

let's talk

TAP

with Christine Donny
from Tapatako Oz

→ TODAY LET'S TALK with *Dein Perry!*

Hi Everyone and welcome back to another edition of Let's Talk Tap.

Hey Guys,

If you weren't around when Dein Perry first took Australia by storm with Tap Dogs, keep on reading to discover this world wide tap dancing phenomenon that started right here in our own back yard! It is inspirational to say the least!

WHAT WAS YOUR VISION FOR TAP DOGS WHEN YOU LAUNCHED YOUR FIRST SHOW 15 YEARS AGO?

Dein: The vision was to put tap dancing with rock n' roll. With an electric base and an electric guitar – anything that had a rock n' roll feel to it.

HOW DID YOU GET THE SHOW OFF THE GROUND INITIALLY?

DEIN: I originally applied for a grant from the Australia Council, which I got, and then we went into the studio for about a week. It allowed me to hire a studio and dancers and a friend of mine video taped it for me. Later I got to create a 5 minute filler for this programme that ended up being used on the ABC TV – and that clip was called TAP DOGS! And from that clip we collaborated with Sydney Theatre Company and developed it into a fully fledged show for the Sydney festival.

DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THAT TAP DOGS WOULD BE SUCH A HUGE HIT?

DEIN: Not really. We went out and did a lot of 5 or 10 minute spots with a couple of guys tap dancing (usually with my brother Sheldon and a few other people) and every gig that we did always brought the house down. But I seriously thought you couldn't get anything more than 20-25 minutes out of it.

IN YOUR OPINION WHAT QUALITIES MAKES A GOOD TAP DANCER?

DEIN: A good sense of timing and the clarity of the feet. But there are so many different styles, just within Australia. And that is the beauty of tap for me. Everyone's going to look different.



A MORE 'CASUAL' APPROACH TO TAP IS POPULAR ON THE AUSTRALIAN TAP SCENE IN 2009, BUT WHEN TAP DOGS CAME OUT IT WAS REVOLUTIONARY. WHO INSPIRED YOU GROWING UP?

DEIN: I never really had any heroes because I was just one of those kids who went to dance class and did my eisteddfods. The thing that jolted me to really want to do tap was when I watched the Sammy Davis Junior Tribute Night and Gregory Hines got up and did a tap without music. His beats were so clear and beautiful and he had his feet mic'd. With that, he really did revolutionize tap and he was my idol as far as that goes.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A YOUNG TAPPER ON HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR CRAFT?

DEIN: You just have to keep going to class and working your feet and getting technical - being able to split the beats up perfectly. If they are going to be even counts they have to be perfect even counts. That instrument needs to be worked and worked and worked. In terms of character I always think just being yourself and doing what comes natural to you.

THERE IS A RESURGENCE IN TAP ALL OVER AUSTRALIA AT THE MOMENT. DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR THESE GROUPS ON GETTING THEIR TAPPING OUT THERE TO A WIDER AUDIENCE?

DEIN: Be original. Don't copy other stuff. Get out there and make something that makes everyone go – "WOW! We haven't seen that done before". And that is the trick. That's what we have always tried to do – come up with different stuff.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR DEIN PERRY AND THE TAP DOGS?

DEIN: The website never stops ticking over with people all over the world wanting to see the show again because they saw it years ago. So it's not going to go away. Touring, touring, touring and getting these new vibrant generations cast, cause all us original guys are getting too long in the tooth now, which is sad! And having a good solid home for the Tap Dogs here! I have millions of other projects as well, but I really want the tap school to do well as it has been a dream of mine for years and now I have done it!!

DEIN & SHELDON PERRY BY DANE BROWN



Like Dein says – nothing beats practicing – so grab those shoes and clean up those rhythms!

So there you go!

The inside scoop on an aussie tapping icon!

Till next time – Happy tapping!!
Christine

check out the Tap Dog's website at: www.tapdogs.com
for heaps of tapping combos and routines all on DVD check out
my website at: www.tapatakoz.com.au

