

Brides & Bouquets

SPECIAL SECTION 2012

A REEL SPECIAL DAY

Are professional wedding videos worth it?

Anica Wong
Creators.com

If you search for "wedding videos" on YouTube, you'll be inundated with page after page of results. "Funny wedding," "My Clumsy Best Man Ruins Our Wedding" and "The Royal Wedding Vows" are just some of the highlights. There's something compelling about seeing a couple vow to each other -- and the rest of the YouTube universe -- that their love will last until the end of time.

But what you may not know is that when it comes to the professional wedding videos you see, couples have made a big financial decision to hire a videographer to tape eight hours of their special day.

When it's all said and done, was that expense worth it?

"It is a lot of money, especially in this economy," says Jonathan Holt, the creative director at The Wedding Theater. "It's an investment. Years from now, that money won't matter; it's about the memories."

Holt got his start in wedding videography by taping his sister's nuptials. From there, the directing graduate found a niche that he enjoyed, quit his other job and turned pro. Now he and his business partner own The Wedding Theater and have produced more than 100 wedding videos in the past few years.

Prices for The Wedding Theater's videos vary based on the features included in the packages; that's common practice for most photography and videography companies. Holt's packages range from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

According to wedding coordinator Jenn Mobley, these prices are pretty consistent with what she tells her clients when they express an interest in hiring a videographer. But she's not shy to point out that only about 25 percent of her clients actually go forward with the hiring.

"I firmly believe that (videos) are a nicety and not a necessity. That is how our couples are really treating it," says Mobley of Eventity, an event planning company that specializes in weddings.

Holt agrees that there are just some couples who don't feel the



Sil Azevedo
Photography

need to preserve their wedding in video form. And he says that he won't approach them like a used-car salesman to persuade them to buy one of his video packages. "Most people who come to us are already interested," he adds.

Mobley points out that there is sometimes a perceived alternative

to professional wedding videos: having the bride's second cousin, twice-removed, sit in the back of the venue with a camcorder and record the whole eight-hour event. Mobley says, "It's absolutely not the same, but it's the same line of thinking."

So in an economy that has slashed the average wedding budget by \$10,000 to \$15,000, what are the perks of hiring a professional to create a video?

It's all based around showing emotions, Holt emphasizes. While still-photography is fantastic and almost no couple will skimp on getting a professional photographer for the wedding, there are times that photos just can't capture it all (see: Uncle Bob's moving speech that brings everyone to tears).

"Imagine your parents and what you know about them right now as older people who have raised you," says Holt. "You might have seen a few wedding pictures, but imagine what it would be like to see them in their youth, when they were in love."

Another plus is that these videos are high-quality products. Producers lay musical tracks over the video, and they tastefully and professionally intertwine cuts and edits to provide you with a full film experience.

Monica Pradel, also a coordinator at Eventity, says some of their couples use the video to share their wedding with relatives who weren't able to attend the actual event. She also notes that using Skype, the computer software that allows you to place voice and video calls over the Internet, is convenient for couples who want to broadcast their nuptials to those who can't be present to celebrate.

But with Skype, no keepsake video exists for couples to look back on. On the other hand, will the DVD start gathering dust on the shelf, maybe only to be pulled out on special anniversaries? Mobley says the problem with videos is exactly that: "What am I going to do with it?"

But if you're still interested in having your special day on tape for decades to come, Mobley has some sound advice: "Even the best or most expensive videographers want the business, and they should be able to negotiate or give you the best deal. If they aren't, then go to someone else. Go with someone who really values you and seems to really want to be there on your wedding day."

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ENDLESS PARTY

Managing post-reception plans with your VIP guests

Sharon Naylor
Creators.com

Everyone's having too much fun to call it a day after the reception ends, which is why more wedding couples are planning after-parties to keep the celebration going. Smart wedding couples wait several hours after their receptions end and *then* embark upon their after-party plans. The delay is smart because the vast majority of wedding guests have left, and that helps to thin the herd.

"We made sure to tell our friends to meet in the hotel lobby three hours after the reception ended," says recent bride Megan Stinson. "That not only prevented other guests from joining us, but it gave us time to go to our hotel room, change into more comfortable outfits, eat something -- since we didn't get to eat much at the wedding -- have some time alone and then head out for the night."

