

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:11:26 - 00:00:33:26 ANNOUNCER

In the banks of the Grand River, high above the Gorge, this is thebuzzr pod. New releases. Industry insiders. Out of the box conversations. Indie music. With guests from the True North. To the West Coast. To the East Coast. And Across the Pond, and Down Under. And now here's Shay.

00:00:37:18 - 00:00:59:28 SHAY

Hey, hello. This is Shay – host of thebuzzr pod, on air indie. We have Happy Walters dialing in from Minnesota. Welcome, Happy Walters. Thank you for joining our pod today.

HAPPY WALTERS: Thank you for having me.

SHAY: Happy, tell us about your time in Minnesota, and growing up and all that.

00:01:01:21 - 00:01:46:18 HAPPY WALTERS

Basically, I was born and raised all over. So, I was born on the east side, raised on the west side and then settled in on the south end. So, I think that's what also kept me out of trouble, too, because I wasn't settled into one place. So, I kind of just bounced around all around St. Paul. And how did that happen? I think it was just moving around a lot growing up. We didn't have a place to live, so we had to move in with my grandma over on the west side. So, we were over there for about two and a half years and that's actually where my dad's from. So, it was easy to move. But then we ended up settling on the south end, which is not a bad area, but it's definitely not the best.

00:01:48:02 - 00:01:57:04 SHAY

So, you had an opportunity to get to know all of Minnesota growing up. You have a background in music. You started quite young.

00:01:57:19 - 00:02:19:11 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah, my dad is actually a drummer. He's traveled all over the world. I think you call him USO tours, right? (SHAY: Yeah) That's what they're called. Yeah, he did a lot of those, like before I was born and when I was born. So, I grew up around music like and used musicians my entire life, which is weird that I never joined a band. It was weird.

00:02:20:06 - 00:02:22:17 SHAY

So, you've always been a solo act?

00:02:23:03 - 00:02:30:25 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. Always been solo. Who never joined a group or anything. I remember getting offers to join hip hop groups and I was like, no, it's not my thing.

00:02:33:03 - 00:02:45:28 SHAY

Well, I'm not surprised with the beats you're putting out. I'm not surprised that you stayed as a solo artist. Outstanding. So primarily as an artist, have you worked in Minnesota?

00:02:48:10 - 00:03:29:04 HAPPY WALTERS

Yes, and then the reason why I started posting music online as far as beats is because I wanted to branch out because I wasn't able to leave like money wise. So, I figured I'm just going to try and get my music

out and a lot less. So, I started posting beats and that's how my name got known. I actually went under a different name too, so I was known as somebody else. And then I started posting beats online and my music kind of just took off. But no one knew me as a rapper, though. They just knew me as a producer. And I have worked here. But it's kind of like one of those things where I feel like Minnesota is a place where you make it out. You don't really make it.

00:03:30:05 - 00:03:33:05 SHAY

That's an interesting comment. Can you explain that?

00:03:34:16 - 00:03:53:03 HAPPY WALTERS

A lot of artists, like there's well-known singers who literally are known here and everyone knows who they are, and they perform probably six, seven days a week. But outside of Minnesota, no one knows who they are. So, I kind of wanted to be the one to, like, breakout. Kind of like Prince.

00:03:54:00 - 00:03:59:10 SHAY

That's definitely somebody to follow after. And you've worked at L.A.?

00:04:00:21 - 00:04:16:08 HAPPY WALTERS

Yes, I've worked with numerous emcees. Jay Gatsby, a band called That Kid is You, because I actually when it comes to producing, it's mainly hip hop. But I also like to write. I just like to write. And I'll work with anybody just like any genre.

00:04:16:25 - 00:04:26:01 SHAY

But a lot of the music that you record and put out there is rap.

00:04:26:03 - 00:04:35:11 HAPPY WALTERS

As far as producing and like as far as my own music. Yeah, but as far as writing, I do want to work with different artists just to expand my writing.

00:04:36:02 - 00:04:38:08 SHAY

And where do you meet up with these artists?

00:04:38:10 - 00:05:10:15 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah, I see. It's all online. Like I was never a huge social media person just because I'm older. But honestly, it's like the best thing, like I've connected with so many, many people, like there's a singer in the UK, just the song that I'm going to be working with. It's just been hard because of the seven-hour time difference. Yes, she's really good. And she found me and was sharing all my stuff. And then so we've been trying to set a date and plan where we can actually work on stuff. But it's just been hard because of the time difference.

