

Edinburgh blogger – Milo McLaughlin

✘ Who are you and what do you do?

My name's Milo McLaughlin, and I've lived in Edinburgh for the last 17 years, since I came here to study when I was 16 (having previously lived in various parts of England, Ireland and Northern Ireland).

On 1st Jan 2011 I launched [The Clear-Minded Creative](#), a new blog which aims to help creative people get clear about what they want to do with their life.

I am currently a digital/web co-ordinator for the Scottish Government 4 days a week, and am also working regularly as a freelance copywriter.

What made you start writing a blog?

I've always been creative – when I was around 9 years old I made my own comics and sold them to neighbours – and I've tried all sorts of things since; acting, music, journalism, scriptwriting – you name it, I've probably tried it!

After an experimental comedy musical/video project I was involved in came to an abrupt end after a fateful tour of Leith and Dunfermline, I started writing for various local publications, including The Skinny Magazine, The List and Is This Music?

Although I was rarely paid for my efforts, it led to me meeting a bunch of like-minded people, who have since become good friends. One of these was Sean Michaels, a Canadian who was living in Edinburgh at the time. He had founded one of the first ever (and still one of the best) mp3 blogs called [Said The Gramophone](#).

Seeing what he was doing was like a light bulb moment for me. Blogging seemed like the perfect medium to share all my creative output, and also to share work by talented people I knew who I thought deserved more recognition.

My first blog (on Blogger.com) was a kind of online fanzine of various writings, art and photography by myself and some friends, which I started in 2005. However the people involved all moved on with our lives and it kind of fizzled out.

Then in 2008 I started doing a music show called I Hear a New World for Edinburgh's [Fresh Air radio](#), showcasing "innovative music from Scotland and beyond".

As a result of that show people starting asking how they could find out more about what I was up to, so I was persuaded to start blogging again, this time using Squarespace.com. I called this blog [Products of a Gaseous Brain](#), so named because I have always had a lot of ideas for creative projects to the point that I often felt my brain would explode!

That blog featured my writings about all sorts of topics, including local music, technology and the media, my I Hear a New World podcasts, plus some daft videos.

I was also very much inspired by other Scottish music blogs especially Edinburgh's Song, By Toad run by Matthew Young, who has built it up into a great community as well as a well-respected record label.

Last year I transferred the blog from Squarespace over to WordPress.org, and I also [put out a fanzine](#). But the lack of focus for the blog started to affect my motivation.

I spent a lot of time working out how I could do something that would help other people and that I would be more inclined to update regularly, and that's where my new blog came from.

What purpose is your blog serving?

The Clear-Minded Creative is all about helping confused creative people get clarity in their lives and careers, and to help them build consistency and confidence about their creative work.

I've struggled with these issues my whole life but over the last year I've had something of a breakthrough. I've started writing every day whereas before I could go for weeks without writing, and my work now involves a lot more creativity than my previous jobs have.

I thought it would be good to share how I've progressed up until now, with the aim of helping other people who have felt the same confusion about their direction in life. I'll also be sharing anything new I learn in terms of being able to bring more creativity into my career in the future.

I strongly believe creative people should be able to earn money from their talents but sadly it's usually not the case – I'd like to explore that too.

Why did you choose WordPress/Blogger or other platform?

I'm using WordPress.org which is self-hosted because it gives the most flexibility and because it means I own my blog outright. As mentioned above I've used Blogger and Squarespace in the past but found them to have limitations. Blogger in particular can be seen as quite unprofessional in "pro-blogger" circles and Google (who own it) have been known to censor people's posts without warning, especially amongst music blogs.

Having said that, I wouldn't recommend a newbie blogger start with self-hosted WordPress because there's a steep learning curve and a lot of tweaking to be done which can be very time consuming. WordPress.com is probably the best way to get started and has much the same functionality.

I do recommend securing your own domain name as early as

possible though, even if you're not ready to use it yet.

Do your visitor numbers matter to you? Would you tell us what they are?

I can honestly say that I don't currently check my stats at all. I think if you want more traffic you need to really push your work out there so it gets featured on other sites, and at the moment I don't have a lot of time for that and am more interested in connecting with the readers I already have. . I really want the blog to be useful for people and for them to feel a sense of community around it.

I was lucky enough to attract a reasonable readership straight away due to being featured on the [Guardian Edinburgh](#) blog, which will be sadly missed, on my friend Fabian's excellent blog [The Friendly Anarchist](#) and on the [Creative Boom](#) website.

One of the most exciting things has been starting my newsletter which I'm really enjoying doing. I'm keeping them very short and trying to make sure there's something useful or extra each week so that people are getting additional value from the emails as well as the usual blog content.

What do you think you could do to improve your blog?

I've got a lot of ideas for how to do that. I put the blog together myself but I'm sure a professional designer could make it look amazing. Unfortunately I'm a bit of a control freak in that I had very specific ideas about how I wanted to lay it out. I'd like to improve my design skills further in the future but I should probably concentrate on producing more content, and hire someone to do that for me – in which I'd better start saving up!

I'm also not able to post half as often as I'd like due to other commitments. But then again, I don't want to overwhelm people with loads of pointless updates either.

What plans do you have for the future of your blog?

I've got a loose roadmap for the blog which will cover all the aspects of being a clear-minded creative, but it will probably unfold at a fairly leisurely pace knowing me! I'm happy to let it develop organically as I go along.

There are a lot of great interviews with Clear-Minded Creative Types already lined up which I think people will find extremely interesting, and I'll also be continuing my Clear-Minded Classics series which will feature books and other resources. Things like the Four for Feb challenge had a great reaction so I will probably run a few more challenges in the future too.

I'll also continue to document my own path and what I'm learning in my quest to get paid for doing what I'm good at and enjoy, whether it be writing or any other creative passions.