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00:01:47

When did you first encounter skateboarding?

When I was growing up I first encountered skateboarding whilst watching Sesame Street and on the beginning of Sesame Street there would be someone skating. There was all the intro clips but there would be someone skating along a boardwalk, I think it was in New York, but I didn't know at the time. On a skateboard at the end of it just for about 7 or 8 seconds. And I saw that for years, so that was the start, that was the first time I saw one, but then I could expand from there to similar from that. After that then, because I had seen that, I wanted to get one of those, so what is that thing with wheels and they go along. Because I did roller skating on quads in Leighton Buzzard, you know the four roller skates, I used to go every Sunday. I was quite good at that there bulldog and everything but then I was really would want the skateboard but you weren't allowed to take a skateboard in any way I didn't have one anyway, but when, one time in Toyland in Leighton Buzzard, this was about 1983 they had like for £1 these blue and yellow polyprop skateboards. So I was like, yeah, I wanna get one. Someone else's mum was eying Must be £1.99 he's saying he's seen these for £1 he has missed the £0.99 off but they weren't they were £1. So I got a blue polyprop and they

ummm...I knew there was a skate park at Knebworth amusement park which was like a, it had IKEA big slide, and stuff, so there was like, a concrete skate park there. So when my parents took me there one Sunday, and then when we got in there you could hire like skateboards, like better ones like and with, and you had to wear a helmet that you hired, a [unclear] Ski helmet and skate [unclear?] pads, you would put all that on. And then I didn't use the blue polyprop 'cos I had the wooden skateboard, and then I couldn't ride but was seeing the guys go up and down it like blew my mind, 'cos I remember just seeing them going and [makes skate noises on the concrete skate park], up and down the concrete I was like "how the hell's he doing that?" "Raaah rooor" [unclear]. I always remember the noise, it was going "Raaaah, rooor, raaaah rooor" then I would just roll down the flat. They had a snake run, you know they would go up the sides like your meant to, but I was in the kids side and would just join when I could and just roll along the flat down but on the flat bottom, because it was a snake run, but in my mind I was going up the sides. Then I wanted to go back so then whenever it was times like people's birthdays and they were out at Knebworth we would go, "can we go in the skate bit"? Then it was closing down one time in about '84 and I went and they was selling the pads and I bought all the pads and the ski helmet, took it home, and then we went down the hill at Leighton Buzzard and then my mate went really fast down this hill, couldn't stop went in all this grit, slid along and then went into a pile of cow shit, and they call him cow shit [unclear] – 'cos he got up and he was covered in cow pat, sorry, cow, but he was covered in cow pat. He got up all crying and stinging nettles, bleeding, with these pads on all covered in cow pats yeah [laughs]. So that was the start of it from there, then there's more to carry on from there but...

00:04:24

When did you first start skateboarding in Milton Keynes?

Yes so, that was like a gradual, the first time I rode a big, for my 13th birthday, I first started skate boarding in Milton Keynes 'cos basically I used to come here. I used to sneak 'cos I grew up in Leighton Buzzard and then I weren't, I want and my friends were coming here on the train to like break dance and stuff in like '86, so then I used to sneak on. I weren't allowed out of Leighton Buzzard, I was, but, but I would say, but I was coming with the train on the train with the older guys anyway on a child's ticket to here and you would see people skating about a bit. But then there was Police Academy we saw at The Point Cinema in 1987 and they had like the big boards, like what you have now like, and we hadn't seen a big skateboard, 'cos skateboards used to be thinner like a small, 'cos roller skates were narrow with the quads. The original skateboards were narrower they didn't think to make them bigger like surfboards 'cos they only had roller skate wheels to put on, so that's why the skateboards were narrow. That isn't what they wanted, but they hadn't thought it to make wider trucks as they called them later on. So basically there was a thing at The Point, anyway you know Police Academy, it is a comedy thing like, and basically that was showing and it had The Bones Brigade in it as a sort of, they had an actor there's Arnie and Carter - two skaters - and they are doing like the [unclear] in it, and everything going. They're like this isn't skateboarding this is skateboarding but then it cuts, but it's Steve Caballero with wings on, and they are all skating around in America, so then we got the big skateboards and I saw one in Manchester on my 13th birthday in 1987 - the 8th of April 1987 - I got my first big board. But I didn't know fully what I was doing, so I had this big board, which weren't bad. It was £49 but it weren't like the best; some of it was good but some of it was a bit weird, but in '87 - so when I was 13 - over at the train station over there, my mate James Cooper who was

