

MK Skate Transcript

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How did you first encounter skateboarding?

I first came into contact with skateboarding from a neighbour in the early 90s. My neighbour was a bit older and he skated and I remember he gave me a board, probably in about 1993/4, something like that. Before him I had had skateboards at home but they were like boards that you get from Argos, like Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles boards or, you know. Bart Simpson board or something like that ... £20 plastic or, ... but my first skateboard came from my neighbour and he skated in the local car park and he gave me my first proper set up.

I didn't actually start skating properly; I just used to use it to sit on it and go down the hill. It wasn't until either 1996/7 that a couple of my friends from school started skating as well so a few of us ... we were like the younger people in the town that took an interest in skateboarding. We used to go to the local car park where all the local skaters used to come and I just started skating from there. I guess that's where I first came into contact with skateboarding so far as doing tricks is concerned and actually looking at it and seeing people actually doing (grinding curbs and things like that think like, oooh, you can do more than that than just sitting down and that is how I guess I started to see magazines and videos because of that as well and then you start to see what's actually possible in terms of riding a skateboard. You can do tricks, you can jump down stairs, you can do tricks in a row and you can film things and shoot photos.

And so, how did you find out about Milton Keynes?

So, growing up in Yorkshire obviously, I guess the main way that I used to see skateboarding was through magazines and through videos. Skateboarding wasn't this instantly accessible thing that it is nowadays, where you can look at Instagram on your phone and see like, video clips and photos constantly. But to find skate videos and to find photos you had to go out of your

way and you had to spend a lot of money and your time to get to ... you had to get a bus to go to Leeds to go to a shop to buy a magazine. And in the 90s a lot of the British mag.... Well, there was two British magazines and I started skating with Sidewalk and Document and both of those featured Milton Keynes quite heavily because ... I guess because, I guess, because of the scene in Milton Keynes that was built up around the bus station, people like Rob Selley and Paul Hayward. So, I guess I first used to see Milton Keynes in the 90s before I could actually travel away from Yorkshire and then the week that I passed my driving test I actually came to Milton Keynes for the first time. I think I passed it like on the Thursday and then on the Sunday I had got a car of mates together in Leeds and drove off to Milton Keynes. We just needed to see the place, to know that it existed because you'd see it and you would be, like, this is perfect – ledges everywhere and there are sets of stairs everywhere that you can skate and there's a bus station and a train station and next to each other that look amazing!

So, yes, I first came to Milton Keynes in 2001 on a Sunday. I got to the point where we were coming down from Leeds like every week or every other weekend on a Sunday just to come and skate the City.

What's your favourite spot to skate in Milton Keynes?

My favourite place to skate in Milton Keynes at the minute isn't actually in Milton Keynes, it's Potterspurty Skate Park which is ten minutes away from my house. In Milton Keynes itself, the Ice ledges near one of the underpasses near Marks and Spencer's up at the City, then there is my favourite spot because the floor is quite good, ledges are good and you generally don't get much hassle skating there.

Have you had much hassle skating in Milton Keynes over time when you come down?

I've not really had that much hassle skating in Milton Keynes because when I used to come down as a kid a lot of the time we would come down on Sundays. So you didn't really encounter much in the way of like security or authority because I guess they didn't have that much employed at the City back then. We used to get quite a bit of grief from kids, every now and then; there used to be a gap next to the bus station. I can't remember what it was called, I think it was something to do with ice again, like the Ice Gap it might have been nicknamed. We got chased out of there by about fifteen youths who were just bored on Sunday afternoon.

More recently, I was out on the streets skating with my partner a couple of months ago and we had some drunk old man came stumbling over telling me that we were causing thousands of pounds of damage to a ledge and then he started physically confront me about it. But other than that, I have not really had much trouble with security in Milton Keynes, not that I can recall.

So, can you tell us about your involvement with Sidewalk Magazine now. I'm presuming it all came about because you were interesting in skateboarding and then it led to a career?

Yes, I started working for Sidewalk Magazine in 2007. I worked for them for 11 years as the assistant magazine editor of the magazine and the website editor and as the chief video content creator. That came about being friendly with Ben Powell, like I met Ben Powell in maybe 1999, when I was working at a small skate-park in a town called Dewsbury. And he used to come and skate there quite regularly and then through that, we just became friends and then in 2004/5 we started working on a local video project together. And yes, I moved into his old house in Wakefield; he had two houses at one point and I ended up renting one of them off of him and we ended up working on this video project and I think that he saw that I was capable of writing things and I was keen to film, keen to edit and so, when the position came about for an assistant editor for the magazine and the website editor ... yes, like he came to me and offered me the job. That was in 2007 and then I stayed working alongside Ben at Sidewalk for eleven years, until the company went into liquidation.

