

CITY LIFE[®]

M A G A Z I N E

TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

JUNE 2011

PASSION FOR LIFE
DULCIE BIRD

BROWN BROTHERS
AT THE CAIRNS SHOW

ROYAL WEDDING
THE GUEST FROM
REDLYNCH



the
Illusionist

SAM POWERS – THE MAN BEHIND THE MAGIC

the Illusionist

He dazzles the crowds on stage, but who is the real Sam Powers? Behind the smoke and glamour lies a shy, incredibly driven individual who thanks magic for bringing him out of his shell.

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The son of a dentist, Sam was raised in suburban Sydney. At his prestigious inner city school, he excelled at the piano and was encouraged to practice music scales rather than magic tricks, but Sam had other ambitions. “I had a stupid dream to be a magician but to keep my parents happy I went to university. I spent first year drawing illusion plans in economics class,” he laughs.

His onstage persona may ooze confidence but Sam describes himself as an extrovert on stage and a tragic introvert off it. “I hardly spoke to girls before I went to university. It terrified me to perform at school concerts, but with magic you have to perform, I just had to do it.”

His self-confessed obsession with magic began at the age of three, when a magician performed at his pre-school. He soon acquired a magic kit but his first paid performance only occurred at fourteen when a teacher offered him \$40 to appear at his son’s birthday party. Times have changed and Sam now performs six nights a week, running an entertainment company that employs 26 local people. It is still hard work. “There is no such thing as a sickie – I have done shows with a bucket on each side of the stage and at death’s door,” he says. In the last two years his longest break has been a mere three days.

A fan of jet skis and fast cars, Sam still believes the biggest adrenalin rush comes from performing on live to air television. “There is no room for errors, the miracles you see are literally milliseconds away from being a complete disaster. If a singer goes off tune for a second it is no big deal, but if I am slightly off the effect can be completely ruined.”

After receiving a book on sports cars, five-year-old Sam decided one day he would own one, a dream that was only fulfilled early this year. I fell in love with the Lotus Exige S,” he explains. “I thought, I can afford one if I work really, really hard. Everything I own, every illusion, some of which cost up to \$30,000, I have earned doing hundreds of kid’s parties and restaurant gigs. It would not be the same if I received a handout or had won the lottery. When I walk up to my car I think, I have worked for that.”

Sam’s first brush with fame was at the wedding of James Packer and Jodie Meares. He was hired to mingle with the crowd for 90 minutes entertaining guests such as Elton John, prime minister John Howard and Pat Rafter. However, he lingered, “I was dressed like a guest so I just stayed on and left at seven the next morning.” He has done private shows for Nicole Kidman and Oscar winner Jamie Foxx, but back in Cairns, Sam avoids the limelight. “I live a nice quiet life. I switch off the Sam Powers thing after work.” Being described as arrogant frustrates the six foot three performer. “In my work you need to be confident onstage but what I do is not that great. If I was a heart surgeon for children, I would feel justified to have an ego. I do card tricks for a living.”

Sam’s parents kept a menagerie of creatures, which fostered his love for animals. “When I was a little I found a grasshopper dying. I remember

trying to breathe on it and bring it back to life,” he grins. In 2010 he became Queensland’s ambassador for the Guide Dogs Association and has now raised more than \$2m for over 100 different charities including Animals Australia.

His acute childhood shyness and the role magic played in overcoming it has not been forgotten. His magic workshops for children have brought him a great deal of satisfaction. “These shy kids come in and I teach them how to public speak, how to stand and look confident. It is really fantastic to see them come out of their shell.” The shy, lanky adolescent who never spoke to the girls appears to be more comfortable in his own skin now. “Before I would rely on magic to be socially adequate, but now it is a good thing just being me.”

The driven five-year-old who wanted the sports car is never far away though. Sam spends his days running the company, creating new illusions, working with his US management team and is developing a new television series for the UK. “I always feel I am behind. What I have achieved is never enough, I want to be stronger, want to be better, more advanced.” Despite the long days, financial risk and hours of rehearsals, Sam loves his life. “I am lucky, I love what I do- it is my obsession.” **CL**



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