always more [unclear]. He was like acid dropping off of the block..., you know the highest block at the train station that's still there? But he like rolled off of that, and then I had to do it, but I was fully scared. I did it in the end, but I was like, "phew!" Really scared. I was like, [makes scared noises], but I did it and we didn't know, so that was that, carried on and next year for my 14th birthday, I got another board, got proper into it. I broke my collarbone the night before I got it, which has still got a bump here now, so then I gave up Judo after that because I couldn't throw. But so the night before my 14th birthday, I was trying to skate mongfoot - it's called 'mongo', skating - mongfoot as fast as I could trying to go as fast as I could on the flat, lost control, broke my collarbone, and my dad was like does he still want to take me to Leighton Buzzard to London to get this board from Phaze 7? Still went and got it, got the board then I, then my dad for like 9 weeks said I slept with it till my collarbone got better. Then we used to come in and then I just started skating Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes [unclear] as good as that. So that was 1988, and that was when I started to come here all the time from about half term 1988, when I sort of met the guys here and trying to just come to Milton Keynes, you know, 'cos it's like two stops on the train from Leighton Buzzard, it's like 10 miles away, so that's when I was coming here from then on. I was just coming to here as often as I could to skate, so that's when I really got involved in the Milton Keynes scene and met the guys like, like there's Simon Dodson [?] who's here today, but the people who lived here and I wanted to get to know them, and I had to take my time sort of prove myself a bit, and then, so then I got really involved from there trying to find out what was going on. Yeah.

00:07:32

Where did you, what were you, your favourite place to skate in Milton Keynes was initially the Buszy or was it? Around the city go to a bit [over talked by interviewee].

Yeah, yeah, my favourite places to skate in Milton Keynes were, yeah well the first point of call was around here 'cos you would see the Bus Station... I was coming to Milton Keynes anyway and seeing stuff and I saw the guys with the big skateboards so, I used to see them out the [unclear]... but I would see the guys on the skateboards here, so I knew this was where you could skate. So when we first came here, the main place we were skating was the train station over there, and around the bus station here, and then the blocks that were here - which are pretty much gone now, but we'd [unclear]... The first thing was could you just roll off of the block, we didn't know what an ollie was yet so when someone first said you would ollie and you had to slide I was like, it must be wrong, you must put your foot on it [lots of rustling]. It can't be you do this thing, slide up and jump, so that was seen as impossible at the time it was that early on, do you know what I mean? You were like, and then like my dad was like, I was saying there is this thing you can jump up now, and he was going "don't that's crazy" my dad, and then I showed him Police Academy my dad was like going "cor!" That's Steve Caballero ollies onto that block and you were like how's it stuck to his feet, like now we take it for granted, but not everyone could even ollie like and then, yeah. So mainly it was around here. And then The Beige we found before I moved, but when people first took me to The Beige, and they were like there is this building The Beige, I had already found it and been in it, but I hadn't thought what all the things what you could do there.

00:09:21 *[Female voice] Someone said you were a really influential explorer in finding new spots in [over talked by interviewee].*

I mean umm not totally, in between, like I just, like, a bit of each like, 'cos it was like [unclear] who was here, I mean I just got like anything I do I get involved with so but, yeah, in terms of exploring spots here a bit of each like, there was, it was more like there was like [unclear], and different people going let's explore some new terrain. I dunno, I was just like full on in terms of like, let's just do it, lets go for it, let's get the most out of it, like. Like when I was at school, it would be like on the last day I went to like middle school in Leighton Buzzard, but when but they had stopped, they used to have on the last day they would do like a riot on Leighton Buzzard high street with shaving foam and like water bombs say, but that all got phased out and they found a way to stop it but then I made that happen again my year. So when that was it, I was like let's just get, they was like, the skating's calming down no one's bringing jump ramps down but I was like, let's just go for it, it likes everyone used to skate through the city centre and go mad on a Friday, so I was like, well, let's all go up tonight come on everyone skate here now. So I got everyone, about 20 of us, went up one time we all skated it through so I was more like let's just make it happen, let's go for it. Like, I was almost sort of out of my depth. I was like scared, but I had [unclear] there was other people, there was like Steve there was really talented, I weren't the most talented person I knew, but I was like determined to go for it, do you know what I mean? So it was like...It's like football there is only one Messi and... and not everyone can be like George Best, or whatever, but I weren't like the natural total one there, but I was determined. So it's a bit of each innit. But so yeah, I just was here a lot, I just got involved, you know I weren't, you know I just came here loads. I was from Leighton Buzzard, so, but that I didn't live here you know, the other lot went to school here and were here

