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**Sole_Zine 09 The Block P Issue - The Liverpool Style Protagonists
Representing the Culture of '110's'**

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Z I N E

**T R A I N E R S
S N E A K E R S
K I C K S + W E B S
S T R I D E S + S O L E S
C R E P S + B E A T E R S
T R A B S + T R A I N E E S**

Whatever you call your footwear, there is a particular tribe who are obsessive about theirs.

volume 09 / THE BLOCK P
summer 2024



FASHION IS ALWAYS CHASING THE NEXT BIG THING, AND IN THE TRAINER COMMUNITY, THERE ARE VERY FEW STYLES THAT DOMINATE THE LANDSCAPE.

In Liverpool there is a deep, affectionate, and cultural connection to the Nike Air Max 95, or otherwise known as 110's (pronounced 'one-tens'), a reference to its retail price around the time the hype started. Wherever you observe, from the city centre to the suburbs, in pubs, clubs, colleges, and classrooms, the Nike Air Max 95 silhouette is ever-present. A style code that has defined the city.

Experts attribute forces like nostalgia, design innovation, music culture, exclusivity, nonconformity, place, and community all as points of difference and drivers in this obsession with style. We try to unpick this story by talking to one of the most prominent 110 experts in the U.K. 'The BlockP' (officially the world's only independent Air Max 95 store) and their loyal 110 community.

PO: Charlie, The Block P is important to Liverpool's ongoing love affair with 110s. How did The Block P come about?

CM: When it comes to The Block P, it's important to mention the culture that I had growing up. Me and my mates would always talk about shoes and clothes - how you present yourself in Liverpool is massive. We used to hang out at an abandoned block of flats in Aigburth and although there were multiple blocks, we generally used to meet at P Block. This was the go-to spot where we would all talk and discuss shoes and clothes as this was such a big part of our upbringing in the city. I'd had a few Instagram pages before starting this one. All the pages I have had reflected me and my style. I had a Maharishi page as this was one of my favourite brands growing up as well as a designer clothing page. But it wasn't until I lost a login to my



original depop account, and at the time I was with my mates chilling at P Block and the name just came to me - I was going to set up a new page called BlockP. We would all chill there and talk about shoes, showing each other deals we had just bought, so it only felt right to name my new page after BlockP. But at the time I had no idea that the name would hold so much significance in my life.

The shop was inevitable once I started this page. I always knew it was going to happen as I felt there was such a calling for a shop like this in Liverpool.

There was a gap in the market - I had nowhere to go to buy these types of things myself, other than events such as LacesOut and Crepe City, which still had limited

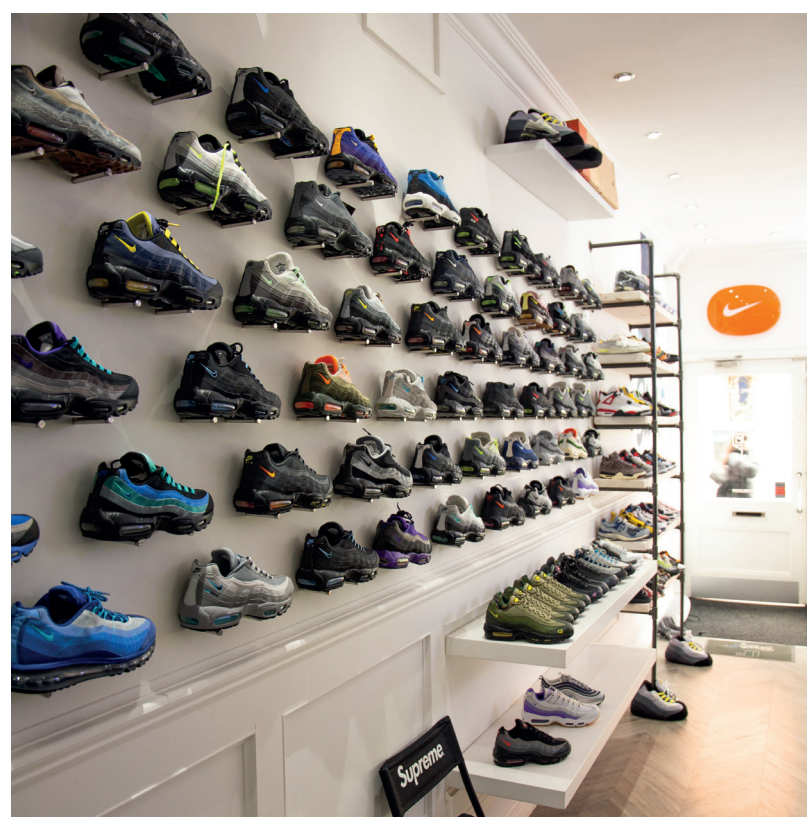


options for 110s, so I wanted to create my own community of people who were interested in the same things as me and I felt like this was the only way to do it. You have people telling you at the time that this is a bad idea and that it will never work but I was so passionate about it and knew I could make it happen. For me this was the path I had to choose. This coincides with me being involved in a car crash and leaving my old job, which allowed me to take the risk and build something special. There was no other option, I would give everything I had to make this business, BlockP, a success.

