

PRIDE

LGBTQ+ ASOS Insider and podcaster Alexis Caught on the huge significance of the annual celebrations

'I've always wanted to go to Glastonbury but I've never been because it clashes with Pride. I go to London religiously because it's the one day a year where we take over our city and say, "We are here and we do matter." It's important to stand up and be counted for people who can't, but also in respect for brave people who came before us and fought oppressive policies. I've been to Pride in Brighton, New York, Barcelona, Madrid, Dublin and Sydney Mardi Gras fairly often, as half my family are based there.

'Kylie at Sydney Mardi Gras for the 25th anniversary was my best Pride. It was amazing because she's a genuine advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. She refused her fee and paid for her own dancers, costumes, staging and lighting saying, "This is my thank you to the LGBTQ+ community for standing by me through my career." That's allyship. Co-opting means going, "Yay! Here's the rainbow! Here's love!" But what are you actually doing to support LGBTQ+ people? The Pride flag isn't just a colourful logo. An example of this was Brighton Pride last year which sadly became "Britney Pride" – a rainbow music festival for straight people. My friends, a lesbian couple, had a kiss and the women next to them went "Ugh" and pulled a face. It was really unpleasant.

'Aged eight or nine, I watched my first Pride with my mum and first went with friends when I was 17. I faced homophobia at school, so it was important to go with my friend Charlie and then-boyfriend Tony, and be surrounded by people like me, feeling accepted.

'If it's your first Pride this summer, make eye contact, smile, feel yourself in your outfit, be comfortable in your footwear. Turn off that judgemental inner voice. Be open-minded about yourself and others, spread kindness – and be gay!

'Wearing something colourful is part of the fun, a badge of honour that says, "I'm part of the club" when we're otherwise taught to tone it down. If we have a beautiful summer again, I won't be wearing much – factor 30 sunscreen and a smile. I'll do the parade, power nap, then hit a party with friends. The last couple of years I've marched with my

rugby club, the Kings Cross Steelers, the world's oldest gay-inclusive rugby club, so I've worn my blue and green kit and some flatteringly tight shorts. Last year, I found brilliant rainbow-patterned dungarees and split the crotch from dancing too much. You need a good break-

fast, water, antihistamines for hay fever, sunscreen and a bag to put your top in when it comes off. You end up covered in stickers from different community groups and I've still got a sticker-covered flyer from the Pride I went to when I was 17.

'My Pride experiences feed into my Qmmunity podcast, which shares lesser-heard stories so people can connect to them emotionally, because the dial wasn't being moved on LGBTQ+ representation. Last Pride, there were lesbians protesting trans women, and you've got terrible racism in the gay community. All of these issues need to be addressed.

'Season two will be out this summer, with more stories, deep dives into our history and our sex lives as queer people, and interviews with non-binary people about their experiences, because although our journey is not the same, I want to stand with them. Someone on the non-binary spectrum who I respect now is [activist and model] Jamie Windust.

'This summer my mission is to go to smaller Prides like Belfast, as that's where they really need numbers, support and solidarity – Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK that doesn't have equal marriage. I want heterosexual and cis people to come to Pride to see that we're not weird – it's harder to hate or be scared if you know people.

'Going to New York Pride last year was amazing and it was phenomenal to be on the GLAAD float and see tens of thousands of people there. New York is very slick, very organised, very big, they've got big money behind it. You have conversations with older LGBTQ+ people at Pride who are so emotional,

relieved, but sad because loads of their friends didn't make it. You see banners of couples who have been together for decades, longer than homosexuality has been legal. It's mind-blowing and humbling.' @asos_lex @qmmunitypod



**IF IT'S YOUR FIRST
PRIDE, BE OPEN-MINDED,
BE KIND – AND BE GAY!**