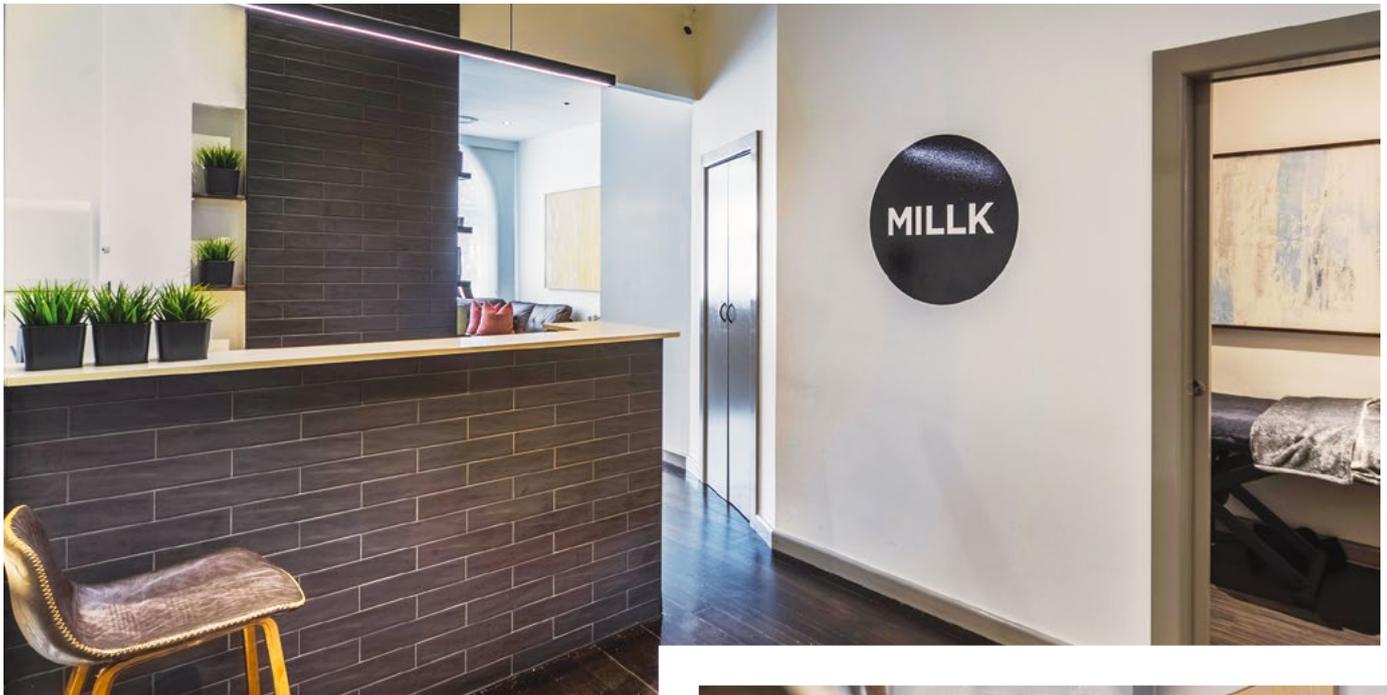


SMOOTH AS MILLK

Milk was established 15 years ago by three men: Simon Barnes, Anthony Savva and Peter Laburn. **Michelle Ruzzene** catches up with director and manager Simon to find out how they overcame gender norms to run a thriving beauty business.



Tell us about Milk ?

