

INNER CIRCLE

# THE INNER CIRCLE CIRCLE

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FROM SONGWRITERS AND PRODUCERS TO CHOREOGRAPHERS AND CREATIVE VISIONARIES, KYLIE HAS WORKED WITH SOME OF THE BEST. WE EXAMINE SOME OF THE KEY PLAYERS FROM ACROSS THE CAREER OF THE PRINCESS OF POP

STEVE O'BRIEN

**C**uteKylie', 'SexKylie', 'DanceKylie', 'IndieKylie'... Kylie Minogue has had many monikers through her 36-year music career, but she didn't acquire those tags alone. There have been a multitude of collaborators, lovers and mentors throughout Kylie's life that have helped her shapeshift from one pop persona to another. In this article we're shining a spotlight on some of the most important people in Kylie's world, some famous, and some only the hardcore will have ever heard of. These are the men and women who have helped make Kylie the Princess of Pop...

## CAROL MINOGUE – MOTHER AND CONFIDANT

Not just the woman who gave birth to her 55 years ago, Carol Minogue was, for some of her daughter's pop career at least, Kylie's personal dresser. The singer told *The Sun* in 2015: "Mum would be there with a cup of tea for me at the end of the show, and then she'd be washing out the stinky costumes." Eventually, though, Kylie decided that her mother didn't quite have the speed necessary for the job: "In the quick change," the singer told *The Daily Express*, "it's like a Formula One pit stop. I thought, 'Come on, let's move you out of here. I can't waste five seconds in the quick change, mum. Out. Every second counts!'"

Fittingly for an artist who's been taken to the UK's heart, Kylie's mum is actually British, having been born in Maesteg in Wales, moving to Australia with her parents and siblings when she was 10 years old. As a teenager, Carol was a keen ballet dancer, but, unlike her daughter, decided against taking up performing professionally.

Even though her mum isn't in the wings anymore, waiting for her daughter's next costume change, she and Kylie's dad Ronald can still be found backstage, offering their eldest their moral support.

## STOCK AITKEN WATERMAN – THE HITMAKERS

Would Kylie have broken through had it not been for the guiding hand of Mike Stock, Matt Aitken and Pete Waterman? Certainly, they weren't there for the original waxing of debut single *Locomotion*, but it was their pop-oriented re-recording – and their own self-penned *I Should Be So Lucky* – that established Kylie as the pop face of 1988. Those first 13 SAW-produced 45s all went Top 10 and debut album *Kylie* was the highest selling album in Britain in 1988 (and the fifth highest-selling LP of the decade). Critics may have scoffed at the cookie cutter ethos of PWL, but there's as much Kylie as Stock, Aitken and Waterman in those early records. There's a reason why singles like *Hand On Your Heart*, *Step Back In Time* and *Better The Devil You Know* are still jukebox faves when other (non-Kylie) Stock Aitken Waterman songs have dropped off the cultural radar. And though Kylie parted ways with the Hit Factory in 1992 with the single *Finer Feelings*, it's not as if she's remained red-faced by her PWL past. She's agreed to cameo in a new musical about the music of Stock Aitken Waterman, titled *I Should Be So Lucky*, set to premiere at Manchester Opera House on 2 November. According to the producers, Kylie will digitally appear as a "specially created character throughout the show".

# WOULD KYLIE HAVE BROKEN THROUGH HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE GUIDING HAND OF STOCK, AITKEN AND WATERMAN?



Mike Stock, Matt Aitken and Pete Waterman, aka the 'Hit Factory'

Image: Avalon

## CATHY COME HOME

Kylie has worked with many, many, many songwriters in her career, but it's Cathy Dennis who was responsible for the singer's biggest-selling song. And it's clearly a partnership that worked beyond that, with the one-time singer-turned-songwriter also penning the No.8-charting *Come Into My World* (which netted Kylie and Cathy a Grammy Award for Best Dance Recording), *After Dark* (on the *Body Language* album) and *Sensitized* (on *X*).

Of course, *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* is just one of the career-defining songs Cathy's written. If that track will be the one that Kylie is remembered for, it's *Toxic* that remains Britney Spears' signature song. And Katy Perry? Surely it's *I Kissed A Girl* that's the track that most people know her by. But then Cathy Dennis knows something about having a hit record. As a solo artist she enjoyed 11 Top 40 hits, including the singles *Falling*, *Irresistible*, *West End Pad* and *Why?* (with D-Mob).

