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***\*If you are using a high resolution display, these pages have been formatted to be best viewed with a medium sized font in your Internet browser.***



It's hard to believe that it has been almost three-years since I wrote the [e-Book on Photography](#), but there's that date of August 2001 staring back at me on the Table of Contents page confirming how quickly time flies. Here we are in May 2004 and I have written another 60 (typewritten) page e-Book for aspiring wedding photographers.

Just as the e-Book on Photography is not meant to be definitive, merely introductory, so too is this Wedding Photography module. Nothing beats real practical experience to hone one's skills.

Although I wrote the words, the majority of the photos used to illustrate the e-Book have been sourced from two wedding photographer friends who have generously allowed me to utilize their excellent images.

My thanks to Larry Rotta of Burnaby, Canada and especially to Jerry Tieng of the Philippines. I've worked with Larry for a few years now helping him with his wedding shoots while Jerry is a former Vancouverite relocated to the south Pacific, plying his trade in the tropics with his Nikon D2H and Nikon D70 kit. Without their photos, this module would have been decidedly the poorer for it.

Larry Rotta can be contacted through his web site at: <http://www.elan-photography.com/>

Jerry Tieng can be contacted through his web site at : <http://www.photos.ph/jerry>

A last note to people who have contacted me for a PDF of this module, due to bandwidth charges, I cannot make a PDF version available of any of the CameraHobby pages. CameraHobby is already the single largest web site on the host server I use and goes through bandwidth like that of a large business/corporate web site. Best thing to do is just save the HTML files to your hard drive and then print off as you desire.

I wish you all the best in your pursuit of spectacular wedding photos for your future clients.

*Edwin Leong*

May 2004

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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Introduction

### So you wanna be a wedding photographer?

Wedding photography seems to be a lightning rod for opinions and attitudes from photographers and non-photographers alike, some good and some not so good. It strikes fear into the hearts of some photographers who would just as soon face a poisonous snake in the outback than deal with the bride's mother on the wedding day whereas others turn their noses at the whole wedding photography industry as being beneath their skills.

Haughty attitudes will find their way towards the men and women that do plunge into wedding photography. They make too little to justify the time and energy spent building up a business, or they make far too much for so little work, as reported in 2003 by a CBS reporter (which caused a wee bit of anguish and consternation by the wedding industry).

There are enough comments and opinions that it can make one dizzy from all the contradictory statements and make one wonder why anyone would "want" to punish themselves by becoming a wedding photographer.



### Wedding Origins

Weddings are probably as old as civilization itself, the joining of a man and woman into a monogamous commitment (or man and man, or woman and woman in a few jurisdictions in the West, but let's not go there, since same-sex marriage is still very controversial in many areas J).

Over the eons of time, every culture has developed its own customs and traditions that the bride and groom follow, or are



encouraged to follow by friends and family. Weddings are usually associated with religious ceremonies, symbolizing the sanctity of the union before whichever God the bride and groom follow. It's an obvious association given the near absolute power of the church in past times, though diminished in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, still has great power and influence.

Today, religious ceremonies are still commonplace, but now weddings are legal contracts between a man and woman and once the government has been satisfied with the required bureaucratic paperwork and attendant fee, the couple can choose a religious or civil ceremony to conclude the legalities.



Looking at the history of weddings, one can see much symbolism and much superstition over some of the traditions. This is written from a western perspective, so you'll forgive me for not mentioning customs specific to other ethnic or religious groups.

As already mentioned, a church ceremony represents the couple's commitment not only to themselves, but also to God for their holy vows.

The wearing of white by the bride represents the purity of the bride, as well as to ward off evil spirits.

The word "bride" is apparently old English for cook – take that for all of its connotations in today's world J

Having witnesses at the wedding dates to Roman times when similarly dressed attendants were required to confuse evil spirits from knowing exactly which man and woman were the wedding couple.

No matter what the custom and tradition, weddings encompass the whole social strata of humanity. No matter how limited or unlimited the budget, there is a desire to celebrate the union and joining of two families. From the very simple to the lavish, there is a style of wedding for everyone and of course, there is a wedding photographer that can be found for each type.

Although I always get butterflies in my stomach prior to a wedding shoot, I've usually enjoyed the event. It's wonderful to be amongst so many people being happy, having fun and celebrating the union of two people.



Like many other photographers taking the craft seriously, there inevitably came a day when I was asked to take photos for friends at their wedding. Rather than instantly shrink away from the request, as other seem to do, I agreed and went headlong into it trying to learn and follow through the events of the day. After that, it spiraled from there into trying to do weddings more seriously and formally. As of now, I am not formally running my own business, but I am involved with another photographer's wedding business and assist him as second photographer. It keeps me active in photography and presents challenges to improve and learn new methods and styles of photography. In short, it's fun and I enjoy it and while dreams of my own business dance in my head, I'm in no particular hurry at this time.

While I'm no veteran with hundreds of shoots under my belt, mere dozens only, I thought I could offer some general comments on how to pursue wedding photography from the perspective of a part time photographer for other part time and amateur photographers interested in becoming involved with weddings.

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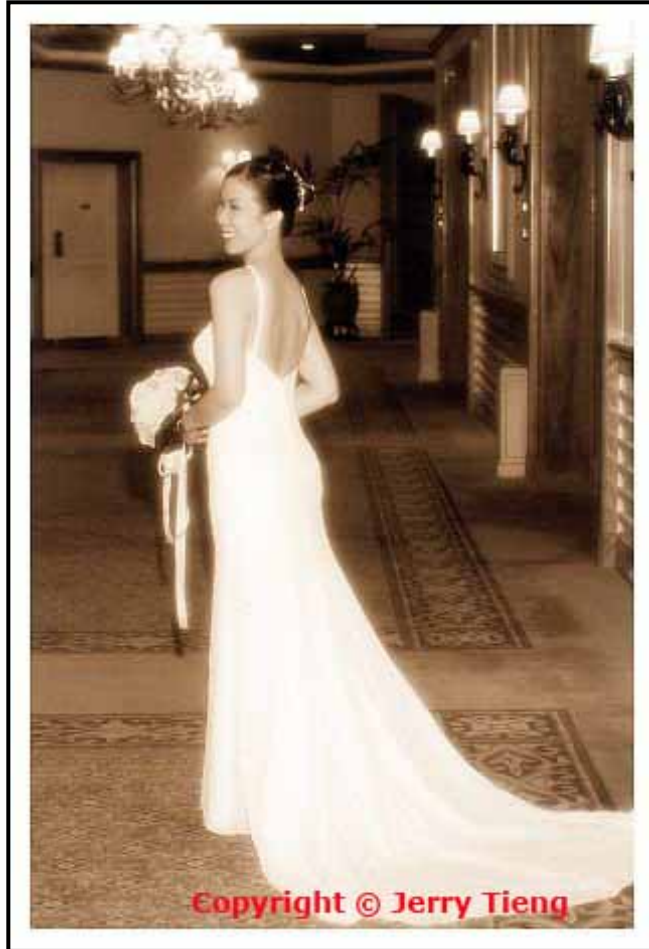
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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Business Considerations

Many photographers run sideline businesses without a formal structure, that is, they do not incorporate themselves and do not take advantage of any tax breaks that may be available to them. Also, a company assumes the liabilities of anything that happens in the course of your business operations during an event.

You may find it worthwhile to create a more formal structure to market your photographic services rather than running it ad hoc, or as a sole proprietorship. On your own, any liabilities incurred by you conducting your business means risking your personal assets. Establishing a limited company creates a legal entity that you can create a personal relationship to but assumes all the risks of your business.

The company is the one that advertises the services and signs the contract with the clients, but would own no assets to sue for. You in turn rent your personal equipment to the company to facilitate the fulfillment of the client contract. The company also hires you to provide the photographic services. In the end, the company makes no money and loses no money because revenue in should equal expenditures out. However, if you decide to put assets under the company's name, then the company has made capital expenditures that may result in the company going into debt. Servicing the debt as well as paying all the rental and services fees charged to the company may allow you to declare a loss on your personal taxes. To obtain further details, don't contact me, contact a tax expert.



To go further with the tax considerations though, let's say that you use a room to hold client meetings and another room as your home office to keep track of accounts through a computer. If you have Internet access to facilitate the creation and maintaining of a business web site, as well as FAX machines, telephones etc., all of these are business expenses.

For the client meeting room and office, if the two combined make up, say 20 percent of your home (arbitrary numbers used here), then you can write off 20 percent of your mortgage payment as a business expense. Again, talk to a tax expert to determine the exact percentages allowed. Same goes for household bills and utilities to maintain the house and hence the meeting room.

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## Insurance

Whether you run the business as a company or a sole proprietorship, insurance is a key



consideration. As a business, there is little choice but to take out a commercial policy to cover your photographic equipment and to cover third-party liability incase someone trips over your tripod and sues you for a broken ankle. It may be possible for the couple to indemnify you of responsibility, but I would not want to take any chances if I were running a business and making a good return from it.

Commercial insurance policies are not cheap. In Canada, premiums start at over \$1000 for a policy and usually go much higher for all the equipment that a photographer may own and the liability that the photographer may face. There may be other options available if you have an insurance broker to search out a good policy for you, but you are likely going to face a severe reduction in coverage for equipment if you choose lower-cost non-commercial coverage. Thankfully, insurance is another business expense to write off.

For photographers in Canada, there is the Goods and Services Tax (GST) that generally has to be charged for any goods or service purchased. However, for the small businessperson offering photo services, the GST is not required to be charged until gross business income exceeds \$35,000. There may also be GST rebates or claim backs available for certain equipment purchases.

For British Columbia photographers, registering your business allows you to bypass the payment of the provincial sales tax (PST). You need a PST number, which is provided on an official card, and you normally either present the card or more typically, tell the clerk or the lab the PST number and viola, no PST to pay on the bill. This applies only to film and processing charges and not to equipment expenditures (as far as I know). You would want to contact the BC government for further details of all the hoops and hurdles to jump through to obtain a PST number for your company.



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## Contracts

If you wish to keep to a formal business structure than you would want to use a written contract outlining your services and the client's commitment in retaining you by paying a percentage of your total package price.

Contracts should obviously be drafted by a lawyer, but a Google search should bring up generic contracts made available to aspiring photographers for such purposes.



You should also consider incorporating permission to utilize the wedding photos you have taken for future marketing purposes in print and electronic formats. Undoubtedly, you want to retain copyright over the images you have taken unless you are willing to sell the negatives and be done with that particular job. Before doing so, you obviously want to print or scan all the good photos for marketing purposes later on with the understanding from the client that this is your right as the photographer.

You never know when some hack writer will approach you and ask for permission to use your photos to illustrate some second rate e-book on the topic.

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## Advertising

If you reach a point in your wedding photography that you feel the need to expand and get yourself known in the market, you need to consider advertising and other marketing approaches.

Formal advertising is not cheap, whether it is a listing in the local Yellow Pages or an ad in a local wedding directory. The rates charged could be the profits from two or more full day weddings and as a part time photographer that could be a lot of profit to make up for depending on the market you're in.

I know a couple of local photographers that advertised in the Vancouver Wedding Directory, a once a year publication that comes out in early spring, in time to help brides out for the coming summer wedding season. Their full-page ads cost a few thousand dollars just from this one, once a year magazine, let alone any other marketing costs they have to bear. That's a fair bit of coin to be blowing even if the directory gets widely distributed.

There are also wedding and bridal fairs that require a fee to be paid to have a display to show prospective brides your photos. Wedding boutiques that are not already providing in-house photography services are another source of marketing to get your name known to people in the business. However, the usual thing for wedding boutiques is to allow you to place your business card on a pinup board along with dozens of other photographers, not exactly the best way to get noticed.

One photographer I know did a quid pro quo with a well known and well regarded wedding dress designer in Vancouver. He did some model shoots using some of the custom dresses and gave the designer usage of the photos and in return he gets referrals from her while also being able to utilize the images for his own marketing needs. Hit the streets and start talking to people 'cause



you never know what might come of it. If you don't try you won't be getting anything out of it.

Other non wedding-related businesses also have business card boards and I've seen photographers post their cards on such boards. A traditional business card is quite small and lacking in viewing potential, so many photographers turn to 4x6 sized cards with a sample of their work, be it a wedding, portrait, or other eye-catching image. If you are already involved with the digital darkroom, creating and printing such cards should be quite cost-effective. I suggest matte paper though, as glossy may look fantastic straight out of the printer, but can be easily scuffed and scratched and you don't want your name looking worn, torn and dog-eared in the public domain.

It goes without saying that a serious wedding photographer should have a web site as a primary means of marketing and being able to show your work in the virtual world. Many of the local Vancouver web sites were created by a team of web designers known as Dreamweavers and their fee for creating great looking sites seem pretty reasonable, but you're still looking at over \$1000 for a basic web site with a gallery to showcase your images.

On top of that is the cost of hosting the web site at an ISP or other host, usually on a monthly basis and if your web site is so large or so popular that it pumps out a huge amount of bandwidth, you face additional costs to cover any excess not covered in your hosting plan. I would expect that most wedding photography web sites would be well within the packages offered by a host.

If you are at all handy with HTML, you could try and create the web site yourself or do your own updates using templates provided by the web developer. However, unless you are especially good at being an amateur graphic designer, it is probably best to let someone else design the site and then have yourself do the updates to reduce ongoing costs for every time you have a minor update to do. I'm talking about being able to update the image gallery easily, as well as pricing and scheduling if offered.

If you are quite busy during the season, a calendar page is a nice idea to show prospective clients when you are booked and which days are still open, but if you're not busy, best not to reveal to the world how much time you have on your hands.

A gallery is a must for any wedding photography web site. You must provide samples of your work to prospective clients because it beats the heck out of having to utilize your time to do such showings in person. Since so much of wedding photography is still shot with film, a film scanner may be a good investment to digitize your images, as well giving you the opportunity to print off your work.

For printing needs, a film scanner with Digital ICE is more expensive, but a huge time saver from not having to spot for dust with color films. ICE unfortunately is not effective with real B&W films because ICE is hardware and software based and the hardware is unable to cut through the silver halide via the infrared scanning channel. Another reason to use the chromogenic B&W films such as Kodak Pro B&W or Ilford XP2 (I assume because I have not actually scanned such films with an ICE featured film scanner).

A more cost effective solution for those not intending to print from their scans is to scan the proof prints with a flatbed. Flatbeds are cheap like borsch with good enough scanners costing as little as \$100. Dust is not much of a concern because you only have to spot the most egregious specks due to the very small size of an image for web usage.

Consider an automated gallery producing software to save you time in having to manually create every single page. However, I have yet to find a gallery application that can create a gallery automatically from existing image files and be powerful enough to allow the creation of new pages for when I want to add more or change the existing images. If anyone has some ideas or knowledge of what I seek, please let us know, because everything that I have access to seems to require creating a gallery from scratch again every time I want to change or add an image.

I notice that more and more wedding web sites provide a list of packages and prices, so this should also be incorporated into the web site. There's no point in keeping it a secret since

interested couples will call up and ask you your prices and then compare them to other photographers' rates anyway.

Some basic biographical information about yourself, your experiences and any significant clients that would help your marketing should also be included.

Your web site should have a killer image on the home page to draw viewers in to want to see more. A gallery of your best photos, package pricing, bio and some flowery mission statement or goals would round out a basic web site. It does not have to be huge or complex, just eye catching from a good design.

There isn't much more that I can say about advertising and marketing, except to say that most established photographers do some form of it to keep their name in the public view and that in the beginning when first establishing your business, you would need to do a lot of it. But just keep in mind the potentially high costs involved versus what kind of business you actually have to pay those bills.

The goal of most photographers is to do away with marketing altogether and work solely on referral business from past clients, but then how do you get your name out to those first sets of clients that can generate future referral business?

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## Copyright

This section is more for the Canadian readers wanting to understand a little bit more how copyright works in Canada. Most of this information was gleaned from an article written by Brian Boyle for PhotoNews (Spring 2004). PhotoNews is a newsletter/magazine published by photo equipment distributor Amplis Foto and sent out to customers of Amplis Foto distributed products (Hasselblad, Bronica, Tamron, Manfrotto, Gitzo, Tamrac, etc). Since this is about copyright, best to make sure I cite the proper source of the material below J

In Canada, when a photographer is commissioned to create original photos for a client, as soon as the photos have been handed over and the photographer paid, the copyright for the original photos belong to the client, not the photographer.

The implications for the wedding photographer are that the client owns the copyright to the photos you took once they have paid for the shoot and taken away their albums. You may hold onto the negatives, but permission must be sought from the client to utilize those images for promotional purposes. I suspect that most clients do not know this and probably most amateur photographers getting into weddings do not know this either.

To workaroud this automatic assigning of the copyright to the client for commissioned work, the photographer must draft a contract to clearly indicate that the copyright remains with the photographer and that the client has no claim to the images other than usage rights. This is more appropriate for the commercial type of photography, but if you're the type of wedding photographer that wants to hold onto the negatives then it is best to ensure that a proper contract is drafted, understood and signed by the client.

For other photographers, the copyright is not much of an issue because they either sell or give away the negatives as part of the package. However, even so, if they wish to display those photos as enlargements in the studio or window display, they must have permission from the client and it is best to do so in writing. A written contract makes very clear what the intentions are and no confusion will arise from verbal permissions given.

Related to copyright are the privacy rights of individuals in Canada. If you have a photograph of a recognizable person, you cannot use that photograph without the permission of the person in it. A model release provides the workaround to this issue.

There are obviously some considerations allowed for photojournalists taking photos of a

newsworthy event and not utilizing the image for commercial purposes, but I am not familiar with all the nuances of this example. There has been an instance of a Quebec photographer and magazine being sued over the photo of a recognizable face being run in the publication without prior consent, despite the photo being "editorial" in nature.

The Canadian Photographers Coalition is working to change the copyright in Canada to be more like the US copyright laws in which the photographer automatically is assigned the copyright for any image produced unless specifically signed away to another entity.

I was somewhat familiar with the copyright issue from past work done for my workplace when my manager and I had a short discussion about the matter and informed me that copyright actually belonged to the workplace.

I think I could have disputed some of the photos taken and used by my workplace since they asked me to take the photos but never paid me for it, but I express this as a hypothetical and not as something to actually be followed up on. For photographic work I do now for my workplace, I have come to agreement for payment options and copyright is not an issue I have any problems with because I do not foresee why and how I could ever make use of photos of my workplace events for future commercial usage.

In another example, I shot some food photos for a restaurant and as I was commissioned to produce original work and was paid for it, the copyright belongs to the restaurant owner. Some of those images could have been used over again, but legally, I would be required to obtain the restaurant owner's permission to utilize them in another capacity.

The last personal example I can offer is of a photo I took used in a TV commercial by a radio station. They did not commission the work, but instead found my image through the Internet. They solicited permission to use the image for a one-year period and we came to terms on usage price to be paid. I made clear that I retained the copyright to the image and that their fee paid would only be for that one-year term. The radio station rep agreed to the terms and the deal was struck and about a month later I saw my image on TV J

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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Equipment Considerations

Photography is obviously very equipment oriented. I, as well as others, can speak out until we're blue in the face that the equipment is merely a means to an end and that end is a fine photograph that you, as the photographer, must consciously be involved in producing. The camera, lens, filter, tripod, etc., are all just the tools utilized to achieve that end result just as a painter utilizes various brushes, paints and surfaces to create his or her art. However, without the tools, there are no photographs, so we must give more than a passing thought to equipment choices.

Just as professional photographers in other sectors of the industry can utilize a wide range of equipment to create their photos, so too do wedding photographers. The advent of digital as a high quality format onto its own will be discussed later on, as for now, I'll discuss film cameras.

While wedding professionals of old utilized large format cameras, I have never seen one in my local area using a large format camera. I think it would be interesting to utilize a 4x5 for some formal group shots, but the time required to setup, compose and expose does not lend itself well to many weddings days with limited time resources available.



Medium format systems are as slow as one would want to get for photographing a wedding and many photographers just go straight 35mm format all the way. Both systems have their advantages and disadvantages, such that many photographers utilize both systems in their wedding day coverage and workflow.

### Medium Format

The format that straddles the extreme of large format on one side and 35mm small format on the other, medium format has been a wedding photography workhorse system for probably half a century with the square format 6x6 Hasselblad being the king of the heap. Of course there are other medium format sizes of 6x4.5 and 6x7 (centimeters) that are also popular with the 645 the current darling of the medium format world because that is where all the technological evolution of the venerable system is occurring.





645 offer auto focus (comparable to late 1980s 35mm for speed and accuracy), evaluative metering and a host of other electronic conveniences that are taken for granted on even entry level 35mm cameras. Indeed, if one reviews the specifications of current topnotch 645 AF cameras, one would find them to be nearly identical to mid-level 35mm cameras.

Such things as:

- 1/4000 top shutter speed
- 1/125 flash sync speed
- evaluative or matrix metering
- Aperture and Shutter priority modes to go with Program and Manual modes
- 2-3 frames per second motor drive

Additionally, because of the professional orientation of 645 AF systems, these cameras also offer:

- Mirror lockup
- PC Sync connection
- Automatic leader take-up and advancement to frame 1
- Automatic winding forward of the finished roll to the take-up spool
- Imprinting of exposure information on the side of the film between exposures

The size and weight of these 645 AF systems from Mamiya, Contax and Pentax are comparable to full-sized, professional 35mm bodies with pro-caliber, constant f2.8 lenses, so it isn't difficult to move from one system to another. While these systems aren't going to be of much use in high paced sports arenas, for the much slower moving events of a wedding day, they can certainly work well. (Actually Sports Illustrated still uses radio controlled Hasselblads for some courtside basketball photos).

