



*An Interview with*

# TODD BUCKLEY



by Talitha Bakker ■ photos by F. Andri, V. Gai,  
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**T**odd Buckley has been involved with the Arabian horse for many years. We all know him from his current position as Stud Manager with Mystica Arabians in Australia. Curious about his history with horses, we asked him a few questions.

**TA:** At what age did you get involved with Arabian Horses

and could you tell us more about this first experience?

**TB:** I first got involved with the Arabian horse as a 12yr old boy. My Grandmother had a small Arabian horse farm and having grown up in a beach town, I used to love spending my summer holidays there cleaning out stables and lunging the older saddle horses.

All the money I could save at that stage went into buying my



first Arabian, a 3yr old gelding named Murrabala Myall (\*GLF Apollo x A Perfect Choice). He was a big stretchy bay horse with plenty of snort and blow yet thankfully lots of patience.

**TA:** What is it with Arabian Horses that intrigues you so much?

**TB:** I'm not sure we will ever know exactly what it is that intrigues us about the Arabian horse but for me, I am fascinated with the Arabians intelligence, beauty and athleticism. In the past I have dealt with several other breeds, yet to be in the presence of an Arabian and witness "Those moments" when one becomes proud, tail flagged and nostrils flared as they move almost effortlessly, is really something special. Whether it is at home in the paddock or in the show ring; that is something I will never tire of seeing! I think it is at that point you are no longer intrigued but addicted.

The Arabian horse possesses this innate ability to bring together so many different people from all walks of life to celebrate a common passion.

There are very few living creatures in the world, which have

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*the capability of doing this.*

**TA:** *When did you start working at Mystica Arabians?*

**TB:** *After meeting Jeff McGlenn at the 2006 US National Championships, I joined the team as manager for Mystica in early 2007.*

*In an ironic turn of events; the year prior to me having met the McGlenn family, I showed a Mystica bred and owned filly – Mystica Jameelah (\*Focus Onme Fa x Windella Precious Gold) to reserve Australian National Champion.*

**TA:** *What are your tasks at Mystica Arabians on a daily basis?*

**TB:** *Mystica is inherently a family-based team, run with only few staff that care for the horses. Because of this, I am hands on with almost all aspects of the farm.*

*During breeding season my days will often begin in the breeding shed collecting the stallions, assisting the vet with breeding mares, before handling and halter breaking the foals.*

*For me, the best part of this type of work is that there is always something different to do. Whether it be as significant as attending an international show or visiting breeding programs around the world, to foaling down at all hours of the night.*

*I also work for other companies owned by Jeff McGlenn including Promac; A lighting and power generation com-*

*pany and Caballus international, which is a newly founded company in Europe which focuses on bringing together the Arabian horse with other high end luxury lifestyle products and services.*

**TA:** *What is the goal of the Mystica Arabians breeding program?*

**TB:** *Mystica has had the same ethos from the very beginning, to breed beautiful, correct and Athletic horses which are able to compete in any corner of the world. We often hear people categorizing Arabians into “American type”, “European type” and even “Australian type”. What we want is to breed horses that are able to compete in all continents. Horses of a “universal type”.*

*Our goal is also to infuse bloodlines from the internationally bred horses we have acquired over the years into Australia to help strengthen the market, and to give other Australian programs the option of an outcross.*

**TA:** *What can we expect from Mystica Arabians in the nearest future?*

**TB:** *Mystica hit the international stage in 2007 and from that point went on to win major championship awards with the horses we purchased worldwide. The focus however for the past several years has been to refine the program and concentrate on breeding world-class horses of our own. It is now*



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that the program is coming to fruition and we are starting to see the product of our initial vision. We hope to see several of these young Mystica bred horses now owned by some of the most influential Arabian horse farms in the industry, competing in the near future.

**TA: What is your favourite and your most memorable moment you have experienced during your time with the Arabian horse?**

**TB:** Looking back, some of my favourite moments spent with the Arabian horse include having had the chance to condition and prepare some of the true show ring greats to National Champion victories during my time in the United States. Horses, which I was once reading about in magazines and then given the opportunity to devote my time and efforts towards.

Another major highlight was watching our three junior horses \*LC Prince Magnum, \*Maharaja HDM and \*True Desire LL win 2008 Scottsdale champion and Scottsdale Grand champion junior colt and filly respectively in the US amongst highly competitive competition.

One of my most memorable moments however would have to be as a child, showing an Arabian warmblood gelding affectionately named "Kevin" in my very first junior amateur handler class at the Australian National Championships. Kevin was owned by a cousin of mine whose only advice for me before going into the ring was "Don't let go!". Kevin was a big moving horse over 16 HH who placidly dragged me from one end of the ring to the other and straight towards the judge in the middle. Remarkably Kevin and I won the title of champion amateur handler that year.

**TA: Could you tell us which bloodlines are dominantly used within Australia?**

**TB:** In the late 1800's Australia was founded on crabbet bloodlines with the majority of horses being imported from the UK.

By the 1970's Many more Arabians were coming from the United Kingdom, but new blood was being added from The United States, Germany, Austria, Spain, Russia, Hungary, Egypt, Poland and Sweden.

By the 1980's the El Shaklan craze had reached Australia and still today, it is one of the most predominant bloodlines found throughout Australian breeding programs.

**TA: Mystica Arabians has been very successful in both Australia and Europe.**

**Do you think Australian breeding Programs are of similar**

**type to the European style and have you in recent years seen a change in the style?**

**TB:** Because of the Australian Arabian horses origin, The European Arabian Horse and the Australian are of very similar type. It is still common to see within breeding programs of both countries Arabians that poses that classic Arabian type, movement and beauty.

Today, with current information through media and frozen semen so easily accessible, Australia is no longer isolated from breeding with top-producing Stallions from Europe and across the globe.

More so than a change in style, it is apparent that Australian breeders are starting to demand a higher quality within their own programs in order to stay in tune with the rest of the world.

We are now seeing horses that are being bred in Australia, competing successfully in Europe, America and the Middle East and I believe this is just the beginning.

**TA: What are your hopes and plans for the future? Where do you see yourself five years from now?**

**TB:** Irrespective of where I am or what I am doing, I hope that in 5 years I am still actively involved with the Arabian horse and playing my part in working towards strengthening and pushing the breed forward. I would like to look back in five years and be proud of the breeding program that we have established and are continuing to develop at Mystica.

**TA: Do you have any interest in building a breeding program of your own?**

**TB:** I am very fortunate to have been involved with the growth and development of the Mystica breeding program. I treat all of the horses at Mystica as if they were my own and I am extremely proud of the direction the program is taking. Regardless of whether I am working with someone else's program, or one day have a program on my own, I think it is particularly important that the younger generation of Arabian horse enthusiasts continue to focus on rebuilding old and developing new programs.

I strongly believe we need to place a higher emphasis on true breeding programs, as they are the core of this industry. □