



Reflections  
of a life  
at the top

# DJ Keith Ross

We met on a cold and damp winter evening at Pennington's Live. You can't miss the building. It's bright chasing lights are visible from far away. The club's interior is full of multicoloured lights, a large stage and is decorated to a high standard.

Keith Ross has worked at Pennington's as the main DJ since the venue opened in its current guise in 1999.

I sat with Keith in the dressing room behind the stage while the band "Men's Club" were

called for their set. We both watched as the lads took to the stage with lights ablaze and we could hear the excited crowd screaming. As the music started and the band began their routine, Keith told me the story of how he became a DJ.

Keith wanted to be either a pop star or DJ but as he went to a working class school in a working class area the expectations for children were pretty low.

Keith's father wanted him to become a hairdresser. As there had been a long standing family tradition it was expected that Keith would do the same. At the age of 15 he left school and went to college to study hairdress-

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"If the floor's full I feel good"

ing.

While at college Keith focused lots of his energies on learning how to be a DJ. At his local youth club the 17 year old budding DJ was provided with a single Dansette record player connected to some large speakers to play with.

Later that year Keith had his first experience at a real night club called The Purple Domino Club in Farnworth near Bolton. "Club's great but the DJ's crap!" said Keith to the manager, who was trying to gauge the opinion of the patrons as they left. Everyone wanted Motown but the DJ was still playing Rock and Roll. The club owner let Keith play the next week and soon he had a regular slot.

After Keith completed his course he acquired his first hairdressing job at Butlins. He cut hair by day and helped the DJ's by night. Here he got a feel for the nightclub industry and gained valuable experience.

Marriage in 1970 halted his career. His wife convinced him to look for a sensible job so he took up tailoring. Unfortunately In 1975 the bottom fell out of the market, businesses folded everywhere and Keith was made redundant.

Luckily he had been working part-time at Amabella's in Bradford, a small nightclub above a skating rink. The club was part of the large Mecca group. Soon Keith was working again and eventually ended up as a full-time DJ at Tiffany's in Leeds and there he stayed for the next 10 years.

He had a fun time at Tiffany's. Pulling people on stage and doing tricks with them involving balloons, fruit, spaghetti, and ice cream were all part of the weekly routine. At that time DJ's had to be Entertainers.

In 1987 along with many other DJ's from the Yorkshire Region, Keith entered the Radio Aire Double Deck Challenge competition. The competition's aim was to find the best DJ in Yorkshire. Keith won the first prize.

Family life has been affected by his career. It is very difficult to take time off when you are the main DJ at a club. Keith feels that he has missed out on many of the normal social occasions that occur at the weekend.

The music still attracts Keith to the job and is the main reason he has lasted so long as a DJ. He enjoys socialising with nice people. Helping people to get up and dance is his goal: "if the floor's full, I feel good!"

Some people want him to play bad records but he says: "You can't stand there and be judge and jury over music"

Five years ago at the age of 47 Keith had a very serious heart attack. He now lives life on a day by day basis and has even given up smoking.

"One of the positive things that has happened is that I really have got a kind of karma where as before I tended to live my life in top gear" he says. Keith tries not to let problems get on top of him taking most experiences in his stride.

The band having now completed their final curtain call look exhausted as they file back into the dressing room. John Pennington takes to the stage and thanks the band with a sarcastic undertone in his voice as if he was not entirely impressed with the bands performance. This is Keith's cue to make his way back to the DJ stand where he will soon continue to entertain the crowd until the small hours of the morning.

