

= Mark Steel 's in Town =

Mark Steel 's in Town is a stand @-@ up comedy show on BBC Radio 4 , co @-@ written and performed by Mark Steel . The series , that was first broadcast on 18 March 2009 , is recorded in various small towns in the United Kingdom . Each episode is tailored to the town it is recorded in and the show is performed in front of a local audience .

The first series of six episodes was recorded in five towns in England (Skipton , Boston , Lewes , Walsall and the Isle of Portland) and one in Wales (Merthyr Tydfil) . The second series , also of six episodes and first broadcast on 7 April 2010 , was performed in four towns in England (Dartford , Wilmslow , Penzance and Gateshead) and two in Scotland (Dumfries and Kirkwall) . The third series of six episodes , broadcast between December 2011 and January 2012 , visited four towns in England (Berwick @-@ upon @-@ Tweed , Basingstoke , Wigan and Bungay) , one in Wales (Holyhead) and one on the Isle of Man (Douglas) . A special episode recording during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe covering Leith was broadcast on 21 August 2012 . A fourth series was broadcast between November 2012 and January 2013 . In this series Steel performs in five towns in England (Whitehaven , Handsworth , Ottery St Mary , Corby and Chipping Norton) and one in Scotland (Tobermory) . A fifth series was broadcast between January and February 2014 and was performed in four towns in England (Glastonbury , Southall , Birkenhead and Huddersfield) , one in Wales (St. Davids) and one in Northern Ireland (Derry) . A sixth series was recorded between March and May 2015 in four towns in England (Fleetwood , Melton Mowbray , Shrewsbury and Barnard Castle) , one in Scotland (Paisley) and one in the Channel Islands (Saint Anne , Alderney) . A Seventh series is planned to air in September 2016 . In this series Steel will perform in five towns in England (Stockport , Hebden Bridge , Colchester , Kingston Upon Thames & Lynton) and one in Gibraltar .

The programme received positive reviews from critics because of Steel 's observations of the locals , and the fact the series took place in multiple locations , compared to the majority of stand @-@ up shows on radio and television , which are normally recorded in one single location . However , some have also criticised the way he has commented on some locations . In 2010 Mark Steel 's in Town won a Silver Award for " Best Comedy " in the Sony Radio Academy Awards , and in 2012 it won the Gold Award in the same category . Also in 2010 it won the Writers ' Guild of Great Britain Award for " Best Radio Comedy / Light Entertainment " . In series was voted " Best Radio Entertainment Show " in the Comedy.co.uk Awards held by the British Comedy Guide in the 2012 and 2015 awards .

= = Format = =

Before each episode , Steel researches the history of the town he is going to perform in . His research interests include local notable people , landmarks , customs and humorous anecdotes . The majority of the research sometimes took place close to the actual recording date . For example , Steel carried out almost no research for his episode in Walsall until ten days before the recording . In Merthyr Tydfil he spent three days in the town where he did research and met locals .

He then performs a tailor @-@ made show about the town in front of a local audience . The style of the programme is similar to other shows starring Steel such as The Mark Steel Lectures , in which Steel presented a humorous lecture about a famous person in history .

= = Production = =

Due to the small budget there were certain places the show could not be recorded during the first series . For example , no episodes in the first series were recorded in Scotland . Steel said in an interview :

" One of the restrictions we 've got is that the budget for radio we 've got going is so unbelievably , comically tiny , that we couldn 't go to Scotland because the fare is too much . It is like some student fanzine . ' Mum , can I borrow some money because I want to go to Scotland.'

" So , I 'm hoping , if we do another series , because I 'd love to go to the Shetlands . I 'd be really

excited at going to the Shetlands . Because it is just like a fascinating place to be at the moment . Or even one of these sort of weird places in Cornwall . But that was too far as well . "

The second series did feature two episodes recorded in Scotland . One in Dumfries , on the Scottish border , and other in Kirkwall , Orkney .

Other than Steel , Pete Sinclair was the only other writer , providing additional material . Julia McKenzie produced the first 2 series , while Sam Bryant produced series 3 & 4 . Ed Morrish produced Series 5 and Carl Cooper produced series 6 and will produce the upcoming series 7 . Also working on the show were studio manager Jerry Peal , and production co @-@ ordinators Sarah Sharpe and Trudi Stephens .