These 645 AF systems aren't cheap and they cost as much if not more than top notch 35mm equipment and you don't have as many AF lenses available to you; however, Mamiya and Pentax do make their AF bodies compatible with their older manual focus lenses. Contax has no previous history with 645 medium format, so only AF lenses are available (the 120mm macro being an exception) for it. While it is the newest entry in the market, the Hasselblad H1 promises an adapter to mate the manual focus 6x6 format Zeiss lenses, making it probably the most comprehensive lens lineup in medium format



645 AF systems are an intriguing choice because while they offer many conveniences appreciated by photographers, these systems easily straddle the old world of film with the new world of digital rather than mating digital as an afterthought, as is the case with older cameras and impossible with others. One has to be a pretty high-end wedding photographer to be able to afford the astronomically high cost of the digital backs though.

## 6x7

645 is the smallest of the triumvirate of popular medium format sizes with



6x7 the largest of the three.

Although there have been a few different camera systems based on 6x7, the one that most will think of and would consider as a wedding solution is the Mamiya RB or RZ67; the RB being an older system with less electronics and the RZ being more modern.

Most would also picture a 6x7 system as being large and unwieldy and indeed when one sees a Mamiya RZ67 for the first time, the back seems to become instantly herniated at the prospects of carrying this beast for any length of time. However, the RB and RZ67 feature a wonderful convenience of a rotating film back that allows the camera to remain upright all the time with just the back rotating as required for a portrait or landscape mode photo. But if you thought the Mamiya's are big, you should check out the Fuji 680 system, which is massive.



It is this rotating back that makes the RB and RZ so big, since the camera is essentially a 7x7 cm system. The now discontinued Bronica GS-1 system had the distinction of being the most compact 6x7 SLR system on the market, but the caveat was that the whole camera had to be rotated to facilitate a portrait mode photo. Same for the granddaddy of 6x7 systems, the Pentax 67, unless a custom L bracket could be made or bought to prevent a precarious and sharpness killing flopping of the camera to one side of the tripod head.

Since most photographers use tripods with their medium format rigs, size and weight is not a terrible concern and if you can afford an assistant to mule the bags and cases, so much the better, but then if you're an amateur or part timer, probably not.

Now while 645 offers a meaningful upgrade from 35mm format, 6x7 is a significant step up and would be the appropriate choice for poster-sized enlargements of the subjects. 35mm photographers like to console (and compensate) themselves with the knowledge that 35mm lenses are sharper than medium format lenses because the film size is so small that it requires such exquisite quality to obtain quality.

While this may be technically true, the larger film surface of medium format provides such an increase in tonality and granularity that to my eyes, I can see the superiority in "most" 4x5 proof size prints let alone a wall size enlargement of 30x40 inches or larger. You can take my comments with a generous amount of salt, but I take such amounts myself whenever I read comments by 35mm shooters claiming zero difference in 8x10 or 11x14 enlargements between 35mm and medium format. Maybe in comparing machine made prints, but not when you have custom enlargements made and compared.

If you want to maximize the quality of your wedding photos in an accessible and popular system, it is hard to argue against the Mamiya RZ67 as an excellent system with a wide assortment of top-notch lenses. For me though, with a limited budget and a desire for a system that could be handheld when desired but offers maximum convenience in film size format, I chose 6x6.

## 6x6

6x6 is obviously square, but it's pretty hip with me. It is true enough that once 6x6 has been cropped, it is no more than 645; however, one does not need to be concerned with landscape or portrait at the time of shooting. Photograph now and crop later is the advantage to 6x6 and there

is a certain beauty for the square format that one comes to appreciate when using it and how so many situations just work as a square print instead of having to be cropped to a rectangle.



The classic 6x6 system offered by Hasselblad in their V system (500 series) and the Bronica SQ-Ai knockoff (what I own) offer fast 1/500 flash sync speed, something also offered in Mamiya's RZ67 system and Bronica's 645 ETRSi system. The older Mamiya and Pentax 645 series cameras offer only 1/60 flash sync speed although both offer a limited selection of leaf-shutter lenses that can sync at faster speeds. The auto focus 645 systems offer no more than 1/125 flash sync speed due to the use of a focal plane shutter in the camera instead of leaf-shuttered lenses.

Leaf shutter lenses are more expensive than lenses meant for focal plane shutter cameras because of the inclusion of the shutter mechanism in the lens itself to control the timing of the exposure. This adds more parts and complexity and thus higher cost, but it provides the ability to use larger apertures in bright daylight conditions, so that you can obtain a pleasing blur in the background instead of having to stop down the aperture to such a small setting that everything from the tip of the bride's nose to the hotdog stand in the background comes out sharply in focus.



The leaf shutter can sync at higher speeds because the circular opening and closing of the shutter exposes the entire frame at once compared to focal plane shutters that exposes the frame in a top/down or right/left sequence that exposes in a partial fashion over the course of the shutter speed being used. There is a mechanical limit that manufacturers have not been able to push beyond 1/300 in the Nikon F5 and Minolta Maxxum 9 cameras.

While the ability to flash sync to 1/500 with most leaf shutters is certainly a valuable feature, in truth, the only time I've had to actually utilize it is when I've been stuck with nothing more than ISO 400 film in the bag and the day was cloudless, very bright and very contrasty, hence the need for fill flash. For such





days, one should really be using ISO 160 films to provide greater flexibility to open up the aperture and on those occasions, I've only maxed out at 1/250 for a shutter speed with a typical f8 to f11 aperture. With ISO 400, I'd have to set 1/500 and even stop down further to f16 and f22, which is not so good because lens diffraction begins to rob the image of sharpness.



To sum up, medium format offers:

- A range of readily available film size formats of 645, 6x6 and 6x7
- Flash sync to 1/500 as standard for most leaf shutter lenses and up to 1/1000 for certain Rollei lenses with the newish Hasselblad H1 offering 1/800 for its lenses
- Auto focus, while not as advanced as the best 35mm, appears to be good enough for most wedding coverage and is not much larger or heavier than professional 35mm equipment
- Offers meaningful to substantially superior image quality than 35mm format
- Has a certain "je ne sais quoi" that bespeaks "pro" and makes people take notice and beneficially, makes you look like "the man" (or "woman")

Medium format disadvantages:

- Shutter speeds not as fast as 35mm with 1/500 being pretty standard, but the auto focus cameras are fast enough with up to 1/4000
- Film loading not as fast as 35mm, but can be negated with multiple film inserts loaded and ready to go
- Owning a comprehensive kit means big bucks in investment, but this can be minimized through buying used now that digital capture has torpedoed the used medium format market
- Related to the cost associated with medium format, you may only have a two or three focal lengths to use instead of the much more common zoom lenses in 35mm – more foot zooming required
- Not meant for speed photography, which means, heavens, the photographer has to be more deliberate and think about the picture taking process
- Film scanning on your own can require a large investment for a real film scanner than the less than satisfactory flatbed scanners and scanning at pro labs can cost even more if you're a prolific photographer
- Extra gear to haul around if shooting it and 35mm/digital





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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Equipment Considerations 35mm

It is sometimes suggested that just about anyone with a decent 35mm camera can become a wedding photographer. Sure, look at me J Seriously though, while 35mm is the most common tool utilized by wedding photographers, one still has to take quality photos in order to become a respectable photographer.

35mm is a convenience medium. The size allows one to pack in a tremendous amount of technology into a compact package that can produce very nice looking enlargements in the 11x14 to 16x20 range, but this requires using the best lenses with exemplary technique and custom printing, not handheld shots with a consumer grade lens and cheap supermarket film and processing.

35mm is also the most affordable format to build a solid kit for event photography. While I and many others prefer using as good as we can afford, I have also heard of and seen others using equipment that is mid-level or lower in the 35mm food chain and their photos are praised as being wonderful. It just goes to show that it isn't the expensive hammer that builds the house, but the carpenter using the hammer and the hammer chosen could be a cheap dollar store special or a Craftsman, but in the end your house is still going to be built.

BUT, being the equipment geeks that we are, we would clarify the carpenter and hammer analogy by bringing in some basic economics and state that while a carpenter could certainly build a house with a dollar store hammer, the dollar store hammer is likely to be of poor quality and perhaps only last the carpenter about one-third of the way into the house construction. Whereas if we purchased the Craftsman right off, it has the potential to last through the whole project and perhaps several more houses afterwards. You may pay double or triple for that Craftsman hammer, but you end up saving money in the long run by not purchasing and using cheaply made tools on an ongoing basis.

AND being the fine artists that we are in addition to being equipment geeks, what better way to allow the creativity to flow than having top-notch equipment in our hands that is as responsive as we need to do our job J

There is no right and wrong because we must use



the tool that feels right in our hands and of the 35mm photographers using mid and lower level cameras and lenses, these have tended to be female pros wanting to use a lighter kit that does not overwhelm their hands and weigh them down like boat anchors. Even for male photographers, carrying two pro camera systems with attendant pro lenses wears after a few hours of lugging them around your neck and near the end of the 2003 season, I was taking to lugging around three cameras off of my neck as I played around with infrared film in a dedicated body. After 6-8 hours, *whew!*



The following is what I like to have in a 35mm camera. Anything missed is because it is not a factor in my usage of the equipment.

- Metal build – call me a snob, call me ignorant of the quality offered by industrial plastics, but you can take the plastic bodies cameras and put 'em where the sun don't shine. Photography is filled with so much subjectivity that people debate the nuances of Nikon versus Canon to the nth degree, when the two companies are more similar than dissimilar in quality and products offered. So, forgive me if I prefer cameras that won't scuff from being knocked around each other after a full day's shoot. Or cameras that don't feel like they're going to give when I squeeze hard on their grips.



- Fast focusing – weddings are not usually considered fast paced, action events, but you'd be surprised at how much can happen in a short time frame and having a responsive camera that can focus quickly is a boon. Even better are systems that provide high frequency motors to focus the lens silently and quickly, as pioneered by Canon with their Ultra Sonic Motors (USM) and later copied by Nikon with their Silent Wave Motor (AF-S). Minolta has gotten into the act with their variant called the Super Sonic Motor (SSM), leaving Pentax as the only major brand without this lens technology. Even Contax is in on the action with their version of USM for their auto focus N1 camera. The other major benefit of USM technology is the instant override of auto focus by simply turning the focusing ring immediately instead of having to flick a switch or pull a clutch, as is the case with screw driven lenses. Turning the focus ring on such lenses without disengaging the focus screw can damage the mechanism.
- Short shutter lag – spontaneous moments can occur at any time, which is why they're called spontaneous moments. You may have the reflexes of a cat, but if your camera is still thinking about taking a shot, your moment of opportunity is lost. While suggesting that a person spend a large sum of money on top of the line cameras is not what I'd like to do, it is an unfortunate fact that the most responsive cameras for shutter lag and motor drive responsiveness are found in the most expensive cameras. Fortunately, the second tier cameras from the likes of Nikon and Canon offer very good cameras for a lot less than their top-flight units, e.g. Nikon F100 and Canon EOS 3 versus the nearly double in cost Nikon F5 and Canon EOS 1v.
- Vertical grip and shutter release – it's slightly faster to not use a vertical grip when going from landscape to portrait mode, but after awhile I tend to tire from flapping my wing around so much. A vertical grip provides greater stability in both formats thanks to not having your pinkie dangle in empty air, as is the case with more and





more of today's compact 35mm SLRs. Vertical grips also usually use the common to find AA cells, so if your camera originally took expensive and hard to find half-sized lithiums, invest in a vertical grip and get yourself rechargeables to recoup the cost.



- Exposure compensation – I cannot think of any serious camera not offering this feature, and it is one that I use religiously with negative films to provide a moderate plus ½ stop compensation. There have been comments from some pros that it is better to have a negative that is slightly too thin than one that is sloppily overexposed, but I think this is only relevant if you are custom printing. There is likely to be more variation in a lab developing and printing your proofs than from a little bit of plus compensation. The higher in ISO you go, the better the results from using more plus compensation, but I don't think I'd go so far as to do a full stop for ISO 800 color negative films, but I would for super fast ISO 3200 B&W films. Just make sure that the camera of choice allows you to lock the exposure compensation instead of one that seems too easy to change. Exposure compensation is also much easier to use than custom changing the ISO setting of a camera. The first time you screw up and load an ISO 160 roll of film on the run while the camera's ISO is still set to ISO 640 (for an 800 speed film) and then shoot half the roll before realizing what you just did, will set you on the straight and narrow to use the exposure compensation feature instead of overriding the film's DX code.
- Flash compensation – I manually dial in plus compensation when shooting from a distance or in a dark cavern of a church, but leave my Nikon flashes on their 3D Matrix TTL setting when shooting outdoors. This automated fill flash setting has consistently worked well for me, but less so when shooting indoors in lower light levels. On those occasions I just use standard, plain Jane TTL mode to good effect. Leaving the flash on 3D Matrix mode can sometimes result in slight underexposure of the subject.
- Flash units that offer tilt and swivel capabilities to bounce light off of a white or neutral colored surface for a more pleasing quality of light. This is demonstrated in a future lighting module, so I won't get into much here other than to say that unfortunately again, the most capable flash units from a given brand are also the most expensive.
- This is not really a camera feature, but Image Stabilization or Vibration Reduction is very nice to have if available from your choice of brand. Unfortunately, that means Canon or Nikon at this time if you desire a choice of more than a few lenses; however, Sigma does have an 80-400mm f4.5-5.6 OS lens (Optical Stabilizer) coming out that should be available in Minolta and Pentax mount. IS/VR lenses do not offer any advantage to stop action because for that, plain and simply, you need fast aperture lenses, which can cost a small fortune for each one. What IS/VR can offer though is the ability to shoot static subjects in low light without flash lighting. Many churches have prohibitions in using flash during certain or all parts of a ceremony and that means tripod shooting to prevent handshake. While using a tripod is definitely the way to go to maximize the quality of the photograph in low light situations, it is not always practical or even allowed in some instances, so an IS/VR lens with fast film can save the day to keep you shooting instead of kicking the carpet and twiddling your thumbs. IS/VR does not mean you can get away with sloppy technique. You still need proper lens and camera holding technique in order to maximize your number of keepers.
- PC Sync socket – this is only relevant if you happen to use studio style strobes. I make use of such lighting equipment on occasion, but I'm always using my Bronica medium format cameras for this style of photography, which of



course has a PC Sync socket given its professional target market. I do not use the sync socket on the F100 cameras I use because of my separation of function and duty for the different formats I utilize. For those shooting with a single format, it is not a big deal to not have a sync socket since an adapter can be bought for so little; however, it does mean having another tiny accessory to keep track of right at the time that you most need it. Having it built into the camera saves that hassle, but then you may have a tiny little cap to keep track of when using the built-in sync socket.



## Lenses

Without a camera, there are no pictures, but the lenses really make the system. All the major brands offer a large selection of quality optics in single focal length prime or zoom lenses. While prime lenses still offer the last word in ultimate quality, I prefer the convenience of zoom lenses. As mentioned earlier, 35mm is a convenience format and what could be more convenient than a good zoom lens? While I would love a super range zoom lens from 20mm to 200mm at f2.8 with AF-S and VR, all in a coke can size package, it ain't gonna happen.

With zoom lenses, most camera brands have settled on three lenses that cater to the professional market. They are the ultra-wide, the normal range, and moderate telephoto lenses.



### Wide-angle zoom

Can start as wide as 12mm (Sigma 12-24mm) and typically zooms out to 35mm. Canon has their lens start at 16-35mm and Nikon has the 17-35mm for the professional f2.8 constant aperture lens offerings. Both also offer slower and cheaper lenses for those less flush with cash, Canon with the highly regarded 17-40mm f4 lens and Nikon with the killer 18-35mm f3.5-4.5, a cost-to-quality champ.

While a wide-angle zoom lens is not a high percentage use lens for my own style of photography, it is used enough that it is definitely worthwhile to have. The regular use of trying to cram as wide a view into a 35mm frame of film is not why these lenses are





considered must haves in a photographer's bag. It is their ability to provide a wider perspective while getting close to your subject that makes them valuable. The ability to show your subjects in context with the surrounding environment is what can make a photo and is a classic photojournalist technique.

### The Normal zoom

Normal range zoom lenses are a definite workhorse lens in a wedding photographer's kit. While the modern day photojournalist may carry two bodies around, one with a wide-angle zoom and the other with moderate telephoto lens, a huge amount of the typical wedding day action happens in the range from 24/28mm to 70/85mm.

In one lens, the photographer can take satisfyingly wide-angle photos to headshots at the telephoto end. And don't discount that more action happens at the "boring" 50mm focal length than many would care to acknowledge or realize. While I would not want to restrict myself to just a 50mm lens sandwiched in between wide and telephoto zoom lenses, having just a 50mm might work well enough for others.

Most photographers can work effectively with two cameras in order to minimize changing lenses constantly and to allow for using color and B&W at the same time. Two cameras also means two different lenses, with one typically being dedicated to the moderate telephoto zoom and the other for a wide-angle or normal range zoom lens. In my experience, I have used the normal range zoom for at least 50 percent of a wedding with the telephoto zoom getting in about 35-40 percent and the wide and other lenses with the remaining time.

If I could only use one lens to photograph a wedding it would be a normal range zoom lens, preferably going wide to 24mm and going long to 85mm with a constant f2.8 aperture. No such lens exists unfortunately and even if it did, it would be at least a CAN \$2500 lens. Canon has the 24-70mm lens, Nikon the 28-70mm lens, and the major third party brands have their offerings that straddle similar ranges such as 24-70, 28-75mm, and 28-80mm. Close, very close, but no cigar and thus I settled for the "consumer" grade Nikkor 24-85mm f3.5-4.5 AF-S lens.

I did have an interest in the Tokina 28-80mm f2.8 lens at one point and while considered excellent with film, was considered less so with digital capture and given my desire for lenses that can easily straddle both worlds I took a pass on it. The lack of availability of the Tokina lens in Canada was also another factor in my decision.

Currently, the newish Tamron 28-75mm f2.8 lens has garnered some very good comments from users as being a very high quality lens with a price that puts it in consumer grade territory, but with professional results. Very intriguing and a lens to



keep one's eye on because it apparently does not suffer from the sloppiness of Tamron build quality from the past. It has also been designed with digital capture in mind and performs with stellar results with film too.

Sigma also has fast f2.8 lenses available that have been designed with digital capture needs. Both 24-70 and 28-70 lenses are available and the people that actually buy and use Sigma lenses seem happy with the performance offered for the price paid. While good, these Sigma lenses have not generated the "rave" standing of the Tamron lens that seems to punch well above its weight.

## The Telephoto zoom

The sexiest and largest of the everyday lenses used by wedding photographers and potentially the most expensive too depending on which model one purchases from the brand of choice.

The focal length of 70/80-200mm is a range that is very nearly perfect for so many applications. One could get away with doing a tight full body shot at the wide end (from a modest distance) to a very pleasing tight headshot with a completely blown out background at the long end.

A fast aperture helps to blur out the background and also provides the needed speed when shooting in dark conditions. In these conditions, having IS/VR available is a fantastic tool to increase the percentage of keepers. Alas, only Canon and Nikon have such fast aperture technological marvels in their lens lineups, but Minolta is making some interesting moves and may be headed towards implementing IS in the camera instead of the lens to avoid Canon/Nikon patent issues. They already have this in-camera IS in the A1 and A2 prosumer class digital cameras and are apparently readying the same feature for their future D-SLR.



Sexy he-man or she-woman status aside, the 70/80-200 being the largest and heaviest of the three major zoom lenses, coupled to a pro-sized camera, will do not any wonders for your neck or shoulders over a long day. These large and heavy lenses have also been known to warp the lens mounts of less than top-tier cameras, due to swinging and swaying nature of the camera and lens on a strap hanging off of the shoulder. Unfortunately, the need for speed in this range of focal lengths simply cannot break the rules of physics that require all of these lenses to be of pretty uniform size and weight no matter what the brand. Some pretty significant advances in composite materials and optics (Canon DO formula offers potential) will be required to shrink these heavyweight beasts of burden.

Personally, I've gone through three versions myself, improving and upgrading as I could afford to do so and thankfully, Nikon has been kind enough to produce two versions of the lens in the past five or so years. They had the AF-S and now the AF-S/VR version that pros, rich, and stupid photographers could happily hand over between CAN \$2500 to \$3000, depending on version desired and where and when it was purchased from. But, there is also a non-AFS version that can still focus quickly enough with a good camera and offers excellent, fast f2.8 optics in a package that is more than CAN \$1000 cheaper than the AF-S/VR version. Few would consider \$1400 for anything a bargain, but in the world of professional grade lenses, the Nikon 80-200mm f2.8 ED-IF lens is a bargain compared to its similar class competitors. This lens also holds its value on the



used market, so one wouldn't have to lose much if upgrading at a later date.

## Other Lenses

With three zoom lenses, a photographer can easily cover a wedding from start to finish and everything else in between. So long as the lenses are of good pedigree and the photographer has the skills, there should be nothing wanting in the photographs. BUT! (You knew there had to be one coming along). But, sometimes what makes the photograph and photographer is the use of lenses outside of the regular and mainstream and certain lenses can be very handy to have when the moment arises. To be sure, such lenses may seldom be used, but when the moment arises, the photograph can really sing.