And did Milton Keynes get featured quite a lot in the magazine then?

Oh, yes, definitely! Milton Keynes got featured quite a lot in Sidewalk. Whenever tours came through it was one place that Americans really wanted to come to, just because the architecture lends itself so perfectly to technical street skateboarding. The Americans knew of it, like its name is known around the world and is synonymous with technical street skating as well, so we used to run it quite regularly. I would be working on video projects to bring people to Milton Keynes for the same reason. We could drive here in two hours from Leeds You knew that there was just a plethora of spots that you could skate with minimal hassle and you were guaranteed to come away with footage. So there was always somewhere we would come and visit, definitely

Male voice:

On that note, I was going to say, was there any particular tours or tricks that you thought were mind-blowing or anything can you

remember filming or going, 'That's an incredible Milton Keynes spot!'

Yes, there is definitely some memorable tricks and tours that have been through Milton Keynes over the years. I came on a Flip skateboards tour, maybe in 2014. A guy called Alec Majerus, he did a switch frontside feeble grind going down the Post House rail, I believe it's called, round the back of Argos by the Holiday Inn. He did a switch frontside feeble grind going down there. That was pretty impressive.

During earlier years coming to Milton Keynes, I remember I did a kid called Mike Wright who used to skate for Blueprint. He done the line at the same handrail and he did maybe five or six tricks on flat first and then carved around and did like a Smith grind down the handrail and as he landed the Smith Grind there was a van American pro's (it was the Bootleg Skateboards team) that were all on a tour for Document Magazine and parked at the bottom of the sets of stairs and they came up and we showed them this, like, seven trick line on the camera and they just got back in the van and left. (Laugh),
That always stayed with me ... it was, like, 'Alright, cool, well see you then!'

I'm trying to think of some other things that I've seen ...

What do you think is the spot that people head for first when ... if you've come to Milton Keynes and you've heard about it ... they've come up on the train or drive your car? Where do you think they'll head for first?

The spot that everybody gravitates to is the bus station ... hands down there! That's where I would come to, especially if I was driving 'cos, you'd just drive in and you can just park up there and just get out of the car and just skate straight away. And you're guaranteed not to get kicked out; I mean, we used to park there and skate there first, when I first came down and that was before the Plaza was built and it was just the original ledges and then once the Plaza got put in ... yes, definitely, everybody wants to go and skate at the bus station first. Then you've got the trouble of trying to getting everybody to leave to go to other places.

What are your feelings about the buszy going or being moved

Is that on the cards still?

Unidentified Male: Basically, it's been a designated skate area so long and have you been there recently

Yes, ... with the skate stoppers ...

Unidentified Male: So, what are your feelings on that, maybe ... and if it were to continue, or to be pushed further and further at the back, or got rid of, what would you feel about that? What would be lost?

Yes, well I guess the current state of the bus station where they are putting these ridiculous strips of, like, anti-skateboarding concrete on the floor that you can't roll over and they've put the ridiculous bollards up as well that you can't even fit through as a human, let alone on a skateboard ... yes, I find that's just a bit ridiculous because that space has been dedicated to skateboarding for decades and now they're actually trying to stop people from skating there. At the moment it's all been taken away, like a small part of the actual bus station that you can skate. But the gesture is far greater than that ... that they can now actually try to stop people from physically skating at the bus station. I think that's a travesty personally, plus if somebody was to, you know, break their leg, heaven forbid! It happened there, like, within weeks of these skate stopper strips being put in ... like ambulance people can't get through these bollards, so it's shocking that that's even being implemented, I guess.

But yes, if the bus station was to go I guess that would be such a shame because there's decades and decades of skateboarding history, you know? And it's been through so much!

What's your favourite trick to do ... or what's your claim to fame in skateboarding terms?

Haven't got any! (laugh)

What would you like to master most then?

Not entirely sure, to be honest. I don't really have much of a claim to fame. I just spent a long time filming the skateboarders.

It was, like, I enjoyed skating myself and I've enjoyed skating since the mid-90s. But yes, I generally keep myself to myself and do it out of the public eye. There is a time and a place for me to skate and it's not usually when there's filming to be done.

