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Special Feature | The Magic of...

BY MICHEL ROY

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

It is almost inevitable that sooner or later, the most avid photographer in the family will be asked to take on a very special assignment – to photograph a wedding.



Don't forget the rule of thirds - place your models at the intersecting thirds of the frame.

Bio

Michel Roy, from Quebec City, is the owner of Digital Direct Photos & Videos. To book Michel to photograph a wedding in Canada or to see a gallery of spectacular wedding photography, please visit the website at mariagehd.ca

Whether you have been appointed to this position of “designated photographer” or you have chosen to develop your skills with the intention of perhaps branching out into this area as a business venture, there are a number of factors to consider before you agree to participate as a member of the wedding party.

Shooting a wedding is one of the most difficult tasks a photographer can take on. There are so many things that can go wrong, and it is such an important assignment, that you must be certain that you are prepared to produce excellent results – or step aside and let a professional do the work. You must always remember that this is much more than a photo assignment – it is a visual record of the most important day in someone’s life.

Professional equipment and a very good track record of photographing live events are just some of the basic prerequisites a wedding photographer needs to perform at the level your subjects expect.

When shooting a wedding, you should go with the equipment, techniques and styles you know best -this is not the time to try new things. If you shoot in Manual mode on a regular basis, that is great. If you shoot in Aperture mode most of the time, you can do very well – just stick to what you know, because trying new things during the wedding ceremony is a recipe for disaster.

Here are some guidelines that could make you a better wedding photographer:

Start learning the tricks of the trade by offering to be an assistant or a second shooter on a professional team



Never leave home without your flashes and many sets of batteries. I can use up to 3 flashes for my wedding photos.

specializing in wedding photography. This will help you learn a lot about the techniques and the tribulations of wedding photography, and you will not have to cope with all of the stress that comes with the special event.

Scout the area, and be prepared for everything. If the bride wants outdoor photos, and the weather forecast calls for rain, be sure that you have a backup plan.

Make a shot plan. Every wedding has the preliminary family photos, individual and group portraits, and a traditional array of images for the wedding album. Stick to the basics, go for the rule of third composition and make sure that every shot is sharp and perfectly exposed. This is not time to try to be artistic with your camera. You will have time to create some artistic effects in the post processing phase.

Bring a least two cameras bodies – remember Murphy's law – if something can go wrong, it will... so bring several lenses, lots of batteries, extra flashes, and a good supply of top quality compact flash cards. Bring more supplies rather than less... you can always go to the trunk of your car to pick up a piece of equipment, but you will not have time to go back home.

If you have the choice, shoot at sunset, the summer light is always great then.





Get close up for the official portraits to capture the joy of the bride and groom.

Wide angle lenses are great to capture the ambiance of the wedding ceremony, while a telephoto lens is perfect to get candid views of the guests. Use your lenses to your advantage. I always shoot weddings with one or two assistants, during the ceremony the assistant becomes a second photographer. This can pose a bit of a problem – you have to make sure the assistant never gets into your shot, and make sure that you don't get into his shots either – always keep an eye on the team so you don't get in each other's way. When it is time to take the more important "official photos" the assistants do their job of

assisting me with flashes, adjusting the bride's dress, etc. I want to be the only photographer in charge at that point, to make sure I have the full attention of my subjects, and to be certain that everything goes smoothly without rushing or pressuring the bridal party.

I always work with two camera bodies on my shoulders, with a good harness for comfort, so I don't have to switch lenses during the wedding. This way, I never miss a shot, and I don't risk dropping an expensive lens on the floor or putting tons of dust in the camera in the middle of a wedding.

I never use flash during the ceremony, instead I crank the ISO so I get enough shutter speed for a good image. When it is time for the official photos of the bride and groom, I really enjoy using my remote flashes to get great effects. With remote flashes positioned from the sides, from behind, and on the background, my assistants become well trained light stands and they move around with my Speedlites according to a well rehearsed series of hand gestures. When my team is in action I am like a conductor directing a symphony

Use the symmetry of the location to make awesome photos. Here is a quick HDR I did using bracketing mode.





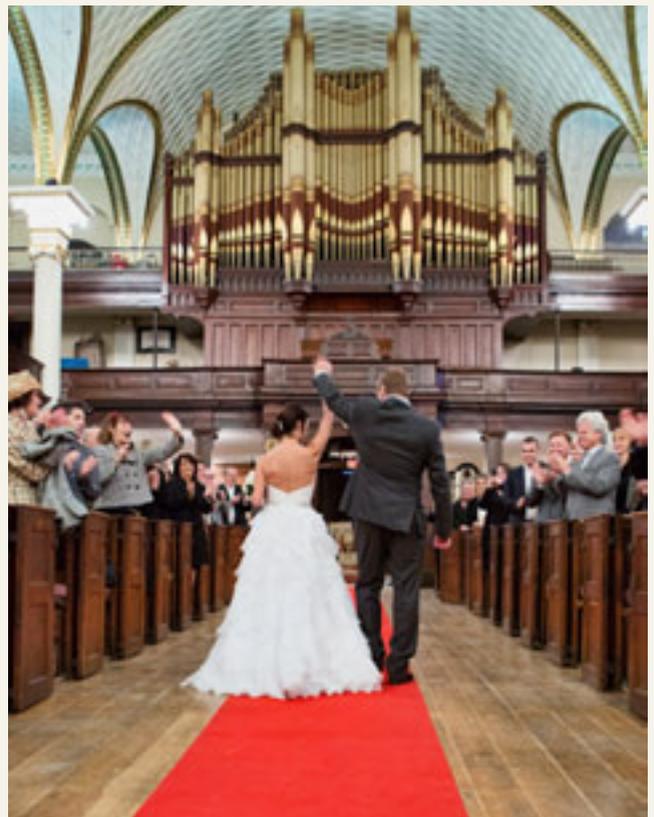
Direct the shoot, you are in control! Make them dance, look at you, look away, steal a kiss – all the classic wedding poses.

orchestra – and it is way faster to have live assistants than to use actual stands and work by yourself.

The white wedding dress is a real challenge for exposure. Be sure to activate the histogram display in your camera and look for a highlight peak at the right end of the scale, but without a huge spike at the end. This way you will make sure you have a good exposure without burning out the white details of the dress. Don't forget to take lots of detail photos, and remember that there is no "time out" in weddings. Use your shot list and check off each item as you shoot. Get the rings, the flowers, the décor and table centerpieces, etc. You should always be ready to shoot everything, and your assistants should shoot the details also, and shoot RAW – you will get the most dynamic range available, and you will be able to fix or more easily adjust the exposure if necessary.

When the ceremony and the party is over, your work really begins. As soon as you can, make at least two back ups of your files, and make sure your images are stored at different places for security.

The real fun starts after the wedding, sitting in front of your computer. A wedding requires hours of post processing, starting with the organizing, arranging and preparation of proofs of all the photos for your customers to see. This is when your creativity can shift into high gear. Try some versions of the key images in black and white; fix the exposure and colour balance to perfection, crop as needed, and make a nice album. Go for quality, and you will make the bride and groom the happiest people in the world! You will soon learn the reason why some wedding photographers love their work so much – it is very rewarding to make people happy!



A second shooter is a great bonus at a wedding, it will give you the chance to shoot from every angle.