## Fisheye Lenses

Can a wedding really be shot with a fisheye lens? Sure it can, just not too often. With the right mix of herbs and spices you too can come up with some finger licking good photos that will blow your clients away and give you that edge in creativity to distinguish yourself from all the other wannabes on the market.

Because this is very much a limited use lens, I'd suggest saving a few bucks and buying used or a third party lens such as Sigma's 15mm f2.8 lens rather than paying full price for a new prime brand lens. Not that I see many of these lenses come up on the used market, so you may not have a choice, but the Sigma brand new is a few hundred cheaper than the Nikon 16mm f2.8 or Canon 15mm version.









## Fast Lenses

There are many occasions where the use of a fast lens is preferred to using a slower lens with flash. Catholic ceremonies are a classic in that at a certain moment in the ceremony, when the priest says "Holy, holy, holy", flash photography is forbidden until the end of the ceremony. Anglican ceremonies are also similarly restrictive of flash photography when the ceremony reaches a certain point in time and a good photographer not wanting to be banned from the church should follow the rules with regard to flash. However, flash does not mean the end of the ceremony because with an IS/VR or fast prime lens, the photographer can continue to photograph the ceremony unobtrusively.

If a photographer covers enough restrictive weddings, perhaps an investment in an ultra quiet rangefinder system, such as from Leica, could prove wise. I've never taken to rangefinder viewing, so my choice would be to supplement my modern 35mm system with a fast lens.

The most common and cost effective fast lens is the now disfavored 50mm normal prime. A 50mm f1.8 can be had for less than \$200 new and used for about half that amount while a new f1.4 lens is under \$500 (Nikon lenses, other brands may be higher or lower, but not by much). I would go for the f1.4 lens because when you need speed, every f-stop counts.

The major caveat for these fast lenses is that at f1.4, 50mm lenses are going to be pretty crappy for sharpness and resolution (Leica lens are probably the exception). But do you want the shot or not? To paraphrase and mangle the words of Ansel Adams, sometimes a fuzzy image of a sharp concept is preferable to no image at all – fuzzy meaning soft from shooting wide open, not fuzzy as in out of focus.

There are other fast lenses besides the 50mm, but we're reaching into some pretty high dollar amounts for these optics that require a large amount of expensive glass to obtain their quality wide open. Unlike the 50mm f1.4, fast lenses in other focal lengths are usually optimized to be their best at or very near their largest aperture. Fast super telephoto lenses are already super sharp at their wide-open f2.8 or f4 apertures (300mm and up) and we see similar performance from shorter lenses.



Given my use and interest in Nikon equipment, I cannot speak with any authority of lenses from other systems, so I will use Nikon examples for the following comments.

Nikon has a 28mm f1.4 lens that is considered to be exceptional for quality and build and so it should since this lens costs over CAN \$2000. In fact it usually costs as much as the much heralded Nikon 17-35mm f2.8 zoom lens, considered to be amongst the best of its kind. The fast 28mm lens uses aspherical elements ground from glass instead of molded hybrid elements that have plastic elements glued to glass to accomplish the same process. Even the expensive 17-35mm lens is rumoured to use plastic elements in its design. Grinding and polishing glass is an expensive process and helps explain why the 28mm lens is so expensive, besides the obvious speed provided.

Nikon also has a 85mm f1.4 moderate telephoto lens that is also much heralded. This lens is still very expensive, but does not require aspherical elements, so it comes in more reasonably at around CAN \$1500. Canon has a 85mm f1.2 lens that is considered to be excellent too and having seen some photos taken with this lens, I can attest to the striking images that can be created with this lens wide open. Unfortunately, it retails for close to CAN \$3000 under Canon Canada

distribution and even grey market lenses cost over CAN \$2000. I joke around with one of my Canon using friends that he should just buy the Nikon 85mm and a cheap body to use and still save money over having to buy the 85mm L lens, even at grey market prices.

Fast lenses aren't for everyone though. The 85mm lenses wide open have such shallow depth of field that you can burn through many frames to get one just right. From the same stack of photos I saw taken with the Canon 85mm lens, I saw many variations and attempts to get the depth of field just right in order for one shot to work. Fast lenses are also laggard in focusing, as in the Canon lens, due to the huge elements being moved – it might also have to do with the lens being an old design not updated to current technological standards. Given how many of these lenses actually sell, photographers breathlessly awaiting for a faster USM in the Canon lens, or for AF-S to show up in the Nikon version, should start breathing into a paper bag to control their hyperventilation, because it ain't likely to happen for years to come.

## Macro Lenses

These lenses would see even less action than a fast lens and like the fisheye lens, would be more a novelty lens for certain setup shots or still life photos. Photos taken with the macro lens are more filler material than must haves for the album, a way to embellish the coverage.

I would love to have a macro lens for my own personal photography and on that basis would include such a lens in my wedding photography kit, i.e., if you already have it, include it. But if you're strictly an event photographer, I see less need to own a real macro lens outright and you could get by with either a lens that offers a decent macro capability, such as the elderly Nikon 35-70mm f2.8 lens, or add a high-quality dual-element close-up lens attachment, such as the Canon 500D, to use with your existing lens and be able to reach macro magnifications.



Photos of rings, cakes, flowers, detail shots of dress patterns, are all available for interesting macro shots, but truthfully, I find the 70-200mm lens set to its longest focal length and minimum focusing distance usually gets me close enough for a satisfying magnification ratio. The times I've wanted to get closer, I've used the 35-70mm lens set to macro magnification, but I need very good lighting in order to compensate for the very, very close focusing distances and the increased risk of handshaking due to handholding the camera. In recent times, I just screw on the Canon 500D dual-element close-up lens attachment to the 70-200 lens for quick shooting.





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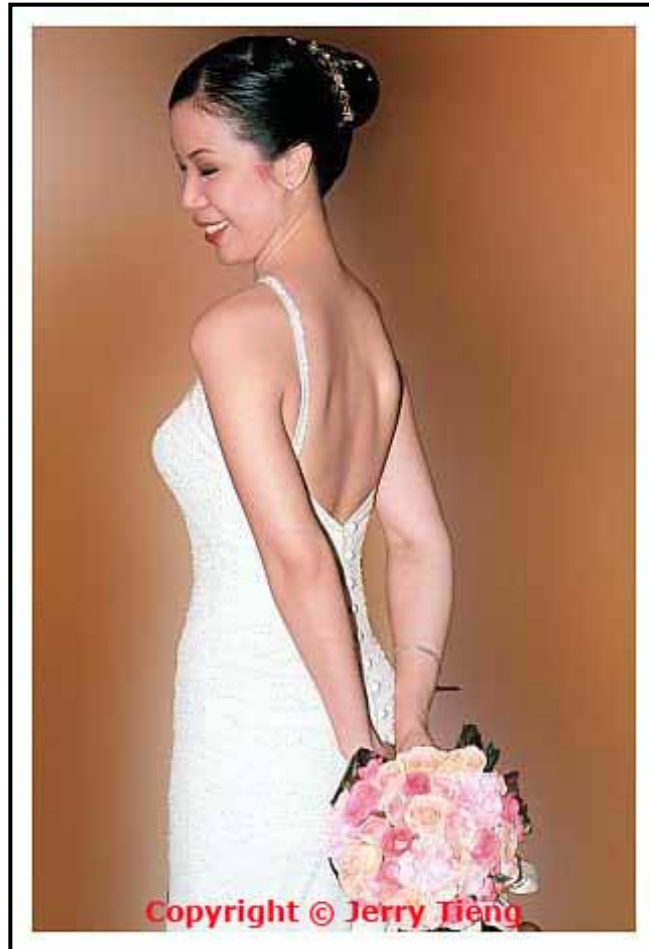
## Wedding Photography e-Book - Equipment Considerations Digital Photography

*All images used to illustrate this page were captured digitally by Jerry Tieng with a Nikon D1x d-slr*

If you read Rangefinder magazine, a sort of newsletter for WPPI members, but available as a subscription to the public, you would think that the whole professional market in the United States has gone digital. Rangefinder profiles very successful photographers catering to the portrait, student and wedding markets and it's a good view to what the popular trends are in the industry.

From reading the magazine one clearly obtains a sense that digital has matured and is where the pro market is headed in order to compete effectively with other photographers already converted to bits and bytes. All the comments and testimonials from those pros laud the digital process and talk about greater control, efficiency and cost savings.

Digital has already made a significant dent in the fortunes of medium format and has caused a shakeup in the market so that certain brands have followed the times and made their products digital friendly while others appear to be in death throes. The used market used to be where Hasselblad users could seek some solace that their very pricey investment could still offer some handsome returns, but no longer as the used market appears to have crashed with most of the blame attributed to the digital revolution.



It was somewhat surprising some years back when Contax introduced a brand new medium format entry in their 645 AF. While it is a very capable film camera, Contax ensured that the 645 would be a digital friendly system. Same goes for Mamiya's auto focus 645 offering, which the company even revamped to make it even more digital friendly than the original offered only a few years ago. Hasselblad has the most digital friendly camera in the H1 and it was a result of a necessary retrenching of resources to follow the market trend towards digital.



Even Pentax has apparently seen the light and realized the shortcomings of their 645N that uses film inserts instead of full film backs, making it impossible to mate with digital backs. Rumour has it that Pentax will rework a new version of the 645N to be digital ready.

My own brand Bronica, appears to be slowly dying as parent company Tamron appears to have no clue how to restructure the product line a la Hasselblad, or introduce new auto focus digital ready cameras a la Mamiya. Two camera lines, the 6x7 and 6x6, have been discontinued with only the manual focus 645 ETRSi still readily available, but for how long? I hope for something more to be offered, but I'm not betting a copper penny on it happening.



Checking out the used prices for the Bronica equipment really hits home to see how little it is worth. It is so low that it would be ridiculous for me to sell out because it probably would not even buy me one pro-level camera, such as the Nikon D2H. That's selling a full kit of two cameras, four lenses, five film backs, prism and other accessories bought only in 1999 and 2000 for significant cost. Bronica gear never had great resale value before, but now it is really in the toilet especially since Tamron has killed the two camera lines. Bargain hunters could really clean up if they desired a solid performer.

Why has digital killed off medium format? Well, you could spend a large sum of money to invest in a digital friendly 645 kit, but with the Canon 1Ds and Kodak DCS 14n offering high resolution cameras in 35mm compatible cameras, it makes more financial sense to just buy a 35mm based digital camera to add to your existing kit.

The Hasselblad H1 would cost over CAN \$20,000 just to build up a basic kit never mind the extraordinary cost of a top of the line digital back in the CAN \$40,000 range. Even cheaper digital backs are still in the CAN \$20,000 range. That is just an incredible sum of money to spend on medium format based digital technology and while the most successful digital wedding photographers could afford such costs, for us part timers, not within the realm of reality. Consider also that the most high profile and successful digital wedding photographers don't even use medium format systems anymore, preferring to go with Nikon, Canon and Fuji 35mm based systems (Denis Reggie and Gary Fong for example).

Interestingly, Mamiya has partnered with Creo/Leaf to market a 645 camera with a 6 MP digital back for under US \$7,000. Mamiya clearly understands that there can a large market eager to try medium format digital, but do not have many tens of thousands to spend on 16 MP and higher backs. However, at US \$7,000, that is





not much less than the Canon 1Ds that offers nearly double the resolution in an integrated package.

### What Kind of Digital?

With that preamble out of the way, for those so inclined, what kind of digital system should one purchase? At this time, I can only see three viable systems to start with: Nikon, Canon and Fuji.

In the Nikon world, there is the D100 mid-level camera based on the film F80 that is a great camera to get serious into digital photography. Nearly parallel to the D100 is Nikon's entry-level digital SLR, the D70 that offers enough improvements and enhancements over the D100 to the point that many D100 users are eagerly waiting to purchase one not as a backup or replacement, but to use right alongside the D100 as an equal. About the only thing that the D100 offers that some may miss for the D70 is a vertical grip, but if Nikon does the right thing and offers one for the D70, the D100 sales will likely stagnate (if it hasn't already as the D70 is shipping and selling like hotcakes, as of this writing).

On the heavier duty pro side, there is the still going D1X that is now quite long in the tooth in the digital world. The Nikon world eagerly anticipates the introduction of its replacement, but current users still seem happy to continue using this workhorse, especially since the high-performance upgrade was offered by Nikon to increase the buffer.



The newest model, the D2H was also highly anticipated and is garnering much praise as a photographer's tool that just disappears in the hands, being the most responsive and fastest focusing camera to date (March 2004) whether film or digital. The resolution is not high at 4 MP, but the D2H was meant for sports and news photographers, but that has not prevented it becoming a favorite of wedding photographers enjoying its speed and responsiveness. Reports of very good 20x30 inch prints from the D2H are offered by those photographers, but I reserve judgment until I can see the results for myself.

That offers four current cameras from Nikon that can find a place in a wedding photographers kit. A perfect kit for me would be dual D2H bodies for the majority of the candid and action with a future D2X for formals when poster sized prints are desired.

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Canon was a bit slow to enter into the digital market after Nikon shocked the world back in 1999 with the original D1, but boy have they made up for it. The original 1D rocked the world with 4 MP of resolution at a blazing 8 fps. Speculation has it that Canon used dual 2 MP sensors aligned together with the image file stitched in-camera in order to achieve the 8 fps rate, but no matter, it was a spectacular success.

The really big achievement that got Canon to the front of the pack though was the 1Ds that offered 11 MP of resolution in a professional quality camera. This is the camera that got





many medium format photographers to reconsider their options for entering into the digital foray. It's not without problems though as the high-resolution sensor can reveal limitations in certain lenses and chromatic aberrations are problematic with wide-angle lenses. However, the full 35mm size frame offers enough to counter the few negatives for many photographers.

Canon also offers the 10D amateur-oriented camera that provides good build quality and features. The 10D has amazed many with its very clean high ISO noise characteristics and is a solid performer.

Less solid and less of a performer, but offering the same image quality as the 10D is Canons' entry-level Digital Rebel. There are enough limitations with the Digital Rebel that I would suggest it as backup or adjunct camera rather than as a full fledged workhorse that is used for most of a wedding shoot.

Canon's newest entry is the 1D Mk II that offers 8 MP and 8.5 fps, truly awesome specifications and it will be very intriguing to see how good the images are from this camera. I have little doubt that they will be excellent given Canon's track record. It will be the ideal camera for many photographers wanting high resolution for enlargements and high performance. It will also be an expensive camera once it does hit the store shelves, but still not as expensive as the older but higher resolution 1Ds. You gotta like what Canon is doing to shake up the market and push all the other brands to produce and perform.



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Fuji has been a player in the digital SLR realm for almost as long as Nikon and Canon with the Nikon F60 based S1 Pro and now the Nikon F80 based S2 Pro. Fuji recently introduced the S3 Pro, which still uses the F80 as the base, but now offers a much superior ergonomic package that offers the same 6 MP resolution but with increased dynamic range. Some considered the older S2 Pro to have been the best of the 6 MP offerings of any brand thanks to the color fidelity that seemed to have been customized for pleasing skin tones and the high resolution offered by the Super CCD chip designed by Fuji. Both the S2 and S3 offer a 12 MP in-camera interpolation that Popular Photography magazine claimed to have given the S2 the equivalent resolution of a 9 MP camera, but with a 12 MP file size.

The whole Fuji S series being Nikon cameras in origin can use the majority of Nikon lenses, but some restrictions apply to manual focus lenses and the old S1 could not make use of AF-S or VR technology. The Fuji S2 also had the ability to provide film-like flash quality with regular Nikon flash units instead of having to use Nikon's digital compatible DX flashes. This unique feature of the S2 may have disappeared with the new S3 as Fuji makes mention of utilizing Nikon's DX technology.

Fuji cameras are definitely worth considering, especially the S3 that does away with some awkward ergonomics and battery issues. In a good move, Fuji keeps the power requirements



of the S3 with AA sized cells so that cost-effective rechargeable cells can be used rather than expensive proprietary batteries.

All of the cameras mentioned above from Nikon, Canon and Fuji can provide excellent image quality to the prospective digital wedding photographer. As Fuji is Nikon based, this means that two primary systems are available for choosing, with both systems offering comprehensive lens selection, flash units and accessories and a host of other features that make Nikon and Canon the choice of professionals the world over.



There are other brands that are emerging (Pentax and Sigma currently, Minolta very soon), but none have the depth and breadth of offerings as Nikon and Canon. After this, I offer no further comment as to which one is superior to the other because that is a personal choice one must make based upon what one requires out of a system.

## Workflow

After choosing a digital system, the next consideration is the digital workflow. It can be very similar to how film use to work, but usually, going digital does involve more work from the photographer.

With film the photographers shoots a wedding, taking enough photos to cover his or her bases and having plenty of extras on tap for the clients to choose for enlargements or the album. Then the film is dropped off at a professional lab for developing and printing into proofs, usually at 4x6 size. The photographer edits the proofs to toss away the bad shots and packages them into a proof album for review. Client reviews, selects the choices for an album and/or enlargements, photographer places order and then delivers with final payment made at delivery.



The digital photographer takes just as many if not much more images thanks to the zero cost of doing so digitally (provided the photographer has enough memory cards, digital wallet and/or notebook computer for dumping files to). Most digital photographers understand the risk of the digital medium and do backups to CD or DVD as quickly as possible, often doing it while the wedding is progressing with an assistant doing the backups via a notebook. At the latest, the

photographer should do the backups upon returning to the studio or home office and immediately backup the original files to CD or DVD.

After backing up has been completed the photographer becomes the editor and begins the review process of all the files, tossing the bad shots immediately. Once the initial review has been completed, the real work begins.

If the photographer shot with the RAW capture mode of the digital camera, a conversion process must be done to the RAW file into something that can be more easily edited such as JPEG, but more appropriately, TIFF format. All the camera brands that use RAW mode offer a free converter, but often times the quality and feature set are limited, leaving the digital photographer with little choice but to use third-party applications.

For those already using Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS, Adobe Camera Raw provides a one-stop shopping option of RAW conversion and immediate image editing in one application. ACR is good and its version 2.2 incarnation in Photoshop CS is even better. ACR provides RAW conversion for a large number of digital cameras and backs and Adobe has indicated that they will offer regular updates for newer cameras coming to market.



Another highly regarded RAW converter (perhaps even more than ACR) is Phase Capture One. Capture One provides a great workflow environment by incorporating a browser, editing window for a larger size image, and an editing tools panel to modify the file before conversion. The edits do not affect the original RAW file, only the converted TIFF or JPEG.

Other third party RAW converters include Bibble, Qimage and BreezeBrowser, but they seemed to have been relegated to the back of the hall thanks to Adobe and Phase becoming involved in RAW conversion.

While the third-party RAW converters can be very good, sometimes the software developers have to reverse engineer a RAW file because of the lack of support from a company. On these occasions the original company's RAW converter may offer the best overall solution.

Nikon is such a company that while it offers basic RAW conversion for free in its NikonView software, the more comprehensive RAW conversion is offered through the optional NikonCapture software. Nikon Capture is about US \$100 or CAN \$150 and is now at version 4.1. While many complain about this added cost option, few photographers seem to know that the lead engineer of NikonCapture participates in a Nikon Digital forum and will actually respond to questions posted by the predominantly professional user group. The engineer gains an understanding of what works and what does not work in real world usage by demanding pro users. Comments and suggestions



are noted and each successive version has usually improved upon the previous version. It's a great feedback process for both parties and noted Nikon expert Thom Hogan, considers NikonCapture to be the best overall converter for Nikon RAW files. I've not heard of any other software engineer from a major photographic company participating in an Internet forum and answering questions as well as obtaining feedback for future improvements to their RAW converter.

RAW conversion can be very detailed with controls for white balance settings, sharpening, levels and curves control, etc. Almost as comprehensive as Photoshop itself, so it's up to you to decide how much or how little you wish to do with a good RAW converter. For some, they do so much in the RAW application that little needs to be done in Photoshop.

RAW format also offers some saving grace for minor mistakes made during the event. Correction of over and underexposure is handled much better with a RAW file than with a JPEG or TIFF that has already had processing done in-camera and risks losing much detail if you attempt to correct mistakes after the shot. You cannot treat RAW as a panacea for gross mistakes because it's not a miracle format that will pull roses from a pile of poop, but for those times that you cannot be certain about exact white balance or wish to shoot a bit underexposed to preserve highlight detail, RAW can make the difference.

Other photographers prefer to shoot in JPEG mode for the higher performance due to smaller file sizes than RAW mode, and shooting JPEG can be an effective solution so long as you are bang on with the exposure and white balance. Bang on exposure is best done with an incident meter instead of the reflected in-camera meter and bang on white balance is best done with a grey card reference or using an accessory such as the ExpoDisc.



By obtaining as accurate a file as possible in-camera saves a lot of potential editing work in Photoshop. For proof type photos there is probably little more to do beyond getting the white balance and exposure correct. Run the files through a noise reduction application such as Noise Ninja and then sharpen it up and print off. Once the client has chosen the images for the album or enlargement is when you would do the major editing to ensure the image is as perfect as possible.

I should note that obtaining correct white balance and exposure is from the perspective of obtaining a technically correct image file and for aesthetic reasons you may not want to go with a technically correct image because it may look too cold or too flat and you may prefer warmer tones or boosting the levels up a bit to open up some details.

