

THE PRIZE THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Thoughts on my mentor and me.

Shirley-Ann Rowley

Albert Einstein is quoted to have said 'Creativity is intelligence having fun' and this is exactly what I see in my mentor Keesha McLean.

I entered an original song in a local competition and won the emerging artist category. My prize was a mentoring package. Unsure of what that was or what I was doing I attended my first session.

The vivacious Keesha invited me into her home and work studio. Her colourful personality , creativity and joy exuded from her surroundings. My anxiety about being a fraud or a flop was quickly blown away by Keesha's infectious enthusiasm which coaxed me to release my own sense of adventure from under the flat rock it had been hiding.

A mentor has many skills but, in my opinion, has two pivotal roles; firstly to guide, motivate, emotionally support and role model creative professionalism in industry and secondly to open artistic vision in mentees. Keesha is amazing at doing both of these! Here are some personal examples.

I won a competition, went to claim my prize, fumbled unprepared and embarrassed through my song and came away feeling INSPIRED! From the first connection a great mentor can inspire you to keep moving forward.

I had a new band concept, Keesha said 'let's take a look', we showed up & sang and our BRAND was identified! A great mentor can see potential and 'industry fit' and then works with you to develop your pathway.

As emerging artists with very little music 'cred' that live in a town full of professional musicians, getting a gig can be difficult without HELP! A great mentor is a connector. A person who shares their knowledge, expertise, advice, experience and most importantly their contacts so you can start performing.

I think I may have won two other prizes in my life both of which I can't recall and have not made any difference to my life at all. But when I won the mentoring prize package from Cairns Vocal Studios principle and mentor Keesha McLean I seemed to have hit the jackpot! Don't get me wrong, Keesha is only human and can only work with what you've got. So, sadly I will never be Beyoncé or Tones, but I will be me and the best musical version of me that I can be

thanks to the mentoring friendship which I am receiving. I think that is a vital key to Keesha as a mentor. I've never felt I was a business or a project or a charity. On the contrary I've felt only genuine creative passion from my mentor which is has inspired and motivated me to reach for my BIG dream.

It has been 18 months since that prize winning day and I can truthfully say I think the prize I received is a wee bit magic because it, well really Keesha, just keeps on giving.