00:05:11:17 - 00:05:18:07 SHAY

Yeah. Time zones to mix up schedules, at times. What type of music does she put out?

00:05:18:24 - 00:05:20:09 HAPPY WALTERS

It's like Euro Pop.

00:05:22:14 - 00:05:24:03 SHAY

That's popular in the U.K.

00:05:24:14 - 00:05:36:07 HAPPY WALTERS

Yes, she's actually really well known and that's why I was shocked because she just sent me a DM and I was like, who is this? Like, I thought she was fake. I wasn't sure if she was a real person or not.

00:05:45:03 - 00:05:46:24 SHAY

So, what about Lake Avenue?

00:05:48:14 - 00:06:12:29 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. Yeah, I tried to reach out to him. The lead singer, him and I actually have a single it's called "Bad Medicine". It was kind of an experimental track, the lead singer. Yeah, right now, all the venues are closed here, so they're not really doing anything and I'm not sure if they're working on their next album or not. I'm still waiting on him to respond to my text.

00:06:13:26 - 00:06:18:08 SHAY

In your music career, you took a bit of a break. Can you talk about that?

00:06:18:18 - 00:07:41:00 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. So, I had put out a mixtape at the age of 19 and it's like just took off here. And then years later I met a girl and then I settled down and that was a six-year layoff of literally no music being made. It was horrible is the worst. (SHAY: And why was that?) Well, she basically told me - it was weird because I was making a living off of it. But I don't know if it was her or her family or whatever, because they basically had no idea, like what I did if it was a real job and stuff like that. So, she talked me into quitting and getting a nine to five. And I basically about five and a half, six years, there was zero music being made except for the one time I snuck off to L.A. (SHAY: Snuck off to L.A. Do you have any stories there?) So, I mean, she wanted to hang out or we had plans to do something. I said, no, I have a family thing. So, I was able to leave on a Friday and come back Sunday morning. And I hit Hollywood Boulevard at Sunset Boulevard so hard with CDs and business cards. (SHAY: That's an awesome story) You know. And then I had had to fly back, but I ended up posting a picture online and someone showed her it and she was she freaked out.

00:07:43:22 - 00:07:46:14 SHAY

So, you are now you're putting out great music.

00:07:46:24 - 00:07:57:26 HAPPY WALTERS

Yes. Now it's nothing but music. I even built a studio in my home. So, everything is just music every single day. So that's why my days have been like twenty-four-hour days.

00:07:59:02 - 00:08:16:03 SHAY

That's awesome, that's awesome that happened. I hear you because I actually have a home studio as well. But you know that. (HAPPY WALTERS: Yeah, it's actually the best.) Yeah. Yeah. During the pandemic are you recording remote with artists?

00:08:18:05 - 00:08:32:02 HAPPY WALTERS

One of my buddies might come record but otherwise as far as recording with other artists or do we have to do the whole email stuff. But otherwise, yeah, I'm just recording right at home.

00:08:33:05 - 00:08:36:08 SHAY

A lot of artists are collaborating online with one another.

00:08:37:04 - 00:08:48:13 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. What I mean, I mean they even shut down the studios here which is really crazy. Besides in venues like they shut everything down. So, I had to build my studio.

00:08:51:02 - 00:08:56:26 SHAY

Well, the Minnesota scene was very active prior to the pandemic, was it not?

00:08:57:20 - 00:09:13:19 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah, it is. I mean their show was just constantly everywhere and it's just it doesn't get enough light. But at the same time, a lot of the artists don't do enough to bring light to the scene, if that makes sense now.

00:09:13:21 - 00:09:19:29 SHAY

It does, yeah. What venues are popular in Minnesota First Avenue, the fine line.

00:09:20:01 - 00:09:47:21

There's Club Seven, JD Miller, who is one of my friends. He's a Shady deejay, which is Eminem's label. He throws a lot of outdoor events, like we do every year. We do a hip hop for autism where we raise money and just throw on a huge show. But obviously now everything's completely shut down. So, he's been doing the whole Twitch thing. And I've been just posting music online.

00:09:50:19 - 00:09:57:21 SHAY

You told me before you had stage fright of a child as a child.

