would absolutely hand that ring down. It's so special and I feel so lucky that I get to have it for a little while. But it's one of those things that you definitely have to keep passing on. However, I remembered that I've got these and I love these so much. So I have a picture of my dad wearing this pair of sunglasses and I am a baby. So these at least are 36-years-old, these Ray-Bans.

Charlie Hedges

Wow!

Lydia Millen

And he gave them to me. I don't think I understood the significance when he gave them to me. And now that I have them, they're just my most favourite thing. And people always comment on them because they are...

Charlie Hedges

Do you wear them all the time? Do you wear them a lot?

Lydia Millen

Yeah. They're so heavy. They are so heavy and they're a little bit battered and bruised, but they are so special. They've even got the vintage Aviator bits that curve around your ears like that. And just having the picture of my dad wearing them whilst he's holding me is incredibly cool.

Charlie Hedges

Oh, don't! That is so lovely.

Lydia Millen

So they're very special.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my God. I feel, do you know what? I feel very lucky that we're, that you're sharing all these stories with us, by the way, because these are very personal stories. It's really sweet, so thank you.

Lydia Millen

Oh no, this is such a pleasure. Most of the time, you know, you never get to tell these things. So I feel grateful that you're asking.

Charlie Hedges

Well, the final question before we do a quick fire round is, your birthday suit which sounds a lot more weird than what it actually is. So this is an item or an outfit that makes

you feel absolutely fantastic. So you've got an event and you're like 'You know what? I need to look my best.' What is that one staple piece that you own that you can't beat?

Lydia Millen

Well I feel like you've already mentioned that I met King Charles.

Charlie Hedges

Yes.

Lydia Millen

So I was going to show you a hat that I wore to meet him which I actually have here.

Charlie Hedges

Woah!

Lydia Millen

This was very very special, very special.

Charlie Hedges

So describe this for everyone listening?

Lydia Millen

Sorry, this is this is a really beautiful navy pillbox hat and it's got a bow on the back and it was designed by the most incredible designer. She just turns hats around for me so quickly. She makes them herself and she brought this to life in a matter of days for me and I was very, very grateful. But seeing as we've already talked about King Charles I thought I would show you a very special dress that is just staring at me because I was invited to go to the Oscar de la Renta fashion show in New York this week and I can't go and I'm so sad. So I've got some dresses because I feel like I'm just going to prance around my house pretending that I'm there.

Charlie Hedges

So these are what you were going to wear for that event?

Lydia Millen

They were going to dress me but these are the dresses that I have that I love and one of them is my favourite dress of all time and so I feel like I'm going to wear it as like an homage to the fact that I'm not there but I feel like I'm there but I feel like I'm there!

Charlie Hedges

Love that!

Lydia Millen

I'll grab it hold on.

Charlie Hedges

Thank you. Oh my God, that is amazing.

Lydia Millen

So this is their hydrangea phy silk dress. I've worn this so many times but I feel amazing in it so it's one of those things that says Spring and feels like it's such a happy dress. It's got hydrangeas all over it and I just love it so much so that would be my birthday suit.

Charlie Hedges

What do you go heels-wise with that?

Lydia Millen

I've got to be honest, I'm someone that savors my comfort with these things and so I'd probably go for a pair of either Emmy London Josie pumps or some sort of strappy summer, but always quite low. I just, I never have a good time. I like to dance. I went to a wedding once and my shoes were so uncomfortable and I love dancing at weddings and I love being on the dance floor all night. So I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't ever wear uncomfortable shoes to go dancing ever again because I was just sat on the outside thinking 'I just wanna be dancing.'

Charlie Hedges

Nothing worse. Footwear is key to a good night. It really is. Lydia, thank you so much. Before you go, I'd like to just do a quick 60 second quickfire round with you. Is that OK?

Lydia Millen

Yes.

Charlie Hedges

So basically you just need to answer the first thing that comes into your head and you've got 60 seconds to get for as many questions as you can. Are you ready?

Lydia Millen

Yes.

Charlie Hedges

3-2-1-go. Socks with sandals, yes or no?

Lydia Millen

No.

Charlie Hedges

Sunglasses inside, yes or no?

Lydia Millen

No.

Charlie Hedges

How many times is it OK to wear the same pair of trousers before washing them?

Lydia Millen

Well, that's quite funny because I'm wearing yesterday's breeches and they smell of horses, so definitely not two days, these need to go in the wash! So I'm gonna go with as long as as many days as you're comfortable with!

Charlie Hedges

Sequins or glitter?

Lydia Millen

Sequins.

Charlie Hedges

Baggy or tight?

Lydia Millen

Oh, a bit of both.

Charlie Hedges

Your partner buys you a nice bag. They're now your ex. Do you keep the gift or do you sell it?

Lydia Millen

Um, I think gifts are supposed to be gifts and so I don't... I wouldn't sell it.

Charlie Hedges

Matching sets or mix and match?

Lydia Millen

Matching sets

Charlie Hedges

Best colour to wear on a first date?

Lydia Millen

Red.

Charlie Hedges

Smashed it! Well done!

Lydia Millen

Thank you so much. This was so much fun!

Charlie Hedges

Oh, I'm so pleased honestly and thanks for being so open, so honest. Yeah, just even your advice that you've given other people that would love to get into the industry, it's so important and it's nice to see and hear like where you've come from as well. It's really beautiful. You're clearly a lovely person. So thank you very much.

Lydia Millen

Ah, so are you. Can we do this every week?

Charlie Hedges

Oh my God, shall we? Do you wanna co-host?!

Lydia Millen

I'd love that!

Charlie Hedges

Ah, honestly, thank you so much. It's really lovely to talk to you.

Lydia Millen

And you. Thank you so much.

Charlie Hedges

Thanks so much Lydia You can find her at lydiaelisemillen.com and @lydiamillen on her socials as well. And of course you can find us @mywardmal on our socials or online at mywardmal.com and we would love it if you could take some time to subscribe, rate and review us on your chosen podcast platform too.

So that's it. Thank you again to Lydia and of course to all of you for listening today.

We'll catch up soon. And until then *My Wardrobe* is officially closed.