PO: How important is it to you and your community to have a bricks and mortar store?

CM: For me personally and for us as a business, having a bricks and mortar store is huge. It allows us to see our customers face to face and share our love for 110s. The people are what it's all about, so the fact we get to interact with our community every day is special to me, and

I'm glad that we have created a welcoming atmosphere in the shop. In terms of business,



you may argue that it would be easier to scale an online ecommerce store than a physical store, but the impact of having the physical store both professionally and personally has been massive. It's hard to measure the impact that it has on our customer base, as some of our regulars who come in all the time use our shop as a sanctuary. It's a place where they can come and feel safe and chat to a group of lads who are passionate, genuinely love what they do, and have the same common interest in 110s. We have been open for nearly two years now and have gone from strength to strength with the shop. Our next goal is to take our operation to the next level and enjoy the process.

PO: Are your customers pure 110 collectors?

CM: Our customers are all kinds of people. Anyone from a young kid coming in with his family to buy his first pair of 110s, to the

older generation buying pairs they had years ago, reminiscing about times they had worn certain pairs.



PO: Are we correct in saying that you are officially the only independent Nike Air Max '95 store in the world.

CM: Yes. We believe we are the only independent Nike Air Max 95 store in the world. Without the special relationship that the city of Liverpool has with 110s, it wouldn't be possible to have such a store.





GOING TO THE GYM IS THE BEST WAY TO GET FIT. IT'S A GREAT WAY TO STAY HEALTHY AND ACTIVE. GOING TO THE GYM IS THE BEST WAY TO GET FIT. IT'S A GREAT WAY TO STAY HEALTHY AND ACTIVE.

STREET STYLISH



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IN CONVERSATION WITH CHARLIE McDONOUGH THE BLOCK P



Instagram:
@theblockp
Size:
8
First Pair:
Nike Air Max 95 Blue
footlocker exclusive 2014
Latest Pick Up:
Nike Air Max 95 Gridiron
(style code CJ7553-002)
Holy Grail:
Nike Air Max 95 JD
Exclusive Neptunes

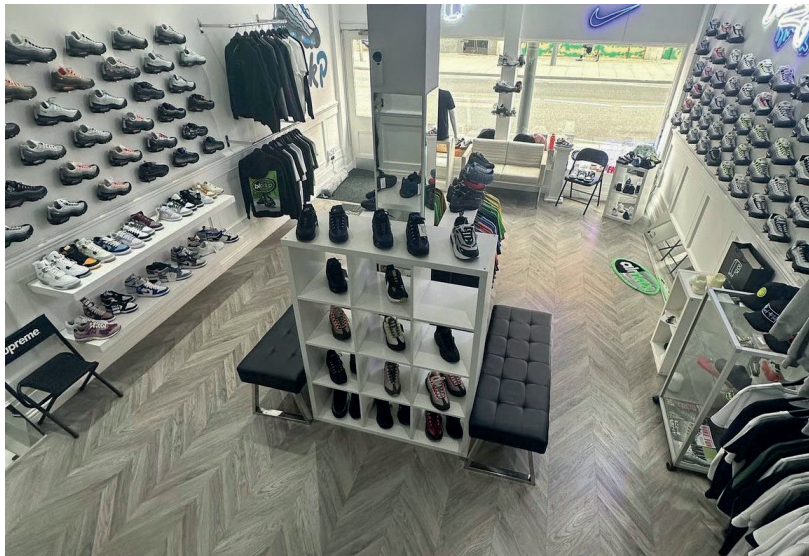
LOCATING MENSWEAR. LIVERPOOL. THE COMMUNITY.

PO: Liverpool's history with trainers has always been associated with 'adidas three-stripes' which as we know came from the Terrace Casual movement. How does the 110-subculture differ?

