

let's talk

# TAP

with Christine Denny  
from Tapatak Oz

LET'S TALK with Bill Simpson & Red Hot Rhythm

Hi Guys,

I am sure many of you were watching *Australia's Got Talent* last month and were thrilled to see a group of tap dancers in the grand final! So I thought I would have a chat with the Brisbane based creator of Red Hot Rhythm (RHR), Bill Simpson and see how he found the experience!

### How did you come up with the idea of pitching tap dancing against Irish dancing for the show?

The idea came about after a good friend of mine Davydd McDonald (one of the Irish dancers in the group) and I were asked to try jamming together on stage simply as a 'filler' for a show we were both performing in. The director said 'we just need 2 -3 minutes so the other performers can get changed'. We took to the stage not knowing what to expect and 10 minutes later we were still going. Both we and the audience couldn't get enough! As a tap performer it is awesome facing off against an Irish dancer! There's so much the two styles can learn from each other.

### It is so great to see a group of young tappers bringing back a bit of that old school charm and style? What attracts you to this style and was it a conscious choice to move away from the more 'funky' style of tap that is prevalent on the tap scene today?

Yes indeed it was a conscious choice. Since creating RHR, I've tried to steer away from the predominantly funky or grungy styles that you see in a lot of tap groups these days. Whilst I highly enjoy and respect these styles, I've always felt that RHR should stand apart with their own unique concepts. In recent times, dancing like 'blokes' has been done - we aim to dance like 'gentlemen' again! There's something utterly awesome about that old school charm and style - it's still amazing to watch some of the old footage - Fred (Astaire) & Gene (Kelly) obviously, but also tappers such as the Condos Bros, the Nicholas Bros, Eleanor Powell, Ann Miller, Peg-Leg Bates... the list goes on.

Photo: Keith Howley



### Who are the other guys in Red Hot Rhythm and where did you find them?

My good friend David Sheather was the first to jump on board after I put the word out I was looking for tappers. Davydd (McDonald) knew Danny Jackson from the Irish dance scene, and was also quick to join once he heard what RHR was all about. It's not just the 4 of us of course - there's a range of other performers in the group also, from other tappers through to didgeridoo players and more!



David Cook, Channel Seven

### What was the best advice the judges gave you on the show?

We were thrilled to receive a lot of great comments from the judges, both on screen and off. Tom Burlinson especially seemed to have great confidence in the act, and the fact that it could be taken much further, perhaps one day into a full stage production. Red, in one of his kinder moments, said that "whoever wins, you guys have a future ahead of you". Oh,...and Dannii Minogue's little song at the end of our grand final performance ( 'I said a whoop whoop gadda gadda wheep wheep!) certainly gave us a boost!



David Cook, Channel Seven

### What did you find to be the biggest challenge when tapping/choreographing for a television audience as opposed to tapping on a stage with a live theatre audience?

The main challenge was choreographing a theatrical performance in a way that would come across best on television. In a theatre, the audience generally has a wide view of the stage the whole time, but when performing for the cameras, the shots are constantly changing, jumping from one thing to another. The difficult part was not knowing where the shots were going to be, especially when you've only got one chance at filming it. You can only hope the camera men pick up the tricks, canons, and other subtle moments which could easily be lost if the camera isn't focused on the right thing. In the end, you just have to trust the crew - it's their job to make you look good on the TV!

### What advice would you give to young tappers out there?

You're on the right track! A love of tap dance lasts a lifetime. (I can guarantee that my shoes will still be getting a workout when I am 70). Don't ever get comfortable and don't ever stop trying to get better - the best dancers in the world got there by continually trying to beat themselves. Tap for yourself - tap because you love it!

Till next time.  
Happy tapping. **CHRISTINE**

Bill teaches tap classes for kids and adults in Brisbane [www.redhotrhythm.com.au](http://www.redhotrhythm.com.au)  
And for any other tapping tips and some great tap routines and chore to go check out TAPATAK OZ at: [www.tapatakoz.com.au](http://www.tapatakoz.com.au)

