

## MK SKATE PROJECT

## Transcript

**Name:** Dean John Edwards

**Date of Birth:** 1975

**Place of Birth:** Northampton

**Date of Interview:** 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Interviewed by:** Nathan Lindsell

**Duration:** 00:27:17

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00:00:04

*This is Nathan Lindsell, it is 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019.*

*[General discussion]*

00:00:39

Unknown voice 1

*How did you first encounter skateboarding?*

So just through kids at school mainly, there was a couple of kids slightly older than me...

*Sorry, you have got to answer the question, start the sentence, like: "I first encountered skateboarding..."*

Okay.

*[Unclear]... they're going to chop my voice out.*

Right okay, fine. So, I first encountered skateboarding at school. There were a couple of guys in the year above me who brought skateboards in on the last day of term on what was like mufti day and I just remember being like blown away. I knew what skateboards were but these were like proper skateboards: it was an Alva and one was a Deathbox and it had stickers all over it and crazy grip tape and it was...yeah, really just really got my attention definitely. And then I randomly saw a copy of Thrasher in my local Co-op which was just like: "What is this about?" you know and then again the skateboards were the same as what I had seen the guys at school riding and that was...that was, yeah, the first sort of...yeah, first, sort of, got my attention, definitely.

*What was your first experience of skateboarding? Sort of, when did you get your first board and how did you..?*

So my, yeah...so, my first experience of skateboarding was, my mum bought me a market board home, so it was your typical

plastic-wheeled, big, fish board, if you like, and it had bon appétit on the bottom and it was like a vulture eating out a skull's eyes. But it was a skateboard and I was quite...I was really, you know, blown away. I sort of quickly modified it, took some of the plastic stuff off it 'cause the guys at...you know, that I'd seen at school, theirs didn't have that on so I tried to make it look like their board. And then I quickly realised that that wasn't really...it wasn't a good board at all, so I was quickly hounding my parents for something a bit better. So that was probably about 1987, summer of '87.

*When did you first move to Milton Keynes and when did you first encounter skateboarding here and getting involved in all that?*

Okay, so I first encountered skateboarding in Milton Keynes before I'd moved to Milton Keynes. So we...I lived in Towcester at the time, so grew up in Towcester. There was about three or four of us who skated in Towcester and, yeah, there wasn't that many places to skate in Towcester when you don't...we ended up getting kicked out of schools and stuff quite a lot at the weekends, and the local council offices were somewhere we used to try and skate but...you know, we were soon thinking of other places to skate and Milton Keynes was always going to be a place we thought was going to be good. And it was that thing where, you know, we'd see when our folks were going shopping over there and maybe they could drop us off for a couple of hours. And that's kind of how it started, it was like, we started exploring Milton Keynes. From there, really, I remember my first visit, there was three of us went and we got dropped off at Lloyds Bank, where the horse statue is, and literally within ten minutes my friend Wayne had fallen over and broke his ankle. And it was just innocuous, he just rolled along and just fell off and we couldn't believe it, he broke his ankle. So that was our first actual kind of, you know, trip to Milton Keynes and that happened. And then after that it was just, yeah, just trying to get our parents to take us over as often as we could really and it was about three or four times. So this must have been about sort of, yeah, this was '88, it would have been. Never saw any other skate boarders. We'd wander round the city centre, going down the underpasses, trying to venture a bit further. We was...we were always quite worried about getting lost 'cause we didn't want to venture too far from the Shopping Centre because even that was quite a confusing place for us as sort of, you know, thirteen, fourteen year olds. But yeah, we never saw any other skaters, not until I actually moved to Milton Keynes in 1990 and, again, my friends then came over and we went for a bit of a, you know, a bit of a venture around and we saw some other skaters and it was, like: "Wow!" And they ended up sort of showing us the bus station, yeah. Sorry, I'm going ahead a bit there; I don't know if I was going to... *[laughs]*.

*It's cool. Yeah, you could probably lead into the Buszy actually now; you could probably say what was your first experience of skating the Buszy and train station?*

00:05:00

Yeah, so my first experience of the bus station was literally following these skaters down...down the hill from the city centre, they're saying, you know, "Come with us. Have you been to the bus station yet?"