After RAW conversion or downloading of JPEG files, an image-editing program is the next step. Photoshop is still the king of the hill and will likely remain so for years to come and while I make much reference to it, there are other choices available if you prefer a different method or cheaper alternative.

It is usually during the image-editing stage that sharpening is applied to the image files. That there may be several rounds of sharpening required has become more recognized due to



the way capture devices work and process an image file. Most D-SLRs use an anti-aliasing filter in front of the capture chip to reduce artifacts such as moiré. Unfortunately, the filter, depending on how strong it is, can also reduce the sharpness of the image file. This requires an immediate first round of sharpening to be applied to retrieve the lost sharpness back before meaningful edits can be done. This first round of sharpening can be done during the RAW conversion process, but most people would probably agree that no sharpening should be applied until the file has reached the image editor.

An automation offered by Pixel Genius makes the sharpening process fairly straightforward. It offers three rounds of sharpening, the first to retrieve the lost sharpening due to the anti-aliasing filter. The second for regular creative sharpening and a third customized for how the final image file will be used, whether it be printed out or just posted to a web site. The idea being that each type of output requires a different type of sharpening with final print size playing a role.



While Pixel Genius makes it pretty easy, you don't necessarily have to spend money on an automation if you're skilled with Photoshop and understand how to use layers and masks to isolate just the main subject areas for sharpening. Also be aware that the Pixel Genius method of sharpening makes liberal use of masks and layers and it increases the file sizes significantly. I've had 16-bit TIFF files grow from 35 MB to over 200 MB with just one round of sharpening. It's a good idea to flatten the file once all edits have been applied.

After the editing process, a decision has to be made about output. How are you going to output the proof images? Traditional 4x6 prints? In large sheets with multiple images per sheet? In a magazine booklet? Or just copied to a CD for the client to browse at home? All are valid choices and digital provides flexibility for how you wish to present the images.

I personally lean towards the multiple images per large sheet because you can mix and match sizes and different images in a wide variety of presentations. 4x6 proofs is just so old school and so 20<sup>th</sup> Century that why would you want to follow the crowd when digital offers you so much more flexibility. Not that there is anything wrong with the tried and true 4x6 proof album, but then there wouldn't have been any point to have switched to digital if you just end up doing the same thing as with film. One idea is one gleaned from big time pro Gary Fong, and that is to montage your photos, as I have done with some of mine in the sample below.

While there are other issues related to the relative benefits of one format versus another, for the working professional, much of the argument comes down to this, the almighty buck. How much of it will I have to spend and how much of it can I save are usually the things going through a photographer's mind when trying to calculate whether some new fangled technology is worthwhile to invest in.

20 rolls times 36 exposures equals 720 proofs\*, but let's round down to 700 for the duds and bad shots you want to edit out. (\*I actually get 37 exposures from the F100 cameras I use, but I still have to pay for that extra proof print)

One full day of wedding photography requires a cost of \$400 for film and some minor pocket change to cover the cost of dropping off and then picking up the processed negatives and proof prints. In the time that you wait, you can be working out the details for your next shoot, meeting new clients, cleaning the office, kicking the dog, waxing the body hair, basically, whatever the heck you want to do because it's the pro lab that sweats the details of your photos to make them look good.



With digital, from the time you finish the photo shoot to the time you have proofs ready for the client to view, you're editing in front of a monitor. You may not have to spend \$400 in film, processing and printing for 700 images, but you will have spent considerable time tied to your computer desk.

But, what if the client wants prints? At the same pro lab, a single 4x6 proof from digital costs \$0.60 after taxes for a PST exempt professional. Multiply that by 700 and what is the cost? \$420, more than shooting film. Granted this is the pricing structure in Vancouver, Canada, and other regions may offer much more cost effective solutions than what we would have to pay. In fact, photo contributor Jerry Tieng has told me of incredibly low prices in the Philippines for proof prints from Fuji Frontier systems that make our digital prints exorbitantly high in cost.

A photographer may choose not to print and just burn to a CD-R worth less than \$1 per CD, or to just print with an inkjet unit, but that would also require costs in ink and paper. Economically, I'm not seeing the case for digital in my neck of the woods.

Assuming that a digital photographer goes the cheap CD-R route (as the lowest cost alternative), the question to ask is what is your time worth? Is \$400 worth your time spent editing, or is your time and opportunity cost worth more? I cannot answer this question for you since everyone has different priorities and schedules and different markets have different costs, but if you have a fairly flexible schedule then it may well be worth the \$400 in film savings, but if you're particularly busy, it may not.

I think few photographers would charge less for their services just because they shoot digitally. A given full day shoot of 700 photos would still be charged the same amount as a film shoot would, but the digital photographer gets to pocket the \$400 in film savings, but is it really a \$400 savings, or is it chickenfeed compared to the number of hours you have to spend in post-production, because that is an opportunity cost.

Obviously, enough wedding photographers have indicated that it is worth their while to take on the editing that many have switched over enthusiastically to digital. The two photographic contributors to this e-Book represent the two different approaches to wedding photography.

Larry Rotta is still using film for his weddings for a few different reasons:

1. He feels no pressure in the local Vancouver market to offer digital because he has not heard of any of the major pros offering full digital-only coverage
2. He would prefer to spend the money on other items of need because his demands for a good D-SLR would most likely require a pair of expensive Canon 1D Mk II bodies
3. His schedule is quite demanding on top of family commitments and as such, does not have the time to edit the hundreds of photos he would take at a wedding

Jerry Tieng started with some top notch Nikon film cameras before moving on to the Nikon D1x and now the Nikon D2H and D70 cameras. The last I heard from him, he was producing 500 or so 5x7 prints for a full day shoot and handing them over to the client in a nice wooden case. Given his investment in digital cameras, I doubt he has any desire to ever return to film.

Many photographers recognize that digital is not much of a cost savings at all, but do appreciate the control and flexibility that it offers and on this point I have to agree. I may not see much merit in having to edit hundreds of image files, but once that editing is done the ease of which it is to create a web based gallery could not be more simple than a few button clicks using any number of software applications available.

A simple action in Photoshop can resize image files to make them suitable for e-mail or viewing on a CD. Far simpler than having to scan whatever number of files is required to create a decently sized web gallery. I personally despise the scanning process and while Digital ICE is an effective tool for color film, far less so for B&W and that means a lot of cleanup work in Photoshop to clone

or Heal brush away the dust spots.

## Film Advantages

- Still relatively cheap, depending on what kind of deals are available at your pro dealer – costs can be passed on to the client
- Forgiving of exposure errors by the photographers – not that any of us make errors, of course not, but just in case...
- A known product to clients – clients know that at the end of the day, they get to hold a 4x6 print in their hands
- No dust to deal with unless you're scanning
- No crop factor, so wide angles are truly wide angles
- Far less hassle on the photographer for developing and printing chores

## Film Disadvantages

- Requires care and attention, especially in bright light and heat conditions
- Always needing to count rolls to make sure you got all of them
- Runs out at the worse possible time
- Time to rewind film can be an eternity as the bride walks down the aisle
- Special films like infrared, require dedicated camera
- Unless you swap rolls in and out (not recommended) you're stuck with a given emulsion until you finish it – not cool to be stuck with TMAX 3200 in noontime sun
- Pain in the ass to scan, especially B&W since Digital ICE is not as compatible with this type of film

## Digital Advantages

- No film costs
- No film storage issues
- No emulsions or film ISO to deal with when moving from bright light to low light, simply adjust ISO settings and vice versa
- High ISO settings superior to comparable film settings, especially after noise-reduction software has been applied
- Flexibility in using edited images for layout purposes or usage in other electronic-friendly media
- Easy to print your own prints at home – same can be done with film too, but requires scanning stage to accomplish, meaning more time and hassle

## Digital Disadvantages

- Same build quality and performance as a given film camera costs much more
- Need for good, recent computer to work on high quality image files and attendant software to edit the files
- Dust spots on the CCD require some touchups in editing
- Longevity issues with digital files on CD, DVD or hard drive
- Crashes could wipe out entire hard drive or flash card of image files – backup, backup, and even more backup required as part of regular workflow
- Many clients may not accept digital images due to stigma attached to low-quality digital quality from within a relatively recent period of time, or because clients only know about consumer digital quality and not professional digital quality

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Photo Contributor Jerry Tieng's Comments about Digital Wedding Photography

## Advantages of digital

### Full control of the printing process

During my film days, it was very difficult to get consistent results from my printer, especially when it comes to interpreting images using directional available light (so-called mood or artsy wedding images). I had to resort to being 'friendly' with a particular operator so that he/she would get to know my 'style' and the results that I want. With digital, I finalize everything with PS and I simply send the files to the Frontier and print with zero compensation.

As a matter of fact, I've learned how to operate the Frontier and the lab owner is 'kind' enough to let me do self-service printing. Imagine a \$200,000 printer attached to my laptop.

- Great ice breaker

I've met a lot of young subjects (flower girls, ushers, bible bearers...) whose shyness was I overcome by giving them a quick peek at the LCD or sometimes even by letting them play 'photographer.'

- Archival and storage

I'm never, ever going back to plastic sleeves again. Ever! DVD's and my hand-rolled database software for image indexing and, of course, my online gallery are perfect complements to complete my entire workflow.

## Relative cost

I would have to say that all my clients have the false notion that since

I'm shooting digital, I can shoot all I want since there's no film cost. We all know that the DLSR is more expensive, and there's a finite shutter life over which we have to amortize the cost of equipment with. I did the math, and I have to say the cost on a per image (including film and processing) basis is almost the same for both.

Cost savings comes from managing the entire processing-to-proof-to-print-to-album cycle considering that I'm working alone without any assistants or messengers.

Verdict, it's cheaper for me because of my unique situation and considering that I work with computers all day (web applications company) and has all the necessary infrastructure and bandwidth to support my digital workflow.

On the other hand, for a really, really traditional photographer who doesn't use computers, I would have to say the initial capital and training investment would be substantial as compared to the already depreciated cost of his film equipment.

## Editing

I do a lot of cropping, curves, channel mixing for the artsy-fartsy shots. I do cropping, sharpening, and selective blurring for portraits. I don't edit 'party' and 'group' shots.

## Number of images

With my 2 camera setup, I shoot about 1200 images for a wedding (bride's house, church, on-location portraiture, reception). If it's a 2-man assignment, we usually end up with about 2000 images.

## Go back to film?

No way, especially for commercial projects. but if I'm 80 and I have nothing better to do, I'd probably do it again just to prove that I can master darkroom alchemy in the same way I manipulate curves and mix color channels in PS.



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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Equipment Considerations Film and Lighting

*Detailed commentary on technical lighting considerations, flash and flash brackets, etc., have been set aside for the next e-Book on Flash Lighting.*

### Film

You have your cameras, you have your lenses, and you have all the accessories you will need to support these primary pieces of equipment. Now you need to ensure that you have an adequate supply of film on hand. Digital of course means enough flash cards with a digital wallet or notebook to dump the files to.

As an aspiring professional you must of course use professional quality film. Yes, dispense with all those Costco rolls of film for the family snapshots and head over to a professional lab and purchase rolls of Kodak Portra or Fuji's N series of films.



Kodak Portra is available in two varieties, the NC for Natural Color and VC for Vivid Color. ISO speeds available are 160, 400 and 800 (only as NC). There is also a Portra B&W film that is ISO 400 and is chromogenic, meaning that it can be processed and printed the same as a color film, but if printed on color paper, a sepia-like tone can result. True B&W results can be obtained by printing on B&W paper for added cost. **Update** – Portra B&W has been replaced by Kodak Professional BW400CN, a new chromogenic film to replace Portra and the old TMAX 400CN.

Fuji's films also range from ISO 160 to ISO 800 and also offer natural or vivid color emulsions. The various films offered are NPS 160, NPH 400 and NPZ 800 for natural color and NPC 160 for vivid color moments. While Fuji does not have a pro-grade chromogenic film, it does offer Neopan B&W films with ISO 100, 400 and 800 ratings.

In the past I have favoured Fuji films, but the more I used Portra films, the more I like it. Both companies' films can produce stunning photos in daylight conditions, but offer some different characteristics for low light shooting. Fuji NPZ 800 tends to be very strong with reds while the Kodak Portra 800 comes off as more neutral. The only concern is with Kodak films used in overcast conditions or shade where I have seen skin tones become muddy compared to Fuji. Very judicious fill flash should help to alleviate this though.

Most weddings follow tradition to some degree and that means white wedding dresses and black tuxedos, yin and yang, zebra, whatever. It just means that you're going to give your camera's meter some fits as it is



going to see some pretty high contrast elements and then having to compute that mess and potentially creating new messes as the algorithms do their thing for an exposure bias. Using consumer grade film that punch up the colors, saturation and contrast for holiday pictures may result in disaster, or at the very least, blah photos for weddings.

Professional grade films have been designed to lower contrast so that there will be a hope of seeing the details in the bride's dress as well as the groom's tux.

The pro films also do better for skin tones so that your subjects do not look like they just come back from the tropical honeymoon before their wedding day. If all you've ever shot with have been consumer negative films and then you move over to the low contrast pro films, you may wonder what all the fuss is about because the photos will look somewhat dull, but the devil is in the details, so look closer at the dress and tux for them and then notice the smooth skin tones.



Black and white coverage at a wedding is standard these days and the aforementioned Kodak Portra (or new Pro BW400CN) makes it easy to shoot because of its color compatible processing and printing. While Portra B&W is/was a very good film, there are other B&W films of interest for different uses.

Iford XP2 is a chromogenic film that is as simple to use as Kodak Portra, but you definitely want to test this film to see how the prints are at its rated ISO 400. Most users down rate the film at ISO 250 for better looking prints.

Kodak TMAX 100 and 400 are true B&W films and TMAX 100 is considered the finest grain film generally available to the public. If you're looking for poster-sized prints, TMAX 100 is the film to use. I've had one shot enlarged to 20x30 inches from a 35mm TMAX neg (tripod mounted camera) and it looked pretty damn good if I say so myself J

Iford Delta 3200 or Kodak TMAX 3200 are high speed films that allow you to shun the use of flash and still be able to obtain a fast enough shutter speed for handholding the camera. Very grainy, but in an artistic manner, but don't over do the use of this film though because people can only put up with so much grain.



Iford SFX 200 is a near infrared film that will provide very infrared-like results without the hassles of true infrared films. Knowing that it is an ISO 200 also makes it easy for exposure since you're not guessing as you sometimes do with Kodak's HIE film. Kodak HIE requires cold storage because heat is near infrared and can affect the film. HIE also requires absolute darkness to load in the camera and absolute darkness to unload. A huge pain in the butt for results that can be quite interesting but also very potentially grainy. SFX 200 offers most of the benefits with far less grain, minimal hassles for loading and unloading, and the use of a red filter also creates striking images, especially with foliage in the background. Definitely worth a try to add something unique to your wedding day coverage, but be sure to use it only in good daylight conditions for maximum effect.

There are certainly more B&W films available, but I like to keep things simple and generally go with rolls of Portra B&W/Pro BW400CN for my main coverage with some SFX 200 in a third camera for the more wild shots.



Other possibilities are using slide film, but as wedding photography is all about producing prints, slide films do not make sense unless you're doing some cross processing to produce prints with wild and vivid colors out of the ordinary.

The use of pro film is expensive, so don't cheap out and go to Costco for the processing and printing. Go to a pro lab that caters to professional photographers for best results. Many offer traditional analog printing along with digital printing processes such as the Fuji Frontier system. The digital process can offer sharper looking prints than the analog system, but the analog system can offer unique templates such as messy borders.

For those shooting digitally, you can print at home with your own printer or after editing the prints, go to a pro lab and run the files through a Fuji Frontier for proofs. But that's just so film-like that what's point of shooting digital? I say get more creative with the digital process instead of reverting to 4x6 proofs, unless the client "really" wants 4x6 proofs.



## Studio Flash

If you can afford to add studio strobes, this is a very worthwhile option to add to your kit. Unless you really make an effort to include such photos in your package, you may not find that many opportunities to take studio flash quality photos, but when you can, it can really make your shots stand out, or just make life easier when you need more light than is available in a small, camera-mounted flash unit.

Direct flash is a necessary evil in event photography. We are so often disadvantaged in having to photograph in dark caves, otherwise known as reception halls and restaurants. To get the guests into the mood for celebration, the lighting is usually quite low key, which for us, the photographers, means extremely slow shutter speeds if we did not use flash. Unfortunately, use of flash usually means directly mounted to the camera's hot shoe and that results in flat and cold lighting that may also cause red eye problems when the subjects are at a distance to the camera's location.



There are various methods to ameliorate the quality of direct flash, from flash brackets to bounce lighting techniques and even small soft boxes for the on-camera flash. You do what you can to try and obtain some good looking photos, but when doing large groups or intimate portraits, direct flash is not the way to go.

Studio strobe units used to flash directly onto the subjects presents the same





quality as on-camera flash, just with much more power. All that power though means that you can modify the light and lower the contrast by using soft boxes or umbrellas. A couple of umbrellas is the fastest and most cost effective way to modify a studio flash unit and beautiful, even light will be your reward for the time, effort and cost of studio-type lighting in the field.

Studio strobes come in two varieties with many power ratings between the two.

The first type is the power pack strobe setup. As the name implies, a power pack that looks and sometimes weighs like a car battery is plugged into a wall outlet to obtain the juice that is then modified and distributed to the individual flash heads. The power rating is based upon the power pack as the flash heads can usually handle a wide variety of watts per second loads.

Power packs make sense for studio use but less so for field use where portability is a key consideration. The alternative is the self-contained flash head, or mono light, that has the power pack built into the flash unit. The individual heads are obviously larger than heads meant for power packs, but the size and weight varies with the power rating.

Power rating in watts/second can be as low as 150/160 w/s up to over 1500 w/s. As you go larger in power output, the more power it requires and more heat is generated, which is why most of the larger flash units come with fans built in to cool the unit. Many of these strobes also offer modeling lights, which I don't find that useful when used with umbrellas, but that is a reflection of my limited experience with just low powered units.

As nice as it would be to go whole hog and purchase 1500 w/s heads, that is an awful lot of power on tap and you have to consider how many times you would really need it. For intimate couples only photos, you'd never need more than 200 w/s and for group photos, 400 to 600 w/s is all that you'd really need. I've seen the output from using just a single overhead 600 w/s strobe firing into a 60-inch umbrella and it provided enough light to take a group photo of over 20 people at f11 with ISO 400 film.

A basic kit of two self-contained strobes, two umbrellas, a softbox, flat disc reflector and enough light stands, can be fitted into a custom case that makes it easy to take out into the field.

While I can suggest and make the case for having a basic studio strobe kit, such kits can be pricey investments and as a beginning wedding photographer or a part timer, the cost may not be justified, especially since I did indicate at the beginning that being able to use studio strobes might not be present very often.

The alternative is to continue using on-camera flash, but if the ceiling is low enough, bounce the light and use slower shutter speeds to try and create a more pleasing, lower contrast photo than using direct flash on the subjects. I'll have more to say about flash lighting in a future module.



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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Styles of Photography

Photojournalism or documentary style is the current catchphrase in wedding photography, becoming overused and clichéd, but it still seems to be popular amongst the couples even if most so-called practitioners do not actually offer true photojournalism coverage.

True photojournalism is to be a witness and faithful recorder of an event. The recorder is not an active participant in the event, but attempts to capture key moments that arise spontaneously. The opposite is the formal style in which the photographer dictates all of the poses and structures the positioning in minute detail. Most photographers work in between the two extremes and although they may suggest that they cater to one type or another, I find that pretty much everyone has to mix and mingle the two styles as the situation warrants.

Is it photojournalism to start taking photos of the bride getting ready but then suggesting the bride snuggle in closer to her helpers for a mini group shot? Cute, nice, but not spontaneous as the "photojournalism" would suggest. Or how about having the bride and groom walk around a garden path? Perhaps the couple would do so on their own to take in what they have just done in their ceremony earlier, but not likely. And if the couple indicates that they'd like to have some setup poses of the family, are you really going to say no, because you're a "wedding photojournalist"? Well, maybe if you're Denis Reggie, but if you're breaking out on your own, you're not going to be burning bridges and potential referral business because it's just not your style.

What I'm saying is that much of wedding photography is contrived and while the truly spontaneous moments definitely occur and should be photographed, the wedding photographer is more a laid back choreographer than a completely invisible bystander to the proceedings.

In most cases, the time that the couple allots to the photographer is almost carte blanche for the photographer to create special photos. Spontaneity still occurs and it takes an observant photographer to capture those moments in between the setups and formals.

Additionally, in these days of fast



action weddings, it seems many couples do not have the patience to do a whole wedding in the formal style, like their parents might have done. Where every single shot in the album is structured and rigid. Today's couple want fluidity in their photographic coverage even if the wedding day is as highly structured and regimented as in years past.

The wedding photographer of today must be flexible enough to offer whatever coverage a potential client desires, from formal (minimal) to candid and documentary (most jobs).

