

DARRYN LYONS

Darryn Lyons, the face behind one of the world's biggest picture agencies, is the man in the know and on the go, with all things to do with celebrity. The celebrity guru and commentator has certainly had one hell of an adventure building up to where he is now and it all comes down to one simple philosophy, and that is to 'Think Big'.

Originally from Geelong, Victoria, Lyons moved to London in 1987 with \$500 AU in his pocket, but determination like no other. He dared to conquer the British world of tabloids and photography, landing himself a role as freelance photographer at the world renowned, Daily Mail Newspaper.

Long before the glitz and the glamour of the celebrity world, Lyons was a war and journalistic photographer that between 1991 and 1992 completed two tours of Sarajevo. It didn't end there; he was then kidnapped in Bosnia, covered revolutions in both Romania and Czechoslovakia and also covered the momentous fall of the Berlin Wall. This achievement landed him the coveted Press Photographer and Best News Photographer awards. Brushing through danger with such ease, he still dared to dream and that is when the idea of Big Pictures was born.

In 1992, whilst employed by the Daily Mail and going from strength to strength, Lyons set up his first of many businesses, the now world famous Big Pictures, from a bedroom in his North London flat. He still remained at the Daily Mail, but as his business expanded, it moved into a commercial space, before finally relocating to the four storey present premises in the up market area of Islington, London. For two years he continued running his own business whilst working for the Daily Mail, which meant he was busy 24/7, but loving it.

Big Pictures continued to grow and the moment Lyons left the Daily Mail to focus on the growth of his own business, turnover leapt from 300K British Pound per year, to 1 million, increasing by over 100% year after year. With a motto of 'achieve the unachievable' Lyons, the man from Geelong certainly proved that with determination, hard work and a vision you can conquer anything.

In 1995, he expanded the Big business, opening an office in New York, followed by Sydney in 1998 and Los Angeles in 2005. Sydney, Australia is still a successful company, dominating the market down under. Not only is Lyons successful in the picture market, he is also successful in the development market with a property portfolio to this day that includes residences in Sydney,

Melbourne, Geelong, St Tropez, Dubai, Barbados, and London along with his two profitable nightclubs, the Eureka Hotel and Home House in his hometown of Geelong. In 2011 Darryn purchased Growlers, a Torquay beach bar and restaurant, and the iconic Elephant & Castle Gastro pub also in his beloved home town. He has also produced and created successful bands, launched numerous clothing labels, owned yachting, private aircraft and limousine businesses, car companies, UK night clubs, produced television shows and launched himself, as the brand Mr. Paparazzi. All of this has contributed to his ability to win the 2004 Entrepreneur of the Year award, as well as his place in the BRW Young Rich List with an empire worth \$58 million AUD.

As the empire grew, so did Darryn's presence in the media, which ultimately saw the inception of Mr. Paparazzi. In 1995, the BBC screened the first series of a show based entirely on Lyons and his commercial operations. Entitled 'Paparazzi', it was screened on flagship BBC1 and attracted excellent figures. A second series aired in 2006 that featured, Lyons' then band, Mrs. Robinson.

After the success of Paparazzi, Australian Dragon's Den on Channel 7 was soon to follow in 2005, with Lyons starring as one of the dragon judges. As a result of his appearance on this programme, his Australian profile grew and so did his business ventures after acquiring an online bikini store and an eco friendly coffin company to add to his ever-growing 'Big Group Of Companies'. In 2007, Tiger Aspect produced Lyons' concept 'Deadline' which was a reality show starring celebrities who worked to put together a celebrity magazine. The 8-week show was a huge success. Lyons trained the photographers, and journalist Janet Street-Porter trained the writers.

Lyons' television production company, Big Pictures Productions also co-produced with Two Four the series 'Exposed' that exposed the inner circles and lives of the world's most elite celebrities. In 2008, his company co-produced a show about Prince William, entitled 'William and Kate's Love Life' and in 2009 went into partnership with Rockabox to produce a celebrity news programme, which aired online and on Living TV in the UK, entitled 'Celebs off Duty'.

In addition to all of the co-production, Darryn Lyons himself is forever in high demand amongst the media in Europe and also Australia. Lyons has been a weekly commentator on ITV1's Alan Titchmarsh show, Sky News Sunrise programme, LK Today and Australian radio shows, TodayFM's Kyle and Jackie O Show, Nova100's Hughsey and Kate show and many more. Lyons currently writes a regular column for the Geelong Advertiser and NW Magazine, reporting on the hottest happenings in the celebrity world. On top of his regular media work, he is forever requested for radio, newspaper, magazine and television appearances in the UK, Australia and Europe.

Lyons starred in the biggest Big Brother ever with an audience of more than 10 million viewers in last year's UK return on Channel 5 of "Celebrity Big Brother". Lyons also anchored the Royal Wedding for CBS on "Extra", the USA's biggest syndicated TV entertainment show. Not only fronting but also interviewing such renowned names as Simon Cowell, Barbara Walters and Sharon Osbourne for the show. The Royal coverage broke all rating records in the US with Lyons quirky expertise as the flagship networks Royal correspondent.

In addition to his media commitments, he has also created the world's number one online celebrity destination, Mr. Paparazzi.com. A celebrity portal with the hottest gossip, pictures and information. This site won Yahoo's best online entertainment website for 2007/2008, with over one million hits per day and rising. In 2008, Lyons also released his first autobiography entitled Darryn Lyons, Mr. Paparazzi, through Penguin Publishers, which was a smash hit all around the globe. The same year, he also bought the successful racehorse Mr. Paparazzi and is currently breeding race horses, his first is due this year. With a passion for polo it comes as no surprise that Lyons invested in his own Mr. Paparazzi polo team.

Mr Paparazzi.com, UK's No 1 online portal for celebrity breaking news, has broken celebrity online records with 2 million people getting his celebrity gossip weekly. Mr Paparazzi.com.au will launch in Australia in a TV with DMG Radio in January 2012 bringing his European domination of celebrity contents to the Australia and New Zealand markets.

There is no end in sight for Lyons, as he is certainly not the retiring type. With his clubs, properties, businesses, and TV shows in the pipeline, along with his original core business, Big Pictures, still going strong, he still feels that there are more ideas to bring to life. His aim is simple and that is to be the 'biggest and best in the world'. Lyons believes that there are opportunities everywhere, which has certainly been evident with his life to date. The man with the crazy, colourful hair is not stopping anytime soon. What he has done is build an empire around business acumen, common sense and a good deal of daring.

However, do not let the glitz and the glam fool you, because Lyons still believes there is no greater place than home. As international ambassador for Geelong, no matter how much he travels, who he meets, whom his friends are, where he lives and where his businesses are, he still carries the greatest amount of pride for where his vision started, Australia.

Darryn was honoured to be appointed second International Ambassador for Geelong.