all week but I just got really involved with them and trying to go right to the core of the people and then yeah, so.

00:11:09

What's the most exciting thing you did with your crew?

Oh what, the most exciting skateboarding thing I did with the crew in Milton Keynes, or?

Yes.

I mean, I don't know every time, the most exciting thing with Milton Keynes skateboarding was that. But I mean, every time I came here and skated from the first time of whatever level of how like basic I was at skating or however good I got, it was always like a great day adventure even up until now - so every time was like good in a different way. There was some times where I did certain things, you know, there was a couple of things ... like, the best thing I did was in '93 when I kick flipped The Beige steps and no one knew if they had done it yet, and like Chris who is here today is a witness and George, they saw I did a clean kick flip that no one had rolled out before and then that was the best thing what I did after that. Then I, [unclear] first sequence [unclear] innit, so trying to like, I knew yeah, that was like a thing that I achieved. It was, there was, so that was like in terms of that, but all the times I, all then when 360 flipped the bin. The best thing I actually did here, that's the most respected thing, was when I 360 kick flipped the bin in. I mean, that's a year before Josh [unclear] free, so when [unclear] came out and he had the bin trade flip I was, I ain't far, but I'd done my trade flip, you know I felt like, I ain't doing bad but, in the end I got better than I thought with it because I kept doing it. Everything I did in life, I kept doing it longer, so the other people who were like talented straight away got it but then they sort of faded out and got into fighting more, so, but I like carried

on, you know what I mean? So, then in the 90's I didn't do any drugs so even all the raves I went to and they made fun of me the guys would be taking their E and my mum was like don't take any drugs, so I didn't, so I did it all sober. The other guys made fun of me and that, but then I went to the rave Dreamscape. But the amazing thing is, I used to skate in the day - say for my 18th birthday I came into here in Milton Keynes skated really hard to wore myself out all round, but then I went into London and went to a rave all night at Barking that I had to fight to get on the coach at Leicester Square, and just raved all night like drug free - I didn't, 'cos I was in to it. I had that much energy I was that hyper active, you know what I mean? And so, there was all that going on.

00:13:16 [Female voice] *What about your street art?* Where did you get? [over talked by interviewee].

With my street art, in terms of the street art so I was doing that, for, I started like spray, 'cos I was break dancing '85, from that then they told me about that there's like graffiti, like my mate James Potter, someone like the Linslade lot in Leighton Buzzard who were a bit ahead like Mentmore, they always knew more stuff. They taught me, like, got me my first flash in transworld later on and stuff so. I was break dancing, if it was like BMX'ing one in '84 then breaking '85, then the spraying, which was like street art well they were like "oh you spray these words like Hip Hop and breakdance you break [unclear] and I was like "how do you do that?" And then there was just spray can and someone sprayed West Ham on my dad's, gran and grandad's and I was like oh, but why have they sprayed West Ham on [unclear] dad? And then my gran was really upset, trying to clean it off, and then I was like why have they sell the spray can even what and he was going [unclear], but it is for spraying your car, and I was like, "oh right". And then they showed, so we had these patterns they were doing, like breakdance and Hip Hop, and I was like "I want to do it". So I

