

# “AT WHAT POINT DO YOU GO HOME? IF NOT NOW WHEN?”

After more than a decade of chasing their career dreams among Hollywood stars and high-powered CEOs, showbiz reporter Kathryn Eisman and business guru Siimon Reynolds heeded the growing pull of their homeland and returned with two young daughters and a new focus – to (re)live the Australian dream

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**H**e's the advertising wunderkind who set up his own business at the age of 23. She's the precociously talented journalist who landed her first job in New York at just 21. But if you're wondering why you haven't heard much about power couple Siimon Reynolds and his wife Kathryn Eisman in the past decade, it's because, like so many Australians, they were part of the brain drain that took many of our nationals overseas.

For the past 11 years, the duo lived and worked in Los Angeles, where Reynolds coached some of the country's most successful CEOs and entrepreneurs, and Eisman, a twice Emmy Award-nominated fashion and entertainment reporter, also created a sock brand that was worn by the likes of Rihanna and the Kardashians.

But with the great American dream that enticed so many Australians now tarnished by the pandemic and political turmoil, the pair have spearheaded a reversal of the decades-long diaspora by returning home.

"We feel such a deep sense of gratitude to be back in a country that feels so free," Eisman tells *Stellar*, adding that when the pandemic first took hold, the family initially decamped from LA to the California desert resort town of Palm Springs. Life had rapidly become arduous, she explains, as their West Hollywood neighbourhood was boarded up, work was done via Zoom, home-schooling became the norm, socialising with friends was impossible and every grocery delivery had to be wiped down with rubber gloves and disinfectant. "We realised that if we were going to be in prison, we might as well be somewhere different," she says of their relocation to Palm Springs.

But even the easy vibe and temperate climate of the desert didn't fully soothe their souls. "At what point do you go home?" Eisman, 39, asked Reynolds one day. "If not now, when?"

For Reynolds, 56, who's been writing books and coaching businesses largely via video for the past decade, the decision was easy. As someone who regularly advises on converting adversity into a better scenario, he tells *Stellar* that coming home was a move that could have been straight out of his mentoring playbook. As the author of titles such as *Win Fast* and *Why People Fail* says: "Life is one big curve ball – how are you going to hit them?"

A recent article in *The New York Times* pointed out that, when forced into a "bell-jar existence", a lot of Australians abroad had reconsidered the balance between their professional and personal lives and realised the appeal of enhancing the latter. Eisman

concur, pointing out that as soon as the couple and their daughters, Capri, 7, and Monet, 2, came out of two-week quarantine in Sydney, they enjoyed dinner with their extended family. "There's no substitute for that," she says, smiling. "Family becomes the cornerstone of what's important to you. The true gift of this challenging year is that it gave Siimon and I perspective."

Eisman reveals that her recognition of the fragility of life had been building for years. "I couldn't stand one more day being away from my parents and siblings. I started regretting that even though my beautiful grandmother and I were very close, I wasn't by her side before she passed. I didn't want to regret having this precious time with my parents arm in arm, not just on a screen."

And having young children means she has a renewed appreciation for another element of Australian life. "You don't have to worry about guns in schools," she says.

While the couple's aesthetic glow can be attributed to good genes and a healthy lifestyle, their strong work ethics are of their own making. They don't so much blanch at the "power couple" description as point out that, after family, their second priority is to simply, as Reynolds puts it, "get stuff done". Eisman agrees. "Our ambition is more born out of creative drive, not the pursuit of fame or wealth or power," she says.

As well as finding success on TV in the US – on NBC breakfast show *Today*, then *E! News* and, later, *Access Hollywood* – Eisman launched her sock brand High Heel Jungle. Meant to be worn with everything from stilettos to runners, the designs were often a talking point during her interviews with celebrities, and on one occasion she had to move fast to fulfil a top-level request.

"I received a phone call from the stylist doing the final season of *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* begging us to get [my]

socks to her first thing the next morning so she could dress the entire crew in them as they walked on to the jet in the opening credits," she says. Reynolds laughs as he recalls offering to drive the precious cargo to the airport if his wife couldn't get a courier.

After a highly successful business career, the former ad man – who's renowned for his landmark 1987 grim reaper commercial that warned Australians of the dangers of AIDS – decided to devote his time to helping others achieve success. As he tells *Stellar*, the death of his own father at 56 was the driver to live his dreams as soon as possible.

"Above all, when I became a father myself it was an ever-present reminder to value family," he says. While COVID has made him busier than ever as businesses respond to a changing landscape, he says the only difference to his working life is that he now has a different artwork in the background when he makes Zoom calls.

Eisman will continue filing stories to the US and working as a showbiz reporter for the Seven Network breakfast show *Sunrise*, but she remains open to new opportunities. After years of squeezing two full-time jobs – work and parenthood – into a 24-hour period, she's also embracing being with her daughters who, she points out, are rapidly learning to say "G'day mate".

"Nothing matters – no amazing job or house or exciting lifestyle – if you don't have your family by your side," she tells *Stellar*. "That's what I equate success with now, and that's why I feel like I'm exactly where I'm meant to be: home." ★



**KATHRYN WEARS** (left) Marni dress, marni.com; Swarovski earrings, swarovski.com; her own shoes and rings (worn throughout); (above) Dion Lee dress, dionlee.com; (opposite) Anna Quan dress, annaquan.com; Tony Bianco shoes, tonybianco.com **SIIMON WEARS** (left and above) Politix suit, politix.com.au; Zara shirt and shoes, zara.com/au; (opposite); Zara suit and shirt, as before



**HOME FREE** (from left) The couple with daughters Capri and Monet in Sydney in September; Eisman (centre) on the set of *Access Hollywood* last January; Reynolds (front left) on the Seven Network show *Dragon's Den* in 2005.