

# ANT & DICK'S TOP 10

PHOTOGRAPHY

90% of Brides wish they had spent more time and money on their images of their day. Try not to have the same regrets. read on...

## Getting the very best photography from your wedding

By The Wild Highlander

*Please note that for the conventions of English dialogue I refer to photographers throughout as male - his, him etc. Girls are as good as boys at shooting weddings and some are much better. These rules apply regardless of the sex of your photographer...*

### **Choosing a Wedding Photographer**

*Weddings force you to compromise.*

*Eventually you arrive at a balance that works for you both. Choosing your photographer will probably include some compromise but that does not mean that you have to compromise on the things that matter to you.*

*90% of brides say they wish they had spent more and payed more attention to their photography. The fact remains that when you wake up the next morning, the cake has been eaten and so probably are the flowers, the dress is worn, the car has driven away, the guests have drunk your life savings and the hotel is busy on the next wedding. You have a great honeymoon to look forwards to and then ....The Pictures...*

### **1. Do You Care**

Not everyone cares about pictures - fair enough. If you are not bothered then it does not really matter who takes them. Digital photography is such that even the most uninspired friend will snap something that works as a keepsake. Having said that, most brides, and brides mum's - who know what looking back at your wedding is really like - see the photographs as an essential part of your life and worth getting right. So, let's work on the basis that you do care and work our way forwards from there.

### **2. Working to your Brief**

Your photographer should have dragged a very clear idea from you of what you want. Even if you don't know how to take a picture you should still have an idea of what you like,

This beautiful picture was taken for a friend of mine who was teaching wedding photography in Spain. The couple are getting married in real life but it was not their wedding day. You can sort of tell can't you.



from albums that your friends have received or even from the work your photographer has shared with you.

There is one thing that a photographer should really understand - what matters most to you. Is it the details of the day, is it your friends, is it a stylish fashioneseque photograph, is it your mum...? It is no good saying afterwards that you really wanted a shot of your brother's family but did not tell anyone.

In my experience, a bride that thinks she is being a pain in the ass is actually one who knows her mind and that gives us a fighting chance towards having a clear brief. Whether you are getting married on a beach in Bali, a church in Chelmsford, a mosque in Manchester or in a barn in Buxton, if you want great memories then one thing is certain - you need to work at it with your photographer to get the results you want.

### **3. How do I know a photographer is any good?**

Make sure that the pictures they show you are the pictures you really, really want. It is quite easy these days, as a professional, to take images that look good. But posing and lighting can sometimes hide a picture with no heart. I would suggest that you look deeper. Look at the expressions on peoples faces. Ask yourself, if it was you in the picture, would want that moment of your life in the picture - or the one a few milliseconds later or before. Great photography is about capturing the only

moment that matters. We all know this because on the web we all can see great pictures every day. Very few photographers are great across all genres of photography so a great landscape photographer is not necessarily a great wedding photographer. Ask to look at an album. Can your photographer take an albums' worth of great images? Each one does not have to be a masterpiece but they should all be above average and consistent. Do not be distracted by 'non-wedding' images - i.e. pictures that have a lovely bride or couple with no evidence of a wedding around them, (like you see on the covers of wedding magazines), - ask to see the album they came from to make sure that you are not looking at an image taken on a training day or a modelling shoot.

But most importantly, please make sure that you love their style because that is where a photographers heart and soul can be found.

### **4. Find a photographer you like to be with.**

You will see more of your photographer on your wedding day than anyone else. He will be there when you are getting ready and will be there at the front of the church and at the end of your brilliant day and almost brilliant, first dance. If you do not feel happy to ask him to get you a drink, find your mum, hold your bouquet while you go to the loo, or even, what are we doing next, then you have chosen

If you get involved you can have great fun with your photographer.



the wrong person. If you don't even like your photographer, then, for heaven's sake, change now before it is too late. You want great pictures and you will not get them with someone who you do not trust and like. Taking wedding pictures is a privilege not a chore - get rid of anyone who makes you feel different.