got a can of Ford gold from my dad. I knew my dad had a spray can for the car so he's got these car paints and then in Leighton Buzzard like, I even sprayed and there was one guy that, I don't know, it was a guy from Germany and he blackmailed me he was like "Are you spraying? This is wrong, out of it [unclear]" 'cos he was like, I don't know why he cared. But he was blackmailing me to clean it off, but then he moved back to Germany I put [unclear], I was like, you know, screw him I ain't stopping. I had just started spraying I don't know about it until I started spraying. I got more cans and chinks and was drawing it up in chalk in Leighton Buzzard and spraying and then from '86 from when we started coming here and we started tagging all the underpasses always so, so I was doing Crazy D, so my parents would search me before I went out for pens and everything, my parents were strict. I weren't meant to be naughty or anything. My dad was a mod but he didn't say, he don't let on that he was, whatever, like in Quadrophenia or something. He all makes out like, he, he's from that scene like. He's telling me off like I'm the first naughty kid ever or something. But they would search me for pens, so I weren't, sometimes in Leighton Buzzard I would put the pen down near the road first, and then my mum would watch me from up the road... He's gone in the bush, he's getting a pen and then they'd run and grab me and search me and I would still try and get a pen so, then I come to Milton Keynes I could graffiti every underpass to The Point, then we'd go to The Point cinema and back.. And then the train, then I started sneaking to London and seeing all the, the, the, spray, the New York style graffiti that [unclear] came out in 1984. All the London lot got that and then they were like painting all the trains, like New York's. So I got really obsessed with that. So before skating, in fact to calm my graffiti down, the street art stuff, I started skating to focus to keep away from it 'cos it was making my mum upset they were just like not being pleased about it at all, know what I mean, some of my other friends [unclear] like, so that was so, so that's, but I couldn't fully stop

ever, I just sort of kept doing it always. So, so I think I painted Milton Keynes every year until I left [unclear]. It all calmed down here, but then I kept, at one point no one was interested in graffiti in Milton Keynes, but then I kept painting it.

00:16:16

[Instruction to pause at this point].

00:16:28

So yeah with the graffiti, like the scene had calmed down in Milton Keynes so there wasn't many people, there was some sort of hip hop graffiti, but then I still was painting some spots in the London stuff it was like not in the fashion at all and I was the only person painting in Milton Keynes, say in '93. I still don't know how I did so much in a day, but I would like skate, spray the bridge over there on my own. I'd paint the brick but in '93 I did the Tech over there and then the following year I did the jumbo techno piece which was up for about 20 years, but then all like Kade and that, but no but then it carried on, so, I know but like use, used to be hardly any graffiti about, even Selly then and Rob Selly [unclear] had stopped tagging, he hadn't been to San Francisco yet, he didn't get it and he was like "why have I written my name all over the b..." and then he started up and Haywood, Paul Haywood went over some of my work when he started up I was like "what's going on?" I had been spraying for 8 years, now you start up and you starting like painting over my work when there is room either side, I don't know what all that was about as well like. But yeah.

00:17:42

[Female voice] *How did you get on to going to art college?*

So, how I got into art college and um, art school and everything when my only A for art GCSE, I got that A and then I had the careers advisor, it was really good 'cos she said I should go for B Tech, and not A levels when I was 16. I got into Barnfield B Tech [unclear] Art and Design. For my painting in the summer. I did a

painting of Frankie Hill of him like skateboarding 'cos he's a big skateboarder, you wouldn't like know about Frankie he jumps all these big steps. So I was painting skateboarding. And I started trying to keep away from the graffiti 'cos that can get you in trouble but mainly I just wanted to skate boards, so the main things the art to sort of fill in so, but I got into the B Tech, did that for two years, 16 to 18, and from that I got straight into Coventry Polytechnic. It wasn't when I got there, it changed to University, literally I arrived and they changed the sign from Polytechnic to University. So I ended up going to University. I didn't mean to go to University, but it was like I've gone to University now when I was 18. Did all the course there, skated as much as I could, did all the painting and then I just graffitied. The thing is you hear information when you are on the course with art, when you are doing a degree it's not the moment when you think always. But in the first two weeks of Coventry there was this older guy going "I am going to try and get into the Royal College of Art from here". It will make his career as a sculptor, so I sort of remembered that. Oh I should apply to the Royal College of Art, so after that I applied to the Royal College of Art, when I graduated. And then after a couple of times I got in, so once I got into Royal College of Art. I left Coventry, came back to Leighton Buzzard 'cos it was so, I didn't realise it was double room rent in London to Coventry - it was like £70 a room in London, £30 in Coventry. I couldn't afford a room, so I had to commute from Leighton Buzzard after half nine to Royal College for three months. It meant it was cheaper, then they got me a cheap room at Royal College. So yes, so I was going to Royal College of Art from 1997. I started there and skating in between and stuff and still coming up here to skate and then they did a thing like in '98 Sidewalk Surfer. Leo photographed me at the bus station he got me in and it says about The Royal College of Art and stuff there. So I was skating and just painting as much as I could and skating, yeah. I had a job at the Royal Academy of Art Restaurant as well just serving

