

Celebrity support for this legend of the music industry



Picture: BRAD HUNTER

‘There was a lot of pressure on everybody to get the track done in front of millions’

Even celebrities get sick and so do the backroom guys who help make them famous. **MELISSA DAVEY** talks to the sound man behind much of The Beatles’ music who is on the road to recovery from serious illness.

RYDE Royal Sydney Rehabilitation Centre patient Richard Lush is receiving a lot of celebrity attention.

There’s been visits from band members of 1970s Australian rock band Sherbet, and “get well” emails from former Beatle Sir Paul McCartney.

It’s no surprise Mr Lush has such high-profile people wishing him well given his illustrious career in the music industry – he was a recording engineer and producer for artists including The Beatles, Oasis, Sherbet, Cliff Richard and John Lennon.

Mr Lush participated in nearly 100 Beatles recording sessions, and was a sound engineer for The Beatles’ famous *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album.

But his professional life is on a hopefully temporary standstill while he receives treatment for Spinal Dural Arteriovenous Fistula, a rare condition which has left him in a wheelchair after losing control of his legs.

“It took doctors a long time to diagnose it.” Mr Lush said.

“Originally I was undergoing chemotherapy because they thought it was cancer, but to cut a very long story short, another doctor called for a halt to the chemotherapy after he discovered it was actually Dural Arteriovenous Fistula, and from there we went on a very efficient trip, after a surgeon and radiologist then came on board.”

Despite his challenges, Mr Lush is determined to walk again and hopes to return to the recording industry which he is so well respected in.

He has been awarded Producer of the Year, has won numerous platinum and gold albums for both his production and engineering, and has been nominated for many Aria Awards.

He began his career in the mid-1960s at the EMI Abbey Road Studios in London at the age of 18, where he worked alongside producer Sir George Martin and senior engineer Geoff Emerick.

“I had no recording experience when I began working there, apart from an interest in music and I owned a guitar,” Mr Lush said.

“Life was totally different back then, now you have to go to one of these audio colleges for three years, pay thousands of dollars and join a long queue to get a job.

“To get in at Abbey Road, I wrote them a letter and they said to come for an interview, so I went for an interview and they said they had no jobs, but three months went by and they wrote back and said come for another interview and asked me to start straight away.”

Mr Lush said the highlight of his time at Abbey Road was being part of the team recording the first live global television link – The Beatles performing *All You Need Is Love*.

It was broadcast to 26 countries and watched by 400 million people around the world on June 25, 1967.

“It was such a huge event, there were millions of people watching and listening worldwide,” Mr Lush said.

“I can’t remember if I was shaking or not

but I must have been, because there was a lot of pressure on everybody to get the track done in front of millions.

“I remember the relief at the end of it was huge.”

He had been at Abbey Road for eight years when a position came up at EMI in Sydney.

“We all laughed when the sign went up on the noticeboard for a job in Australia for two years, we said ‘who would want to go there for two years?’,” Mr Lush said.

But Mr Lush thought about it and after some encouragement from his mum and his friends, decided to apply.

“I’d worked with Cliff Richards and his manager was Australian, and always going on about how great Australia was,” Mr Lush said.

“I stayed for two years and then went back to Abbey Road, but the rain in England and the food in Sydney brought me back.”

In 1975 he began working with the band Sherbet, who had the hit song *Howzat* which reached number one in Australia and made the Top 10 chart in the UK.

Other Australian artists he has worked with include Slim Dusty, Anthony Callea, Guy Sebastian and he also recorded the music for the 2000 Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony and for the Baz Luhrmann film, *Moulin Rouge*.

But according to Mr Lush, the development of digital technology and modern day recording techniques, which allow musicians to record at home, has seen the quality of music diminish.

He laments the days when recordings were usually made as live ensemble ‘takes’, and skilled recording engineers were needed to take advantage of the complex acoustic effects, giving each studio around the world a trademark ‘sound’.

“There is a lot of bad audio around now,” Mr Lush said.

“The golden era has gone, unfortunately.

“I’d like to have even started a little bit earlier if I had my life again, and snuck into the Big Band era.

“I would like to have been around for that.”



The cover of the legendary Beatles album.



Sherbet, with front man Darryl Braithwaite second from left, in 1974.