*I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that photojournalism can also be as contrived as wedding photography. Hard breaking news is truly being a witness to the events unfolding, but a lot of journalism for photography and video is "set up" and is hardly spontaneous. Watch a TV news story and watch how the video footage unfolds if it happens to include an interview with someone. Usually, the person is shown to be doing some "normal" activities, working at the desk, reading a reference book, or other, but this is all fake for the benefit of providing filler for the audio track. Same for still photos used for non-breaking news. The photographer can bring enough equipment to create a mini studio for taking and directing a simple shot that tries to look spontaneous.*



## Color versus B&W

Color is king in the world of photography. In the consumer world, which provides the profits to R&D professional products enjoyed by serious amateurs and professionals, the vast majority of photographs created end up as 4x6 color prints. When the color process was introduced, many wrote off B&W as a viable consumer medium and indeed there was a time when B&W's future looked as dim as film does now compared to digital.





However, the artists and photographers with a flair for running against the color grain kept on using B&W and over the last decade, it has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity. In fact, B&W never went away; however, as the digital process becomes better over time and is more capable of producing darkroom quality B&W prints via the computer, true silver-halide B&W printmaking might again face extinction. However, that is not for discussion in this module, because we are more interested in the end-result not the process itself.



B&W prints are very popular for wedding coverage. It evokes a number of emotions and harkens back to classic times when style was ever present, when there actually was such a thing called "society", instead of the morass of pop culture inundating and permeating every facet of western life. B&W is simply timeless and should be an important consideration for your photography.

Do be mindful though that with certain cultures, you may have to sell the couple on the merits of B&W photography. My own experience is primarily with Chinese couples and when I mention that I would shoot some B&W film, some give me a quizzical look and request that I still shoot color, and lots of it too. It seems as if using B&W film is to rip them off of their expected color coverage, because the couple sees color everywhere and this is what they expect too. These couples lack the ability to see the aesthetics of the medium for a very direct "truthful" color representation of the wedding, and if they only knew how much more expensive B&W is over film J



These are the same couples that do not appreciate different expressions or interpretations of an event. Once, as a guest, I took a photo of the couple walking by my table using the rear-curtain sync mode of my camera and flash combo to create motion blur. I liked it enough to produce a 10x15 inch print for my book and use it as my opening image. When one person viewed it, she questioned why I would have a "blurry" photo in my book and even after explaining it to her, she still concluded that she did not like that style for which I quickly added that I would not produce any "National Geographic style" photos for her brother's wedding.

A professional photographer and teacher had a look at my book once and he asked about the same photo and how people reacted to it and I told him that generally, the Chinese clients would not like it whereas the Caucasian couples were usually intrigued by the photo and more receptive to including a few similar shots here and there. It's not as if you can do rear-curtain sync motion blur all the time anyway and even when opportunities arise, your timing has to be right on to release the shutter at the right time, otherwise you won't get the shot just so to make it work.



Back to B&W, it has a classic feel to it and when a moment presents itself, you can create images that evoke 1920s cool. B&W simplifies matters for the photographer too. Worried about ambient light mixing in with your flash? Well put away the flash and load up some high-speed B&W and shoot direct. Grainy yes, but killer for ensuring the foreground has the same light levels as the

background. Grain works for B&W too whereas it becomes a detriment for color photos.

Modifying B&W to add some toned shots can be a really nice touch to really enhance the nostalgic look and feel. You can ask the lab to do it the old fashion way or shoot a chromogenic B&W film such as Kodak Portra B&W 400 or Ilford XP-2 400 and just process and print through the regular color process. Just be sure to indicate what kind of toning you want because while you drop off expecting brown sepia tones, you may end up with blue tones instead, which is cool too, but no longer a warm feeling image like good old brown sepia.



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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Meeting the Clients and Packages Offered

As a part time photographer, being able to meet with clients may present some challenges. If you have space in your house that you can dedicate as a meeting room, this is the best route to go because then you keep costs down by not having to rent an outside studio or office space. Unfortunately, not all of us have the luxury of being able to dedicate a room and furnish it tastefully and comfortably just for prospective clients to meet and relax in while reviewing your albums and photos.

One photographer I know of works out of his condo and while it is his personal living space, he's dedicated a significant portion of the environment to being his meeting place for clients. His fridge is famously stocked half with film and the other half for "drinks".

If meeting in your own location, obviously ensure that your meeting room is clean and dusted. Vacuum the carpet or sweep the floor, plump up the throw pillows and make sure that your cat or dog has not shed all over the couch. Some of your most outstanding photos should be properly mounted and framed on the walls and your albums should not be in excessively used condition (leather is a nice touch that ages well).



When the couple arrives, invite them in to sit down and offer them refreshments. Conduct your presentation and answer the questions that follow. Ensure that your comportment and attire reflect the professionalism that you want to be known for.

For others without easy access to a dedicated meeting place, alternatives must be sought, such as meeting at a coffee house convenient for both parties to reach. This is problematic because of the need to bring along presentation material such as albums, prints and even notebook computers. Coffee houses can be busy and noisy and just not the best environment to meet in and get to know one another for business purposes.

The next alternative is to hit the road and meet the client at his or her place with your presentation material. While you must still haul out the albums, prints and computer you at least know that there won't be competitive distractions around and you can present your photos and pitch in a relatively relaxed environment. While others may question the value and amount of work required to make house calls, it should show the prospective client how dedicated you are to the business.

If you choose the house call option, you can minimize the number of trips by providing all of the most relevant details over the phone and by having a web site available for people to see a sampling of your work. The biggest factor that I have





found from most people in deciding who to hire has been price. If you're in the ballpark of a couple's budget then you can go into pitch mode about what you can do for them, but if your price elicits gasps from the caller, then that should clearly clue you in that they are not in your price range and thus you needn't expend that much effort in the process.

Once you are able to meet the clients, the presentation can follow a basic structure, but much of it has to go by feel. Is the rapport there with the couple, did you hit it off with them right away? How was their reaction to your photos and albums, did they remain silent or were there oohs and ahhs heard? Most times you want to zone in how the bride reacts because in most cases, the bride drives the decision making process. If she didn't take to you and your presentation, no matter how the groom feels about you, you're not likely to get the booking.



I cannot say much more about the presentation process because it is largely instinct as to how to react and interact with the couple. You may go into a meeting deciding that your pricing is going to be by the book, but find that in the course of the presentation, the couple has really taken to your photos, but you can sense that your price may be the dealmaker or breaker. You have to decide whether or not to cut the price or offer additional sweeteners to seal the deal.

## Packages Offered

There can be any number of packages offered to prospective clients, but having a core of three or four will allow the couple to easily compare your packages to other photographers' offerings.

While some photographers choose not to discuss pricing in the beginning, many now post their package pricing on the Internet. Reviewing these local web sites will provide you with a very good sense of what the market is tolerating. There will always be the wonder photographer garnering five-figure bookings and of course this is the goal you desire too, but everyone has to start somewhere and the trick is to price yourself just right, so that people will find you competitive enough to call up for further discussions.

You do not want to price yourself too low, as the thought may arise that you are desperate for business, or are a complete rank amateur with quality to match the prices. There is a potentially huge market for this lower range of the market, but best to leave it alone for the college students and amateur photographers to exploit. Once your name and reputation have been tagged as a low-end photographer, it is hard to get it back.

I can offer no pricing in this section because pricing is all about the market you reside and work in. The California and New York markets may be able to bear starting rates of US \$5,000 and up, but middle America may consider US \$2,000 as extravagant and \$1500 as average for a



full day wedding. So, it all depends and you want to ensure that your prices reflect what the local market accepts. Big time pro Gary Fong charges US \$20,000 for a full day shoot, not including albums or enlargements!



Of course, your prices must be realistic in being able to cover your expenses and return enough profit in order to make this business worthwhile. While a certain amount of capital expenditure may have to be carried in as debt because gear is expensive, if you cannot make enough to pay off all expenses including the debt and leave enough leftover to expand the business or replace gear, you won't be in business for long. Only you can determine what is the right amount of money to make to ensure that a wedding photography business is worth the effort to pursue.

If you are not so good with business, or lack the desire to go full-fledged into the business but still desire to be involved in wedding photography, becoming someone's backup or second photographer is a good option. You won't enjoy the monetary rewards of running a business and obtaining the full profits of a booking after expenses, but then you have none of the worries or work involved, such as setting up the business, advertising the business, finding clients to support the business, meeting the clients, photographing the clients, dropping off and picking up the film and prints, meeting the clients again.

As a backup photographer all you have to concern yourself with is the photographing the clients part. The money probably won't even come close to covering your personal expenditure in photography, but for a few hours per weekend, it isn't bad and what else were you going to do with all that equipment and time on your hands J



For packages, you really do need to see what the other photographers are offering in your local market. If you see everyone including proof albums and negatives as part of the mix, chances are you're going to have follow suit because anything missing from your package will be leveraged against you by prospective clients trying to squeeze more out of you.

Packages are most often tied to hours worked and number of photos offered, e.g.

- 8 hours
- Up to 300 photos in proof style album
- 1 – 8x10 album with 25 prints
- 2 – 5x7 parent albums
- 1 – 16x20 enlargement
- 5 – 8x10 enlargements



- 10 – 5x7 enlargements
- Additional albums and prints available

Some very basic packages may offer little more than the proofs and negatives for a much lower cost than the full package above:

- 8 hours
- Up to 300 photos in proof style album
- Negatives included

Eight hours is certainly a full day by anyone's definition and sometimes the eight hours is not linear meaning it is not from 1 pm to 8 pm, but could be from 1 pm to 10 pm or later, not including traveling times and breaks for the photographer. Meaning one hell of a long day for the poor working stiff and a hell of a deal for the couple to get much more time for less. Sometimes though this is what a person must do to clinch the deal.

Side note – I'm not one for squeezing the client for a free dinner, but appreciate when one is offered, although working and eating are difficult to do and I generally do little sitting and eating at such events. The way I see it, you should be getting well compensated for photographing a wedding not eating and drinking like a regular guest. While it may be accepted by some I think there is a line of professionalism that a photographer should not cross over and declare that a meal at a table as part of the compensation, even for long full day events.

Besides a full day package, there should be additional packages that offer couples on a budget with shorter hours and more limited photos and albums, perhaps for a three or four hour time period. For the truly ambitious, there could be super full day package of 10 to 12 hours offered, as there are definitely brides that want coverage from the early AM getting ready right to the last guest leaving in the very early AM of the next day!

Set yourself with at least three options that offer a package for the minimum amount of hours required to justify you taking the job, because, as Murphy would probably state that as soon as you commit to your minimum package, another person will come along wanting you for your maximum package. On this basis, many photographers will not offer or accept short three or four hour jobs from couples on a budget and start their pricing based on six-hour jobs and up.



This makes sense in that even for a four-hour job, you still have to do as much preparation as a full day job and the four hours that a couple wants you for are probably in the prime hours or in hours that prevent you from double-booking. But, you would also be giving up a potentially large market because there are many couples that can only afford a good photographer for a few hours. In the beginning stages of a business I think you need to take the short hour jobs and build the business

to the stage where most of your bookings are true full day packages.

There is much economic consideration when working on creating packages. The more you offer the more that you must charge the client and if most of the clients walk in and say your photos are great and we want you to be our photographer, but...your package is more than what we want pay...

Be prepared to offer variations of your primary packages on the fly if that occurs. It may not be a case of the couple being thrifty, but genuinely not wanting a full-blown package of albums and enlargements. Having a stripped down, bare essentials package is worthwhile to have, as long as the hours and compensation are there, because it should be noted that all the extras offered by a photographer is where a lot of the profit can be made.

A custom 16x20 print might only cost you \$50 to order from a pro lab, but you can turn around and price it for hundreds of dollars to the couple. A custom \$10 8x10 print can be sold for three-times as much money. When my wife and I reviewed proofs from our photo session, we were only allowed to take 25 proofs for our album and when we enquired about what each 4x5 print would cost, we were told \$20 per print. Knowing something about labs and their prices, I was quite impressed (in a bad way) with the increase in cost for a print that cost less than \$1 to produce.

A nice \$100 leather portfolio album can be similarly increased in turnaround cost to the client. So, find your balance between the extra work required to order albums, enlargements and copies of extra proofs and determine what the general market price is as charged by other photographers.

## Albums and Presentation

What kind of album you choose to present your work is going to be largely determined by what format you shoot, film or digital. You shoot film and there isn't much variation from the standard 4x6 proof print put into an album of 4 prints per page.

As the name implies, these are merely proofs meant to showcase the event and allow the couple the opportunity to select the prints for enlargement and a more formal album. For a special event as a wedding, you obviously do not want to pick up the dollar store specials for floral pattern albums.

A classy looking album using archival materials is a must but even so, the cost does not have to be very high. Peruse the pro labs and other stores catering to photographers to see what is available.



Digital breathes some new life into the concept of proof prints or images. There is the obvious, no proof route in which the couple receives a CD of low resolution JPEGs to review to printed images ganged up by traditional fours, or sixes, or even eight images per page. Some high-end photographers even create magazine booklets of their proof images. Others choose to post the whole shoot to a web site gallery for the client to review in the comfort of their own home.

Digital also presents the opportunity to do away with the awkward landscape to portrait transition



that so often accompanies film proof albums. Now, the photographer can organize the images to always be right side up with no rotation of the album. Other unique presentations include montages, a la Gary Fong, to combination large image surrounded by smaller images. The presentations are endless and you are only restricted by your imagination, as to how to present your work. Think outside the box, or in this case, the typical 4x6 proof album.

How larger images are presented is also a key with a clean white border to simulate a matte being nice to draw the viewer in. Digital makes the use of drop shadows fairly easy to accomplish too.

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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Preparation

### Equipment

Your equipment should be checked over, packed and ready to go the night before the wedding. All batteries should be either new or charged to full capacity with plenty of spares of every type you need for all pieces of equipment. This is where pro-oriented gear that uses the common AA cell is a great advantage since you can keep everything standardized to one type of battery.

Almost everything I own that I use at a wedding has been standardized to AA, from the medium format's motor drive, to the Nikon F100 cameras, to the flash units, including the big Metz flash that uses NICAD packs but can be powered by AA cells, to my wireless flash trigger and flash meter. I may occasionally mix in other pieces of equipment that utilize a different battery type, but I make sure I have spares of those available.



I mostly use rechargeable cells in the 35mm camera and flashes, but other pieces of equipment require so much current that rechargeable cells just do not work or last very long. The medium format motor drive is one such device and on the rare occasion that I use the Metz flash with a 35mm camera, the TTL adapter requires small AAA cells to properly pump out the proper amount of flash, otherwise, the flash just dumps the whole charge. This TTL adapter is one that sucks the life out of rechargeable AAA and requires alkalines in order to get through a shoot.



For the medium format motor drive I prefer to use Energizer's lithium AA cells for their long lasting power capabilities. I can easily go through a

dozen weddings with one set, but I change the cells after each season. I also use a lithium cell in my flash meter for similar reasons and one cell will also power me for a whole season. The thing with lithiums though is that they are very linear with their power, that is, they run perfectly right up to the end and then fail spectacularly with little warning. If you use lithiums in a device with a battery indicator and notice it blinking, be sure to have a replacement set ready to go immediately, in fact when the indicator starts blinking, just replace it then and there instead of trusting to fate that you can squeeze off a few more frames.

And in the farthest reaches of your camera bag or case, have a dozen-pack of Energizer or Duracell alkalines for a "just in case" moment. The big thing about wedding photography equipment is redundancy. You've likely heard it before and you'll hear it again here, make sure you have spares of your primary pieces of equipment. Some will say that you need spares of every single piece of equipment you own, but even an equipment whore like me considers that to be too much.



I use two 35mm cameras for the primary wedding day coverage and although I could say that one is a backup, in fact I use both cameras simultaneously with two different lenses. For the last couple of weddings I was involved in 2003, I even took to using three cameras simultaneously, with the third one loaded with infrared film and a wide-angle zoom lens with a red filter. A 16mm fisheye with an orange filter was mixed in with the wide-angle zoom for even more striking images.

If something were to happen to one of the primary F100 cameras, I simply switch to using the other F100 only. Fortunately, this has only happened once where one camera seemed to flake out for a short period of time and nothing I tried or could think of under pressure while a photo-rich moment was occurring worked. Powering it down did not work nor did taking out the battery tray, but when the moment quieted down and I fiddled around some more, the fix was ludicrously simple, just advance the film to the next frame. This fix was mentioned in the manual too under the trouble shooting section, D'oh! Time the camera was down and out, probably no more than 15 minutes. Time that I aged during that moment, probably five-years with my heart beating furiously like an adolescent looking at his first Penthouse magazine.

I also have two medium format bodies, but one I have attached to a motor drive and the other is just stock. I've only had an issue with the motorized camera once during a wedding when pressing the shutter release did nothing, but manually advancing the frame cleared it up. That was less stressful because another photographer just stepped in and took shots with his 35mm rig while I cleared up my minor stall and then I was able to step back in seamlessly. With the first F100 example I was shooting alone as the primary photographer.





So, dual, sometimes triple 35mm cameras and dual medium format bodies are available in my kit. For lenses, I'm a bit less picky in duplicating all focal lengths because lenses are usually the most reliable pieces in the kit because for the most part they're just tubes of glass. Things are a bit different with the newest lenses that have AF-S/USM and VR/IS motors incorporated in their design and all electronic lens mounts to boot. These lenses offer the potential for more problems than older auto focus or manual focus lenses.

My current complement of lenses are, in focal length order, the:

- 16mm fisheye prime lens
- 18-35mm wide-angle zoom
- 24-85mm normal range zoom
- 35-70mm normal range zoom
- 70-200 telephoto zoom

My only real duplication is in the normal range where I have the 24-85 and 35-70 lenses. If all the other lenses somehow failed or suffered catastrophic falls onto cement, I could still cover a wedding with either one of those lenses, utilizing foot zoom power to go wider or to get closer. As most of the action tends to happen in this normal range, it is the most appropriate area to duplicate lenses for. I would not mind duplicating the 70/80-200 range too, but that is an extravagance that is not warranted at this time being a part time photographer. If I were to duplicate the telephoto range, I would likely do so with a different lens than another fast 70/80-200 lens, such as the Nikon 80-400 VR lens, which would provide another benefit on its own with the super long coverage to 400mm.



I also have two primary flash units to use with the F100 cameras, both being the Nikon SB28, but I expect to add a third and perhaps even a fourth Nikon flash unit in the form of the SB800DX for added redundancy (but primarily for digital use). The primary flash unit for the medium format system is the Metz 45CL4,

which is backed up by the venerable Vivitar 283, but the Nikon flash units could also be pressed into service in either Auto or Manual mode with the Bronica cameras.

Flash is one area that I definitely feel requires generous redundancy due to personal history, as well as seeing flash fail with other photographers. For a two-camera kit, go with three flash units that are the same model so that one can easily slip in place of another that has failed.

With your kit all packed up and ready to go as soon as the events unfold, you can concentrate on the photo taking rather than the equipment. Make sure cameras are mounted to their flash brackets and flash units and cords are close at hand. You can wait to see how the day shapes up weather wise before deciding on your first roll of film.

Pack any notes or special instructions from the couple in a place easily found, e.g. suit pocket, if you wear suits, or, as I do, in a waist pouch that I also keep extra rolls of film, batteries and a Pocket PC that I use to store poses and ideas for the formal shots.

Get a good night's sleep by heading off to bed early rather than late and if you suffer from allergies like I do, make sure a supply of non-drowsy pills are in your bag or pocket. By being fully prepared the day before, you can get yourself fresh and ready to go immediately without worry that you forgot this or that for your equipment case.

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Incidentals that you might want to pack in a shaving kit for those "just in case" moments:

- Tissue paper and/or Wet Ones or wipes
- Safety pins
- Band-aids
- Headache pills
- Gum – it really is not professional to be chewing gum like a cow on a cud, but gum does help to keep your mouth wet and not dry up, which can cause sore throats, so keep the chewing discrete
- Throat lozenges incase you choose not to chew gum
- Masking or gaffer tape NOT duct tape
- Mini sewing kit with spare buttons
- Garbage bags to spread out on dirty or wet surfaces
- Towel for similar use as garbage bags or for wet moments – at one wedding I only had one towel or bag for the bride to sit on and the bridesmaid was squeamish about sitting on a large rock with some dried out bird droppings. I used the only thing left in the bag that could have been used for such a purpose, my micro fiber cleaning cloth.
- Space blankets to hand out to the bride and her attendants for fall or winter weddings – makes for good photo ops

Additionally, a tool kit is a must have for a photographer and if you use more than one bag or case, having multiple mini kits can be handy instead of having to open up one case while working out of another. Some basic tools to have or consider are:

- Multi-purpose tool like a Leatherman that include pliers, flat head and Phillips screw drivers, and knife
- Allan key set (also known as hex heads) – having been an Ikea shopper for many years, I've accumulated many of their standard hex head tool that just happen to be perfect for my Kirk-made Arca Swiss plates and Newton flash brackets. I have at least one for each of my major bags and cases, which allows me to forego the need for a full hex set
- More masking or gaffer tape – I've used masking tape with some tissue paper as a makeshift bandage after cutting myself on the sharp edges of my Newton flash bracket, after that I made sure I had Band-aids in my bags



- String or thin rope

Other incidentals to have handy:

- Pen and paper for jotting down last minute notes from the couple
- Maps or map book of your city to find the place – better yet, take a cruise through all the areas you have to be at before the wedding day so you know which routes to take
- Sunglasses, gotta be cool when driving, but not for photographing
- Water, plenty of it – bring a mini cooler with ice to keep the water cold instead of letting it turn warm in the heat – I tend not to eat or drink when working, so leaving the water bottle in the car on a hot summer day makes for a less than satisfying quench when a break comes around
- Snacks to keep you going during the day – as mentioned above, working makes me forget about food, but you're working the body hard and it needs nourishment. Power bars are handy to have even if you don't feel like eating.
- Change of clothing and shoes "just in case"
- Loose change for parking meters and bills for buying emergency batteries "just in case"
- Umbrellas for shooting in the rain
- Clamps for backgrounds or cloths you might use during a shoot
- Jumper cables for the car for those Dumb and Dumber moments of leaving your headlights on
- Step ladder for high perspective shots

You may never utilize any of the items listed above, but weddings can turn out to be fickle events and preparation as an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

For film, you must have more film than you anticipate needing to use for the shoot. If you're doing a full day and you figure to shoot 20 rolls of film of all types, bring 30 rolls with extras of the most used types. I make no specific recommendations below for film brand, other than Fuji or Kodak professional type with a bit of Ilford mixed in.



