

**A**lana Davison caught up with the new Australian Idol judge, who attributes much of his success to his three-year Townsville experience.

**Alana Davison:** I have to admit Kyle, I didn't exactly put my hand up for this interview. I think your reputation has lead me to think it would be a tough one.

**Kyle Sandilands:** No, don't be foolish (he says pleadingly). I am just an honest guy.

**AD:** I understand you had a rough childhood. How have you overcome that?

**KS:** There is just so much weirdness to me I don't know where to start. I used to live in a horse float on the streets of Brisbane. I had a party at home and during the party, mum's car got damaged. We had a big argument and I ended up moving out. They [his divorced parents] sent me up to Townsville to live with my auntie, Jill Stevens. If I hadn't left Brisbane I really think I would've been the next Chopper Reid. The reality is, a lot of my mates have gone down a bad path and I could have too. It was good to get to Townsville. I was a full-on Brisbane street kid and I remember getting off the plane in Townsville, looking at everyone else dressed in jeans, and nice Colorado shoes. I was an uneducated teenager and went into the nightclubs saying to people, 'what are you looking at clown?' I soon learnt that I was in a town full of army dudes.

**AD:** Where did you stay in Townsville for those first few years?

**KS:** I stayed with my Auntie Jill in Kirwan (who has since moved to Brisbane). When I arrived at Auntie Jill's, I rocked up with a suitcase held together with duct tape. She had three boys of her own around my age and she was a nurse so she had that tender, maternal thing going on. Although I've gotta say, she ruled us pretty firmly. We all had to do chores around the house. I picked ironing because it meant I could sit in front of the TV and still get my job done. To this day I am still a great ironer. There were times when she could have thrown me out, but as soon as I got a job at 4TOFM (after producing a fake resume which stated he had worked at Triple M in Brisbane), things started to change for me.

**AD:** What was your first job at the station?

**KS:** My first role was to drive the promotional vehicles handing out freebies. A few years later I was running the promotions department for Mike Willesee's Queensland radio stations, and then I had an on-air role.

**AD:** What other jobs did you have in Townsville?

**KS:** I got a DJ job at Lang's Tavern and it was really my full-time hangout. I was into hip-hop music at the time, but all the army guys ever asked me to play was Khe Sahn. I would play the tape, and then they would be like, "play it again". I'd get played up to 20 times a night. I used to go to Maggie Island on a regular basis, and I had some enquiries about having a karaoke night there. In the end I was running it (alongside his other radio commitments) every night.

**AD:** This is a bit weird, talking about all the night

when I was in my early 20s through a transfer with Mike Willesee's radio stations. Back then you could pretty much get away with anything on air during the early 90s.

**AD:** Why was that?

**KS:** Because we were off-broadway, they didn't have the politics and people playing a part in how the show runs.

**AD:** So now that you have become an 'Idol' judge, what are your true thoughts on Marcia's 'fence-sitting' comments?

**KS:** I think it's ridiculous, but she does know what she talking about from an artist's perspective. Despite a few ups and downs, she has had a credible career.

**AD:** I suspect they [the producers] wanted you to take over Dicko's spot to spice things up for television?

**KS:** No, they haven't actually. I think they know that I will give an honest opinion and offer constructive criticism. I am not purposely going to try and be nasty or funny. Plus, I never went for the job. They came to me. I have been a mate of Dicko's for a while since we went deep sea fishing a few years ago. And when he left the show, they thought I would be the one to do it.

**AD:** What did you think of last year's show?

**KS:** In the second series I would swear at the TV because I didn't agree with any of their decisions. I reckon half of the good singers were gone before they selected the final 12.

**AD:** Who did you vote for as last years' Idol winner?

**KS:** I ended up voting for Casey, but she was just a kid with a bad attitude and had to change her image to wear frilly skirts. That's why she hasn't really done much with her albums. In Australia we can see through any phoniness and bullshit, and she should have stayed true to herself.

**AD:** Is there a chance to sign up any raw talent from the show with your new record company [King Kyle Records]?

**KS:** That's a possibility. We have a few stars now, including my girlfriend Tamara [22-year-old Tamara Jaber's first solo under Kyle's label is 'Ooh Aah' and reached #4 on the ARIA chart]. I first met Tamara through Jackie O when she was doing Popstars - we've been together for five years.

**AD:** I believe you've met Richard Branson. How did that happen?

**KS:** I met Richard Branson through work a few years ago, and I quizzed him about independent record labels. He suggested I start my own so I sold off some land a few years ago to start up 'King Kyle Records'. When I saw him some time later I told him I had taken his advice, and he said, "I knew you would do it".

**AD:** So what deal did you secure with Channel 10?

**KS:** A three-year contract. I'm blown away that they wanted me for the three years. I am still surprised by other people's confidence in me.

said. Half of what I say is real, and the other half is for entertainment - it stems from me being a clown. I was always that nerdy kid at school with the wrong uniform on and I've been fired from a few jobs - but you know, you bounce back. But it's always been hard to give me orders.

**AD:** That must be difficult for your bosses?

**KS:** It's more of a partnership arrangement now. They make suggestions, but I am not going to pretend I am someone else - and they know that.

**AD:** What else could you possibly want in your career?

**KS:** I want to stay doing the Breakfast Show for more years. They pay me a lot to be there. My first radio job paid me \$22,000 and now I've signed a one million dollar contact. Holy crap, \$1 million!

**AD:** Despite the bad-boy image. I've heard that you have a charity that you give quite generously to?

**KS:** Yeah, I give regularly to the Exodus Foundation in Sydney for underprivileged street kids because it's what I can relate to - it's close to my heart.

**AD:** Is the money something your psychic predicted? (Kyle and Tamara are open about their use of a psychic).

**KS:** Tamara and I have been so lucky. And yes, we live our lives by a local psychic. Every single thing she's said has happened so far. She said, "you are going to do TV and it's going to be huge." At the time she told me, I was more than happy with radio and I had never even thought about TV. She also said I was going to change to breakfast radio, and make a lot of money. She saw me pictured in a white shirt with \$100 notes all around me. And I know I can make a bit of money in video production, which I have also been dabbling in of late with my business partner Ryan. I met him in Townsville 15 years ago, and we are still doing things together.

**AD:** It sounds as if Townsville has made for some happy memories.

**KS:** Townsville was great grounding for me after Brisbane. I was a bit worldly and lippy the first few weeks in town, and then I learnt that I could get in trouble if I didn't shut my mouth sometimes. But, yeah, heaps of memories. I used to hang out at The Strand. I was a bit of a hoon and would hang out in cars there. And I loved Jupiter's. I had my first ever gamble there on the steak wheel and I ended up winning a whole pile of chips. I am glad that I went to Townsville, otherwise, who knows what I would have done.

**AD:** Obviously you are now madly in love with Tamara, but did you leave any broken hearts in Townville?

**KS:** I was actually thinking about that and which girls might be reading this. I met a long-term girlfriend, Lisa, in Townsville, and we travelled around a bit together through Cairns, Mackay and Gladstone. But it didn't work out because I wanted to move around with the radio job. We are still friends to this day and still talk on the phone sometimes.

**AD:** So you are not such a bad boy after all?