



TALKING THE STREETS

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**Observant British
MC/Producer Mike Skinner
navigates your host
Garrison Reid through his
growth, his *Game*, and his
approach to managing
entrepreneurial endeavors.**

When you decided to make *A Grand Don't Come for Free* a theme record, was it easier or harder to make a theme record?

You've got to be aware of the whole thing, at the same time zoning in on each song. So, yeah, it kind of requires a bit more holistic thinking. But, if you can get your head around it, it's not that hard, really. It's just like certain bits when you change one song, you change another song, and, you know, yeah, cool.

At what point did you decide to not make this record a theme record?

In a way there's a theme to this album, you know, and in a way, it kind of is all linked in because it's more of a documentary, which I'm not necessarily going to do that again, either. I always kind of want to do things differently. I think if I had done another story, you know, it would only have ever been slightly less exciting as when I did it the first time.



Speaking of the documentary, I heard you were making a documentary DVD.

I don't know what's going on with that, actually. I'd only really let it go if it was really good. Bits of the last song on this album are from what would be the DVD. There's just bits where I was just kind of going a bit mental.

How did the Futureheads remix come about for "Fix But You Know It?"

The rock side of it is a more looked after by my A&R man. I tend to bring the urban side through the beats and stuff. But, yeah, I'm always trying to stay on top of everything I can, really.

Do you listen to the Futureheads or Indie Rock often?

I've heard a bit of the new album. And like Bloc Party and stuff. Like I say, we're surrounded by it, so, you know.

Did you feel you needed to read [The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists by Neil Strauss]?

I don't think I really need it in the UK. I like the psychology of it, you know.

“I think rap music is a culture. It’s not a beat, or a rhythm, although it is, as well. It’s black America, and all of the value systems that go with that. Someone like me will never be a part of that, or will never penetrate that.”



On “War of Sexes”, what got you to read *The Game*?

That was given to me by a friend of Neil’s. I was living in New York at the time, and I read it in about 3 days.

The book took me two days.

Did you learn from it? Do you feel you needed it?

I don’t think I really need it in the UK. I like the psychology of it, you know. It’s really interesting and, you know, good to know, I think.

For people who’ve read *The Game* and heard the song and put two and two together. Did you feel comfortable throwing it out there with your own twist on it?

That’s what I do with everything, really. If you’re a writer, you’ve got to constantly regurgitate everything you take in. Actually the ignoring her thing, and talking to him, I’d already kind of had that before I read the game. *The Game* kind of reconfirmed it all. But that concept, I used that before anyone, you know?

I like how it simplifies the relationships between the sexes. Are there any other tracks on the record that correlate so directly to things you’ve read or watched?

No, not really. I wouldn’t say *The Game*...it was already kind of

as it was. The ending of it was influenced by *The Game*, yeah.

I heard in a BBC interview you had sent Lady Sov beats, what made you decide to do that? I mean, this was before Def Jam and before she was really known.

She did the “Fit, but you know it” remix video. I think that was like the first video she did. That was ages ago. That was years ago.

Back then I was interested, but I’d only just started the label and I just had The Mitchell Brothers.

I’m always throwing stuff out there, always sending people beats. Nowadays, we now have brokers and stuff involved. It’s a lot more businesslike than it used to be, you know. In the old days it was just literally just swapping records.

Is it better or worse now? Or is it just how it is?

I think it’s better now, to be honest. Because my broker, Darrell, he’s kind of filtering out the noise, but also hearing new people. You know, so, it’s what magazines do for us normally. You read a magazine and you get to see what new bands there are, and the magazine filters out all the really shit ones. So you get to hear new music that’s good. And I think that’s really important.

I think that’s actually we’re at a point where you don’t get that on the Internet too much. Which is why the iTunes chart is actually getting more commercial, it’s not getting more eclectic. It’s because people are listening less to tastemakers and magazines, and kind of having less decision-making.

So, it’s the same as me getting beats. You know, you need someone who’s on that all the time.

When you started The Streets, did you also plan to start a label?

I wanted to start a label when I was a kid, but then I just realized that I'm not good at business. I'm kind of good at thinking it all out, but I'm not good with relationships and stuff. I just go into myself, and have long periods where I don't want to speak with anyone. It's hard to maintain a business through that.

Nowadays, the reason I run a business is because there's other people that can do those things, and are really good at those things. And I can just think about music, and kind of be my own insane self.

Do you do a lot of scouting for new stuff?

It's difficult because I spend most of my time working, prioritizing things that I've already signed. There's a lot of noise out there. Most producers that you hear kind of aren't what you're after, you know?

I read in another interview that you had recorded for Puff Daddy for a Biggie tribute. What happened with that?

It just wasn't suitable for mainstream American hip-hop release.

Based on the beats or the accent?

It's more the culture of it. I think rap music is a culture, it's not a beat, or a rhythm, although it is, as well. It's black America, and all of the value systems that go with that.

You know, someone like me will never be a part of that, or will never penetrate that, which is why we've got the equivalent in England, which is different.

Do you think labels factor? Def Jam for Lady Sov and Atlantic for you?

It's just getting into America, with us, was all about having it on the shelves in a place that wasn't too pressured, with a team that was really passionate about it. If you stick something like that, which is alien, like The Streets is, onto the shelves with

a major label like Atlantic...if it doesn't perform it gets pulled off the shelves. So, the only way any artists like me will have a chance in America is by going with a smaller company that's got a ceiling within a major label, as well.

I read that you feel all your influences are American. What are some European exceptions?

I suppose a lot of the UK stuff when I was growing up was like speed garage and house and stuff. And drum 'n bass, which we're really good at.

Do you think your music works well with viral marketing like college parties?

You couldn't put on a big tour... it's the only way that it will grow here. Like I say, my priorities really are just...there's something growing in the UK, and, you know, that's my priority, really. You know, making the label work and developing The Streets, and kind of not repeating myself too much.

If any Americans have got into that, they have got into it because it was that, it wasn't trying to be anything.

If I'd come over on my first album and tried to do a big tour over, I don't think anyone would respect that.

