



Liam Bowden & Steve Boyd, Deadly Ponies



This power pair got together in 2009, just three days after Steve moved to Auckland from Wellington. A decade later, they're partners in life and in business, running the leather accessories brand Liam founded in 2005.

TJ: You met online and hit it off on your first date – when did you decide you wanted to work together too?

Liam: My strengths are more creative and less organisational and operational, so it really just started with Steve helping when I was in need and grew from there. He has a marketing and PR background, so his skills translated pretty naturally into the business.

Steve: I come from an artistic family and have always been interested in the arts, but I went in a totally different direction. When Liam and I met, I was working in politics and we probably couldn't have come from two more separate worlds. It wasn't until about six years ago, when I ended up resigning from my other projects, that we finally

decided to make a go of it. When I came on board, I was more like an ops manager, but as we've expanded I've taken on the role of CEO and ended up in a bit of a jack-of-all-trades position where I try to keep everything moving along smoothly.

TJ: What's the best thing about it?

Steve: Just being in it together, really. We're very in sync, which makes sharing the journey fun. I often think that it wouldn't really matter what we were doing – if we weren't making bags, I'm sure we'd be creating something.

Liam: It's getting easier and easier. It was quite hard maybe three or four years ago when we were sometimes getting in each other's way in terms of our roles. But as Deadly Ponies has grown, our

departments have grown, so now there's a clear division around what's an operational department and what's more of a creative one. It's also about the trust we have. Especially at the beginning, it was amazing to have someone on the financial side who I could trust completely.

TJ: You've just launched an internationally focused range, D LY P, stocked locally and at Boutique 1, Moda Operandi, Shopbop and Selfridges.

Liam: It was very much a creative collaboration. We both sat down and pulled apart everything we do and stand for and were like, "Okay, using these ethos and these elements, how can we challenge ourselves and create something different?"



We've got our unisex pieces and our classic soft collection and more cleaner pieces, and then this is more of an architectural story, which we've chosen to present internationally. They're like little art pieces – they're quite sculptural and look just as good from the side as they do from the front and back.





We're very in sync, which makes sharing the journey fun.

We've got our unisex pieces and our classic soft collection and more cleaner pieces, and then this is more of an architectural story, which we've chosen to present internationally. They're like little art pieces — they're quite sculptural and look just as good from the side as they do from the front and back.

TJ: Ideal for weddings...

Steve: They're very much signature pieces designed for that very special occasion. Our Pleated Bender, for example, would be a pretty special day-before or wedding day bag, and some of the small clutches are perfect for bridal parties.

TJ: Do you talk shop at home?

Steve: It definitely creeps in, but we've trained ourselves over the years to understand what our language is. We have quite a different work language to our home-life language, and sometimes pre-empt conversations by saying, "I'm talking about this as your partner". It's a different mindset. Sometimes you don't want an answer, you just want to complain about something!

TJ: What's the 'glue' that makes you stick?

Liam: The idea of not being able to spend all day

together feels sad and not as fun, so it's just that enjoyment of being around each other. Even though sometimes we get on each other's nerves.

Steve: I think we're very good communicators. We know when's a good time to have space and when's a good time to hang out, and that comes from expressing it and knowing how to talk about it. I think that's our strength and we're lucky we have that because I don't think you'd cope in this environment if you weren't good at it.

TJ: As well as launching D LY P and opening a new store in Auckland's Britomart, you've been planning your upcoming wedding in Queenstown. How's that going?

Liam: Good! Working together in this business means organising an event is very easy for us now, so in that respect it's made the wedding planning kind of too easy, and now we're trying to become more involved and engaged with it so we can experience and enjoy it.

Steve: Because we haven't been that focused on it, you don't get that excitement and build-up. Now that the Britomart store is open, we've refocused our attention on the wedding so we have time to get excited.

TJ: What are you most proud of?

Steve: We're really proud of where we've got to. It's a pretty special partnership and a rewarding business. But I think the most enjoyable thing has been the people who've worked with us. You remember the fun times with them more than anything else.

Liam: I think it definitely adds to it. Our staff refer to it as a family mentality and I think they sometimes play us off like mother and father. They ask one of us a question, then ask the other one until they get the answer they want!

TJ: When you started creating wallets in your garage, you probably couldn't have predicted this is where you'd be now.

Liam: It was a hobby for a long time, but I always had the drive to launch my own business and make decisions based on creativity rather than the bottom line. So it's great, 10-plus years on, to still be able to make those kinds of decisions and create something that's interesting and fun.

TJ: And with your beautiful man by your side.

Liam: Exactly — tick, tick, tick!