cappuccinos and stuff Saturday and Sunday, which I hated doing that, but it was all just like the five days of college went in a flash then you're in the cafe for two days completely bored like, do you know what I mean? So I there was all that yeah, up to there, that takes you all up to like 1998. But I would still come to in the first term of Royal College. I was skating after, I'd come up, I used to drive my sister's Mini up here, so when I snapped my cruciate ligament in about '99 over there on the seven steps, that sort of ended a lot of the skate. But umm... I would drive here in a Mini, I would drive home with my ACL snapped, I didn't even want to tell my parents 'cos I couldn't put any weight on the leg. I didn't know what it was that had happened and then they didn't, they only X-rayed it later on in London and they didn't get a diagnosis for 18 months. I didn't get surgery for about 2 years nearly, so it's never been the same, it's never been since the same. As Mike [unclear] would say I hit my head, and never been since the same. Like never been same since, innit yeah. So there's that.

00:21:32
out for?

How many, let's go back to the knee, how many years were you

Yeah, so the knee like, that, that really it almost feel like people think that's like a excuse, but I would always skate in every year you could find a photo of me doing something every year and skating. But 'cos of the, the knee like it was like Frankie Hill, it wasn't like easy. Like now I would have got rehab and they would have known. Say I was like 24 and I did it now, you'd have gone "Oh that's your ACL, I'd have got it done straight away", I would have known and got all the stuff to carry on, because they just x-rayed it, you're not going to find like that snap you can't find that from an x-ray, just like, so that's what really ruined it for me 'cos, I couldn't even walk; it kept giving way when I was walking. Once it healed up, I didn't skate for four years, because this is so much pain, going and like I can, and yeah, but when it got. But after

about four years I tried to skate Kennington in 2005, and I was doing all right, but then I was trying a front side flip on the bank at the end, 'cos I could do front side flips like the [unclear], but over like strained it, jarred it again, then I had to get about thought "oh I've done it again", but I had an MRI scan and they said it's ok. But after that I was like, no. But then in 2009 I started skating about and then I started doing more. They had the reunion here in 2010, but, but after that I started skating everywhere, but just cruising, you know what I mean? But then the problems I had with my Achilles heels would go stiff because I started, because I always used to push what is called Mongo, which is this, which wasn't like flagged up until 1992 'cos back in the day skating was more you skated any way, there wasn't, there was all criticism whatever but there was, you could, no one had flagged it up yet. Front foot pushing this whole thing of how, so I was skating the way that it is, not seen like the coolest way to do it how you push along, innit, but that hadn't come out yet so, yeah. But where are we up to?

00:23:14

I was going to say this is good I'm trying to think should we make it more Milton Keynes orientated maybe about the way how you interpreted the architecture in Milton Keynes, the way you saw the spots, a bit of that?

I mean, so yeah the architecture in Milton Keynes and how it looks and everything, I mean like I remember before Milton Keynes was built. So I have got early memories of what my mum saying. There was a new shopping centre here and they were going to go and shop there and see it, and then when I saw it, and I was like it's all this glass. And then there's like The Point Cinema - this was before skating but it relates - and like seeing this city, if you've not seen a city like it, but now I say I live in Glasgow or and you see bits of it and then my fiancée says that it looks like Milton Keynes and then I was like, yeah, 'cos Milton Keynes was like 35 years