We're like: "No, we didn't know anything about the bus station" The only thing I did know roughly about a bus station was I'd seen photo of Doc that Wig had taken, in RAD – the Space Shuttle landing; a famous photo – and I remember being blown away: there was a photo of Milton Keynes in a skate magazine which...and I was thinking, 'Wow, there are skateboarders there, there is somewhere...you know, where was this place?' and one or other of my friends seemed to think it might be the bus station 'cause of the bay...you know, the bay barriers and it looked a bit like that. So we were kind of on the lookout for that anyway but, yeah, we followed these skaters down to the bus station and it was like typical...when you come down from the station you go into the underpass and then you turn left up the slope to the old end of the bus station. I remember it being like a...it was just a weird scene from a film or something, it was just all these skaters skating about, there was obstacles and planks of wood up against the blocks and the big yellow pipes and, yeah, I remember that, I will always remember that. I was just...I was blown away. And the sound of the place, actually the sound of, you know, the echo from underneath the ceiling and, yeah, it was definitely like: "Wow, this is something else."

*I was going to say, who did you first start skating with? Who was your like crew and who did you..? You obviously met people down... [unclear].*

Yeah, like having...sorry, the first people I met, when I had just moved to Milton Keynes and I started skating down the bus station, were James Jessop...James was the first person I spoke to actually and he came up and spoke to me. You know, it was like: "Hey how are you doing?" You know how friendly he is; ultra friendly. It was quite funny 'cause skateboarders can be a bit standoffish at first, they can be a bit, you know... And I probably have been myself to an extent, over the years. But yeah, Jessop was always ultra friendly, so he was definitely the first person I spoke to – and then it was like Leo and Lee Crowe: they were the first kind of guys. And Simon Dodson, George Masterson, Chris Connolly. So those guys were, yeah, the first kind of guys I started hanging around with. I remember the first couple of Saturdays I kind of ventured down there on my own, just skated for a few hours and then I would go home. But then I remember one time Jessop took my phone number and was saying, he said to me,

“We’re going to Harrow in a couple of weekends’ time. Do you want to come?”

It was like: “Wow, yeah.”

I feel like I have been accepted in you know, I wasn’t just skating on my own now, I was part of a...you know, I had been invited out to go skating, so that was good, yeah.

Unknown voice: *Next one. Anything else you’ve got you think you’ve got to add in there? Cause you wanted to go into the Rob Selley stuff as well.*

It was a bit later on, the One Stop. Yeah, Rob was about; he was really young though, really young then – this is 1990.

Unknown voice: *Have you got much about Chris’s shop in...the One Stop shop, ‘cause Dean could talk about that?*

So that started in ‘91, right? He got that going in ‘91?

*I think when it started actually it was... [unclear]*

*[All talk at once]*

Unknown voice: *Radlands was ‘92 but he opened the shop and then he started getting boards...*

Well it must have been ‘91, it must have been.

*Okay, that’s fine we’re all right with ‘91 but yeah, can you tell us about the shop?*

Yeah, so my first...first memories of the shop being at the bus station was...I mean, we didn’t...none of us had heard it was going to happen or anything like that but obviously we’d go into the bus station and buy bacon rolls, you know, occasionally and we got quite sort of friendly with Chris a bit, you know, he’d sell sweets and cans of drink and things in there. And then, all of a sudden, I remember one of my friends said, “Skateboards; he’s got skateboards on the wall, in the shop, in the snack bar,” and it was like, wow. So we went in there and he’s...and yeah, Chris had just said, “Yeah, I’m going to give it a go. I’m going to get a few boards in and...makes sense, you know, saves you guys going out to shops wherever,” – the nearest one was probably Northampton or Kettering. Yeah, that was brilliant and he got more and more bits in as it went and then, after a couple of months, there was a TV up and he would play some of the videos, so we’d actually sit there and watch the videos as well in the shop. I remember watching Questionable for the first time there and the H-Street video, the Next Generation video. Yeah, it was just...it was a buzz yeah, absolutely.

