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Black Scot Pod

Start Me Up

'If you really want to get to know someone, give them a computer that doesn't work. How they handle that tells you everything you need to know.' Shirley Mcpherson taps at her headphones, as her voice dips in and out. 'I thought the days of tech hell were over,' she says, identifying a kink in the wire.



'The difficulties in winter 2020 is something I never want to live through again,' admits podcast partner Suzie Mwanza who explains they had more than just 'can you see me, can you hear me' issues with technology in lockdown. Thick East Coast accents combined with Mwanza's Zambian and Mcpherson's Lesotho heritage are a surprising combination for some, which they attribute to the lack of Black Scottish voices in mainstream media.

What's the T?

'Sometimes when people south of the border meet us, they think we're American,' says Mcpherson. I can imagine bewildered Londoners listening to the accents, trying to match them with an African nation or Caribbean island. They grew up in Musselburgh, where there were very few Black Scottish students at their school. Twenty-nine-year-old Mwanza, who moved to Scotland when she was ten, was tasked with babysitting the now 26-year-old Mcpherson, who was only seven when she arrived in the country. But she was less than keen, having ignored her at school: unsurprising given that 'massive' three-year age gap, which has closed as time has passed.

'At school there was a lot of expectation not to be an African stereotype,' says Mwanza. 'All people saw were the Oxfam and UNICEF adverts with poor, starving children. We felt like we had to prove that's not what we were; that Africa was diverse and innovative.' Like all good enterprising millennials, they embraced the online world, experimenting on YouTube with content like muckbang (eating videos) before launching the *Black Scot Pod* in October 2019.

Momentum

They didn't go the whole hog until July 2020, with the push of the pandemic and inspiration from Stewart Kyasimire's *Black & Scottish* documentary. 'It gave us a spark to know that we weren't just speaking into the void; there was an appetite for this kind of thing,' says Mwanza. 'Then George Floyd happened and the mainstream media started talking about Black representation.'

Content

Black Scot Pod features pop culture, current events and lived experiences with the pair sharing their thoughts on everything from the education gaps in school and the lack of Black Scottish films to the challenge of finding make-up for dark skin tones. Listening to this podcast is like eavesdropping on a conversation between friends on the bus into town. The 'bantercast' format allows hosts to trade raw, unfiltered, unedited opinions and *Black Scot Pod* keeps everything in: burps and all.

'We didn't want to be formal or come across as preaching and teaching; when I'm listening to podcasts, I want to be reminded of my own experiences and have a laugh,' says Mwanza. 'Suzie and I have always had chemistry; I see her as a sister. We can speak candidly and I don't have to worry what she thinks,' says Mcpherson.

Not Fooling Around

Since launching, *Black Scot Pod* has been spotlighted on Apple's Black Voices List and featured on Spotify's Black Voices, alongside the likes of Michelle Obama's podcast. Putting themselves out there is paying off and they've had a number of opportunities as a result of the show. This year they've been asked to judge the British Podcast Awards for a second time. 'I saw that email and thought it was spam. It's just mind-blowing to be invited to judge some amazing podcasts and peers,' says Mwanza.

They are unassuming and painfully modest, saying they didn't think anyone would listen. But thousands have, from Europe, Madagascar and even Australia. 'When people started messaging us about their lived experience and asking for advice, that's when we knew people were listening,' says Mcpherson.

To Infinity and Beyond

'There shouldn't be any geographical, race or gender barriers to achieve what you want in life,' says Mwanza. 'We are just as talented and capable as some of the biggest stars out there.' The opportunities are only just beginning for a podcast duo who want to be taken out of their element; 'or at least out of the cupboard' they podcast from.

Black Scot Pod can be found at linktr.ee/blackscotpod with new episodes airing every Thursday.

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