For daytime conditions outdoors, I prefer to use ISO 160 films to allow for fill-flash use but even then the lens might still have to be stopped down quite a bit more than I like in very bright sunny conditions. A polarizer or neutral density filter can help to bring down the depth of field into the comfort range.

For indoor daytime conditions I use ISO 400 films that I can use with flash, or if the light is strong enough, just ambient, but I am mostly using flash as much as possible with color films for that extra pop and saturation. For nighttime conditions I use an ISO 800 film to help burn in the ambient light better when I'm using flash.

Interspersed with these color films are rolls of Kodak Portra B&W (now TMAX 320) for black and white coverage. ISO 320 or 400 is a bit fast for fill-flash use in sunny conditions, so I have to go ambient most times but the high contrast seems to work nicely with black and white. Add in a bit of sepia and you're really cookin'. Some Kodak TMAX 3200 or Ilford Delta 3200 for high speed ambient coverage indoors might be utilized, but I have generally not been a high speed kind of guy.

Depending on the day itself, Ilford's SFX 200 might see action in another camera to get some



funky near-infrared photos. Especially effective with foliage in the background, but incredibly dramatic with puffy clouds set in blue sky. Use a red filter on the lens and if you really want to push the blackness of the blue sky in the print, try a polarizer on top of the red as well.

Any of the B&W and ISO 160 films would be lower usage types with ISO 800 coming next, but the workhorse film is the ISO 400 type. This is the middle film that can straddle low light and bright light with good results either way.

For digital, nothing could be easier than custom fine-tuning your ISO as lighting conditions warrant. Bright light? Set to the lowest ISO. Middling light? Set to ISO 400. Low light? Set to ISO 800 and if you really want some ambient only photos, set to ISO 1600 and then clean up with Noise Ninja or Neat Image Pro.

For the workflow afterwards, I like to sort the digital files into separate folders based on the ISO used to batch apply the custom noise reduction profile before combining the filtered files back into one master folder again.

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## Keeping Fit

Working a full day wedding is hard work. Whoever said wedding photographers earn too much never spent 12 hours lugging two full size, pro cameras and lenses around their necks with two additional cases or bags on top of that, and a tripod.

Even a relatively short day for four to six hours can still inflict a beating on the body. The following day, my body is usually stiff and I sometimes wonder why, but when you think about it, the wedding photographer is constantly on the go. Do a few of those types of days in a row and watch the pounds melt away.

My lower back will be stiff along with my neck and shoulders. My right forearm will also usually feel stiff too from holding onto a camera for long periods of time. So, though you may not feel much on the actual wedding day itself, as you get on in years, you definitely feel it the day or two after.

This flows nicely to the point that you want to maintain some physical fitness and conditioning to minimize the stiffness and allow you enough juice to keep going the whole day.

I'm reminded of the scene in the movie Hoosiers when Gene Hackman's character is running the boys through a series of tough conditioning workouts at the beginning of the movie, because by the end of the season, Hackman does not want his team to run out of gas and ever be outworked and out-hustled by another team.

Now, I'm not suggesting some basketball style workout regime, but some regular exercise and good diet will make life easier on you for those days that you have to abuse the body by working it out without ingesting a regular supply of food and water, as you would for regular non-photographic days.

Diet and exercise will also minimize any unpleasant surprises when you take the winter off and then have to dust off the suit and shirts the following season, only to find that you're still carrying Christmas turkey baggage around your waist.

## Dress and Comportment

Dress sensibly, but most important, dress comfortably. A suit and tie look great, but are a pain in the ass to wear and photograph in. The suit jacket is constricting and tends to bunch up with camera straps around your neck and on your shoulder. The tie also tends to get caught up in the neck straps.

For my own wedding shoots, I prefer a basic outfit of dress pants, or really good looking black, wrinkle-free khakis that can pass for dress pants with a wrinkle-free dress shirt – yes there are such shirts, try Eddie Bauer for some decent looking ones. They cost about CAN \$75 and will wear better over a full day than a traditional dress shirt that looks great for the first hour but looks like it had been slept in by the end of the day. Plus good dress shirts cost over CAN \$100 and are not as durable, requiring dry cleaning, whereas the Eddie Bauer shirts can be machine washed and dried with regular laundry and come out looking great. I forego the tie as well.

The most important part of the outfit though is perhaps your shoes. Comfort again is the key word because while fancy dress shoes look great and are comfortable enough for an office environment where you aren't on your feet the whole day, not so good for weddings.

Traditional dress shoes usually have a hard and smooth sole that is too thin for comfort and too noisy over hard floors. Rubber soled shoes provide superior cushioning and support over a long day. Less noisy on hard surfaces, but if they get wet they do tend to "squeak."

Now that you're all set to go, your attention can be focused on the wedding itself.

[Next Chapter - Putting it all together for the Wedding Day Workflow](#)

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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Wedding Day Workflow and Putting it all together

As a wedding photographer you are obviously at an event to take photos. This is your job and why you were hired, that you had the kind of style and vision that appealed to the couple. This is not the time to be shy and if you're introverted, best to find another type of photography to get into, like landscapes.

As the hired photographer you generally do have the run of the show – within reason. Your job is to take photos at key moments which means that you will get in someone's way or view, but you do what you have to do while keeping your behavior and attitude in good taste and harmony with the way the day is unfolding. Remember your professionalism and a few excuse me's and apologies help along the way too.

The length of time you will spend at a wedding and the type of coverage you will provide will depend on the wedding package the couple has agreed to purchase. You may find yourself running on your feet from 8 am to 1 am, or you may be requested to show up for a four-hour stint of ceremony, formals and partial reception. Most of the preparation notes I covered are oriented for a full day wedding, so adjust according to the actual package you will provide.

Some brides will request that you show up at her parents' house to photograph her getting made-up and dressed for the wedding. The general coverage will include make-up application and oftentimes the bride's friends and attendants are present, so some good buddy-buddy shots can be taken of them getting made-up too. Get them nice and close for some face shots. If the bride's parents are around, get a few informal shots of them alone and with the bride. The bride getting made-up is also a good time to use a really fast lens to isolate just her face with an extremely shallow depth of field. Seeing such photos taken with a Canon 85mm f1.2 wide-open were incredible.

The bride's dress should be available before the bride puts it on, so check out the dress for any special details that would avail itself for a macro shot. A few "found" shots of the dress would be good coverage to have, found meaning finding it hanging on a hook or laid out on a bed. Including the shoes with the dress would be a good setup shot.



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After the bride has put on the dress, her helpers will be fussing and smoothing it over and will make for more good coverage. You may wish to suggest that the bride's mother become involved for the finishing touches for some intimate photos of the two. For the traditionally minded the bride will shortly pin a boutonniere on her father's suit jacket's lapel.

When the bride, her helpers and her family are ready, the car or limo should be coming soon if not already present. The general rule of thumb is if it looks expensive take a photo of it for record keeping. This applies not only to cars but anything that looks expensive, from the catering, floral display, table settings, wine, etc.

*Below: interesting to see how two photographers approach the same or similar subject matter.*





Photos of the bride entering the car and exiting at the church or ceremony location are standard, but slap on the wide-angle zoom or fisheye and get some fun shots inside the limo. Try and get some once the groom is along for the ride too. After that, meet up with the bride at the church. If the timing is good, you should have a few moments at the church before the bride arrives, so get photos of the groom and his attendants along with guests coming in and signing the guest book.



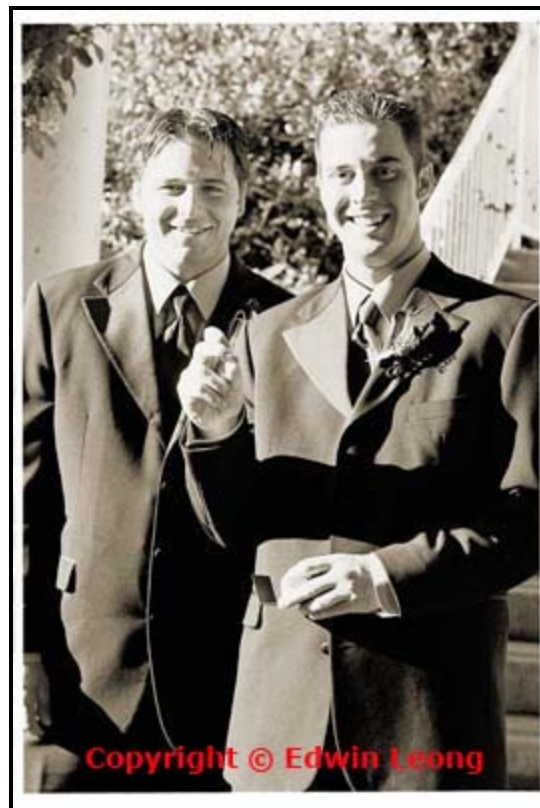




If the timing is really good, you'll be able to arrive at the church well before the guests do, which will allow for some ambient light shots of a nice looking church, or other setup shots if it is not a church wedding. The church or ceremony location is often when the groom's side of the family gathers together and hand out and pin on the boutonnieres. All good photo ops of course. You'll want to familiarize yourself with the groom's family and who the important members are for later photos.

This also a good time to meet with the minister or justice to go over any do's and don'ts that may apply for the person and/or church. As mentioned elsewhere, certain churches (Catholic and Anglican) have rules on when to use flash and when not to. Individual ministers may also have their own rules of what is appropriate and not for photographic coverage. These rules have developed over time because of the boorish behavior of some photographers in the past that have served to mark all wedding photographers as boors.

By stepping up onto the altar during sensitive parts of a ceremony, to firing a flash in the minister's face, and just generally not being discreet is what has been some of the no no's that today's wedding photographer should avoid. I know that many photographers want to push the boundaries for the "shot", the must have killer that could make a huge sale, but not at the expense of angering the subjects involved. You don't hear about the good behaving photographers, just the bad ones and they stigmatize the whole industry. As a beginning and part timer photographer, you especially want to ensure your name is sterling.





Generally, the ministers are the ones with the rules to follow whereas the justices are much more relaxed. I've met a few justices that gave me carte blanche to do what I needed to cover the event, even if it meant being right on top of the guy, as one explained it. These justices understood that while marriage is a formal ceremony filled with tradition, it was not for them to impose restrictions because they saw it as a celebration of the couple and it was more important to ensure the couple had good photos than to follow strict tradition. Obviously, these justices made for an excellent photographing environment that freed me to take the photos I needed from wherever I had to be.



Most ministers, even with rules, are good to deal with as long as you don't cross the line. By following their rules it is much easier to have them involved in the photos after the ceremony and be in their good books for a future job that involves them again.

A few shots of the guest arriving are good record keeping moments, but the real action begins when the bride arrives. Shots of the limo, carriage or car are part of the coverage, as are the bride stepping out of the vehicle. Again, if the mode of transportation looks special or expensive, get a shot or two of it. If you have time, get creative with the angles after taking the standard record keeping shot.



Sometimes the bride and her party will head directly into a dedicated waiting area inside the church or simply wait in the car until the music starts and it's time for her to take her walk down the aisle. If the former, there will be a last minute once over of all the girls that you can get some shots of. Be sure to get some photos of the flower girl and ring boy if present. Close ups of the rings on the pillow are nice to have, but these are usually fake because the real rings are held by the maid of honor and best man. If time permits, obtain the real rings and do some setup shots after the ceremony during a lull.

When the ceremony begins in earnest, the groom and his attendants will walk up to the altar. Sometimes they walk down the aisle and sometimes they just come out from a side door. If you did not attend the rehearsal you'll have to find out beforehand how the men will appear since you well know how the women will come out.

I was shooting a wedding in which neither myself nor the main photographer knew exactly how the men would appear in the very large modern style church. We saw ushers escorting the guests in and asked them about the entrance, assuming that they were members of the wedding party, but they surprised us by saying they did not know. Not until the ceremony began when the groom and his real attendants emerged from a non-descript side door



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near the front of the church did we know how they would appear and it was a frantic moment of rushing to photograph the entrance when we saw them. The ushers were simply ushers and not wedding party members.

Once the groom and his attendants have appeared and positioned themselves at the altar, the parents of the couple will often walk down the aisle first, then the flower girl and ring boy followed by the bride's attendants. If the father of the bride escorted the mother down the aisle, he usually scampers away down the side of the church to escort the bride. Other times, someone else may escort the mother down the aisle. Needless to say you must take photos of all of these people walking down the aisle. Always be aware of your film count to ensure you have plenty of frames for the bride's moment. If you're getting near the end of the frame either shoot them off quickly on the preceding subjects or else rewind and insert a fresh roll before the bride appears.

It is also needless to say that you as the photographer will not be walking backwards down the aisle in front of the bride. Stake out your position at the front of the aisle on one of the sides and take a middle position at the beginning of the walk and then move to the side again when she is near the front of the aisle. Do this for all the main subjects walking down the aisle. When the bride has reached the altar, get up and walk backwards away from the subjects to capture the father handing off the bride to the groom and any lifting of the veil and kissing moments.





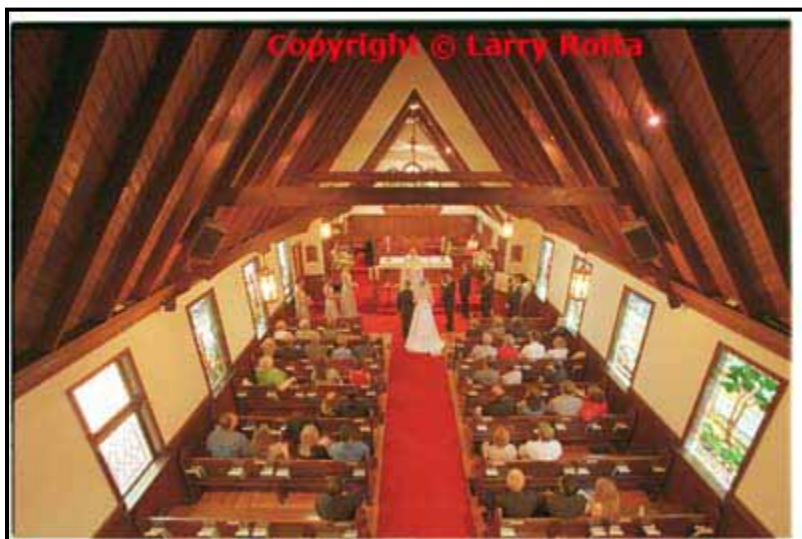
With a two-camera system, I start with the 70-200 lens when the bride is at the beginning of the walk and then switch to the normal range lens when I can no longer fit the whole bride in with the 70mm focal length, about midway down the walk. I may switch back to the longer lens to do tighter close-ups of the bride though. At this point, it's all instinct and intuition as to which lens to use and what kind of photo I want to take based upon what I see transpiring in front of me.

When the minister begins his ceremony, the action is in a lull and this is the time to head to the back of the church and try some tripod-mounted ambient light shots. If there is a balcony, have the tripod setup before the ceremony so that you can quickly go up and down for some overhead photos.

Catholic ceremonies usually have members of the wedding party or a guest head up to a podium to do some readings and prayers. Usually four or five readings are done and there is no objection to having flash photos taken of them. While flash is allowed during the beginning of a church ceremony, you still do not want to go overboard and start strobing up the place, choose your photos wisely for discretion.







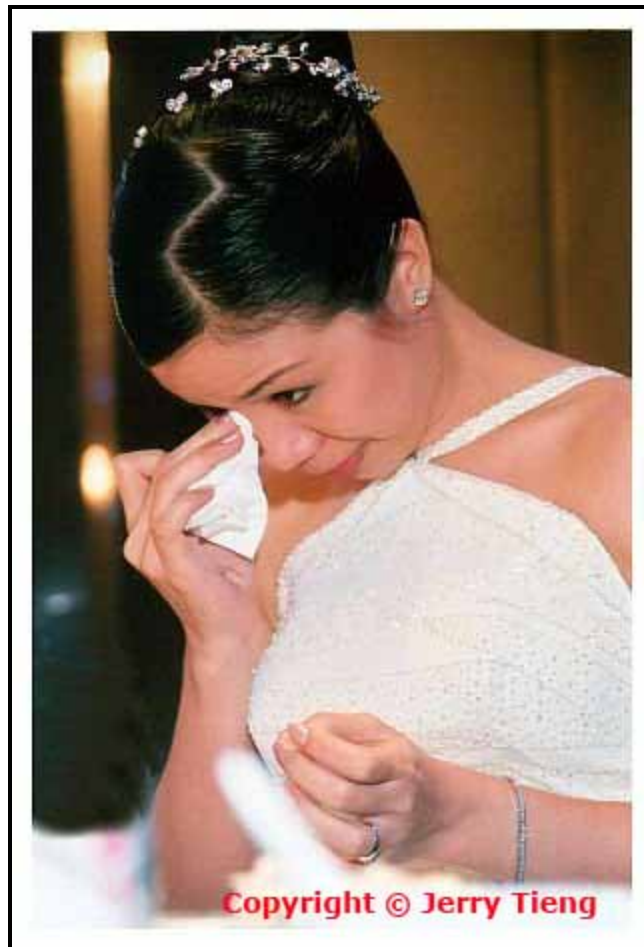




Things to watch for are emotions from the bride and perhaps even the groom, i.e., tears falling. This is the time that some high-speed B&W film adds a different look than flat, flash lighting and also helps to reduce the amount of flash required to capture the events. Be sure to watch the guests as well for any emotions or expressions on their faces. Little kids and babies are always sure-fire "aw" moments when the bride looks at the proofs, followed by comments such as, "we have get copies of the baby pics for so and so", cha-ching, the sound of money J

After the minister or justice has said their opening comments and prayers, the vows are exchanged, the rings placed on the finger and then the kiss. All require photos, but especially the kiss, so again, be mindful of your film count and be sure to have enough to cover multiple shots.

A word to the wise about flash and motor drive for such photos, the moment only lasts for a few seconds (usually) and while your pro-grade camera can rip through 5-10 frames per second, your flash cannot if you use lowly alkalines. Even expensive lithium cells can have it tough to recharge quickly enough to throw adequate light for a motor driven sequence of shots. The best choice (in my experience) for fast recycling are high-power NIMH rechargeable cells that crank the juice and may give you just enough power to recycle fast enough for the second and third shots. If not, then your first shot will be properly lit followed by underpowered flash shots in the motor sequence. Nikon users now have the option of using the new SB800DX that add a fifth cell to the flash to really improve the recycling performance of the flash.





After the kiss, the minister or justice will sometimes introduce the newly married couple to the guests, but the ceremony is not actually over yet, as the signing of the registrar and marriage certificates are required. The signing is presided over by minister or justice with the bride and groom and one witness for each, the maid of honor and best man signing the papers. This is when photographers are allowed up to the altar to take photos. After the signing, take a group photo for



record keeping.



Now the couple will be officially introduced and the guests rise and clap. After a moment, the bride and groom walk down the aisle followed by their wedding party. It can be difficult to get shots of all of the wedding party as they come down because a single photographer really has to walk backwards out of the church and capture the couple emerging from the church doors. This is where a second photographer really helps out in the coverage so that the primary photographer focuses on the couple while the second takes the walking down the aisle shots of the wedding party, flower girl and ring boy, and then the parents and guests.