Unidentified male: The other thing I was thinking was maybe there was if maybe there was any particular, something that you filmed in Milton Keynes and if it ... how you decided the website because your role was slightly different to Ben Powell's, I mean. What was your role and how did Milton Keynes feature in the website?

Unidentified male: What was your role in that and how did you decide whether Milton Keynes got exposed or not?

So I guess my role in so far as Sidewalk Magazine goes ... my role in the magazine itself was to assist Ben and to help gather the content for the magazine in terms of text and you know, if there was a tour coming to the UK, like, you know, we would have to decide who was going to go on it and (give me a second to think about it ... there are times ...) because in relation to the magazine and how things got featured in the magazine, it was kind of ... it was always a unanimous decision, like, myself and Ben, we rarely have much of an impact over where a tour decides to go. For instance, that would be more down to Leo Sharp, or the photographers because they're ones that are more hands on with steering the direction of the article from a visual point of view.

But my role so far as Milton Keynes is concerned was more to do with the video side of Sidewalk because we were working on a full length video for three years ... it was called 'In Progress' that came out in 2011 and Milton Keynes did feature quite heavily in that, primarily because Sean Smith had a section in there and he filmed for the entire three years that we were working on the project. So I spent quite a lot of time in Milton Keynes and Ben spent quite a lot of time in Milton Keynes as well, skating with Sean, gathering the footage for that particular section. Then in doing so, we was filming with Rob Selley on occasions and then James Bush who had just appeared; he was still quite young at the time but he got a trick in there at the end of Sean's section.

Yes, we just spent quite a lot of time in Milton Keynes filming and like I said before, you know, we used to bring people to Milton Keynes in order to film as well. So, yes.

Did Sidewalk magazine go into America; was that why it was Americans like to come to Milton Keynes and skate?

(00:50:00)

Yes, Sidewalk magazine was available in America. I don't know what the circulation figures were like over there but the industry saw it and that was important because when they were planning on doing tours to Europe you know, but they obviously looked at the UK magazine and it would be, 'We want to go to this spot and we want to go to this spot!' So yes, Milton Keynes came up quite a lot in those sorts of conversations because Americans were, you know, aware of it, it's reputation as a skateboarding destination of choice preceded it so, yes, it would often be named in conversations.

Unidentified Male: And just in the 'In Progress' for the year, yes ... Do you have a favourite Sean Smith trick? I mean, you must have been involved filming in it?

Yes. I wish I could take more of a claim because it's some of Sean's more ... like, technically insane footage that he had in that video but Rob Selley actually filmed, like, the three or four stand out tricks in Milton Keynes that featured but his Switch Kickflip Backside Tailslide up the T Block is still unfathomable to this day ... you can't do it, it is not possible!

Yes, I wish I'd filmed that but Rob Selley did. I just put the footage in the timeline.

(00:15:00)

What about injuries that have happened over time when you have been filming?

In Milton Keynes?

Mmm.

I've seen Harry Lintell thought that he'd blew his knee out skating The Little Brown Bar, that was quite traumatic. That was at the end of a pretty horrific day for Harry, that had involved two other previous injuries. My friend Denis Lynn tried to do a tailslide at a spot at the Pritchard Gap in The Beige ... and there is a handrail off of a wall and he is trying to do an ollie to tailslide and literally landed on his groin and fell over and twisted his ankle.

I was just going to ask you about The Olympics ... skateboarding becoming an Olympic sport now – how do you feel about that?

I'm not really too concerned with skateboarding becoming an Olympic sport; it's just a progression of ... to me it seems like it's a progression of street league and that the more organised mainstream, like, competition side of skating that's come around over the past few years and I have not really been paying too much attention to it, to be honest. It is quite far removed from my day-to-day experiences of skateboarding and my involvement with skateboarding but I guess anything that gives skateboarding, like, wider recognition it opens up the door with possibility for more people to become involved in it. That's a good thing, as far as I'm concerned.

One last question; what do you feel skateboarding has given to you in terms of how it makes you feel, how it has obviously

given you a job in some ways but what do you think it has given you?

Skateboarding has given me pretty-much everything that I've got to this point. Like, certainly, the vast majority of my friends have come from skateboarding and it's given me the opportunity to travel the world and to see places that I would have never got to have seen otherwise.

I met my partner through skateboarding and we've got a child so it's given me a family, so yes, I guess. I owe pretty-much the majority of where I am today to skateboarding, yes.

(00:21:31).