



KEITH AT HOME WITH PARTNER ELIZABETH HAWKES.

# Keith Potger

You've heard of 'The Seekers', right? OK, you young ones are excused. For the rest of us the Carnival is never over.

Paul Cockram went to see Keith now he lives here and started by asking him how he got into music

It started when I was at school, at Melbourne High School. While I was in fifth form I formed a trio. The next year we added another voice to become a quartet — but that group then disbanded. Athol Guy, at the time, had a trio and then his group broke up. All this happened in Melbourne, I'm a Melbourne boy, I grew up there.

Out of those two groups came another group that Athol and I started, which morphed into 'The Seekers'. The Seekers were actually four men to start off with. There was Athol Guy, Bruce Woodley, myself and Ken Ray. When Ken left the group, instead of replacing him with a bloke, we looked around for a girl, because Ken had a very high voice.

That's how we came across Judy Durham, as she was known in those

days. She became Judith a little later on.

While The Seekers were still four blokes, we were given this Monday night gig at The Treble Clef in South Yarra in Melbourne. Then Judith joined the group and took over the role as the fourth member. We played every Monday night and we were paid in spaghetti bolognese — all we could eat. That was our recompense for the gig.

**Which was the tune that launched The Seekers onto the world stage, or at least onto the Australian stage?**

Well, it was the same record that launched us all over the place — 'I'll Never Find Another You' written by Tom Springfield.

That really kicked off the whole thing, because when we were in Australia we

were what you might call a little coffee-lounge group. But when we went overseas we found that there was a bigger audience out there. Then luckily, Tom Springfield came along and started writing fantastic songs for us and producing our records. That was how we became known internationally.

'I'll Never Find Another You' was written specifically for us. Later on, Tom was asked to write the theme song for the film 'Georgy Girl', and he collaborated with Jim Dale who wrote some lyrics for 'Georgy Girl'. That was the only film song that we had in our career.

**Was it England or America first?**

It was England first for us. We went to England in 1964, then because of the success of our early recordings, particularly 'Georgy Girl', which was a number one hit all over the world, but especially in the US, we became known in America as well. But Australia was always our home, even though we were based in the UK for all that time.

We arrived in England in 1964 so the original span of the group was from 1962 to when we broke up in 1968.

We started recording while we were in Australia in 1963, so there was that extra year while we were in Australia

before we went to the UK. We recorded about 75 or 80 tracks, something like that, between 1963 and 1968 and generally speaking, that was the sum total of our early recording period. Then, after we reformed in 1992, we recorded more material and since then we've recorded a studio album and other tracks.

**In those days, when you went on shows like Ed Sullivan, did you perform them live or did you mime them?**

We performed. The Ed Sullivan Shows and other programmes in America were all live, but in England, on Top of the Pops and other TV shows like that, the artists mimed, so we mimed along with all the others. Even The Beatles mimed, everyone mimed. It was only later on that shows like Top of the Pops insisted on their acts performing live.

**Judith Durham has a fantastic voice. I was listening to Danny Boy. She is a wonderful singer.**

She has and yes, she performs a great interpretation of that song.

**The other thing I noticed about her voice, I thought, was perhaps it got a little bit richer as she got older.**

Well, it's very much in the ear of the beholder, I believe. There were a couple of tracks that she did in Melbourne before we went to England, where her voice is absolutely pristine. Then there were subsequent ones that she did later when we were in England, and they sound great as well. So, perhaps in that four or five year period there was a bit of maturity in her voice, but nevertheless that clear tone was unmistakable, really.

**And you fellows had your harmonies down pat before she joined anyway, I suppose.**

Well, we had a few of them down pat, yes, because Ken, as I said, had a very high voice, and so getting around those harmonies was pretty straightforward. But I've been arranging the harmonies for the group since we started, so it was kind of a continuum, if you like.

**Are you the arranger?**

Yes, of the harmonies, the music and generally acting as a kind of musical director for the group. The others throw in ideas and then we come to a conclusion. It works well.

**So, when you had a song written for you was it just the words that were written and you composed the music, or did it come as a package?**

The song was in a finished state as a melody and a set of lyrics, and then it was up to me to arrange it for the group.

**Have you a favourite after all this time?**

Yes, I suppose 'The Carnival Is Over' is probably my favourite, and 'I'll Never Find Another You' follows on pretty closely from that.

They're both Tom Springfield songs. Then there are a few that I quite like, but generally as far as our hit records are concerned, it's those two, for me anyway, that stand out.

**Why do you think it is that songs like 'Morningtown Ride' are a type of song that doesn't exist anymore. Like, straight and conservative. Pop songs are not like that anymore. Have we moved on?**

I think there are versions of that style of song still around. I'm reminded of the Pharrell Williams song 'Happy'. [sings] "Because I'm happy ..." That is a song that I think we probably could have done our own version of 30 or 40 years ago — or a song like that. I went to see a Pete Murray concert last night in Batemans Bay. We bought his CD

and were listening to it we as we were driving home to Braidwood, and for instance, there's one song on it that we could've covered.

So, I think again, it's in the ear of the beholder. It's like talking about Judith's voice, and how each song impinges on the listener. I think that while there's a lot of alternative music like rap and hip hop, etc. nowadays, that didn't exist in the era in which we were performing, equally there was big band, swing and things like that that didn't translate into the rock'n'roll era of Elvis Presley and his peers. Once The Beatles and The Rolling Stones came along, that whole genre changed again.

So, that's a long-winded way of saying that perhaps there are songs that can still translate onto each decade.

**Does religion play any part in the group or your personal philosophy, or that of the group?**

Religion plays no part in my philosophy. Judith is a very spiritual person. She has a guru, a master in India that she follows.

We recorded and performed a lot of gospel songs in our time, mainly because Judith grew up on that kind of music, and when she started performing, before she joined us, she was singing with a trad jazz band in Melbourne. That sort of gospel material was very strong in that idiom in those early sixties. People like Frank Traynor and Frank Johnson had trad

THE SEEKERS RECEIVING A GOLD RECORD FOR GEORGY GIRL IN 1967. PHOTO FROM THE GRAHAM SIMPSON ARCHIVE.

