

OK! This Week

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'IT WAS BICKER AT FIRST SIGHT'

MARIELLA FROSTRUP
ON FAMOUS FELLA FRIENDS,
HER AIR HOSTESS DREAMS
AND CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE WOMAN AT A TIME...

Within minutes of meeting TV star Mariella Frostrup, we are instantly in awe of her wicked sense of humour, intelligence and ballsy persona. As we dine at a private members' club in London's Notting Hill, we soon discover Mariella, 50, who lives nearby with her lawyer husband Jason McCue and their two children, is one well-connected lady and counts George Clooney, Mick Jagger and Hugh Grant among her close friends. 'When you've been around as long as I have you end up meeting everyone!' she tells *OK!*

When asked who leaves her starstruck, she smiles: 'Bill Clinton. I was introduced to him by Bono in the Groucho Club one night. I also met Michelle Obama, who was amazing – there's something about meeting people like that, you feel like you're in the presence of power. Forget famous people, they don't change the world. I love George Clooney and Hugh Grant but when you meet the powers that change the world, I'm in awe.'

Three years ago, the unabashed feminist launched the GREAT initiative, a charity devoted to working towards gender equality in the developing world, which she founded with musician Karen Ruimy. Here the inspiring star chats to *OK!* about the campaign, famous faces and real girl power...

You've had such a diverse career, what advice would your younger self?

To relax, because everything felt so important when I came to the UK on my own aged 16, I was fuelled with the determination that my life worked out okay, but so much of what happens you have no control over. I was also anxious about whether I'd meet someone and have children and if I got the work I wanted.

You did meet someone – was it love at first sight?

No, you haven't met my husband! It was very much bicker at first sight and it's carried on in that vein ever since!

Do you think it's harder for famous women to find a husband?

It's tragic that a man playing the field in his fifties is sexy and roguish – it doesn't put people off George [Clooney] – but for women in the same situation it's not seen as an attractive quality, it's seen in some way as a mark of failure.

Left: Mariella is working on the GREAT campaign with Karen Ruimy. Facing page: The pair show off their GREAT Boodles bangles



Did you always know what you wanted to be?

I wanted to be an air hostess, but I soon realised it wouldn't be fulfilling. I then wanted to be a foreign correspondent but my dad died when I was very young so I left school and then it was about doing whatever work I could get. Nothing has ever been planned – if you don't have a plan, everything else is a bonus.

Tell us about the GREAT campaign...

As a feminist it's very hard to travel to developing countries and see these women who do 90 per cent of the work of the land but have no basic human rights. If they're raped there is no law against it – there was only a law against domestic violence until a few years ago. We founded this charity to advocate, highlight and draw attention to what these incredible women are doing. We also support grassroots projects.

Tell us about the GREAT Boodles bangle...

Your girlfriends are the people who keep things afloat – I've turned to mine when I've been stressed and they've picked me up when I was depressed and we've lived through an awful lot together, so this bangle is a symbol of those friendships with 100 per cent of the profits going to women who nobody values. I love the message that valuing your girlfriends adds value to all the millions of women who aren't valued enough.

Do you have a strong group of girlfriends?

Absolutely, I have six who I've known for 30 years and I love, they're like my sisters. At this age, your friends become your family and often outlive marriages!

How did Renée Zellweger get involved?

Lots of these initiatives benefit with the help of the stars, so I knew that if we were going to go to Liberia, we really needed an A-lister like her. I spent time with her in Lake Como the summer before and she's such a great girl and because she plays Bridget Jones – a character every woman can empathise with – she was my dream choice. I just sent her an email and she got back, saying: 'Absolutely!' There was no fuss, no agents and no bother. She flew herself to London with a backpack, we had a drink in the hotel bar and left for Liberia the next morning. She found it very moving and distressing, but also very motivating. She's been a supporter ever since.

As a feminist, do you think the Spice Girls had girl power?

Girl power was nothing to do with being powerful, it was about dressing up, being sexy and making men fancy you. It was nothing about being clever or changing the world. Every headline shouldn't become a movement. **OK!**

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KAREN'S SINGLE, FRAGILE, IS OUT NOW.



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