*Do you have any memories of the '92 – leading up to the Radlands and that – do you have any memories of the '92 Skate Jam at the Buszy?*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I entered that as well; I had a run in that as well. Yeah that was...again, it was just one of those things that got talked about. Chris was talking about possibly holding a competition and then, before we know it, he's asking us to make a few obstacles or ramps and things and so, yeah, there was a few evenings at the bus station where we'd put in a few sort of rubbish kind of obstacle things together. I think Rob himself had made like a fly-off and I think Rob even made the little funbox – it was like a tiny little funbox with a rail thing on it. But, other than that, it was just planks of wood against the blocks and it was the yellow pipe and just using the blocks as well. But, I remember we had no idea it was going to be as kind of busy as it was – we thought it was just going to be us and maybe a few others there – but like it was almost like everybody from England, everyone in the whole British skate scene was there, almost. All the London guys came up, guys from Wales, the Deathbox team were there. It was crazy, yeah; it was really good. I remember, more recently, found out from Chris that he actually sent off for permission and got permits to have the competition, which blew me away, I couldn't believe it. I thought it was just something we did, I thought it was someone said, yeah, we'll put a few obstacles up, we'll get a tannoy and kind of, you know... I think, on the day, we were all expecting that the police would turn up and just sort of like kind of shoo us along, but they didn't; no, it was good.

00:10:58

Unknown voice: *Can I show you this picture?*

Yeah that's a good idea. So yeah, that's a picture, I believe taken by Tim Leighton-Boyce. (I don't know if you'll be able to focus in on that or we'll do that afterwards). So that's us lot. That's me there and I think Lindsay is there, you've got Ben Etheridge, but then, sat down by, you've got Pritchard. You have got Matt Fowler, Flynn Trotman, Jeremy Fox stood there now, the owner of Flip – he was the owner of Deathbox at the time. So that picture's great 'cause it just captures, you know, the core kind of group of people who were just there. But, as I say, I remember the London skaters being there as well, like, Curtis McCann was there and, you know, Femi Bukunola was there, I think. Yeah, it was just a surreal day; it was really great.

Unknown voice *Do we go into the Radlands stuff or do you want me to go to...I don't know if you want to talk about Rob and all that kind of thing...[unclear]..?*

Yeah, we can go into...yeah, we could talk about...yeah, when the...maybe first started...when Rob maybe started...

*Maybe talk about when you met Rob and..?*

Yeah, okay we can talk about Rob, yeah. So I guess, yeah, around 1990, '91 Rob was always around, he was a bit younger then, a little bit younger than me. I remember he was...he was really into football at the time and so he'd kind of skate sort of when he wasn't playing football a bit. And he'd come down quite often, sometimes even wearing his football kit sometimes, and skate about. But then I think I remember, it must have been, yeah, late '91, he started...you could notice he was starting to get pretty good. I remember he'd made a fly-off ramp and he'd brought that down and he was doing 360 ollies off this fly-off ramp and it was just...that was, "Wow!" You could tell he was practising and he was the first person out of all of us to be doing flip tricks – well, switch flip tricks, especially like nollie flips and switch flips – and yeah, you could tell he was really keen to...he was starting to make a bit of a push, if you like. He was always practising which wasn't sort of a done thing back then, we just used to skate – you'd come down on Saturdays or Sundays for a skate – but you could tell that Rob was skating as much as he could, you know, even just outside the front of his house or on his driveway he would just be...he would skate a lot. And I think, yeah, by the time Radlands got built and then Chris moved his shop from the bus station and created Radlands, yeah, he had gotten really good. Yeah he went...he took a trip, a turning point for him was definitely his trip to San Francisco. He went, I think it was late '92, he went to San Francisco, so being around that kind of, you know, that era of skateboarding and that culture of skateboarding at the time, the Embarcadero kind of era, being there he came back a different skater; it was just, you know, something about him, definitely. I remember him doing a fakie 5-0 in the middle of the block at the train station; it was just, like, something else, it was just really different. Before he went he was quite flippy and the way he skated was a bit different a little bit more almost timid, but, yeah, he came back almost like a different person really and, from then on I suppose, he just progressed really quickly.