00:09:59:08 - 00:10:58:19 HAPPY WALTERS

The whole first appearance story. And I even have another one. I was talking to my cousin about this show coming up. And he was like, you have to tell the one story about the fight. But the first show I did, I puked, but I still went on stage. But when I released my mixtape, I was nineteen and there was this huge show. I mean, it was huge. It was a sold-out show, they even flew into someone big from down south here and I was the second to the last act, so the guy before me was almost done and I was forgetting all my lyrics. So, I was praying like, oh, my God. Like, I, I hope something goes wrong. So, I get handed the mike and I go to walk up on stage. Sure enough, a huge fight breaks out which ends up shutting down the show. And it actually kind of funny because I was actually excited. I was like, thank God that that's how scared I used to be. Even as I got older, I was still scared.

00:11:00:13 - 00:11:01:16 SHAY

Are you still scared?

00:11:01:24 - 00:11:04:22 HAPPY WALTERS

No, I actually enjoy it now. I really enjoy it.

00:11:05:19 - 00:11:11:12 SHAY

And you've been influenced heavily by DJ Premier?

00:11:11:21 - 00:11:42:10 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah, him, Dr. Dre, Kanye West. And there's a long list of other guys. Like they inspired me to make beats and I don't know what it is, but I mean, they're considered like the greatest of all time. So hopefully in 2021 I'll be able to cross some of those guys off my list and I can work with them. (SHAY: You want to collaborate with them?) Yeah, that'd be fun. It'd be fun because like just hip-hop minds coming together, it would be fun.

00:11:43:19 - 00:11:46:13 SHAY

Well, you definitely have the classic rap hip hop sound. It is actually making a bit of a comeback.

00:11:46:19 - 00:12:06:06 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. The artists. And there's another producer and New York, Statik Selektah. He's one of the greats, too, like one of the greatest beat makers of all time. His sound is definitely that classic, too. And this and what's even better is I'll be able to actually cross him off the list.

00:12:06:17 - 00:12:11:11 SHAY

Oh, really? (HAPPY WALTERS: Yeah) Well, that's awesome.

00:12:13:05 - 00:12:42:28 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah, I'm excited.

SHAY: Well, the reason I featured "Paid Vacation" on my blog last year and I love that it's your breakout single. It is outstanding. (HAPPY WALTERS: Thank you.) One thing about the lyrics I love. "I ain't here to change the game. I'm just here to play it." (HAPPY WALTERS: Yeah) well, it's well written. It's a point for sure. Can you say a bit about the song before we play the song?

00:12:43:08 - 00:13:49:18 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. That lyric for some reason gets quoted online so much and I have no idea why, because I feel like there's other lines. But for some reason, every time someone sends me a *Snapchat* or something, they always type in that. That line as a quote. It's hilarious. (SHAY: and catchy) Yeah, but it's funny that that line just stuck out. But I mean the song. So, the beat was a *YouTube* beat and it was by someone that I actually knew. So, I told them to send me the beat and I wrote the song pretty quick, but it wasn't actually laid out yet because it had no hook. But I still recorded it and it actually sat for a few months. And then I sent it to my buddy DJ D Mil, and he mixed the track. And then I said, could you? Because so I sent him a bunch of lyrics that stood out to me. I sent him like 10 different lines for the hook and he ended up having to pick that line. And then the last one and it kind of just made the song because now everyone, like, recites that one line over and over again.

00:13:50:29 - 00:13:56:21 SHAY

Well, it's absolutely great. Like we're going to take it for a spin right now. And thank you for bringing that music to us.

00:14:00:16 - 00:17:06:49 "Paid Vacation"

00:17:09:25 HAPPY WALTERS

So, basically.

00:17:11:43 - 00:17:19:10 SHAY

So, let me ask a question, hun. You've been called one of the best kept secrets in the industry. Can you tell me about that?

00:17:20:35 - 00:18:41:24 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah. So, it all started. So, when I was known here, a lot of people knew my name, but they didn't know my face. And there used to be I think it was called the Twin City hip hop works here. And I didn't even know that I was nominated as the "best kept secret", but I ended up winning, had no idea. And then DJ D Mil, I think this was at the end of *MySpace*. I think so he sent me a message and I was like, Dude, you

won. And I was like, one what? What? And so that kind of be because I wasn't there, it just made everyone look me up online. And then it kept on going where there's a producer named Mr. Porter, which is Eminem's hype man and one of his close friends, and he's been making beats forever. I mean, he's won Grammys and everything. Last year, me and him actually collaborated over Iggy. So, a lot of people know my name. They definitely don't know my face. So, the whole best kept secret thing just keeps on, like traveling through.

