

Jimmy Collington, 62, and his wife, Margie Best, 48, have run their rockabilly dance and DJing business, Limpin' Jimmy and the Swingin' Kitten, for the past seven years. When they met 13 years ago, Jim had just come out of a 25-year marriage and Margie had sworn off men.

2 of US

**Jimmy Collington
& Margie Best**



Jimmy: I moved to Sydney from Adelaide, where I'd lived for 25 years, in 1997. I had just started to learn to dance rock'n'roll and my dance teacher told me about a rock'n'roll night that was on every Thursday. I'd just come out of a 25-year marriage, and after that an upsetting break-up, so I wasn't on the make or anything. But one Thursday night I was sitting at the bar and I was suddenly aware of this gorgeous redhead beside me. I offered her my seat, she said, "No thank you, I've been sitting all day and I'm quite happy to stand", but we started talking. At one point she had a dance with another guy and I thought, "There's no f...ing way I'm getting up to dance with her." She was fantastic! But eventually we did have a little dance, she was very understanding and we hung out all night.

At that stage Margie had been dancing for about seven years and I knew that if I wanted her I had to learn to dance. So I started going to classes Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in different studios learning different levels just so I could dance with her.

Margie was a bit over men when we met. She confessed that she was left with two choices – she was going to be either a nun or a lesbian! So she was very cautious at the beginning. But I didn't doubt it and three weeks after we met I asked her to marry me. She thought I was nuts.

I knew Margie was a lot younger than me, but I was a bit taken aback when I realised it was 14 years. We had a really in-depth conversation about it and I think she

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"Oh, God." One night we started talking about children and I was being very cagey, but then Margie threw out the clincher. She said, "Would it change my life?" And I literally fell about laughing. I said, "Your life will never be the same again." And it turned out Margie really wasn't that maternal but she was trying to suss me out.

When I turned 60 I started to think about dying. I guess it started when I got a stent in my heart because I'd been having angina attacks. I remember thinking, "I'm not ready to die, I've got too much to live for." And of course I started thinking about leaving Margie behind, trying to cope with everything. So I've got to focus now on some of the major jobs that need to be done around the house, so that if she ever does get left, she's not struggling.

Margie had a big operation a few years ago and I waited at the hospital while they operated. I was

seeing that with age, a lot of the shit in your life is left behind you and you've learnt lessons from the past that younger men might not have latched onto.

I had a vasectomy after my second child was born; I was pretty sure I didn't want any more. Then along comes this young woman and I'm thinking,

thinking, "Oh my God, I'm going to lose my wife, my life, my darling. I'll be half a whole." But they eventually brought her back, listless with grey-green skin, and I thought, "Thank goodness." Because I honestly can't imagine what life would be like without her.

She gave me new life at a time when I was older and didn't expect it. A lot of men my age are starting on the decline, but I'm going up.

Margie: Jim was sold on me that first night, but it took me a little more time. I'd had a few failed relationships and I had my guard up. I thought, "I'm going to be alone for the rest of my life." But Jim really chased me. He'd find out where I'd be dancing and mysteriously turn up. It was quite nice; no one had done that before.

Jim was a little jealous at first. He didn't quite get that I could dance with eight different guys a night. But I read the riot act. I said, "I've known these people a long time, I'm not going to stop dancing with them." So then he took private lessons, trying to get up to speed.

When Jim proposed three weeks after we met, I thought he was kidding. I said, "You barely know my last name!" But he was set; he didn't want anyone else to snap me up. He asked me again six months later and I said yes.

A month before I met Jim I'd been saying to two girlfriends separately, "I keep being attracted to the wrong kind of guy." And they both said, "Have you ever thought about writing a letter to the universe listing what you want?" I hadn't, but what did I have to lose? So I wrote a list a page and a half long: must like *Seinfeld*, must like dancing and the music I like, must not be a couch potato, must treat me like a princess ... it went on and on. I tucked the list away and totally forgot about it, then about a month after I met Jim I pulled it out and ticked off every single point.

Because Jim had been married before and has kids and grandkids, and I'd been in quite a few relationships lasting anything from three minutes to 10 years, I think we both knew what we wanted by the time we met. I also think the fact that neither of us wanted children [together] was a good thing. I have two older sisters and an older brother; none of them have children, so I've never really been around kids, and a lot of experiences I've had with them haven't been great.

Jim's got the gift of the gab. He grew up in a country town in Scotland where everyone knows each other, so he has that openness and can start a conversation with anybody. I often think, "How do you do that?" I'm more guarded.

There's so much more Jim and I want to do and places we want to go, but lately he's started thinking, "How long have I got left?" I'm not in that headspace yet, so it's a little weird, but I have to realise that he is 14 years older and it could happen. So I just make sure we live life as much as we can and still act like 19-year-olds.

Eight years ago, Jim lost his job as sales manager at a printing company he'd been with for 20 years. That collapsed our world a little bit. I wasn't working at the time because I had to have quite a major operation, so we didn't have any income. But through that Jim became a courier by day, which meant he got a van, and shortly after that we started the DJ business and were able to use the van to transport all the equipment. So although it was an unhappy time, it opened up this other world to us as well.

I think Jim and I are happiest when we're sitting under our mango tree, having a glass of wine. We never thought we could get a house, ever. And our own mango tree? If you'd said that to me 10 years ago I would have said, "Yeah, right." So we feel very blessed, with each other and with the scene we're in and the people we know. We're on the same wavelength and we don't have to explain ourselves, and we've got the same passions. It's nirvana, it really is. **GW**