*Unknown voice: What was there about the favourite spots in Milton Keynes? We could go through that or...were there other things that you would like to cover already?*

*Unknown voice: I don't know, I was just going to see if you wanted to cover any more of Rob, or..?*

*Tell us about your... [all talk at once]...your sort of...you know, you have obviously kept doing it?*

00:15:00

Yeah I mean, yeah so my skate boarding for myself especially in Milton Keynes. I mean you sort of I guess I started skating in Milton Keynes in eighty nine/ninety. I skated all the way through especially at the Bus Station all the way through part of the scene if you like 'til about ninety six and then at that point started to feel like I was probably getting a bit old my hips were starting to hurt and I had a few other interests going on and you know life in general starts making skate boarding a bit more difficult. Girlfriends at the time were making things difficult for me to (laughs), yeah making it difficult for me to skate and then I had a little bit of a resurgence when the Stony Stratford when the old Stratford ramp appeared in sort of late two thousand two thousand and one. We used to go down me and Neil started skating together a lot then going down to there and going over to Buckingham so I didn't really skate the Station again properly not regularly for years not until I was about thirty seven (laughs). Started going down there again a bit mainly late evenings or early mornings, but, I have always had you know a real attachment to the place especially the Bus Station, I have always just gravitated towards the place even now, you know, it is probably the first place I think of when I want to go and skate, but, I do find it hard to skate there now so I am more likely to go somewhere like Potterspurty, RADLANDS, the new RADLANDS somewhere that is a bit kinder of my knees and a bit easier to Ollie up stuff and things, yeah, yeah. My favourite spot back in the day was Milton Keynes Train Station I spent most of my time there at the Train Station yeah it was just great you could roll around freely, nice low blocks, higher blocks if you wanted them. The slopes as you come down from the Bus Stops and then up, there was you know there is always a slight kick isn't there? I used to skate that a lot. The Library, the old Library gaps I used to really like those and the Beige before they put all the stops in - there were three stairs at the bottom of the Beige, a really good skate, yeah, yeah and obviously the Bus Station itself was always I would quite happily stay there for a whole Saturday/Sunday, yeah.

*Unknown voice*

*I was going to say what was your impression of the Buszy as it is now and where and the scene in general?*

Yeah, I mean I was I was slightly removed from it a little bit when the whole process went through to two thousand and six and the whole project and I was kind of on the outside of that a little bit so I could see what was going on but I wasn't all that involved, but, it was amazing the whole process and learning bits as it went and the ideas and then to what they ended up doing. I remember, I remember the excitement. I remember Lindsay contacting me and Gavin Rose contacting me and telling me just telling me what they were gonna do what was going to be at the Bus Station it was, it was alright it was like I can't believe they are going to do that, and I was just really impressed. I mean a part of me as well

at the same time the old Bus Station is just not going to be the same but what they created was incredible, yeah, and it just meant that the place it would be there for generations to come and it has been, yeah.

*Unknown voice*      *The last thing about the brown bar?*

The Brown Bar okay so for me the Brown Bar has always been this obstacle, it was usually something we skated as we on a typical Saturday you would start off at the Bus Station meet at about twelve thirty and skate there for an hour or so and you would do the trip around, you know, around the City Centre and we would always end up at the Brown Bar and there were always a couple of guys who could skate it, Leo, Jessop, Jasper, they could skate that and they would do things over it but I could never do the guts to Ollie this thing, I knew I could Ollie it I had a half decent Ollie but I could never get myself to it I had visions of me hanging up and smashing my teeth on the path, you know, I could just never do it and never had the guts to roll up. Did I sort of roll up occasionally a few times? Yeah, and it was always a regret, always and then two thousand and twelve, so aged thirty seven on me own with a camera one morning I just thought I am going to go and do that, me and Lindsay had a little video project going at the time and we both made skate sections over the course of that year and I thought that would be a really good way of ending my little skate section if I could get the guts to do it and at the back of my head I did not think I could do it, I did it and I could not believe I could do it yeah and that was a little gremlin that I sort of yeah got off my back, yeah.

*Unknown voice:*      *That's inspirational?*

General discussion

00:20:00      It is weird, it is.

*Unknown voice:*      *I will wait until I am forty?*

*Unknown voice:*      *So what is your take on the Brown Bar now because?*

Ah the stuff, yeah, I mean the stuff that has gone on over that bar over the years is crazy absolutely it is like I say you roll up to that thing and you try and Ollie it. The tricks that have gone over it are mind boggling, you know, the things that James Bush has done over it and Frontside 360 Ollie it is just crazy and anything Nollie over it is ridiculous and it is one of those things and you see it on a video and you want to say to people "Do you understand how hard how that is how ridiculous that is?" But yeah anything forward Nollie or Switch over is bonkers - it is absolutely crazy.