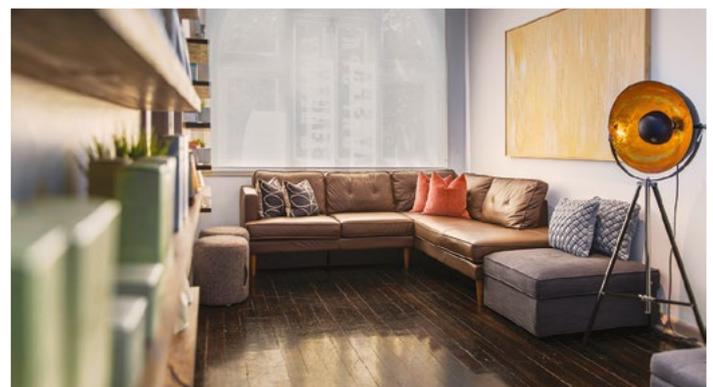
“We first started the business as a boutique spa and beauty salon which focused on treatments for both men and women in an equal fashion. It was initially quite spa focused and over the years we have evolved into a medi spa. It was originally only the three of us working in the business, all males, which was unusual and novel for the time. We opened a second location in Brisbane in 2008 where Anthony now lives. This is now his successful business and was rebranded as Archon Spas in 2016.”

Tell us about the design?

“From the beginning we have tried to create a neutral space. A balance of masculine and feminine. Original dark wood polished floor boards in a 19th century building, raw timber product shelves, metallic tiles in the treatment rooms, warm dark brown ceramic tiles in reception. Soft lighting and subtle large canvas art work of muted tones in various areas of the spa. An elegant large arch window allows sunlight to stream into the waiting area during the day. It’s a welcoming environment to walk into. We definitely wanted to steer away from the stark clinical look/feel. I think people relax more before their treatments in these surroundings, which helps to moderate services that are not comfortable.”

Who is your typical clientele?

“Our typical clientele is people from all walks of life, in their late 20’s through to 50’s. With an almost equal balance of men



and women, exactly what we were aiming for. Mostly people with a reasonable to good income. Our treatments are not at the expensive end, but certainly not budget either.”

Tell us about your focus on men?

“Initially in 2004 we saw the market for men’s beauty on the rise. At that time a handful of salons/clinics appeared to try and cater for men, not just gay men but men in general. We were one of those few. It was a new opportunity. Some tried to focus just on men and most probably found that Sydney wasn’t quite big enough for that at that time. We didn’t want to create just a men’s only environment. Men had been excluded with the previous model of the beauty salon with reinforced feminine surroundings almost hostile to the male visitor, especially when it came to male Brazilian waxing! Therefore, we didn’t want to do the same thing

in reverse, we didn't want to create a space that excluded women to the same degree. Millk is and was for everyone."

What are the most popular treatments?

"We have performed a lot of laser treatments in the last few years. Laser hair reduction is substantial for us given the amount of men visiting the spa. Laser facial treatments are also becoming more and more popular. Men's waxing has always been our specialty, we even have interstate clients for this. I think we coined the phrase 'Manzilian' many years ago, so without doubt this is also very popular alongside the laser version. Our male client's soon realise we know what we are doing when it comes to these treatments and often regale with stories of experiences they have had elsewhere."

What are your latest treatments?

"We offer a very broad range of services that cater to a wide demographic, which are competitively priced alongside consistent good service. We now have Dr Zac Turner performing anti-aging procedures at Millk; Zac appears regularly on Channel 9's Today Extra. In the last couple of years we have added current treatments such as HIFU skin tightening, genesis laser and Cryolipolysis. Millk is unique, there isn't another clinic quite like us in Sydney."

What are some of the challenges faced by your medi spa?

"Other than the normal challenges any business experiences every day, finding good staff is probably one of the substantial challenges we deal with. We have a great team at present; however in the past if and when we do find someone new, they usually require a lot of training to get to the standard we require. Especially in waxing and laser therapies. The fact that we do so many treatments for men does put some women off working with us. This could be due in part to the training they receive which may have little focus on men. The freshly qualified graduates from many of the beauty colleges still require a lot of training and years of work experience; which can be a big drain on the business. I had an apprentice at one stage, by the end of her four year apprenticeship with us she was a very competent therapist."

