

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY?

BY MICHAEL STRAUB
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What's the deal with wedding photography?

I am sure that you are asking yourself this question as you plan your big day. Well, hopefully I can shine some light on the subject! (Pun intended!)

One of the big things that everyone asks is ...”Why spend all that money for something you’re going to set on a shelf for 20 years?”

My response to that is ...”Why did you put a time limit on that?” You must expect to look at it in 20 years, and when you do, think about how valuable it will be to you. Your photos (and video, if the format it was recorded with is not obsolete) are all you will have once the day has passed. Your album is a record of two families joining together. It is the documentation of one of the greatest days of your life! Okay...I’ve said my piece. Here are some things you should know.

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

There are two basic styles of wedding photography happening right now. They are “Classic” (also known as “Traditional”) and “Photojournalistic” (also known as “Documentary”). A Traditional style is more posed, or guided, where the photojournalistic style is more candid. I am a photojournalistic photographer, myself. There is nothing “wrong” with either style...it really comes down to your personal taste. Couples who would prefer a more formal look or posed group photos should begin to look for a traditional photographer. Those couples who would rather go about their day without posing all that much should look into a photojournalistic style of photographer.

WHAT IS A “SHOOT AND BURN” ?

Now that the whole world is digital, there are a lot more “weekend warrior” wedding photographers. Hey I’m not knocking anyone here...it’s just a fact. Digital has changed the photographic industry immensely.

Many of these new photographers are doing a “shoot and burn” type of arrangement. They photograph the wedding, and then burn all the images to CD or DVD and just hand it over. Many couples think this is great. They have a CD with all the photos and they can print them to their hearts’ content! But, you should be aware that studies have been done by professional photographic industry organizations that show a large percentage of couples don’t ever do anything with the CD. You see, life gets in the way. They promise themselves things like: “We will look at the CD this weekend,” and then just don’t get around to doing it. Also, they don’t end up with quality prints unless they are using a professional level lab.

But again, it’s up to you to decide what is best for you. Some couples may find this to be a great way to meet their budget needs, as this arrangement is usually less costly.

UNCLE BOB HAS A REALLY GOOD CAMERA

You may have a friend or relative who is the family photographer. When I am at weddings, I often meet these great people. They LOVE taking pictures, just like me, and that’s awesome! But...they may not be the best suited for the job of your wedding. You can’t redo this...there is no second chance. Again, I am not knocking them...I am just trying to pass along some advice based on my experiences and hearing couples talk AFTER their wedding about how they wished they had someone there that had more experience with documenting weddings.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I THINK ABOUT WHEN CHOOSING MY PHOTOGRAPHER??

Ok...once you have a feel for your style, you will want to begin your search on the web or phonebook. I strongly encourage you to go to the websites of your candidates so that you can see their work upfront. There is no point in wasting your time (or that of the photographer) if you can see that their style does not fit your expectations.

Once you've narrowed your choices down, call and schedule an appointment to meet with them. This way you can see some sample albums and meet the person to see if your personalities click. I once heard a very successful photographer say some wise words. He said that he tells brides to choose their photographer the same way that they choose their gown. You are not going to shop for your gown over the phone, right? Just like your gown, you want your memories of your day to feel right, look right, and fit right.

By visiting each studio you can learn more about what they are going to provide and how they plan to provide it. Also, you want to be sure that you are speaking to the person who will be your photographer, and looking at their work. Some studios have several photographers, so it's important that you meet with the photographer who will be at your wedding. After all, everyone has a different eye and personality, so you want to be sure both are compatible to your expectations.

WHAT DO I ASK?

When you visit you may want to ask each photographer things such as:

- How many weddings have you done?
- What is included in my package? Do you have a sample that I can see of those products?
- Do you retain the copyright on your images?
- Do you work alone or with an assistant?
- Do you have a contract?
- Why do you photograph weddings?

In closing let me just say this....pick the person that you trust or feel the most comfortable with. You don't want to be with this person for 10 hours and feel stressed. Your images are the only thing that you purchase without seeing. You can taste the cake and food samples, listen to the band or DJ, see and smell the flowers. But your images won't be seen until all is said and done. So choose the person that you feel will meet your expectations the most. And then just relax and enjoy your day. Trust me, that will have a large impact on your images! I hope I helped here, and I wish you the best for your wedding, and more importantly, with your lives together!