NL:

*Do you have a favourite trick that you have seen go down either at the brown bar or in general in Milton Keynes? Have you a favourite?*

So, I was there when James Bush frontside 360 ollied it. It was a late December night with Leo, he took a few photos of James around the city centre that night. He also ollied the bike rack outside Argos head offices which was the biggest ollie I've ever seen in my life, it was, you know, for this little guy, James – I mean, obviously, I knew he was a good skater, I knew he was but that was amazing. And then we went round to the brown bar and he was trying a few things and he frontside 360 ollied this thing and it was just...that will always stick in my head as the craziest thing that I've seen on there. But, you know, back when we were skating it I remember watching Leo do a frontside 180 mute grab over it and that was just, you know, for us back then that was crazy, absolutely crazy. And I think...I think James Jessop might have late shove-ited over it but I can't remember whether he landed it or not, but even then, back then, that's mad. Yeah.

*[Break in interview]*

*The only thing I was going to ask extra, which I'll ask you later as well, is Rob, what was Rob known for? Like, his type of skating, what made him special? You have to try and... 'cause this might be viewed in the future by someone who actually knows about skating and someone who doesn't and obviously, like, the sort of stuff he was doing then you see quite a lot, but at the time he was the only one doing it and consistency was the thing. So what was different about Rob? What made Rob so special? Why do people go on about him?*

Okay, so...

*And you're talking to Nathan.*

Yeah, so what made Rob's skating so unique, or so different, or ahead of its time was his...especially his switch-gating and his block skating so what would be known as ledge skating I guess. Anything switch in and out of blocks, you know, into tail slide, into nose slide. He did some...I think some of the tricks he did, he was definitely one of the first in the UK to be doing things like switch flip, 5-0, shove-it out on a high block, you know. You know, switch flip, backside tail slide, shove-it out - stuff like that. No one was doing that, not in the UK. Again, influenced a lot by the American skaters at the time but for us it was really ahead of its time. I remember a run he did at Radlands, in the park, where he made about twenty tricks in a row, everything pretty much switch, up the roll-in, over the hip, up the other quarter pipe, switch flip, switch [360?] flips, switch hard flips, nollie 180 flips, everything. And I

think that videos on YouTube, you can see that as well and we were in the background. I think one of them, you can hear me just going...saying something like, "That's ridiculous," or "Oh my God!" Yeah, but it's just...he just nailed the technical side of skating really quickly and was doing stuff that no one else in the UK was doing. Especially, as I say, switch ledge skating; definitely.

*I think that's everything from me.*

*I was just going to ask something, as a...and again, direct yourself to Nate, but who, when you talk about all these different nollies, ollies, whatever, how do you decide if it's a new trick? Who name's it? Or how do you decide on the names for tricks?*

So, the names of tricks, we always used to get from the magazines or from videos. We never used to name any of the tricks, they were already pre-named. You know, we would hear that Mike Carroll was doing...now doing nollie flips over handrails, or learning that Rick Howard had done this trick which was now called the Howard flip, which is a ballerina heel flip, which is a fakie 360 bigspin heelflip. Yeah, I mean, occasionally we'd do something silly and try and make up a trick name and things but they all came from – it was all historical – all came from the magazines and videos, pretty much, yeah.

*So there isn't a Milton Keynes trick that's specific to Milton Keynes?*

*That's a really good question, isn't it?*

*Well yeah, unless you guys know of one and we don't.*

*Well, this is silly, Dan invented a trick called a granny basher. [Laughter] But that doesn't count really.*

*Can I end it with the question, what has skateboarding done for you?*

*Yeah, let's go.*

So, skateboarding for me has given me some of my best friends I've had all these years; it's given me a bit of an identity, I think really, I feel like I've got a unique connection with an activity and a certain time in my life which I don't think many people would have had I think. And even within skateboarding, I think that the experiences we had growing up and the culture within skateboarding that we had and the venue we had in the bus station, I just...I think that's unique as well. So I feel really lucky, you know, and I've had people say to me, who don't even skate,

who know about skating and say, "Oh, you were one of the original bus station skaters."

And I'd say, "Oh yeah, kind of I guess, yeah. I guess I was."

And yeah, I just feel really lucky to have grown up and have my best teenage years around those times, yeah.

*That's fantastic. [All talk at once]*

00:27:17

END OF INTERVIEW