CM: 110s are a way of life in Liverpool. This is similar to what the three-stripe culture used to represent. The three-stripe culture stems from the football and casual scene when lads watching Liverpool play in Europe would come back with Italian tracksuits and Adidas Originals in the 80s. This culture has now expanded beyond football and is more of a city-wide movement. Today 110s are worn for every occasion, not just going to the match like the Adidas 'Casuals'. The 110 culture has developed to mean much more to the city. It has to do with the underlying story the city has to tell, even if people wearing the shoe don't even realise it. Wearing the 110 in Liverpool creates a sense of community and solidarity in the city and an ethos of people together. This could even be linked back to when Thatcher was urged to place the city under 'Managed Decline' after the Toxteth Riots in 1981. This led to the people of the city having to make it on their own and be more entrepreneurial. This is why many scousers are hustlers as it is in our DNA.

KO: What does the 110 sub-culture mean to you and your community?

CM: In Liverpool more than any other city 110s are a staple in the culture. They represent not conforming to the norm, which is a massive part of the culture in our city as we always feel like outsiders. Liverpool is a working-class city and 110s are a working-class shoe, allowing our community to express themselves in a way which is truly unique to us.



KO: How are the 110s represented by the community - how do they show off their grails?

CM: Instagram pages and sneaker events like LacesOut are a keyway for the community to show off their 110s. Getting dressed up in your best pair and heading to LacesOut is always a good day for the community. It is a place where you can chat to other 110 enthusiasts and show off your best pairs. But now having the shop, I am fortunate that I get to do this every day.

PO: Can you explain the 110 sub-culture and legacy in Liverpool?

CM: How much time do you have? This is a question that arguably could be discussed for hours. There are more factors in this than one might imagine.

Price Point:

The entry point on a general release pair of 110s is £175 right now but this will keep rising. This is a lot of money for an everyday pair of trainers. And with the limited availability of hyped and sought after colourways, such as OGs, in our opinion this is one of the variables causing the rise in popularity of other branded models such as ON Running and Hoka. However, the price of the OGs

(originals) or even more exclusive pairs can be anywhere upwards of £400. The most expensive pair we have had (Air Max 95 Top Boy Lorenzo Exclusives) sold for a staggering £3,500!



Location:

Liverpool is a very fashion-oriented city. People pride themselves on looking good and a nice pair of trainers is the perfect way to do that. A fresh pair of 110s is the staple of any decent outfit. The 110 subculture is so strong in the city. The shoe is a symbol of being from Liverpool.

Exclusivity:

There are so many average releases, but our consumers want to buy something that you can't get from JD or the Nike website. They want to stand out and be noticed for wearing not just any old pair of trainers. That's why we specialise in exclusive pairs that are hard to come by. We filled the void left in the market as the demand for the best releases is so high, and you can't buy them anymore, so our aim is to help solve that problem.

Nostalgia:

The older generation want pairs they had when they were younger creating more hype around the vintage pairs. These customers come to our shop as it reminds them of buying their first pairs all those years ago, bringing back happy memories. We have pairs from the latest releases all the way back to the first releases in 1995 stashed away in our archives.

Hype:

In our opinion the 2020 Neon Release was a milestone for the hype culture of 110s. With the demand being so high, the 2020 Neons set a precedent that it was acceptable to pay £300+ (in 2020/2021) for a pair of Air Max 95,



which before 2020 was unheard of. This led to other pairs like Solar Reds and Crystal Blues following suit closely after. The 2020 Neon release created awareness that Air Max 95s hold value and to an extent are an investment depending on certain factors. Now we see pairs, like the Beetroots, reselling as soon as they come out as the demand is far greater than the supply.

Designer Trend:

There is also the fact that the appeal of wearing designer clothing and shoes has started to become less common. Some 110s cost more than designer shoes and they are harder to acquire. Before 2020 Lanvin runners or Valentino RockRunners were considered to be the "Cool" shoe to wear especially on a night out. However, with the resell price of some Air Max 95s being £400+, in our opinion, this has put rare 110s in the same bracket as a pair of designer shoes. This is why you now see people eating in expensive restaurants wearing Air Max 95s. Five years ago it wouldn't have been as socially acceptable to wear 110s with jeans, but now it's considered normal.

Design Quality:

The actual quality of the shoe is also a big factor. Although people moan about the quality of newer general release pairs, they are well made in comparison to other shoes. If your 110s are looked after and not battered, they will last for years. They are easy to clean, add height and are comfy and compatible for everyday life. Even while I was answering these questions in the shop, over 20 people walked past wearing 110s. If they were made of poor materials, nobody would wear them, and this is not the case. It will be interesting to see what will happen with the quality of the materials over the next few years. This is due to Nike's commitment to sustainability and their 'Move to Zero' campaign. We have seen pairs released in 2023, like the Stadium Greens, which were made with over 70% of recycled materials to reduce their carbon footprint. It will be interesting to see the impact this shift will have on the demand for the shoe.