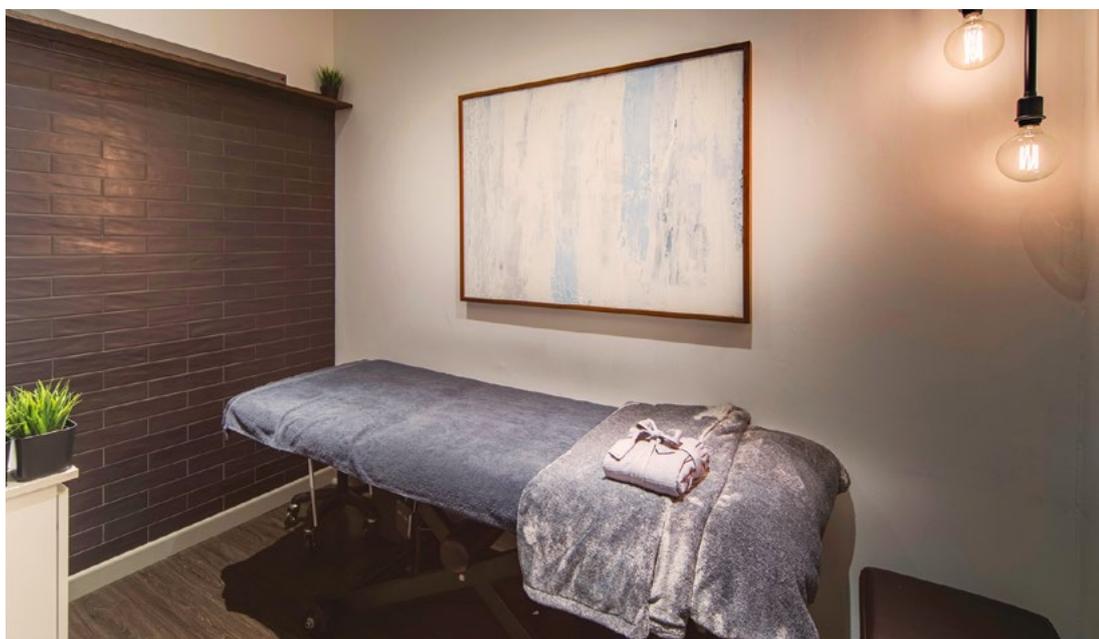
List all the retail brands you stock?

"Our retail brands are quite minimal now, compared to the past. Ahava, Christina and Clineral have been product lines that we had for many years. They are well priced and suit a wide range of skin types. We introduced our own private label cosmeceutical range a few years ago called Actives, this is the only range of its type we keep now. We use this both in professional as well as retail. Having our own line of products keeps our clientele loyal.

We also stock Palm Beach candles, V76 men's skin care, and Tuscan Tan retail products."

Tell us about your relationship with Cryomed?

"We have a great relationship with Cryomed. Most of the equipment I have now I have purchased through them. Josh has great ability when it comes to sourcing quality machines at an affordable cost for the end user. I trust their recommendations as I have found them to be focused on looking after the customer and making sure they are happy with what they have purchased. Most importantly, I feel Josh is dedicated to supplying equipment that actually works and delivers results. Since our inception in 2004, I have had many companies approach me trying to sell equipment that was just not legitimate. Prompt help from your



supplier is crucial if you are running a number of machines; we get that support from them."

How has technology influenced Millk?

"The short answer to this is; big time! Taking on some of the new developments in technology has been a game changer for us. However it's important to be cautious in regard to what actually works and what might appear to work when it comes to new modalities. I like to do my research and observe for a while first. Not being a therapist makes me a little more sceptical and I tend to not get caught up in all the hype with some of the beauty trends that have come and gone in the past 20 years."

What are your future plans?

"The business is growing, we are moving away from spa treatments and looking to take on more therapies that make significant changes for the client. Another clinic may be on the horizon, but only if we can give it the same level of attention that this one receives." ■

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