



power of two

Rick Molinsky discovers another side to couples on the A-list

Plastic surgeon Chris Moss has just spent the weekend teaching his eight-month-old son William how to crawl.

"It was hysterical to watch," says Andrea John, Moss' wife and business partner, with unashamed excitement.

"And you should have seen the huge gummy smile William gave when he'd realised what he'd done."

At the same time Moss was teaching his son the mechanics of crawling along the floor of his Toorak home, barrister Marcus Clarke and his Polish-born wife, Ivona, were enjoying a Sunday morning stroll along Collins Street.

"These walks are one of our favourite things to do," Ivona says. "The Treasury Gardens are so beautiful to walk through, and there's the window shopping as well."

Babies and window shopping? It's hardly how you imagine two of Melbourne's A-list couples spending their weekends. Where are the yachts, the whirl of social engagements, the real shopping, the red-carpet fatigue?

"Oh, we get inundated with invites to dinner and events," John says.

"But I think everyone tends to glamorise a lot of areas, whereas the reality is between having the surgery and having a family there is a lot of heavy lifting to do."

"You have to be choosy," Ivona Clarke says, smiling. "I confess that sometimes I don't even bother, because you want to spend some time at home with family or with just your friends than go to some event just to turn up."

Ivona Clarke and Andrea John are from different backgrounds, but they share the distinction of being married to powerful men.

At 44, Chris Moss is a plastic surgeon to the stars. With his new multimillion-dollar surgery complex in Toorak, Liberty Belle,

already at capacity, Moss is poised to become one of Australia's most sought-after plastic surgeons.

Marcus Clarke, 48, is a barrister and a director of Carlton Football Club. After 26 years in commercial law, specialising in monetary fraud, he doesn't come cheap. He admits to being impatient, and one suspects he doesn't suffer fools lightly.

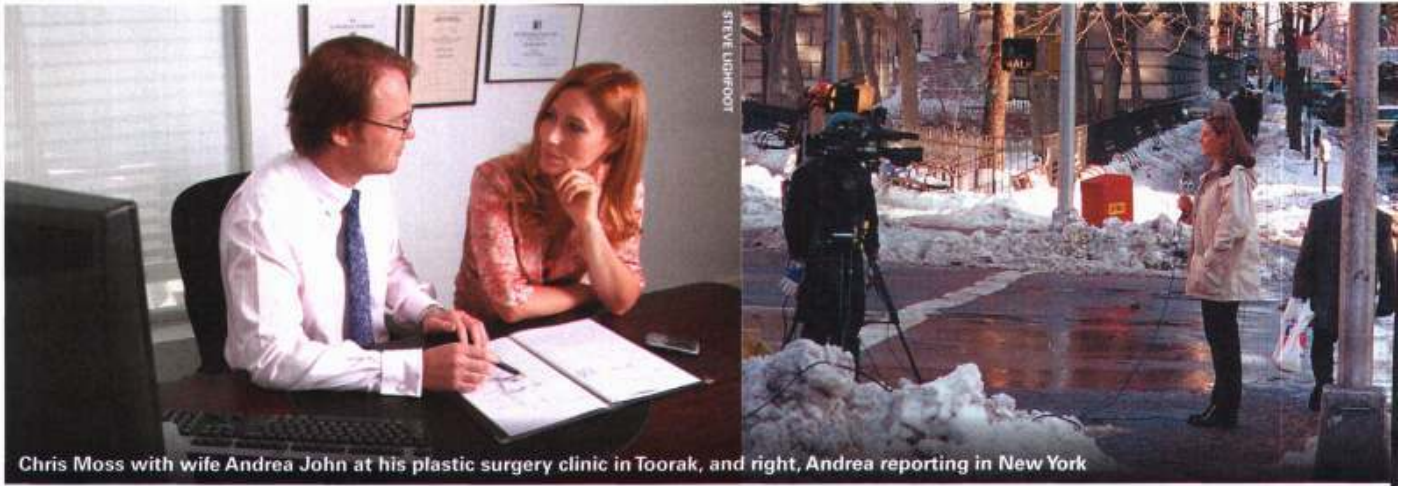
Their partners are also forces to be reckoned with. Although Andrea John and Ivona Clarke are gorgeous women who love their designer clothes, don't for a second consider them trophy wives.

Melbourne-born John, the daughter of AFL legend Graeme John AO, was a teenage tennis champ who later qualified as a tennis coach. She was pursuing a career as an accountant when she first met Moss.

"I was 20 and Chris was 24," she says. "It was 1991. At the time he was doing brain surgery, and he was this gorgeous ... he was tanned and blue-eyed ... Oh my god, he was gorgeous, and I was an accountant with a monobrow and a bit chubby."

"No, she was beautiful," Moss interrupts. "Absolutely beautiful and marvellous."

'I think it's about choosing the right partner. Whether in business, marriage or - in our case - both'



Chris Moss with wife Andrea John at his plastic surgery clinic in Toorak, and right, Andrea reporting in New York

Although both admit it was love at first sight, they only dated briefly.

"I was doing 80 hours a week (and still do). I had a long haul ahead of me," Moss explains. "I had another eight years to go, as I'd just only decided to go into plastic surgery.

"I knew that we had a lot to do in life, and so I knew we weren't in the frame of mind to settle down and marry back then."

John and Moss stayed friends as they pursued their goals. She switched careers to become an on-air reporter for Network Seven and later ABC America in New York.

Twelve years after they had first met and dated, John moved back to Sydney and could have had anything or anyone she wanted.

In the end, what she wanted was Chris Moss. But she kept her own name and became his business partner.

"I know plastic surgeons' wives who refuse to work with their husbands," John adds.

"Because a plastic surgeon (is) a certain type of person, they work real hard, and there's no real turning off. I actually really enjoy the challenge of work. I oversee the management of both practices, including Liberty Belle."

"Andrea looks after the whole facility," Moss says. "I look after the patients, the medical direction and training of the staff. We have a very clear separation."

Ivona Clarke has proved just as big an asset to her husband and their two teenage children.

The Clarkes are a rare find in today's world, especially in A-list Melbourne. They're unassuming, although obviously financially well off, and they're still very much in love.

This is evident by the way they greet each other as he rushes in from court to change for the photo shoot for this interview.

It might be just a simple "Hello, you", but it speaks volumes. "I have your suit and tie and shirt in your office," Ivona says.

As he heads off, it's clear that Clarke relies on his wife's management skills. It's been this way from the beginning.

"When I met Marcus he was a very young barrister," recalls Ivona, who grew up in poverty and saw the fall of Communism before moving to Australia from Poland in 1989.

"I was working at OPSM in Hardware Lane and was just learning English. He heard me buying lunch and asked me if I was Swedish," she laughs.

Was it love at first sight?

"For me it was. For him it took a bit longer. But once he did, that was it."

Ivona gave up work to become a full-time wife and mother.