Brides and grooms who plan this delayed after-party are then joined by only their closest friends, which keeps expenses down, and they have something in their stomachs to help keep them from getting too tipsy as the celebration continues.

*Types of After Parties

--Out on the town. The bride and groom pre-scout a fabulous bar or club to which they'll lead their VIP guests. Often, the hotel will allow use of the free shuttle bus to bring the group to the club and back at an appointed hour, which provides a safe ride for all.

--In a separate party space. The hotel might also have a small party room that the bride and groom can decorate with table linens, candles and dimmed lighting. This style of party is popular with bigger-budget brides and grooms, who arrange for late-night cocktail-party fare; food stations, for instance, could offer sliders, waffle fries and other bar-type food.

It's an open bar, of course, and some after-parties even have a DJ playing music

from the couple's pre-selected playlist. When you book a hotel's party room, they do require you to order food and drinks, but the entertainment is up to you. Many couples simply hook up their iPods for their after-party music.

--In a hotel suite. Not the bride and groom's suite, mind you, which they'll want to keep private. Rather, consider a tidy friend's suite. Party guests need to keep it down to prevent bothering other hotel guests, but it's a comfy locale for a small after-party





LITTLEST WEDDING ATTENDANTS

Managing the kids in your wedding party

Ginny Frizzi
Creators.com

Though the bride and groom are traditionally the center of attention at their wedding, the spotlight is sometimes stolen by their youngest attendants. Whether it be because they look so cute or because they've had a meltdown, flower girls and ring bearers can be among the most memorable members of the wedding party.

The tradition of having children in wedding parties started because written records were not maintained in olden times. Attendants had to be young so they would live long enough to be able to verify that a marriage took place should the question arise upon the death of one of the parties.

Though there is no set age for the youngest attendants, many are between 3 and 7. There is also no set number, which is up to the bride and groom. Many flower girls and ring bearers are nieces, nephews, cousins or the children of friends of the couple.

Kathi Evans, president of All the Best Weddings & Celebrations, has some definite views on how to best incorporate children into a wedding party. "As a wedding planner, I've seen it all," she says. "Children as young as 2 walking up the aisle all by themselves and as old as 7 who look at all the people and refuse to budge. Things will go well at the rehearsal, but come wedding day it's a different story. It's always a crapshoot when children are involved. You just have to be ready with plan B."

Evans advises sending children up the aisle in pairs, citing "safety in numbers," because one child will encourage the less reluctant one to come along.

As to the best age for the littlest attendants, Evans thinks that 4 years old is perfect for a flower girl or ring bearer. "Younger than that and there's a chance that a parent is going to have to carry them up the aisle. Always make sure there's an adult that they know who can step in and help out if the child gets scared and refuses to move," she advises.

INVITATION TRENDS

Giving your invitees a letter to remember

Sharon Naylor
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Wedding invitation trends rise up and evolve just like fashion trends, with different colors, textures and styles forming the new "in" designs. Because today's bride wants a coordinated look for all of her print items, every important stationery piece -- from "save the date" cards to menu cards, place cards and thank-you notes -- is often designed in matching or color-coordinated styles.

While brides on a budget often ask whether emailed, free invitations are acceptable now, it's still a must to send pretty print invitations. Ceci Johnson, celebrity invitation designer and founder of CeciStyle magazine, says, "By sending a pretty, formal invitation through the mail instead of an online invitation, you show that you went to great effort to design them, and you create a gorgeous keepsake."

And guests love to see the gorgeous invitation that always thrills when it arrives in the mailbox. Designing the invitation has become a creative treat for brides

and grooms who look to these top invitation trends for 2011 and 2012:

--Bright and bold colors. While traditional couples still love the look of ecru-colored invitations printed with formal black lettering, a big trend in invitations, according to the bridal website [BecomingTheMrs.com](#), is bright and bold colors chosen for their match to the couple's wedding colors and perhaps to the season of the wedding.

The Knot, a popular website for wedding planning, says a recent invitation trend is for couples to choose bold colors and have the wording printed in white. Top hues for spring and summer are candy brights, and fall and winter call for jewel tones such as sapphire, eggplant, hunter green and cranberry.

--Sparkle. Invitation cards are intricately accented with tiny Swarovski crystals, mini pearls and rhinestones all hand-placed in the design. It might be a crystal sapphire affixed in the couple's monogram or starburst designs in crystal shine.