= = Reception = =

The majority of the reaction towards Mark Steel 's in Town has been positive . In May 2010 , the programme was given the Silver Award for " Best Comedy " in the Sony Radio Academy Awards . In May 2012 it won the Gold Award in the same category . In November 2010 it won the Writers ' Guild of Great Britain Award for " Best Radio Comedy / Light Entertainment " . In January 2013 it won the " Best Radio Entertainment Show " award in the 2012 Comedy.co.uk Awards held by the British Comedy Guide . It won the same award in the 2015 awards .

Chris Campling in The Times wrote a review of a show recorded in Skipton : " A tough gig ? More like shooting fish in a barrel , to judge from the reception he received from the honest burghers of Skipton , North Yorkshire . From the moment he remarked on the fact that the hall in which he was performing was used as a cattle market during the day and was hosed out before the show ? and got a roar of approving laughter ? Steel must have known that he could do no wrong . "

Campling , as well as other critics , have commented that one of the main features of the show is the ability of the locals to laugh at themselves and their eccentricities . Campling wrote of the Skipton show : " The ability to laugh at itself is one of this country 's finest attributes , but the Skipton mob were only too happy to celebrate their insularity . " Elisabeth Mahoney of The Guardian , who reviewed the Dartford episode said : " Going to a place and insulting it takes guts and careful strategies . Steel made use of the fact that he is from nearby Swanley both to signal that he knows the area but also that ? whatever he was about to say about Dartford ? it was better than his hometown . " Another journalist , reviewing the Penzance episode in the North Devon Journal commented : " Why do we like programmes that laugh at us ? Because , I hope , we laugh at ourselves . We 're not ignorant of our stereotypes . West Cornwall ? Aaarrrrr ! "

Miranda Sawyer in The Observer also praised the show saying it was , " A simple idea , kindly and wittily executed by another unfashionably humane Englishman . Thank Gaia they still exist . "

Hilda Swinney , the Portland correspondent for the Dorset Echo said that at the recording on the Isle of Portland : " The audience , mostly Portlanders , were appreciative and very responsive to his humour and his views on ' their special island ' . They left him in no doubt that a return of Mark Steel 's in Town would be very welcome . "

Stuart Morris , a historian who helped to provide research for Steel for the Portland show commented : " I was amazed that he should have absorbed so much of the island 's history in the short period of time that he had . He joked about the Portland winds , saying that in comparison , islanders wouldn 't even have bothered to take out their kites in the face of Hurricane Katrina . He made a few remarks about Portland / Weymouth rivalry and our Weymouth friends present laughed as much as the rest of us . "

Ian Wolf from the British Comedy Guide commented that : " The fact that the series moved from town @-@ to @-@ town was very impressive ? as it meant Steel had to write a unique half @-@ hour routine for each venue (compare this to most stand @-@ ups , who only have to come up with about an hour of strong material a year !) . "

However , at times local journalists have responded negatively to the programme . Lisa Reeves , who reviewed the episode recorded in Wilmslow , commented on how Steel 's socialist political views did not mix with the affluence of Wilmslow and nearby Alderley Edge , which he also visited for the purposes of the recording . Reeves wrote that : " It was an enjoyable evening , with some

very funny gags but a large part of the material focused on the champagne lifestyle so often portrayed in the media . " She also said that Steel should have focused more on how good the area was as a place to live in , " but I suppose that wouldn 't make for good comedy . "

= = Episodes = =

= = = Series 1 = = =

= = = Series 2 = = =

= = = Series 3 = = =

= = = Edinburgh Fringe Special = = =

= = = Series 4 = = =

= = = Series 5 = = =

= = = Series 6 = = =

= = = Series 7 = = =

= = Merchandise = =

The first series of Mark Steel 's in Town was released for download on 1 March 2010 . The series has yet to be released on CD .

A book accompanying the series , entitled Mark Steel 's in Town and published by Fourth Estate , was released on 27 October 2011 .