#### **5. Love it, work it - enjoy every moment.**

There is no other day in your life when the whole world puts its troubles aside to make everything go your way. You should take advantage of this by showing your happiness in response. Your photographer can do amazing things for you if you blossom. Embrace the opportunity to be the queen of the day - you can hide again tomorrow if you wish. I have seen brides who normally regard themselves in a very critical light, glow and come alive by simply relaxing and enjoying the day. Love the camera, let it do its work; be natural, shine and the pictures will be a thousand times better than you thought a picture of you could ever be.

#### **6. Compare costs properly.**

Good wedding photography is not necessarily about cost but good wedding packages definitely are. You will be often be given a choice that requires you to understand more about the process of photography than you ever wished to know. Album names, picture sizes, animations, as much as you can eat for a fiver, it can be very confusing. You can do your own research on the information

your photographer gives you about who makes the albums etc, on the internet. In reality you are paying for two things - the photographers time and the products that they sell you. If you never meet your photographer until the day and they only stay four hours then you should not expect to pay too much for their time. If they are selling you a bundle of 'everything' then look closely at the quality of that bundle of product. The chances are that such a photographer is working on a quantity rather than quality basis and your results will be 'good enough'. Once they are done they are not coming back. This is a short term solution but it is a good one for those who are shopping on price alone.

#### **7. Pre wedding shoots and Post wedding shoots**

Many brides have not heard of these. The first is like an engagement shoot. They are about selling you more but the pre-wedding shoot is a superlative idea for informal, 'non-wedding' shots of the two of you. Nice images in a silver frame from this shoot are a brilliant present for hard working mum's on a wedding day, to say thank you - much more personal and thoughtful than flowers. You can also take a picture from the pre-wedding shoot and have it ready for the day with a clean, wide surround. Your friends can then write their goodwill messages on the surround. It means that your first picture for the loo is sorted and you actually see their messages rather than hiding them away in a book on a shelf. You should think about doing the shoot about 4-6



You get some great images from a pre-wedding shoot that you can use as gifts or wedding branding.

weeks before the wedding to allow time for printing. By that stage you should also be at your best with your regime, making you sparkle with confidence.

**Post-Wedding shoots** - often called Trash the Dress - are straight forward wedding fashion shoots and are unlimited fun for brides who are up for it and a waste of time for those who either do not care or who love their dresses too much to wade in the sea in them. However, there is a new trend called 'Cherish the Dress' that allows you to take a more 'respectful' and possibly more romantic view of post wedding photography. Primarily these shoots appeal to those who love photography and the idea of taking more time to get the best images they can with more time than was possible on the day. Personally, I think that there is little heart in an image that was not shot when you were genuinely getting married - the memories are not the same. It can still be a fun day out but don't make the mistake of thinking it won't cost you more money in the end - which works for me!

#### **8. Ask for References.**

I am sure your first enquiry about a photographer was to a friend who was married recently. Most people start their search that way and many never have to go any further. Any photographer worth their salt is going to go out of their way to make sure their brides recommend his work to others. Wedding Fairs are another good source of

photographers. It gives you a chance to meet the 'Person' as well as see some pictures. It is not often the place to confirm the business. Most fairs have in excess of 20 photographers, so anyone trying to close you with a 'show only today' offer should be asked if they will extend their offer; at least until you get a chance to find out more and to discuss it with your partner. Just ditch anyone who says no - it costs them nothing to work with you, so they are obviously more concerned about your money than your welfare.

There are some websites that are very helpful in 'accrediting' photographers. Look at the SWPP - the Society of Wedding and Portrait Photographers. They are the only society that is only focussed on social photographers and they have huge connections. Check out their site to find photographers in your area and if they are qualified.

#### **9. Technical stuff made simple.**

**Digital or Film:** You will find very few photographers shoot film now - although some offer it on request at greater cost. To be honest it is not worth the bother these days as long as professional equipment is being used. A little know fact is that anything that has 6 megapixels or more will produce an image big enough for your album in either RGB (photographic print) or CMYK (press print).