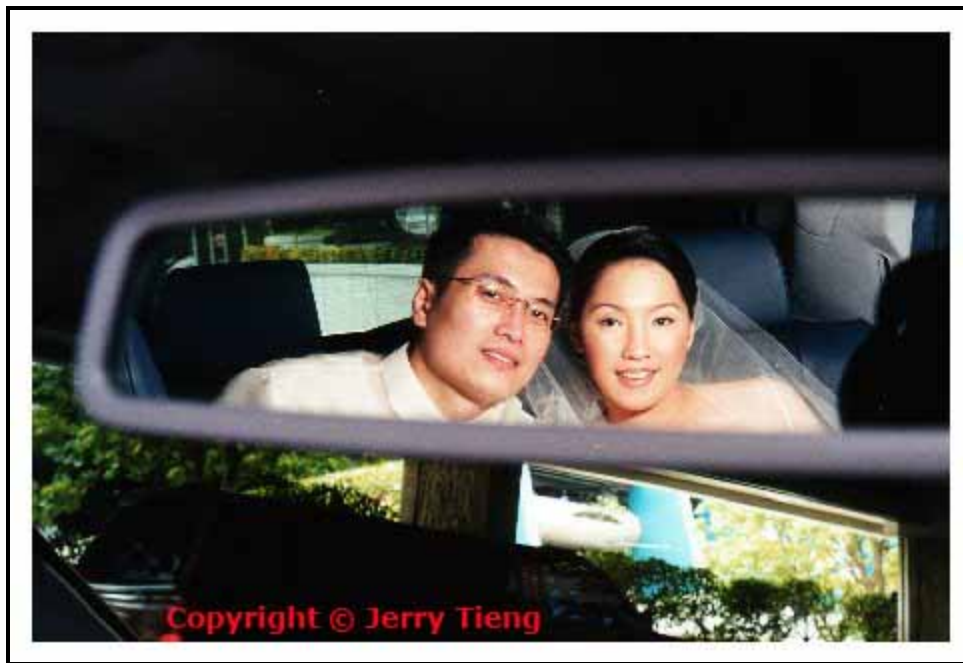


Mingling, handshaking, backslapping, cheek kissing all occur as the couple receives their congratulations from the guests. Plenty of candid moments will be available. After the initial euphoria, the time comes that a large group shot of the wedding party and guests can be taken in front of the church. Use whatever natural or manmade props are available to organize the group. This could be a staircase in front of the church where you shoot from a down position looking up or an open space in a garden or lawn that is best for you to be high up on a step ladder and tripod fully extended (not by the centre column though).



After that, the wedding party will head for the cars and depart the church. Car shots from outside and inside are available here. If the car has a sunroof, more photos are available of people sticking their upper body through it. It's best if the sunroof shot is a spontaneous act by a member of the wedding party, but if not, it does not hurt to "encourage" the use of the sunroof.

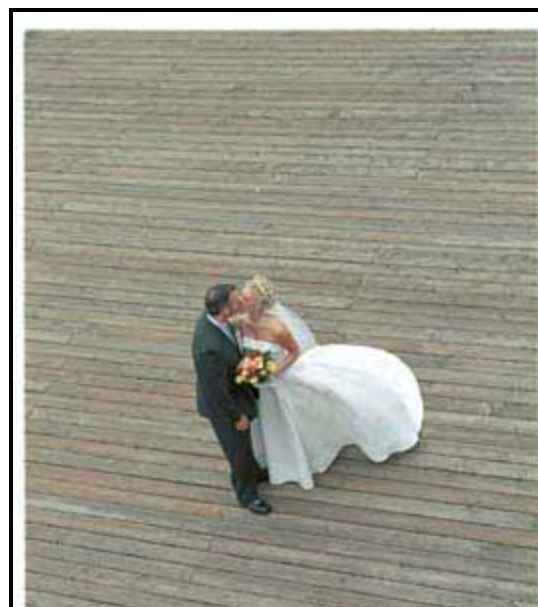




For many couples, right after the ceremony is when formal portraits are taken. If the church is large enough and nice enough, the formals and groups photos can be taken right on the grounds, but if not then a suitable location has to be determined by the couple.

In my city of Vancouver, there are a couple of areas that are very popular for taking wedding photos. A garden set in an old quarry called Queen Elizabeth Park often results in lineups of bridal parties trying to get some shots beside a small waterfall that I personally find dismal and ugly, but does fall into a very small pool that offers potential. Another location in my local suburb at an old heritage building near Burnaby's city hall also has many bridal parties going in and out of the garden paths and green space.

Gardens are popular because they are pretty, but pretty





also means popular and you have to accept that your awesomely scouted location might also be a favorite of dozens of other photographers.

Beaches offer another classic location for wedding photos, but be mindful of the mess that can arise from the sand and water. Also, whenever you are photographing in the public, crowds form to watch the shoot. It's no big deal and I enjoy the good vibes that arise when people look on while you work. They usually stay out of the way and sometimes they can even be called into assist for holding up a background, so don't sweat the gawkers.

Before the intimate couple's photos are taken, it is best to get all the group formals out of the way. Guests don't like hanging around for hours waiting for their turn, so get the non-family guests out of the way first then move onto extended family and then immediate family. Immediate family may not like waiting around either but they would be more tolerant of having to wait than regular guests and other extended family members.

Always ensure that the couple provides a list of group photos they want taken and try to have a family member designated as your go between. This person is the one you talk to help you out with the groups and who's next and so forth. They're also the ones to talk to family in case of language barriers between you and the family and the directions you need to give to organize the group. With such a person coordinating which groups come next on a list, you can work pretty quickly and efficiently to keep everyone happy because taking photos is actually pretty hard work for everyone involved.

For certain ethnic groups, the family photo is paramount and you should respect this. Chinese for example may not see some family except at weddings and funerals and the parents of the couple consider this moment as a key highlight of the wedding. Take plenty of photos here because film is cheap compared to the wrath of a Chinese mother who will complain incessantly about the photo you didn't take or flubbed over the ones you got right.

My wife, who is now a Chinese mother three times over, has always groused about the amount of money I have spent pursuing photography, but mysteriously goes quiet whenever her family has an event that is a prime picture taking moment and at times will even request that I bring my best equipment for the photos. I of course make her "beg" for my willingness to take her cherished family photos – hey, I take my victories where and when I can J

If an elderly member of the family seems to be receiving extra attention, be sure to get some candids and formal portraits with the couple and extended family. Work the group photos with the older members first so that they can leave early and rest up for the reception.

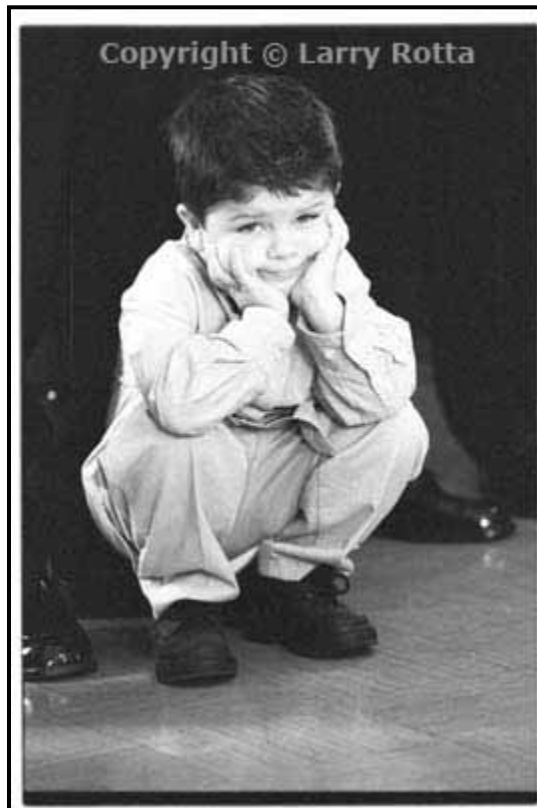


You can try some variations for groups photos such as arranging men on one side and the females on the other, but most people expect that family groups and couples remain together for a large group photo. If the group arranges itself naturally and you try to bring about a little more harmony in the structure, you may end up

ruffling some feathers, as I did one time when I suggested that one woman without a male companion move to the other side of the group for better balance, only to be "told" by another woman from the other side that she was not a part of "their" family. Er...aren't we all family? I left the woman where she was and took the photo as is rather than annoy the other woman further, but I felt bad for the lady I asked to move because she was willing and then had to return to her original space after the rude rebuttal about "family."



Babies can be difficult because their attention is not on the camera but what's happening two or three feet on either side of them. Toddlers and young kids can at least be cajoled into paying attention to the photographer acting like an idiot, so let the kid or clown in you out when the kids are present. Just make sure the grownups receive instructions to keep their eyes on the lens and not you. And take plenty of photos when babies and kids are involved, double, even triple the number of regular shots with just grownups in them.



Once the groups have been taken care of, you can move onto the couple and the bridal party only photos. If time and coverage permits, individual, couple and group photos of each member of the party is nice to have and offer. The couple may decide that they would like to give such photos to the party members as gifts, meaning more potential revenue for you.



Of course, the key photos are of the bride and groom and again be sure to take photos of both alone and together, with a heavy emphasis on the bride. Full-length photos of the dress, torso shots and the close-up photos of the head and shoulders will ensure proper coverage. Most photos will be setup with you directing the positions and posing, but do be aware of the candid moments that occur such as you futzing with the camera and the couple talking, cooing and kissing intimately. If you work alone, it's a good idea to keep a 35mm rig on your shoulder to quickly catch these moments while you are getting a tripod mounted camera ready, otherwise, make sure your second photographer is aware of catching these photos while you get ready.

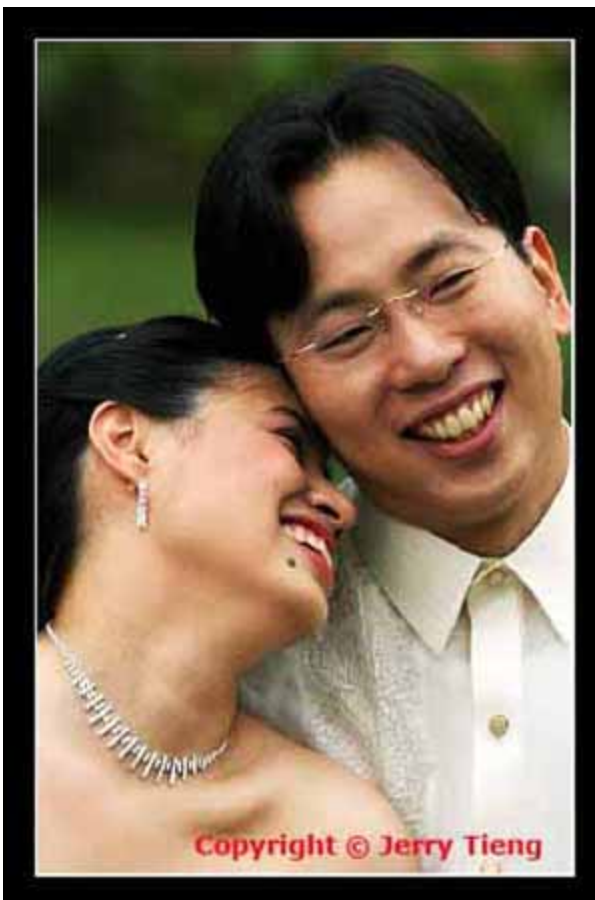
Posing is what I find to be the most challenging aspect of wedding photography. Candid moments seem easy enough because it's about gut reaction to a scene and being quick enough to capture it. It still takes skill in composing quickly and efficiently to photograph candid moments, but I'm more at ease with this style than intimate setup photos of the couples.

Even groups can be simple enough because you want some symmetry for the group and you generally have the time to move people around to achieve that symmetry in the viewfinder – a second opinion from the second photographer or assistant is also nice, so if available, be sure to ask.



Posing couples for their intimate formal is where butterflies float inside my stomach and sting me like a bee, as I work through my limited repertoire of poses. I've even taken to scanning some poses and then saving the small JPEGs in my Pocket PC for instant recall when I run into a brain-dead moment. One does whatever is necessary to get the job done.





One specific tip that I can provide is be sure to get enough tight close ups of the couple and of the bride and groom alone. I use to cheat with medium format and take relatively wide shots of the couple on the basis that I could crop more intimately for an enlargement, but the 5x5 proof print

would still show a wide view and this leads couples (brides usually) to think that it was not intimate enough. In essence, fill the frame to maximize the quality of your film format instead of cheating. The bride will feel that she got more of her money's worth for it.



Don't forget the groom alone. Because so much of the photographic coverage is of the bride or of her with the groom, the groom is often forgotten. A wedding may be one of the rare opportunities he has to be fully decked out in formal dress and few good portraits of him alone should be good sellers. Some less formal poses of him without a jacket would also be good – you know the GQ thing with the jacket held by the fingers slung over the one shoulder. Also, shots of him with the best man and also with any other attendants – you know, the fellas.



After all that a break should present itself for the wedding party and the photographer. This break between the ceremony/formals and the reception can be quite lengthy if the ceremony is early in the day and the reception is at normal dinner party hours. What to do with the break depends on the couple, culture and traditions in place.

Chinese couples often use the break to do tea ceremonies for the parents. Convenient if all of it is at one house, but other times the couple has to rush from one parent's house to the other to do two sets of ceremonies. A lot of film can be used during these moments depending on how many relatives there are to present tea to. Chinese brides can receive wrist and neck breaking amounts of jewelry during the ceremony when the mother, grandmother and aunts present their gifts.





For other cultural groups there may be nothing expected of the photographer during this lull and it is a good time to check up on battery power and usage. I've found that my 70-200 VR lens is a voracious power hog and I like to change batteries midway through a long day to ensure I have enough juice for the night. The other camera and flash units do fine on the same set of rechargeables.

The break is also a good time to reflect on how the day went, how the photos might turn out and what or whom you may have missed and need to take more photos of during the reception. Any equipment breakdowns or issues need to be resolved then and there and what alternatives are at hand if the problem cannot be resolved.

Get some food and water into the body, rest up if you can, change clothes if required and prepare for a potentially long night of partying.



Receptions and/or dinners can differ based upon ethnic groups. For the Chinese couples, a huge dinner is what the reception is all about and while plenty of events occur during the dinner, by around 10 pm, most guests straggle out of the restaurant as dancing and continued partying is rare. As a photographer, you know that you'll be out of the place by around 11 pm, once the last round of family photos have been taken. Often times, the couple will ensure a seat at a table for you even though you did not request such a benefit, a sign of cultural politeness.



For couples following western tradition, dinner is followed by dancing and celebrating with a DJ or live band to get the people into the swing of things. Unless you've been specifically told that you will not be needed past the first set of dances, you may find yourself there to the end, meaning the wee hours of the AM. This is obviously dependent on the number of hours agreed upon and it's best to make your exit as quickly as possible once your hours have been met, so that family or guests aren't coming up to you passed the set package time and requesting photos to be taken.



It's a nice gesture to offer to stay for the first set of formal dances so that the bride gets a photo of her dancing with her father and the groom with his mother and then bride and groom alone, but beyond that, if you've met your hours, the more you do means the more money coming out of the profits. It's a fine line to straddle because the more you do, the better your name will be and the better the potential for referrals, but do too much and you're eating into your bottom line for time and film used.

For those receptions where you are in attendance till the end, there are a couple of events to make note of, all pretty straightforward and pretty obvious.



The cake cutting sometimes happens at the beginning and sometimes at the end of dinner and is distributed as dessert to the guests. Champagne accompanies the cake cutting in most cases and little bit of intertwined arms drinking is the norm for the couple. Because this is a significant event, many guests will come up to take their own photos. Don't be worried about these snap-shooters, just make sure you are up early and have staked out the best position to take your photos. Your best position is not directly in front of the cake because then you have the cake between you and the couple, but off to an angle that allows you to see the whole cake and the couple cutting the cake.

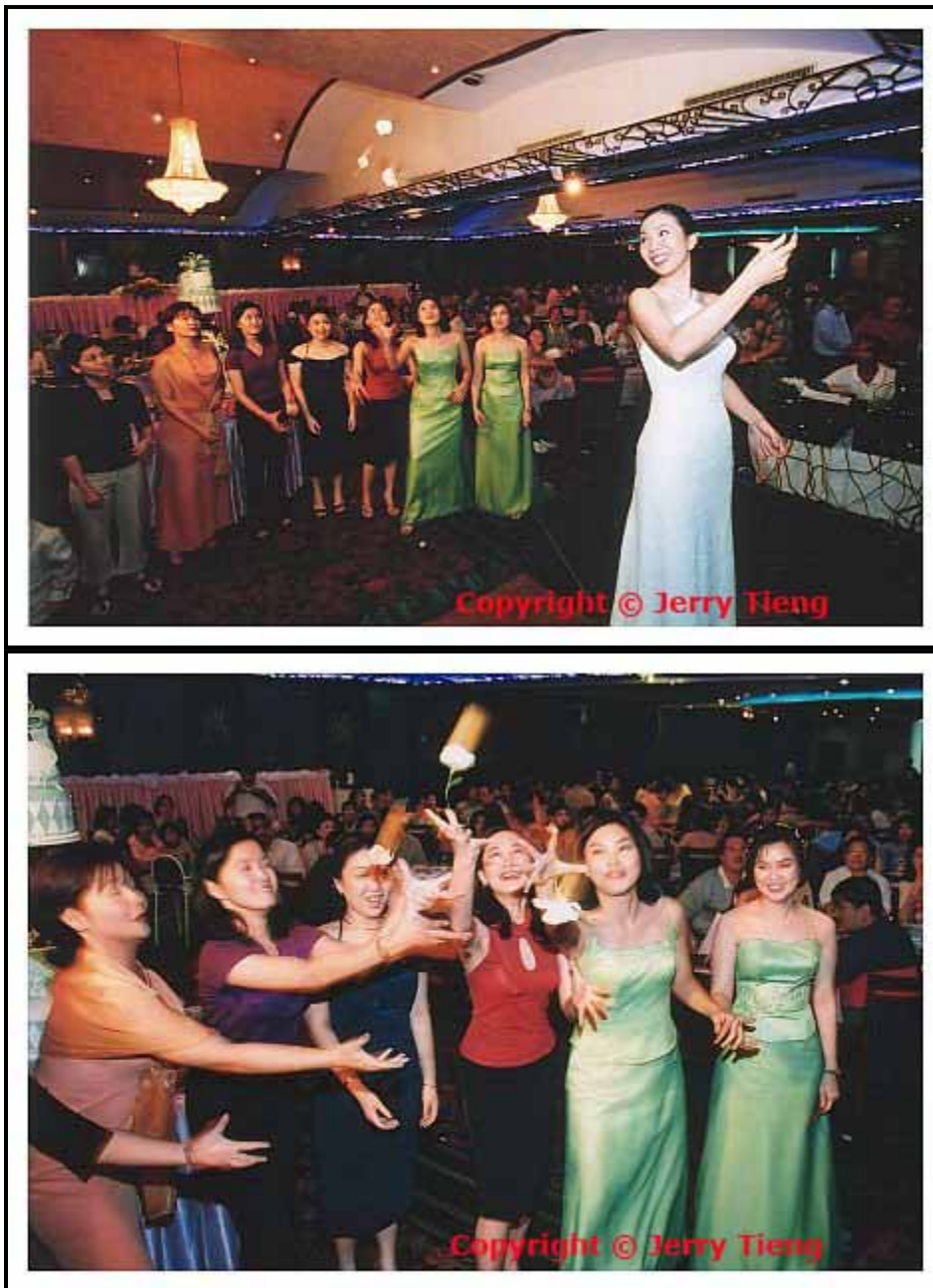




Bouquet tosses happen after dinner and an ultra wide-angle lens is good to have for these shots. I like to show the bride at the extreme of the frame on one side and the girls wanting the bouquet on the other side. Because of the lack of room to maneuver in most restaurants or halls, the wide-angle is what works to capture all the action. A motor sequence of shots allows me to get shots of



the bride in preparation for the toss, the bouquet in mid air and then the arms reaching for it and the lucky girl who got ultimately got it. It makes for a great series of shots because no one pays attention to you and all eyes are on the bouquet, pure candid. Afterwards, get a shot of the girl alone and with the bride for the record.



The garter toss follows the same guidelines as the bouquet toss, except that shots of the groom getting in close to his new wife's legs precedes the tossing of the frilly lace. Afterwards same MO, wide perspective and motor sequence of shots to catch all the action. Take a photo of the lucky guy with the groom afterwards.

Often times at receptions, stories are told and incidents occur, so be on the lookout for facial expressions on the couple and the most important guests. The truly candid moments always make for excellent photos and despite you hovering around, the couple will express surprise that you got such photos because they will have hardly noticed you at all.



During the dancing, get creative and experimental with your flash and shutter speed and knock off a few frames with a slow shutter (aka dragging the shutter) with regular, slow and rear curtain flash sync. You may only get a few good shots out of it, but they can be a great caper to the coverage for the night.



It goes without saying that the majority of your photos during a reception will be flash lit due to the low ambient lighting of most restaurants and halls. While ISO 800 is great for such times, I do find that anything larger than 4x6/5x7 gets grainy, so if group photos are requested, use a slower film and utilize more lights if possible. Studio lights might not be possible, but an assistant or spare guest holding one or two flash units can allow you to use slow film with small apertures to hold depth of field. A flash system that allows for easy wireless TTL would be great for such moments. Wireless TTL should also be channel dependent, not optically based otherwise other people taking photos will trigger your flash units.



The Canon 550EX is a capable channels based wireless TTL system for film and digital. The new Nikon SB800DX looks great too, but at this time, it can only be used with cameras supporting the new iTTL standard (D2H and D70 digital bodies as of this writing). Minolta was a pioneer in wireless flash channels capabilities, but I believe the flash mode is Auto and not TTL as with Canon and Nikon.



Optical wireless means that the flash triggering is line of site and because the trigger is usually a weaker flash unit that is either white light or infrared in output. Because it is line of sight for operation, the remote flashes will see any other source of white light flash or infrared and will fire without any command from you.

A channels based system can be radio controlled for excellent coverage over long distances, but is very expensive, or can also be infrared (cheaper), but is tunable to work within certain channels. This allows the flash to be triggered by you only instead of somebody else using a point and shoot. If you are in a large venue with other photographers using the same brand, it is possible that there will be interference or channel sharing and your remote flashes can still be triggered without your signal.

While you are forced to use flash for most of a reception, you can try some ambient light shots with high speed B&W or use a VR/IS lens to work with slow shutter speeds.