KO: How do you see the 110-story evolving?

CM: For me 110s will always be a staple in the culture of Liverpool. For them to be overthrown another shoe would have to come in and take over, but with the history Liverpool has with the 110s, I don't think that will ever happen. We have seen shoes come and go over the years, like now with the rise of ON Running and Hoka's in the city. They are popular now, but they will most likely phase out, whereas 110s have always remained a staple. What could replace the identity that 110s represent? It goes beyond just a shoe and for me, I couldn't see 110s being replaced.

LOVE FOR 110s.

KO: For our audience who are not aware, why are they known as 110s when the product is called Nike Air Max 95?

CM: This used to be the old retail price of the shoe, and the name stuck. The community often jokes 'Make 110s, £110 again' as the retail price continues to rise.

KO: What should the Nike Air Max '95 be called today?

CM: They have and always will be called 110s.

KO: Where did your love of 110s come from?

CM: 110s were the shoes to have when I was growing up and I never had enough money to buy a pair when I was younger. I always saw older lads in pairs and loved the way they looked. I saved up enough to buy my first pair and never looked back. I then started flipping 110s to pay for my own, and it all took off from there. I would go on depop and see used pairs of 110s for ridiculously cheap prices, clean them up myself and sell them on for a profit. I would then use this profit to buy more shoes and so on, scaling the business to where I am today.

It's mad to think that when I lost my old job and started this, I only had £12 in my bank account, but I was never worried. Now I look back and realise that was so special, as it was that hustle that made me who I am today.

PO: Do you have a particular memory about 110s?

CM: I've got loads of memories about 110s. But one of my favourite memories was travelling across the English Channel to Paris overnight to attempt to buy the unreleased Corteiz Les Bleus. That was some experience. We got a lift from one of our good mates as they were driving to Germany. We hopped out in France and managed to make it by the skin of our teeth to Paris just in time for the drop. The drop was crazy as people were in a manic frenzy chasing around Paris trying to cop this pair. People were jumping on top of buses and there were thousands of people queuing up trying to buy. Luckily, we managed to cop a pair and bring them back to the UK, and this was the first pair that was available in the UK, and we managed to get the first 'in-hand' photos of the shoe online, so the community could see them.

KO: Which is your favourite colourway?

CM: This is such a difficult question. If I'm honest it changes all the time, I don't have one set pair which is my favourite as I love different pairs for different reasons. But as of right now my favourite pair is the Aluminium's, but this could easily change as I have a lot of top picks.

PO: The Neon colourway is one of the rarest, how has it become such a Liverpool staple?

CM: The Neon's were the first release of the Air Max 95 way back in 1995, and there have been various re-releases of the neon colourway as they are a piece of history. Without the neon colourway, there would be no Air Max 95. The neon's are an integral part of any collector's rotation. Liverpool's relationship with the neon's has always been prominent. As it is the original colourway, any 110 enthusiasts will have a pair of neon's in their collection and there are more 110 enthusiasts in Liverpool than anywhere else in the world.

PO: What impact has the elevated status of the Neon 110 and the high price it commands had on other colourways?

CM: The neon set the scene for the OG gradient. There have been various gradient colourways to drop since the neon's such as the crystal blues, solar reds, fresh mints, granites & aluminium's all of which are favourites amongst our customers. And as mentioned previously the 2020 Neon release, we believe, set the tone for Air Max 95s in the resell market. Demand was so high that supply couldn't meet it, consequently, making it acceptable to sell pairs for more than you bought them for. In the future the price will continue to increase as the older the shoes get the harder they are to find.

PO: In terms of exclusivity do you consider the 110s to be a luxury item and/or status symbol?

CM: 110s in general aren't a luxury item, they are the identity of what the person wearing them represents. However, luxury 110s exist, especially some of the more expensive pairs like the more recent Lorenzo collaboration with pairs reselling for £1000+.

EXPRESSION

KO: What we wear on our feet is an expression of who we are, what are you wearing today?

CM: Today I am wearing our Block P slippers. Our Air Max 95 inspired slippers are designed by us and are exclusively a Block P product. The demand for these was so high that they sold out instantly. This has led to us restocking them, which will be some point soon. Keep your eyes peeled as there will be more surprises on the way regarding this.

