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The house I grew up in... was a white-fronted, Grade II-listed council house in a mixed part of Brixton, but I still felt the racial tension. Once I was hit over the head with a cricket bat, it was just that kind of area. Even if you were Italian, you were a "wog".

When I was a child I wanted to be... a fashion designer, an actress and an air stewardess. But then I started a small clothes label which never took off, failed an audition to Rada, and never applied to be an air hostess.

The moment that changed me for ever... was seeing a Day-Glo UFO in Doncaster one night after a concert. It was a bright ball of luminous pink, made of energy – like a fireball. Everyone else thought I'd lost the plot.

My greatest inspiration... The Pilgrim's Progress: it was read to me at a very young age and I loved the way the characters were given names relating to their personalities – I was very moved by it.

My real-life villain... is the personification of war and violence, which is open to interpretation.

If I could change one thing about myself... I would lose a stone. I've gone down to nine and a half, but eight and a half stone would be nicer!

At night I dream of... angels, if I'm very lucky.

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What I see when I look in the mirror... is a distant shadow of my former teenage self. You start seeing signs of age. I have a fear of losing my teeth.

My style icons... are size 14 ladies of the Hollywood Golden Age, such as Marilyn Monroe and Joan Shawlee in *Some Like it Hot*: they're perfect.

My favourite item of clothing... is a black Freya bra.

I wish I'd never worn... a blue foam dress with an army helmet, which I wore to perform at the Brixton Academy in 1991. I looked like the world's biggest hot water bottle, a giant oblong with protruding limbs. It had little planets all over and was meant to replicate something I wore at the Roxy in 1978. It didn't work.

It's not fashionable but I like... twin sets and pearls – punked-out versions, of course.

You wouldn't know it but I'm very good at... cooking vegetarian food, simple tofu stir-fries and homemade soups.

You wouldn't know it but I'm no good at... knitting. I have tried, but haven't the patience.

All my money goes on.... overheads.

If I have time to myself... I go swimming. Sadly the sea here in East Sussex is just too cold so I go to the local pool.

I ride... along the St Leonard's promenade on my little manual chrome scooter. I've still got one as I haven't grown up. I used to ride it in London and someone shouted "supergran" at me.

My house is... by the sea, at the end of a terrace, about five minutes from the seafront. The house isn't very punky, I don't stamp too much of myself on to a property.

My favourite building... is the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. It looks like something from a fairy tale, with all the domes, but it's also quite kitsch.

Movie heaven... *The Great Gatsby*, mainly for Robert Redford. He plays a poor boy done good, but is continually trying to impress a girl. It's very sad and dramatic. And he's very beautiful!

A book that changed me... *Angel Inspiration* by Diana Cooper. It's about angels and how to connect with them, and bringing light and good energy into wherever you are. At night I practise going through the angel chambers in my dreams.

My most valuable possession is... my soul.

My favourite work of art... is a version of Queen Elizabeth II by Andy Warhol. I saw one with pink diamond dust thrown on and it was really lovely, really pretty. The Queen looked nice.

The last album I bought... was *A Portrait of Duke Ellington*.

The person who really makes me laugh... is Ronnie Barker in *Porridge*; the nonchalance, the attitude, the deadpan British humour.

The shop I can't walk past... is the beautician's, I can't resist the nail salon, for a good basic French manicure. I'm not into false nails, they look like talons and with them I could never type fast enough.

The best invention ever... is the Hoover.

In 10 years time, I hope to be... retired, from singing, as I'll be 60. I've just started singing again after a long time so I've been seeing a voice coach to get into shape.

My greatest regret... is that I have none.

My life in seven words... I'm a poseur 'n' I don't care!

A LIFE IN BRIEF

Born Marian Elliott-Said in Bromley, Kent, in 1957, Poly Styrene was the lead singer of the British punk band X-Ray Spex before releasing a solo album, *Translucence*, in 1980. Her mother was a legal secretary from Hastings, her father, a dispossessed Somalian aristocrat. Poly Styrene is well-known for her outrageous outfits, anti-Establishment lyrics and for joining the Hare Krishnas. She has a daughter and currently lives alone in St Leonard's in East Sussex. Poly Styrene will perform at London's Victoria Park on 27 April and at a one-off gig at the Roundhouse in Camden, London on 6 September

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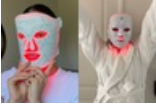
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