

keith & louise

Only in the rich tapestry of real life could a rock legend and former nurse team up to start an embroidery business. Hush now and listen to their conversation.



Louise: A chance meeting affected my life's path. "Do you know the way to the Palais?" asked a man with intense eyes. It was 1975, I was 16, the man was Keith Lamb, lead singer of Hush. Hush had 13 gold records, seven albums and they toured relentlessly. Tickets for the gig were left on the door that night as a thank you, and so I saw the first of many of Keith's mesmerising performances. Keith is one of Australia's greatest-ever front men.

It was 11 years before Keith and I met again. Times were harder. Hush had broken up. Although he'd produced platinum albums, written hits for Status Quo and appeared in stage roles, Keith was shattered. Since age 12, he'd been a singer, fronting bands in the UK, supporting major acts such as The Who. It was as though he'd given so much to audiences that he had nothing left for himself. I brought Keith to our family property outside Bendigo for a time of healing.

The Bendigo break became more or less permanent. So did the conversations. Whether it's a big event like the Countdown Spectacular tour, where Keith rocked huge audiences night after night, or a silly thing like yawn-singing at the beach with our families, we have fun. There's energy. Things happen and barriers disappear. We find ourselves riding elephants down the main street of Jaipur or drinking champagne in the Throne Room of Buckingham Palace (Keith rarely drinks alcohol and asked for dry ginger!) Keith's the most honest person I know.

He's strong, generous, funny and helps me overcome fear. He's a powerhouse of invention. Sometimes I'll say "please, no more, I need more lives". If anyone wants creative ideas, ask Keith!

Like most people, we've come through challenging personal times and changes. Hush's best song in my view is *Nothing Stays the Same Forever*. The lyrics ring true, but I'll cherish our partnership for as long as it lasts.

Keith: Louise pulled me up and saved my life. She says I've saved hers from being dull. No day passes that we don't share our thoughts.

We bounce off each other, so I'll start something but it won't be quite there, and Louise answers with a different take, then I'll move it up another level and at some point we get to the heart, find the soul and then there's the development.

I'm astounded at the heights she's taken some ideas! Like The Art of Conversation. Someone in England will email that TAOC saved their family from disintegrating. Feedback is an incredible buzz and inspires us to do more.

Louise's husband Lewis is a very good friend of mine. I'm Uncle Keith to their daughter and her family are like my family after all these years. Louise taught music at Violet Street and I liked giving her input on music education so her students lived music. She says I've broadened her perspective as she came from strict classical training. Louise is always there when I sing, a tour nanny. Everyone adores her on tour 'cos she's caring, sweet, easy to share problems with - a wise and confidential ear. She sees fair, straightforward solutions.

We speak no falseness. We listen. Set high goals. I get frustrated with Louise if she's dismissive of an idea that I want us to work on but we talk to resolution. She's Grammy to my grandkids. I know what Louise likes, I try to help look after her. Make sure she eats properly, because she works so hard at all she's involved with, she's built an extraordinary international network. She nurtures her daughter! Her day starts at 5 and goes until late. She once told me, seriously, how much you can achieve if you rise at 3.30. For us, work is more fun than fun.

Keith Lamb & Louise Howland are business partners in Rajmahal embroidery and co-inventors of The Art of Conversation (TAOC) board game. ■