

From **Rock Stars** to **Real Estate**



From his stomping ground in London to selling houses to the rich and famous, Tim Winborn-Sharp had everything at his fingertips. Yet he made the decision to leave the big city and move to the tropics of North Queensland, to a lifestyle that was more conducive for his family and with the aim to launch a successful company venture. As his business, Reef Edge Realty, celebrates its first birthday, **MAGGIE WILDMAN** chats to the straight talking Brit about his experiences in London and the challenges of becoming an Australian resident. Photography by Sue Wellwood.

As a young lad in London, Tim wanted to be an actor. In a twist of fate, he was in the right place at the right time and scored himself a role, albeit as an extra, in the Robert DeNiro and Bob Hoskins' flick *Brazil*. In fact, it was his first girlfriend's grandmother that helped him achieve this part of his dream.

Completely unaware of his girlfriend's link to fame, he was having Christmas dinner with her family when he first met her grandmother, who just happened to be the award-winning Jessica Tandy, whose fame included films such as *'Cocoon'* and *'Driving Miss Daisy'*. Unfortunately his 'big break' happened when the British film industry wasn't strong, but at the same time Tim was offered the opportunity of selling property in London. He gave up his acting aspirations and opted for a career in real estate instead.

You might think this is where his brush with fame ended, but in his fledgling days as a junior real estate agent, having worked his way up from coffee boy to company director, he helped funny-man Benny Hill buy a property. "He was exactly the same person as what you saw on television," Tim remembers.

It was not an isolated case and during his career Tim sold properties to, and for, many different British

television celebrities. He shares the memory of the day he thought someone was playing a joke on him, when, sitting unassuming in his office, a man in pyjamas and a dressing gown walked in and asked Tim to sell his property. It turned out the PJ man was a member of one of England's premier rock bands, the name of which Tim won't reveal, but it wasn't until he was inside the 'rock stars' house, with walls adorned by gold records, that Tim realised who he was.

Tim credits his down-to-earth attitude for his ability to get on with everyone from all walks of life, and the fact that he was well-grounded by his parents. A defining moment in his life, the one that he directly attributes to making him the man he is today, is something that occurred when he was only 6-weeks-old. He was taken into foster care, and the people he fondly calls Mum and Dad adopted him. He has never had the desire to look for his biological parents; he says his family is the only one he has ever known, and is the only one he wants to know.

Tim's matter of fact attitude applies to everything he does, so when he and his wife Caroline got married at Palm Cove, they decided this was the place they wanted to spend their life. They thought

it was paradise, and that Australia's lifestyle was something they wanted for themselves, and their future business.

Being granted a four-year business visa, something that isn't the easiest of things to do; Tim's challenge was to set up his own business, one with an annual turnover of at least \$250,000. If he was successful, the chance of him attaining a residency visa was high.

The turnover for Reef Edge Realty has easily exceeded this in its first year, with only two salespeople in the office – and Tim and Caroline have now learnt that they are well on their way to obtaining permanent residency.

Tim laughs when I comment that real estate agents don't have the best rap when it comes to reputations. But he says, "We are straight talking and honest. We tell it how we see it – there are no unrealistic expectations and I won't tell people just the things they want to hear. It is about treating people the way I would expect to be treated myself". **CL**