**Black & White or Colour.** All digital cameras can shoot in black and white but if

This unposed shot was lucky but kind of anticipated. Check your photographer's work to see how lucky they make themselves!



you do shoot in black and white only, you can never make colour images from your files. If your images are shot in colour they can be easily converted to black and white or sepia or any other toning process. No good photographer will be shooting in just digital black and white.

**Bits of colour in black and white pictures.**

The technical term for this is masking layers but 'bits of colour' works very nicely. It is very easy to do but can be time-consuming. Do not be afraid to discuss it with your photographer. However, if you have loads of pictures you want masked then they would be right to ask for more money to cover the time. Bear in mind as well, that it is an effect that works best with sparse usage.

**Picture sizes.** This can be very confusing - especially when talking about borders and frames as well. We only offer two sizes as standard - 5 inches by 7 inches or 8 inches by 10 inches. We do this for several reasons. Firstly, as standard sizes, you can easily get frames for them. Secondly, they are the optimum sizes for labs to provide prints quickly and simply. Thirdly, they are the two extremes of what you are looking to display before you start hanging images on a wall: 5x7 goes very well on the mantelpiece in a frame or in an album from WH Smith and 8x10 looks lovely in a silver frame on the side table or piano ( yeah, well - window sill).

**Album Styles:** There are only three types of album and then they can all be big or small, wide or thin, blue or red etc. Firstly there is Matted which means that you get actual photos set onto your page with framing mats around them. They are often the most expensive and considered the classiest. Secondly you get Magazine style which is the whole page as a printed sheet of photographic paper but laid out with images within images right to the edge of the page. These can look lovely but they can also easily look dated if you are not careful. Finally you get the Coffee Table Book style. You should briefly know that this is no longer an RGB photographic print process but CMYK litho print like a real book. Known as Indigo Print. This innovation is thanks to the progress of individual customisation that has been forced on to the print industry. The cheaper versions are products like, Blurb, Bobs Books and Apple books which are fine in many cases. They do have limitations. They are unpredictable in their reproduction of colour. The only way to get litho colour perfect is to run a lot of sheets through the press whilst adjusting the ink flows and that is tricky with short runs like your single album. If quality is your objective and you do love this style then you should be asking for albums from companies like Booked Images as their Elegance Book is world class indigo printing.

Every location has something going for it. We had to walk out into the vineyards at Denbeigh's in Surrey to get this but it was worth it.



### 10. What is the cost of Credit?

Any photographer that will not talk turkey about costs is probably worth avoiding.

Whatever they are charging you can ask for some kind of compromise on price. I have just started a process whereby I will be able to offer credit to my wedding and portrait clients very soon, (within a few weeks). I am working with a company called Able2Buy.

We are being very open about costs of credit. In this climate do not risk your money until you know who you are dealing with. At it's simplest, if you are offered credit, there are three types: Buy now Pay later, Interest Free and Interest bearing.

Interest bearing is a desperate case these days at about 19% and I would advise avoiding if at all possible.

The most important thing to know is that for Buy now, Pay later and Interest Free Credit, your photographer has to have a commercial credit license. It is also worth remembering that it is illegal to declare a price interest free and then have a different price for your cash prices.

Why do I think it is worth it? If photographs are an art form you admire and your wedding day was a great day in your life then if you want to buy now and pay for it over a timescale that suits you, then I think it is a fair way to find a solution. You spend more with me and so I should be supporting you in that. If you spend an additional £1000 with me it

will cost me about £150 that I have to pay to the credit company. This is an example only and it varies according to the amount and the time period - discuss it in detail with your photographer if they offer it.

Out of curiosity I amortised the cost of a cake, over it's lifespan and compared the day rates. The daily cost of a £500 cake is £500 a day but the cost of £3500 photographs over 50 years (18,250 days) is about nineteen pence a day and that includes possession of those images every day of that time. Credit can bring you what you want as long as it is reputable and you manage it properly.

***If you have any questions about this article or anything else to do with wedding photography please feel free to contact me direct on 07970 775533***

Best wishes

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