--Textures and layers. [BecomingTheMrs.com](#) says that invitations are no longer simple, single-card stock pages in an envelope, but are instead multilayered with touchable textures such as an overlay of frosted vellum or decorative seals. Raised borders in smooth, pearlized print add a touch of elegance, and the color motif might be shown in the added layer of color or pattern in the envelope liner.

For any panel type, the laser-cut printing technique is a huge trend. "It's so fresh, unique and innovative," says Johnson, who launched her Ceci Vivre collection, which coordinates the invitation's laser-cut design with other print items, as well as tabletop accessories, such as place cards and place mats for bridal showers.

"There isn't a way of defining cheaper when it comes to paper stock, but it's always best to choose nice paper stock," says Johnson, who also says that one type to consider is 130-pound paper. It's not so glamorous as satin or silk in fabrics, but it is high-quality."

Johnson says the best way to find the perfect paper is to feel it. Go to your invitation designer or to the art supply or stationery store to pick up, touch and feel dif-

RETYING THE KNOT

Planning your vow renewal

Kristen Castillo
Creators.com

Ever think your wedding was so fun that you'd like to do it again? That's a definite possibility as vow renewals are getting more and more popular.

Rebecca Stebbins, weddings manager at The Venetian in Las Vegas, says she receives a vow renewal inquiry "almost every day."

You can say "I do" again anytime, but the trend is to retie the knot for a special occasion, such as an anniversary.

"Most couples seem to plan their renewal around a milestone year," says Kelly Seizert and Maria Cooke, planners from Ritzy Bee Events and contributors to "Southern Living Wedding Planner and Keepsake." "Celebrities like Heidi Klum and Seal are just one of Hollywood's couples setting the vow renewal trend."

"We also see couples who may have had a more modest ceremony and reception on their wedding day hosting these parties as a way to celebrate their continued commitment to each other."

*Appeal

The ceremonies also give couples a chance to reconnect and reinforce their marital promises.

"Vow renewals are appealing for myriad reasons," says Jillian Kramer, editor of the wedding website [Pretty Little Weddings](#). "It's important to not only reaffirm the promises you have made to one another, but celebrate the time you've spent making those promises a reality."

Kramer continues: "Marriage is a wonderful thing, with twists and turns that can be celebrated at every milestone. Many couples also use vow renewal ceremonies as a chance to supplement the vows they once made by adding new promises that are relevant to the challenges they've faced or goals they'd like to achieve."

Many military couples recommit before or after a deployment, as a show of love and support.

Another motivating factor for many couples is the ability to include the whole family.

"Couples are often including their children in their ceremony either with special readings or adding new 'family vows' that outline what each parent promises to both their partner and family," says Seizert and Cooke

*Renewal Budget

Weddings can be pricey, but in comparison, renewals can be very affordable. For example, a study by The Knot Inc. found that an average wedding in 2010 cost \$25,984.

Stebbins says a vow renewal at The Venetian costs about \$2,500 and includes "bouquet and boutonniere, photography, celebrant to perform the ceremony, champagne gift basket delivered to the couple's suite," as well as use of renewal sites such as the venue's wedding bridge, chapel, gondola or gardens.

Seizert and Cooke say a budget depends on the size of the guest list and how elaborate the renewal will be.

"The costs can range anywhere from dinner for two at a favorite restaurant to a party often more elaborate than their original wedding reception," they say. "Many couples who had more modest original weddings have more means 10 or 15 years later and are able to spend a bit more on a vow renewal for themselves."

Most often the "bride" and "groom" pay for their own renewal ceremony, but sometimes their family and friends contribute for the party.

*Planning a Vow Renewal

A vow renewal can be low key or over the top, depending on the couple's preference. Some choose to recommit on location at a favorite getaway, while others remarry at home or in a local venue such as a restaurant or hotel.

Vow renewals tend to be smaller events than a traditional wedding, with guest lists of 40 to 50 people.

"Many couples try to include all of the guests that were originally invited and attended their wedding, and some keep it small, including only close family and a few friends," says Seizert and Cooke.

The renewal ceremony itself can be customized as much or as little as you want. You can redo your original wedding vows or recite new promises. Customize the ceremony with your choice of readings and music. A through-the-years video or slideshow can be a fun personal addition to the celebration.

You can wear your wedding attire from back in the day, or you can