After finishing off the night, it's time to pack up and head home for some R&R.

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## Wedding Photography e-Book - The Aftermath of a Wedding

After a long hard day of wedding photography, the day does not quite end for you. You have to pack up all your gear into the cases and load up the car for the trip home. If you got off early you can unpack and clean the equipment, but if you got stuck late then best to just crash and clean up the next day.

Once you're rested and able to clear your head of the wedding then you can sort the film and prepare to drop off at the lab. If you're really keen you can snag a bunch of envelopes used by the lab of your choice for writing down the order and any special instructions you have for the roll of film and then drop off the envelopes at the lab's drop-in window – on the assumption that you've done a weekend wedding and the lab is closed, or that you were so keen that you had to drop off the rolls right after the wedding.

For digital, you download the image files and begin the editing process with your workflow of choice. Obviously, the film photographer has less work to do at this point because he/she lets the lab sweat out the details.

Whether film or digital, once the images have been returned, editing and sorting is the next big step. Editing means tossing your duds and yes, every photographer is going to have some whether it be missed focus shots, inadvertent shutter release shots of someone's shoes, etc. Best to toss the prints and never let the client see the flubs.

Editing also means tossing the shots that make the couple look bad or unattractive. It may have been an honest shot of something happening at the wedding, but if the facial expression changed just as you released the shutter and instead of a great expression you get a mad grimace, best to toss those photos too. Be especially wary of the mothers J

The idea is that your edit is to put your photographs in their best light and you're not going to do that by including duds. If you come across a shot that seems borderline or questionable, ask for a second opinion or else just toss it. Better safe than sorry.

After the editing has been completed then you have to sort – usually done hand in hand with proof prints. You stack the photos in time order, so that when inserted into the proof album, there is a seamless flow of photos showing the events as they happened.



I often find that I have a roll of film loaded that because of what it is, or because of the lens I have mounted, might span several hours of a day from the beginning of the day to the ceremony whereas the other camera gets worked much more. I might have a few of these rolls depending on how much I'm shooting and so obviously if you went roll by roll there would be a discontinuity in the presentation of the photos.

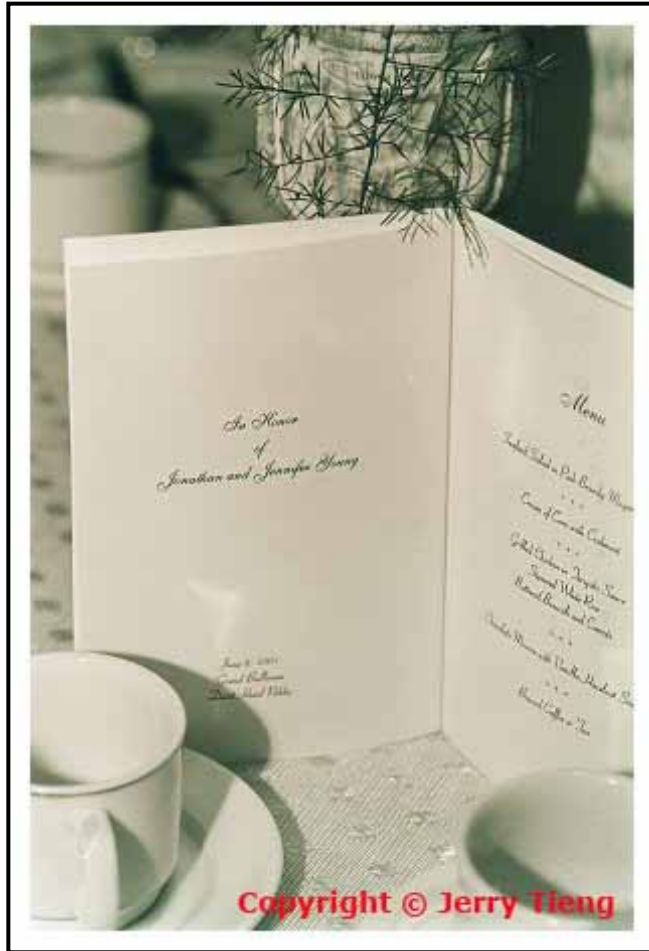
You need to devise a system to keep track of which print came from which roll for easy reprint or enlargement ordering. The roll by roll presentation is easiest to keep track of, but potentially, not in time sequence. Since most of my personal shoots include the negatives, I just sort the proofs in time sequence and let the client figure it out, but I do clue them into the index numbers on the back of the print so that they can easily match print to negative roll number. Most pro labs print such indexes on the back of the print to match a stapled index number on the film leader. If your proofs are from a digital process like a Fuji Frontier, you can also obtain index prints that provide small thumbnails of all the images on a 4x6 print.

Once the proofs have been first through the first round of edits and then sorted, do another final round of editing as you start the album creation process. Proof albums are generally four up per sheet, which limits you to how you can present the photos. Knowing this in advance you should give some thought as to how you want to structure an album, ensuring that you have plenty of portrait and landscape oriented proofs. It would be ideal if you could layout an album so that you end up with four portrait mode shots and four landscape mode shots on one sheet rather than having to mix and match portraits and landscapes on one sheet. Unfortunately, sometimes you just have no choice, but try to minimize this disparity in formats on one page. That's the beauty with the digital process that allows you to avoid this type of mismatch depending on how you do the album presentation.

Some photographers only put in a specified number of prints into an album, but a true proof album is one that comprises all the (edited) photos you've taken. The point is that you want the couple to easily choose which shots to reprint and/or enlarge. I do this for any wedding I do as the primary photographer.

My general layout is a time-ordered layout with the 35mm proofs followed by the medium format proofs at the back if the album is large enough to accommodate them. If not then I purchase a separate small album for the 5x5-sized prints. If I do put medium format prints into a 4x6 proof album then I crop the 5x5 print into 4x5. Other photographers request that the lab print to 4x4 size paper. I didn't think that there was such paper until I saw them with my own eyes and while effective I prefer the original 5x5 and doing my own custom crop if required. There are also 5x5 archival sleeves available from Printfile to fit into standard three-ring albums.

Most times, if I am the primary photographer I shoot through enough film to create two and sometimes three proof albums. One for the daytime getting ready and ceremony photos, another for the reception/banquet photos and the third for medium format formals and group shots, depending on number of photos taken.



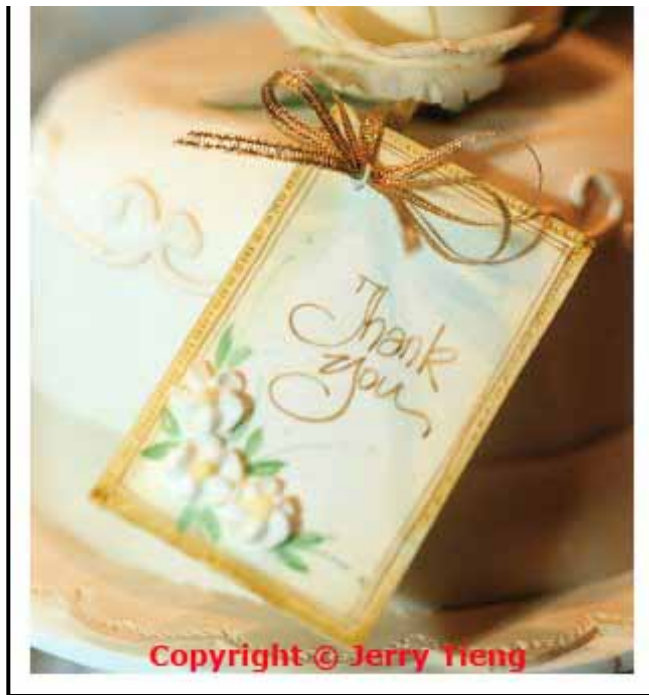
If I'm photographing by myself, I tend to work through about 15 rolls of 35mm for a full day, and about 5 rolls of 120 format film, depending on how many formals there are. If I were to hire a second photographer to work with me, I would expect the number of rolls to increase from 15 rolls to 25 to 30 rolls of 35mm format. Given the potential for large amounts of film to be used, you must ensure that your package pricing reflects this reality.

When you are first starting out in the wedding photography business, you are going to need to order duplicate prints from the lab in order to create your own albums to show to future prospective clients. This is a business cost that while it would nice to pass along to the clients, is more likely a cost you'll have to take up yourself from the profits. It is best to order duplicate sets of photos at the same time as the original order as you will save more money than going back at another time and requesting reprints.

You will also want to review the proofs for your own enlargement needs, either in a large format album or for framing on the wall. You want to have a few framed prints available for review so that couples can see the quality of your work. An enlargement is definitely higher impact than a tiny 4x6 proof or even in a large print in an album.

Once your proof album is complete, it's time to meet with the clients again and let them review your work. Unless you've encountered some kind of disaster with the film, or you were so completely off that Mr. Magoo could outshoot you, you should expect the clients to be satisfied with your work and be paid for your efforts. And best of all, that you will receive good recommendations from them for their friends and family and you will begin to build up your reputation and earn even more money down the road.

This is where all that hard work, sweat, toil, blood...yes, I've bled on weddings, as mentioned earlier on...pays off, with a satisfied customer walking out the door proudly clutching their cherished albums of their wedding day.



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## Wedding Photography e-Book - Final Words

Weddings can strike fear in the stoutest of photographers if they are unaccustomed to the rigors of a wedding event. It's entirely different environment than being out in the bush stalking wildlife or the great, unseen landscape. Many times the nature photographer is a solitary figure alone in the elements where time, relative to a social event, is on the photographer's side. The photographer can reflect and contemplate the scene and subject for what is best according to personal aesthetics.

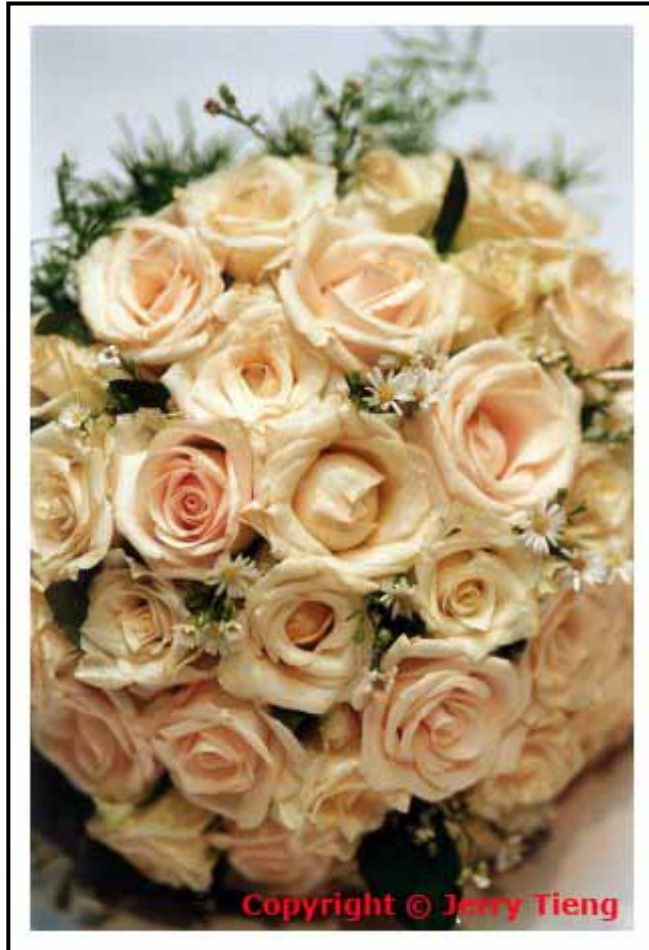
Weddings on the other hand can sometimes be organized chaos. While a basic itinerary may exist, often the photographer is front and centre as master of the day, dictating who should be where and when. People are rushing by to greet the couple; people come up to ask the photographer to take this or not to forget some special person. All around mini events are happening that the photographer has to keep an eye on for potential candid shots.

Weddings are hectic, wild, filled with stress, but can be immensely fun. If you're not a social person then weddings are not likely your calling as a photographer, but for those open to challenges on an ongoing basis and the need to continuously think, sometimes just on pure instinct, wedding photography can be a remarkable option.

Weddings are a mix of formal, informal, portrait, candid, photojournalism, documentary, still life, color and B&W photography. It's where the artistic eye always has to be open to the possibilities around you.

While weddings can be quite lucrative for the top echelons of photographers, you as the beginning wedding photography will not likely make a huge amount of money in the beginning, as you build up the business. More so if you just do weddings on a part time basis, which seems to be the case for many found in the median group of serious photographers, but especially for the lower price range of photographers.

If you have the right attitude, a willingness to bleed money to buy good equipment, and have a commitment to provide great customer



service with professionalism, wedding photography could be right for you.



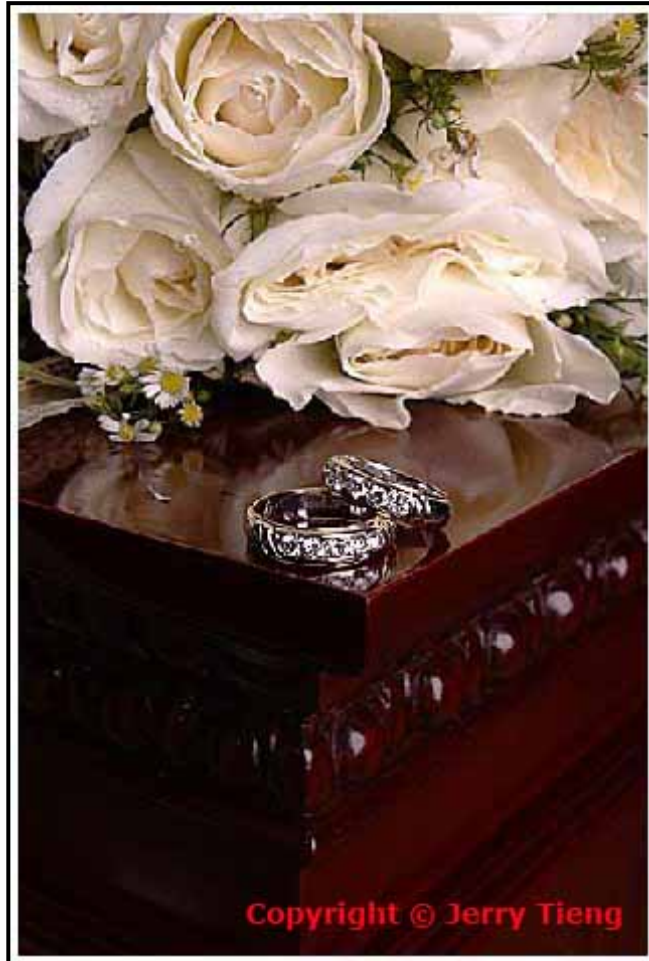
This module is just a general guideline for some of the basics, but in no way is it comprehensive to cover all aspects of a wedding photography business. I do recommend buying a couple of books specializing in wedding photography to provide additional guidance. Steve Sint's *Wedding Photography; Art, Business, and Style*, is a fine one to get going with.



As a dabbler myself, my experience is relatively limited and not running my own business prevents me from discussing all the nuances of such a business, but I hope there has been enough to get yourself thinking about the process.

I still enjoy photographing weddings even if I don't consider myself all that personable or sociable, irascible loner that I am preferring the solitary landscape, but there is something about weddings that draws me to it. At first it was the challenge of doing something new with my photography and wanting to be competent at it, but now I find myself addicted to the good vibes and being around so many happy people. Needless to say it also provides justification to utilize my collection of cameras and lenses and to continue acquiring more J

I wish you well on this new pursuit and to revel in the moment and just as the last chapter of the Photo e-Book served as a public comments page, so too will this page. Send your public comments to [comments@camerahobby.com](mailto:comments@camerahobby.com).



Some anecdotes:

- The designated photographer using a point and shoot to take the shots of the couple going table to table in a very dimly lit restaurant
- One of the designated photographers using a top notch Nikon F3 and matching Nikon flash (mounted over the rewind knob as required by the F3) but what appeared to be a basic 50mm lens, requiring her to move back and back and even further back from the couple at each table in order to get everyone in the frame. I, of course, just pull out my 18-35mm nowadays but at the risk of making all the slim females at the edges of the frame look like Jenny Craig candidates.
- Yours truly in panic stricken mode as the SB28 flash fails at bro-in-law's wedding and having to make do with the less powerful SB27 and yes, size and flash output power does make a difference.
- Yours truly getting the once over by a pro





while shooting bro-in-law's wedding at a popular park for weddings. We were shooting by the waterfall and this is perhaps the most popular spot of all in QE Park and couples wait in line for their session beside it. The next couple's photographer is looking at me and I feel an intense desire to slug him with my tripod. Of course, I decided not to sully my tripod and finished off the shots and moved on, less wise I'd be writing this in the comfort of a 4x8 prison cell and trying to hide from the amorous intentions of Bubba.



- Yours truly in another panic stricken mode when I stupidly decided to risk using the Metz's sideways oriented flash bracket on a tripod even though I knew the mounting threads were questionable. Mr. Murphy struck again and my whole Bronica kit with 150mm lens and Metz flash attached came crashing off of my tripod and onto the ground. What saved me from having a heart attack right there? I was setting up on a very wet lawn that was near-muddy in many places and this wet lawn cushioned the fall enough so that there was not a speck of damage but much in the way of mud splatters. Folks, this is why you have filters and lens hoods over your expensive lenses as my front element was unscathed. When the night was over I spent two hours cleaning my equipment and had to soak my muddy filmback in water in order to get all the fine grit out of it. As a result of this mishap I promptly ordered a Newton flash bracket for use with my Bronica and Metz flash, a bitch to handhold though.
- (From Larry Rotta) I shot 2 rolls for a friend's wedding. Nice of her to want me to relax and enjoy myself (which I did) so she hired her fiance's co-worker who shoots 'professionally'. Anyway, half way through the ceremony (of which was only about 10 min.), this so-called pro runs out of film and had to run out of the room to get some more from her bag,...tsk tsk tsk. And to boot, she only had 1 camera slung around her neck with no backup photographer. Good thing I was there.

Then, during the cake cutting, she didn't want anyone else to shoot pics...so we all waited for her to setup the tripod, etc. and take her quick snaps. Then I waltz up there with my 2 assistants (garnished from the crowd of eager onlookers) to hold up the infamous Black Velvet backdrop (ooooohs, and ahhhhs, from the crowd erupt)... take my time to professionally pose the couple into a final masterpiece while allowing all to start snapping away... and after taking some shots myself, gleefully accepting all the accolades coming my way (re: especially from my manager who was also there telling me how 'beautiful' my poses were).

Felt kinda bad for the 'pro' that was there (as one person commented that her facial expression was saying 'who the hell is this guy') but looking at the bright side another addition to your e-book: "Embarrassment can be a good lesson"







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Reader's Comments:

**From: Alan T. Mak**  
**Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 2004**  
**Subject: Wedding e-book**

Fantastic! I've just skimmed through the book quickly but I plan to go back through it slowly to digest everything. Thanks for writing a useful guide for us semi-pros and wannabes.

The one thing that I think you missed is physical preparation. I never realized what a physically demanding job wedding photography is. >From the bride's house to the last dance, you're easily looking at 14-18 hours of moving around and lugging equipment. Everytime I do a full wedding I need a day to recuperate...

Alan T. Mak

*Actually, I wrote about it in one of my earlier articles, but it's a good idea to incorporate that as well as a comparison of digital costs versus film costs. Expect an update in the coming days.*

**From: Alan T. Mak**  
**Sent: June 19, 2004**  
**Subject: Wedding Albums**

Edwin,

Do you have any tips or suggestions about putting together wedding albums? What are some creative and economical alternatives to the custom, handbound jobs that cost \$500+?

I have found some quality leather bound "scrap books" that I think would make decent albums. Mounting the pictures with photo corners doesn't seem to do justice to the pics...

What do you do for your clients?

Just wondering...

Alan T. Mak

*Just 4x6 proof albums for my clients. I do a basic service only of proofs only and give the negatives to the clients and tell them to do their own enlargements. I keep my prices fairly low, so that provides leeway for the couple to do their own thing.*

*The albums, I tend to buy from a local pro lab that look good and are very cost effective, around \$10 for a 200 proof album, so it's no hardship to buy several and place all the proofs in them. I try and do at least two for a full day shoot, one for the day photos and one for the evening reception. At times, a third one custom for medium format may be purchased depending how the regular proof album comes along for capacity.*

*If you prefer to offer an 8x10 or 11x14 album, Prat makes some pretty nice stuff and since you're in Toronto, it will be very easy for you to go to Vistek and check out the Prat line. Vistek has very good prices on these leather covered albums.*

*They normally come with 20 inserts which allow for 40 prints. This is a different and a classy way to do an 8x10 or 11x14 album – more like a portfolio than a traditional album. These albums are generally in the \$100 range, but go elsewhere and you could pay nearly double for the larger sized albums. I bought an 11x17 album locally "on sale" for \$150 and then bought several 11x14 and 12x16.5 albums, all for less than \$100 each at the time, from Vistek.*

*If you go to this page about the D100, you will see two shots of the 11x17 album that I use for my D100 prints on 11x17 paper, but I also insert 11x14 prints from my medium format system.*

[http://www.camerahobby.com/Digital\\_NikonD100\\_3.htm](http://www.camerahobby.com/Digital_NikonD100_3.htm)

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