ahead. Now they've built places to look like it, so you more get used to it. But if you didn't live in the rest of the country like in London they wouldn't have it like Milton Keynes, yeah, and it had a certain look to it. But you just took it for granted, it was lucky 'cos when the skating started we saw Police Academy or some American bits and even Embarcadero "ah, this looks like Milton Keynes but Milton Keynes is better", 'cos Embarcadero has got the block but it's concrete, but we've got like that here, but it's marble and then for a while I was like "oh", but really we need it rougher. But then it turned out the Americans preferred it how the Milton Keynes look, in the end it turned out to be literally perfect apart from the paving slabs are too rough, but you didn't think about that then 'cos you had a bigger board and everything, you didn't ever think that it was too rough or whatever there was so. But it literally was like almost like it was built for street skating. The other thing they talk about rounded hand rails then they are all like Pat Duffy the round rail, I only skated rounded rails from like 8, cos all the hand rails round here are round, so my first Ollie 50 50 the guy now who's on the nine club [unclear] like, mate, I only, I didn't none, I only skated rounded rails so that's my first Ollie 50 50 was on a rounded rail, you know? And then I didn't even think, if it, 'cos they're like "ah" you could balance and shoot off. They were like, Pat Duffy was longer later on, and everything, but all they knew here we only skated rounded rails so it was first broad sides and then Olly 50 50, first Olly 50 50 was on a rounded hand rail up at the courts or Sainsbury's. I had my first lip slide then and I was only doing a bit, the shortest bit, but say in '99. I Ollie lip slid to Sainsbury's but it was like a rounded rail, but, because they are meant to be harder people say because it don't balance, but I'm saying. But all the skaters here only knew rounded rails so I think that's an important thing, not the and then they are not even the lowest rails here, they are like higher than Harrow's say, like even Jamie Thomas does the eight step at Harrow 'cos it is smaller to get [unclear]. The rail near the Trust

House is like a bigger rail innit like 9 steps and it's rounded so. Milton Keynes it's still now if you bring anyone here and they'll skate the [unclear] yeah, it's just got some good things, in fact they ruined it the [unclear]. One of the best spots is like The Beige, they're saying for the new skate park can they rebuild them some Simon ~Dobson [unclear] maybe they'll build us a replica set of The Beige but, but by if somehow it just turned out to be like a perfect thing, apart from the surface could have been smoother, but then in the shopping centre it was marble and you can skate that but somehow because it was a city of the future. It was like ban this to all the best stuff, and ban this from the public domain. When those videos came out and Frank Hill was doing like the 11... you have a set up there with the round....but it had all the stuff what America had or LA but you had it here it was the only place in the country that had so much of it, like even compared to London that's got more like old cobbled stuff, or Liverpool Street was a bit more rare, but at the time there was nowhere like Milton Keynes innit. And then, so yeah obviously, this is before there was no anti skate at that time as well like, and in the end they first used to, at The Beige, they would throw all stones out to stop us. It got so bad even like one guy, a guy would come out and rugby tackle me 'cos I wouldn't stop, so I would be trying to ollie, you know, there's the boards that high and then the block, but I would like keep the guy 'ed be like saying stop skating and [unclear], and he'd like assault me it would be like he could, he would run out and rugby tackle me and pull me off of the wall and I would keep trying to do it. Then I had security guards who like, then I would throw my bottle of water on the security guard and then run and jump the nine step board slide to get away from him, go down it and stuff, so there was all this like... they were trying to stop us skating here. I'd bring like a broom on the train from Leighton Buzzard 'cos I didn't have a car - I had to sweep the stones at The Beige... 'cos they would get all the gravel and throw it out. When they first put the no skateboard signs up, then I made

stickers hand cut "skate here" and put 'em on the back and ollied it the other way through. And then the policewoman, and I was like "ah but it's just stickers, it's not even graffiti look it's not, who can take it off", but it just says "skate here" on the back. So then it became like a war of like they were trying to make it harder to skate, but it just like carried on even 'till now like the skater stoppers out there. Now it's got they put those silver things and James Bush was like then they put more like bumps innit really, and James Bush is like front side heel flipping, but onto the bumps they're still like skating it it's like Mike [unclear] in New York innit and he ollies the Brooklyn [unclear]. They put this fence on it so no one will ever jump it again a spiked fence, but he jumps over the spiked fence as well, so. It's like a form of rebellion as well and against, I don't know, whatever control, innit, it's a bit, it's a bit of rebellion in there innit like protest and that reclaim the space, so yeah.

00:28:31

That's great, leave it like that (lots of voices at once)

Well thanks for listening.