

CATHRINE WEARS (this page) Scanlan Theodore dress and shoes, scanlantheodore.com; (opposite) Lee Mathews dress, leemathews.com.au; her own ring



“I’m like a kid in a candy store now”

As a publicist, Cathrine Mahoney knew how to get attention and control damage, sometimes both at once, with a careful choice of words. But when it came to the end of her own high-profile marriage to rugby league legend Andrew “Joey” Johns, she retreated inward, not knowing what to say. Now a thriving podcaster, Mahoney has found her voice and is sharing her side of the story in an irreverent new memoir. As she tells *Stellar*, “I can be completely inappropriate – it’s so exciting”

Photography DUNCAN KILICK Styling NICOLE BONYTHON-HINES Interview ANGELA MOLLARD

There can be no doubt that in writing about her divorce from one of the nation’s most famous sportsmen, Cathrine Mahoney is going to cause a stir.

After all, it’s not often you get to see the nuts and bolts of a marriage breakdown, let alone one involving a footy player as celebrated as rugby league immortal Andrew “Joey” Johns.

But if Johns (or anyone else) is worried the “tell-all” may reveal too much, Mahoney is adamant that her new memoir, *Currently Between Husbands*, is not an attempt to dish the dirt or wash her soiled laundry in public – even if there is plenty about nudity, underwear and tampon mishaps.

“It’s not a rant about men or my ex, or marriage in general,” the former publicist and current host of the podcast *So, I Quit My Day Job* assures *Stellar*. “When a marriage ends, you shove it all in a box and stuff it in the back of your wardrobe and don’t want a word of it. But unpacking it six years later, you realise time heals and you look at things differently. I was bonkers crazy in love with Andrew, and he was with me. It just didn’t last the course.”

Against the swirl of constant headlines and obsessed footy fans suggesting she wasn’t good enough for Johns when their 13-year relationship ended in 2015, Mahoney sheds light on the lunacy and scrutiny that comes with being married to someone famous and reveals all the tenderness, complexity, pain and gentle humour that a split can engender.

“I’ve written the book I was looking for when my marriage ended,” she explains. “I wrote it for all of us who slide down the wall or fall to the floor when a relationship breaks down. I write about learning to cry quietly, and the loneliness, and what a loser you feel like when you have to make a person out of pillows because the bed feels too big when you’re alone.”

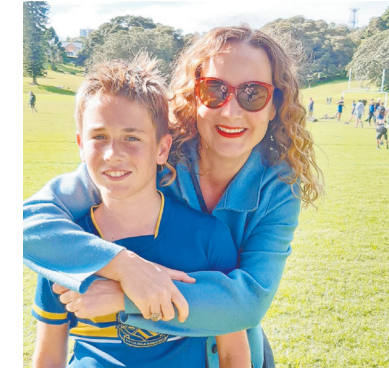
For those wanting a stickybeak into what it’s like to be a WAG, Mahoney chronicles how she made Johns wait for a first date, the secret visual message he would send her when he was playing a match, and the moment on holiday when she rifled through his luggage looking for confirmation that he was going to propose.

She also doesn’t shy away from addressing the controversies that enveloped the NRL star, including accusations of racism, his battle with mental illness and his struggles with drugs and alcohol. But Mahoney does tread a delicate line. “As a gross oversharer

I realised I can share within an inch of my life about me, but it’s different when you’re oversharing about someone else,” she says. “Especially someone else who is not your husband anymore.”

Johns, 48, who is now raising a three-year-old daughter with his partner, yoga instructor Kate Kendall, has read the sections about him, but hasn’t given Mahoney any feedback. As she points out, their divorce has been mostly civilised, but not, as actor Gwyneth Paltrow famously called her split from rocker Chris Martin, a “conscious uncoupling”.

However, Mahoney enjoys a strong bond with Louis, her 13-year-old son with Johns. He even backed his mum after she declared on her *Not Another Parenting Podcast* (that she co-hosts with Sarah McGilvray) that she wouldn’t mind dating a painter because she needs touch-ups



STILL IN THE GAME (from top) Cathrine Mahoney on Mother’s Day this year with her son Louis, 13, who she shares with her ex-husband, NRL star Andrew Johns; the former couple’s wedding day in 2007.



done around the house. “I’ve talked to Louis about wanting to be in love again and how, when he’s with his dad and Kate, I get lonely,” she admits. “At first he suggested we get a dog, but now he’s like, ‘I get that.’ We have an honest dialogue.”

Candour and humour are at the heart of British-born Mahoney’s work, which will include writing a regular column for *Body+ Soul*, set to start soon. To that end, her memoir also addresses what she calls the “beige” bits of life. “When it comes to relationships, you don’t just get the ‘I love you’s and the ‘f*ck you’s,” she says. “You get the, ‘Oh look, *Luther* is on the television, that’s exciting.’ Those are the highlights when you’ve been together a while.”

A former publicist for Sony Music, the Nine Network and Nova, Mahoney has had a professional and personal front-row seat to fame, describing how she once kissed Robbie Williams and was almost squashed by Jennifer Lopez’s bottom. Ergo, she’s better placed than most to see notoriety for what it is. “Even the most amazing high-end celebrity still goes to the toilet, still gets a period, still fights with their boyfriend and still has to get up with their kids, but they have to be ‘on the whole bloody time,” she explains. “I’d get exhausted sometimes being with Andrew because you’d have to smile all the time – usually when you were in the middle of a big argument.”

With her face on billboards, Mahoney is leaning into her own fame now. Helping her are treasured friends Amanda Keller and Tim Ross, who have written forewords for her memoir, one that a psychic predicted will become a bestseller and be turned into a movie. “I love telling stories, and yet there was an element of being with someone in the public eye that meant I couldn’t fully be me, because I can be completely inappropriate,” Mahoney reflects. “Now, I’m like a kid in a candy store. It’s so exciting.”

If “currently between husbands” is both the book’s title and her lighthearted response when queried about her marital status, it’s also a barely concealed hint that Mahoney, 47, remains open to new love. “The title is better than a Tinder profile,” she says with a grin. “And with my photo on the front, I couldn’t take out a bigger advert, could I?”

Of course, the psychic also predicted love will come Mahoney’s way around September. So for any potential suitors, she has two words: “Call me.” ★ *Currently Between Husbands* by Cathrine Mahoney (Simon & Schuster, \$34.99), is out Wednesday.

OTHER PHOTOGRAPHY: INSTAGRAM/@CATHRINEMAHONEY; HAIR: TAYLOR JAMES REDMAN USING HAIR RITUEL BY SISLEY PARIS; MAKE-UP: KRISTYAN LOW USING SISLEY PARIS