



# Meet Meow Kiki

Some people might think that twenty-one is too young to know what you want to do for a living. Heather Cummings disagrees. This young designer knew from an early age that she wanted to be creating clothes in the spirit of her favorite fashion icons. She started selling her designs on eBay in 2004 and soon realized that this was more than just a part time hobby. She now sells her own line full time through the [Meow Kiki website](http://www.meowkiki.com) (www.meowkiki.com) and through her [Etsy shop](#) and her [eBay store](#). Once we were able to stop drooling over her clothes, we sat down to ask her a few questions.

## Where does the name come from?

The name “Meow Kiki” actually came from a stray cat my family and I found when we moved into our new house. She was so sweet and she had the strangest meow, so I named her “Meow Kiki.” Then, one day I was trying to think of a new eBay name, for some reason I chose meow\*kiki and it’s just stuck with me ever since.

## When did you first know you wanted to be a fashion designer?

Well, I’ve loved fashion my entire life. I always loved clothes and always loved to look different from everyone else. I think it was middle school when I actually started dreaming of becoming a famous fashion designer.

## How did you get started selling your own designs? Was it scary at first?

I started listing my clothes on eBay. Before I started sewing, I was actually already selling vintage clothes on eBay. Once I started sewing, I gradually added some diy clothes in with my vintage clothes. Eventually, I got tired of vintage and only sold handmade. I guess it was a little scary at first, but I’ve never really worried about if people like my stuff, like me, say this or that about me or my clothes. I was just happy when someone bought something and had something good to say about it. The customers made me feel at ease, and they still do.

## When did you realize this could be a full time job?

I realized it could be a full-time job when I discovered “Supayana” and saw how much she was making.



I actually remember when she was only making like \$16-\$30 an item. I watched her grow and realized I could do that too. I finally realized I didn't need to wait to get a business loan for a brick & mortar store, I could just do it myself!

I noticed that your line is also carried by some brick and mortar stores. How did you get stores to start selling your products?

All I did was write on my website and eBay me page "If you're a store that would like to carry Meow Kiki Clothing, contact me." They did! It's funny how simple that is.

What people/icons helped shape your fashion sensibility?

Gwen Stefani had a HUGE impact on me when I was about 9 years old. I saw her and I was like "She's just like me!" I dressed like her, talked like her, I really love Gwen Stefani. She amazes me. Betsey Johnson also had a huge impact on me. The first time I found out about Betsey Johnson was on Melrose Avenue in California. I buzzed the door, they let me in, and I was just in awe. The clothes were outrageous and the boutique was so elegant and beautifully designed. As soon as I walked in that door I thought "One day, I will have a boutique just like this."

What inspires you these days?

These days, I'm inspired by other diy designers, high fashion, magazines, things that are on t.v., Japanese anime, anything that looks interesting to me inspires me.

There's a huge boom in all things D.I.Y. recently, both people making their own and buying handmade. What do you think it is about D.I.Y. that makes it so appealing?

I really don't know the answer to that question. When I first started making clothes, there weren't many people that knew about D.I.Y. Maybe it's myspace.com? Maybe eBay? Something happened. Fashion has definitely taken an alternative turn in the past few years. The music has changed, and people are becoming more unique. I don't really know, but those are all probably contributing factors.

Speaking of the D.I.Y. boom, do you know any good sewing resources and/or websites for people who may be just starting to learn to sew?

I actually made a little "FAQ For Aspiring Fashion Designers" on my myspace blog ([www.myspace.com/meowkiki](http://www.myspace.com/meowkiki)). I'm also a member of [diyscene.com](http://diyscene.com). It's a forum for people who D.I.Y and people post a lot of tutorials on there.





**What's your favorite piece that you ever created?**

Wow choosing a favorite is so hard! It always changes. I'd have to go with a long sleeve hoodie I just made with guns & hearts. It was really cute.

**What's the weirdest piece you ever designed?**

I guess the weirdest piece would be this shirt I made with long thick ties that came from the sides of the shirt, then criss-crossed in the front and tied in the back. It was inspired by that anime "InuYasha." It's a show based in old Japan, where people wear those kimonos. I saw someone wearing some weird shirt and I had to make something like it. People loved the design!

**Project Runway? Thoughts?**

I love project runway! I watch it religiously. I've probably seen every single episode. Maybe I'll be on it one day...

**If you could design for one person, dead or alive who would it be?**

If I could design for one person, it would be Gwen Stefani. She would be the perfect celebrity to wear my clothes. Honestly though, any famous person would do just fine.

**Do you have any advice for our readers that may be thinking about getting into the business of selling their own crafts?**

Sure, I would say that if you really want to do it you have to put in 100% of your time and effort. Some people do this kind of stuff only part time. They can't compete with the full-timers. Running a business is like gambling with your life. You never know how much money you're going to make and you never know if you'll be able to pay this bill or that bill. You have to be really into it and you have to be willing to deal with the consequences of being a "starving artist." You might be a starving artist at first but if you strive to be better you might be a millionaire in the long run. You never know. I personally enjoy the roller coaster ride but if you like security, it might not be for you.

**Is there anything you feel is important that I'm forgetting to ask?**

I guess I would just like to add that I really appreciate all my customers and fans of Meow Kiki. If it wasn't for them, Meow Kiki would be nothing. Sometimes, I get so busy that I can't respond to every single email or comment. But I really appreciate everyone and everything they say!

See more of Heather's great threads at [meowkiki.com](http://meowkiki.com)