00:18:43:18 - 00:18:49:14 SHAY

You're definitely making noise, definitely make a noise. And it's going to be one grumpy lady somewhere in Minnesota. (HAPPY WALTERS: Yeah) So, did the pandemic affect the sound of this track at all?

00:19:13:18 HAPPY WALTERS

I know it's weird because I like when I made this song, I didn't know if it was going to be big because my previous singles, I have one other single that's like a throwback hip hop song. But the rest are kind of like they're hard to describe. They were kind of like experimental tracks and they weren't really big. That's why I'm shocked. This is my biggest song because I wasn't sure if the classic hip hop sound was going to be like accepted considering, like all the music that that's out now. So, I wasn't sure, but definitely it has impacted my sound because I'm really just focused like I have nothing else to do. So, I'm really focused on just bringing back that classic hip hop sound.

00:23:34:26 - 00:23:31:58 SHAY

I think that it definitely is time for people to start hearing that again on the air. (HAPPY WALTERS: Same.)

00:23:30:33 - 00:18:59:24 SHAY

So, let's talk about the other things you did. You've worked on a lot of TV shows and your singles are going to be featured on them.

00:18:59:26 - 00:19:30:04 HAPPY WALTERS

Yes, it's VH1. Those love and hip hop shows, and *The Housewives* shows. Yeah, I got a contact from a producer and she wanted beats. So, I said I think I sent her like a hundred and some beats and then along with songs and I didn't know if they were going to be used. And then next thing you know, I get an email saying over half have been used. So, I mean, I really don't watch those shows, but it's kind of cool that a lot of reality shows are going to be playing my songs.

00:19:31:13 - 00:19:49:17 SHAY

Yeah, it's pretty cool. And it's actually outstanding that that that opportunity is coming to you because that might be a way for artists to supplement their income until they start doing the live gigs, festivals and stuff like that.

00:19:49:23 - 00:20:15:07 HAPPY WALTERS

Yeah, and actually because of those shows, even since the last time we talked, I've been contacted by three or four management companies as well. They are trying to sign me, but it just wasn't a fit musically. (SHAY: And why wasn't it?) The artists they manage are like the newer ones, like the young kids, like the trap style. And it's just wouldn't that be a fit?

00:20:16:21 - 00:20:38:17 SHAY

So, it's not the sound that you want to bring back. Yeah, well, did bringing back new tracks with the classic rap? I'm sure you'll get the attention of people like DJ Premier. (HAPPY WALTERS: Oh yeah) Yeah, definitely. So, what can fans expect next from HAPPY WALTERS?

00:20:39:05 - 00:21:11:01 HAPPY WALTERS

I'm actually releasing an EP. Hopefully I want to release at the end of January, but it might end up being February. It's called *Ocean of Thoughts*. It's just three songs, one produced by me, one produced by, like I said, Statik Selektah, which is I'm lucky to even have him on there. I don't know how it came about, but he's on there. And then my buddy, Saheed, who's a well-known YouTube beats maker. They will be coming out. I want to release it in January, but it might end up in February.

00:21:12:14 - 00:21:15:03 SHAY

So, the album is how many tracks?

00:21:15:16 - 00:21:18:29 HAPPY WALTERS

Three. So, EP is called *The Ocean of Thoughts*.

00:21:19:27 - 00:21:30:07 SHAY

I look forward to hearing it. (HAPPY WALTERS: Yeah, I'm excited.) So, before we go Happy Walters lead us to the best way to follow you or get your music, buy your music

00:21:30:29 - 00:21:38:27 HAPPY WALTERS

You can find me on every music platform, *YouTube*, social media just type in HAPPY WALTERS and I will pop up.

00:22:23:20 - 00:23:37:32 SHAY

That's awesome. Well, thank you, Happy Walters for joining our pod today. (HAPPY WALTERS: Thank you for having me.) I love your sound. (HAPPY WALTERS: Thank you so much). And the chat today was great. You all, out there, take the track for a spin. You can easily see why once you start listening to it. If you like the artists' influences, you're going to love HAPPY WALTERS. He definitely is one of the "best kept secrets in the industry." Hey, all, thank you all for joining Happy Walters and I on thebuzzr pod today. Next episode, we go Across the Pond. A fantastic Maidstone, UK indie guitar band joins us. The four-member band has had three successful singles prior to the release of "Sad Eyes" which we will listen to on the show. They are racking up the Spotify playlists and have had radio play, including BBC Radio London. The Shop Window joins us January 26. Catch you next episode. Subscriber feeds are at thebuzzrpod.com. Cheers!