

GOK WAN:

'I'm still on my body CONFIDENCE JOURNEY'

The fashion guru talks to *Charlotte Roberts* about the importance of loving yourself

It's a rainy weekday morning, and we're talking pants with Gok Wan. Literally. To be fair, it's for a legitimate reason – not just because we're nosy. The 49-year-old fashionista, DJ, presenter and chef (take your pick) is collaborating with lingerie brand Pour Moi for their Own Your Confidence campaign, and part of that is helping you find the best underwear. Don't worry, though – he's not about to enforce a cull on your comfy knickers just yet.

It's the perfect collab for Gok, who started his career empowering us on *How To Look Good Naked* and has spent the majority of his time since making us feel good, whether that's playing banging tunes in his famous Ibiza DJ sets, whipping up tasty Asian-inspired treats in the kitchen, or making us laugh

on *Celebrity Gogglebox*, on which he appears with his bestie Fearne Cotton.

Now, on the cusp of turning the big 5-0, Gok is in a reflective mood about what makes him happy, what's still on his to-do list, and how he can make us love our bodies more – wobbly bits and all...

Let's talk lingerie! Why is it so important that we wear well-fitting undies?

Your lingerie is the most intimate part of your wardrobe, right next to your skin. Obviously, it's functional – if you've got a larger chest, then having enough support can keep back pain away – but it's essentially down to comfort. If you feel more comfortable when you start dressing, then you're going to wear your clothes better. You're going to stand up

straighter and feel more confident for the rest of the day.

We all have that one favourite pair of old knickers – please don't say we've got the bin them...

No, I don't think you should throw them away! They might be a bit old and tatty, but they're your security blanket. However, I know from doing this for so many years now that if you get it right with your underwear and it fits properly, it genuinely will make you feel better about getting dressed.

Has body positivity changed a lot since you started working in fashion?

When we started making *How To Look Good Naked* back in 2006, body positivity wasn't a thing. Fast-forward two decades, and now there's different shapes on runways and in shop windows. I think we're seeing a far more diverse





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Cooking up a storm on *This Morning*



Bra-vo: giving undies tips



Go Gok: working the crowd on the decks at Bestival

range of what the general public looks like. Even for Pour Moi to put their marketing budget into a campaign like Own Your Confidence is amazing. We're still not there yet, but it has changed.

Have you always been confident?

I've had as many ups and downs with my body image as anybody else – I'm only human. I've spoken very publicly about my relationship with my body, my weight gain and weight loss, and my eating disorder. But fortunately, I've never been afraid of fashion. Even when I was much bigger and I couldn't necessarily wear the clothes I wanted to, I still loved it as an art form.

When have you felt most confident?

Probably when I started making *How To Look Good Naked*. I got as much out of that show as the contributors did. So, me really coming into my own probably happened in my early thirties, which seems quite late. I guess I'm still on that journey. I'm always questioning my politics when it comes to fashion and body confidence.

What's your top tip for feeling good?

Understanding that regardless of its size, how it

moves, and the restrictions you may have, your body is precious. It may not be what you want it to look like when you look in the mirror, but it does the most remarkable things. At the end of the day, your body is simply a vessel that holds the most important parts of you – your sensibilities, your compassion, your soul and your drive. Those things are far more important than dress sizes.

You're turning 50 next year – have you started party planning?

I love a party, as everyone knows! I tend to throw something quite lavish and fun. Obviously, 50 is a milestone, so I want to have something really big. **Do you love a theme?** Oh, 100 per cent. I'm kind of toying with the idea of a mini festival – I'm a DJ, so

'No one's ever given me fashion advice'

I've got lots of DJ friends that could play. I don't know whether it's going to be something like that, or whether I'm just going to hire a space in Ibiza and get everyone to come over and party. Whatever happens, it'll be very full

on and probably over multiple days.

You DJ'd at Alison Hammond's birthday party. Maybe she could return the favour?

Interestingly, Alison's son Aiden really wanted to DJ

tired, but there's beauty in ageing. I don't feel scared about it. I'm excited about what will probably be my last ten to 15 years of work, so I really want to do all the stuff I haven't completed yet. But at the same time, I've had such a big life. Sometimes when you're so busy, you forget just where you've come from. I'm looking forward to reflecting and feeling great about what I've done, as well as looking forward and saying, "OK, let's work out if we have enough time to complete that project." **Is there anything you're worried about?** I was always very carefree when I was younger, and I kind of had that feeling

that I was going to live forever. I guess the difficulty with the ageing process for me is that you lose people – and I'm really afraid of that. I'm afraid of losing my parents and my friends. I wish I had a magic wand and could make everyone I love live forever.

What's the best fashion advice you've ever been given?

You know what? I don't think anyone, in almost 50 years, has ever given me any fashion advice. **OK, what about your worst fashion faux pas?** I used to work in retail and, for some unknown reason,

one day I wore a beige ribbed roll neck, beige Farah trousers, beige shoes, and a beige jacket. I looked like a mid-century sofa. I went to work, and I remember I had to go home – I lived an hour away from my job – because I was so uncomfortable. I took tonal to another level. **What's a top styling tip for someone in their thirties or forties?** The same advice that I give

to anybody, which is you have to own your outfit. Fashion is art, and it's subjective. It doesn't matter how outrageous or how conservative it is – if you enjoy it, then you should wear it.

What about someone 50-plus? Does styling change as we grow older?

I think that part of the issue we have is that when a woman hits 50 or 60, she gets given a whole new set of rules. She's got to cut her hair short, not show her body, and dress her age. I hate the term "mutton dressed as lamb", I think it's awful! It's your body, and you should be able to represent yourself to the entire world in whatever way you want! For anybody in their fifties, there are no new rules other than the rules that

you want to have. If you want to cut your hair short or lower your hemline, you must do it for you – not to please society's expectations. We shouldn't be doing this. It's essentially ageist. **In the celeb fashion world, who would you say is rocking it at the moment?**

Rochelle Humes is absolutely killing it. She's all about the aesthetic. I love to see what AJ Odudu is wearing, too, she always looks incredible! I was DJ-ing in Ibiza this summer and she happened to be in the same club – we were dancing all night. She looks just as polished and beautiful at three o'clock in the morning in a club as she does when she's presenting *Big Brother*. **You've had a real portfolio career, from stylist to author to chef. If you had to pick one role for the rest of your life, which would it be?** It's difficult because I love them all so much. Every

single one of those jobs is an extension of my personality and my passions. The function of them is different – cooking, fashion, writing, DJing – but the service is the same. It's all about delivering information and making people feel like they belong. Whether that's cooking for somebody or playing them a track I was listening to 25 years ago, the process is the same. I create, I show them something, and hopefully they get something out of it. **So, you'd pick to make people happy for the rest of your life?** Yes, I'd make sure everyone feels cared for. I get a real kick out of people feeling they've been looked after.

The last time you spoke to heat was during COVID and you said the world would look totally different afterwards. How has your life changed? I've changed a hell of a lot,

and I think society's changed, as well. It was such a scary time. I created a brand during lockdown, Isolation Nation, which has absolutely changed my life. Maybe I'm looking at things through rose-tinted glasses, but I like to believe that we are more compassionate, and that we now know who our neighbours are because there was this moment of unity. Regardless of age, occupation, or financial status, we were all dealing with the same thing at the same time. We have a slight recovery to go still, but the romantic side of my brain likes to believe that we are far more of a community than we were before. ■

Own Your Confidence and find the perfect fit with Pour Moi's fabulous lingerie collection. To shop Gok's confidence-boosting pieces, head to Pourmoi.co.uk/what-lies-beneath