More recently, Cathy's been lending her songwriting talents to Sophie Ellis-Bextor (*Off & On*), Kelly Clarkson (*4 Carats*), Galantis (*Love On Me*, *Gold Dust*, *Runaway (U & I)*) and KT Tunstall (*I Am The Pilot*).



© Getty Images



Kylie and Terry Blamey, 1993

### JASON DONOVAN – THE CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART

Since they first appeared onscreen together in the 1980 in the long-forgotten Australian soap *Skyways* (as brother and sister!), through their time on *Neighbours* as Ramsey Street sweethearts Scott and Charlene and on to their No.1 smoochfest *Especially For You*, Kylie and Jason's names have been wedded together in the public's mind. But while they were coupled up on the small screen, fans were left to guess whether the two were entwined in real life. Well, it turns out they were, dating for five years between 1984 and 1989. Interviewed on *Piers Morgan's Life Stories* in 2012, Donovan revealed: "I think she chased me initially and then I guess I gradually gave in. One thing led to another and the next thing you know we were working and having this relationship."

In his autobiography, Jason went further: "Kylie was my first proper girlfriend and my first real love affair. In our first months together I think we both felt like we were walking on air. It wasn't enough that we spent 12 hours a day together at the studio, we wanted to spend every waking hour together. We were inseparable."

It was Kylie who told Jason it was over, with Donovan admitting the split hit him hard: "Whether she had started seeing Michael Hutchence while we were still together I can't say," he wrote. "But when I learned they were an item I understood that it was well and truly over between us."

Over 30 years on, Kylie and Jason have remained friends, often reuniting on stage for a nostalgic rendition of *Especially For You* and reappearing as Scott and Charlene for *Neighbours'* final (well, at the time) episode in 2022. ▶

### TERRY BLAMEY – MENTOR AND MANAGER

It's likely that Kylie wouldn't be the star she is today without Terry Blamey. As her manager, he was with her for 25 years, joining the singer after she released her first single, *Locomotion*, and was by her side through 11 albums. "She certainly went beyond everyone's expectations, including her own probably, to become so successful for such an incredibly long period of time," Blamey told AAP. But in 2013 the relationship came to an abrupt end. Some newspapers reported that the split was due to tensions between Blamey and Kylie's father, but Blamey himself told Fairfax Media that it was a friendly parting of ways. "As we reach this fork in the road after a wonderful 25 years working together," he said, "we do so amicably, wishing each other nothing but the very best."

The split came only a few months after Kylie delivered an emotional speech in London when Blamey was recognised at the British music industry's Artist & Manager Awards: "We started off in 1987 when I had what resembled a poodle perm. Who didn't?" Kylie said. "And as you might not know Terry sported a very fetching mullet. I didn't drink coffee, now I don't turn up for work without my coffee, and Terry didn't drink alcohol – it was that long ago. He would order a cappuccino and I would scoop the foam off the top. Twenty-five years later you can only imagine how much we've been through together: the highs, lows and plateaus, the good, the bad and the ugly. But throughout it all Terry's commitment, support and guidance has remained constant."



Jason and Kylie during their *Neighbours* days – Oh, the hair!

# AT THE TIME, THE IDEA OF THE WHOLESOME KYLIE SHACKING UP WITH ROCK'S PREMIER SEX GOD SEEMED AS LIKELY AS HAROLD FROM NEIGHBOURS RELEASING A RAP ALBUM

## MICHAEL HUTCHENCE – THE INFLUENTIAL LOVE

"I don't know what we should do first, have lunch or have sex." Those were the first words Michael Hutchence said to Kylie Minogue when they met at an INXS aftershow party in 1989. At the time, the idea of the wholesome Kylie shacking up with rock's premier sex god seemed as likely as Harold from *Neighbours* releasing a rap album, yet Kylie was together with the smouldering INXS frontman from 1989 to 1991. To the outside world, this was when she finally shed her nice-girl image, with the couple allegedly joining the Mile High Club on a first-class flight, sitting right behind Aussie PM Bob Hawke. Asked whether the in-flight hook-up really occurred, Kylie replied coyly: "I'm not telling. I never told that story. Only Michael and I know what really happened."

For fans, Kylie's relationship with Hutchence closed the door on her PWL/*Neighbours* persona, ushering in the era of 'SexKylie'.

"It was a magical time in my life," she explained to *A Current Affair* in 2014. "You're becoming a woman, you've still got a lot to learn and to have someone like that open your eyes to many, many things in a rock and roll way, in a poetic way, in a lovable, humorous, amazing way, obviously it was a great time. Even when it was slightly on the wild side, he was always very tender with me. I was a precious little thing to him so amongst the headiness, it was always very sweet."



Kylie and Michael Hutchence were the celebrity couple of their time  
© Getty Images

## WILLIAM BAKER – CREATIVE COLLABORATOR AND 'GAY HUSBAND'

Stylist William Baker has long been one of Kylie Minogue's closest collaborators and pals. Their friendship harks back to the early 2000s and it's him we have to thank for Kylie strutting around in those iconic hotpants in the *Spinning Around* video. Okay, it wasn't Baker who sourced them (that was one of Kylie's girlfriends, who purchased the barely-there shorts for 50p at a market in Kensington), but it was him who chanced upon them in Kylie's wardrobe, asking the singer, "What about these?"

Baker first met Kylie when he was working as a sales assistant for Vivienne Westwood and was often, in the early 00s, the singer's plus one at events. "He started as my stylist but today he's my friend, my gay husband," Kylie said at the time. Together they partnered up for the 2003 book *Kylie: La La La*, a largely pictorial biography with the majority of the text penned by Baker, and 2012's coffee table tome, *Kylie Fashion*.

There were rumours of a falling out in the late 00s (according to the *Daily Mail*, "Friends suggested that Kylie was attempting to show that she could do things on her own, following her split from Olivier Martinez, while others believe William spoke to the press about the couple's split, which ended their friendship") but by 2014 things were cosy again between them.

Outside of his work with the Princess of Pop, Baker has worked with such acts as Garbage, Tricky, Björk, Tori Amos, Reef and Jamiroquai. He was also employed as a stylist by Britney Spears for her 2009 *The Circus Starring Britney Spears* tour.



Kylie and confidante  
William Baker, 2012



With Andrés  
Velencoso 2011

## ALL THE LOVERS

Jason Donovan and Michael Hutchence remain the most high-profile of Kylie's boyfriends, but there have been others that have been equally as important in her life. Model Andrés Velencoso was one of her more long-term lovers, after Kylie met him after he was hired to star in an advert for her perfume in 2008. They went on to date for five years but ended their relationship in 2013 citing their hectic work schedules. And earlier this year she split from British *GQ's* Creative Director Paul Solomons after five years of dating, with a source telling *The Sun*: "Long distance isn't easy for any couple. Kylie and Paul really tried to make things work but ultimately the time difference was a killer – Paul couldn't exactly nip to Melbourne for a long weekend whenever things got strained."

Other relationships include French actor, director and photographer Stéphane Sednaoui, model James Gooding (who controversially went public with details of their relationship in the months after, with Kylie retorting: "It's sad James has let it come to this. I wish he'd just accept that we have to move on"), French actor Olivier Martinez, British actor Joshua Sasse and, briefly, singer Lenny Kravitz and action icon Jean-Claude Van Damme.

## STEVE ANDERSON – PRODUCER AND COLLABORATOR

Songwriter and producer Steve Anderson's relationship with Kylie stretches all the way back to 1990 when the Southend-on-Sea native remixed *Step Back In Time* for the DMC label. Since then he's been one of Kylie's most loyal collaborators, working with her not just on countless albums and singles, but also tours as her long-time musical director. "She is the sweetest person," Anderson told the *Belfast Chronicle* in 2016. "She is exceptionally talented and a lovely person as well which makes her so easy to work with. She works extremely hard and puts 100% into everything she does."

Steve Anderson has defined the sound of Kylie's post-PWL pop career and if you've ever seen Kylie live, then a lot of the brilliance of that show is down to this maestro. And as the songwriter behind *Confide In Me*, *Did It Again*, *Flower* and *Give It To Me*, among many others, he's the guy you've got to thank for some of your favourite Kylie numbers. ■