



STEPHEN J. EDGAR

BEHIND THE SCENES

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH PHOTOGRAPHER

Stephen J. Edgar

THE SUMMER SEASON BRINGS AN AVALANCHE OF PARTIES, WEDDINGS AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS. COUPLED WITH VACATION SCENARIOS...FROM VAST TRAVEL TO EXCURSIONS IN THE CITY. IT IS DEFINITELY TIME TO HONE YOUR CAMERA SKILLS. OR FOR SOME OCCASIONS, HIRE A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER. THIS MONTH "BEHIND THE SCENES" FEATURES AN INTERVIEW WITH PHOTOGRAPHER STEPHEN J. EDGAR TO FIND OUT THE LATEST SCOOP.

B Magazine: When and why did you pursue a career as a professional photographer?

Stephen: Back in '88, I moved to Toronto and eventually became an assistant to the renowned wedding photographer, Stephen Rudd, working in his studio's production department.

What a wake-up call! Rudd blew my perception of wedding photography to smithereens! So the seed was planted. I was inspired.

B Magazine: What types of photography have you done?

Stephen: I photograph people in their environment. Within that, I shoot everything that moves...and some things that don't! I've photographed corporate portraits - even album covers for a death-metal band. I have traveled to Haiti to bear witness and to document "Her Pain and Passions". Recently I photographed C&C yachts U.S. national campaign and in the coming weeks I'm off to Africa to shoot a fair-trade chocolate assignment. I've done fashion and glamour - even people and their pets! Weddings are the ULTIMATE rush!

For me photography is all about Being There in the Moment. The fact that I can stop time - freeze that fleeting instant! It's very powerful. Emotionally and Spiritually, it's a good reminder of how important it is to enjoy life in the present and not get too caught up with minor daily problems.

And that's what is so fun about shooting

Weddings! Here it is THE most intense day of couples' lives. EVERYTHING converges to the point when the rings are slipped onto waiting fingers...and I'm there as the inconspicuous story-teller, ready to see the beauty (but also the FRANTIC, FREAKY, and FRIGHTENING, moments) leading up to them! It's pure magic and I am honored to be there. And then, of course, there's the party afterwards...watch out!

B Magazine: Where are you based? Do you travel and if so where?

Stephen: I am based out of Toronto, Canada but I travel anywhere internationally for my art.

B Magazine: Do you have any anecdotes re: working in the field?

Stephen: I am an affable hunter of moments, a merry observer of life and a keen storyteller to future generations. For me it's all about being fleet footed and ready with finger on the trigger, whether I'm shooting a wild location assignment or an infant sleeping in the warmth of his mother's arms. An acclaimed photo editor said it best when he uttered "f8 and be there..."

B Magazine: What changes in photography have you seen over the years?

Stephen: The changes to the world of photography have been massive in the last...5 years even. Digital has opened up a whole new way of thinking, let alone shooting.

Information technology allows anyone to instantly share photos across the globe -it's amazing! What I can do in post-production is absolutely fabulous! The Custom Albums that I layout in Adobe Illustrator or the multi media DVDs I produce in Final Cut Pro never were possible before without a huge team of experts.

Of course, all this advancement has its price. People want to see it NOW. Sometimes I miss that magical time when I could make a photograph without having people stop what they are doing to clamor around the camera to see what I'd just done ...

All this new technology allows for a compromise to those who cannot wait. In some of my wedding packages I offer up AWE-SOME reception presentations of images I photographed throughout the day. I throw in some music and blow peoples minds!

Of course, while the toys and tricks have changed, a great many things have stayed the same. Excellent lighting will never change nor will the 'rule of thirds': Composition and Design...Anyone has access to this wonderful new technology, but it takes a Professional to know how to work with it -to tame it.

B Magazine: How does one go about choosing the right photographer for the occasion?

Stephen: It comes down to taste, and especially knowing what you want. Everyone has access to thousands of photographers' portfolios online and many of them have their



own unique style and experiences. I'm all about going with your gut feeling on who you trust and feel most comfortable with.

B Magazine: What types of questions should clients ask a photographer?

Stephen: Rather than approaching a photographer armed with questions to ask, I think it's important to use your good sense and to know what you want in the end. Meditate on that and then do your research. Educate yourself! Photography done right is a wonderful and complex art form that requires time and understanding from its patrons. Relax; no question is stupid. Most photographers enjoy chatting about their work and will be more

than happy to take the time over a pint or an espresso or a gelato (as I'm doing now!) to wax poetic about his or her style and operations. It's very important to get a good vibe from whomever you are curious about.

B Magazine: Specifically wedding photography: How has it changed? What should a bride expect from a photographer? What is the difference between a good and bad (Uncle Fred) photographer.

Stephen: Thankfully the world of wedding photography has changed! One of the reasons for this is that the average client is more educated these days and appreciates photography as an art form much more than they

use to. The old stigma of the wedding photographer (elbow patches and all) is gone and has been replaced by a handful of creative thinkers ready to push the envelope.

I think it's important for Brides too - I can't say this enough - KNOW WHAT THEY LIKE and to educate themselves as to what options are out there. Whatever your tastes are there is someone waiting to help you out.

My Brides hire me because of my creative, spontaneous style, and they know they will have fun. On the other hand, if you want someone more formal, there are many photographers who specialize in that particular style. While I don't like to label anyone a BAD photographer, making sure you hire a pro is of the utmost importance. Shooting weddings is not for the faint of heart. It is extreme pressure to perform and be on from top of the day, right through to the end. I am inclined to thrive off this environment and remain jovial throughout...there are others however...what I'm saying is don't skimp and hire your uncle with the nice digital camera because chances are you'll end up heart broken. If your uncle really wants to be involved I always need someone to help carry my gear! Simply put, you pay for what you get.

B Magazine: From a photographer's point of view, what beauty tips - do's and don'ts - do you suggest for your lady clients?

Stephen: My biggest beauty tip: trust your photographer, he or she will guide you.

Tip 2: Don't starve yourself before your day. Eat a good breakfast and make sure to get a good night sleep! These simple rules will help you glow on your wedding day.

I highly recommend brides-to-be (and grooms-to-be for that matter) to do their very best to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes eating well, with regular exercise. Yoga and meditation are amazing and will affect how you look and how you feel - this is nothing new! A bride's level of stress will affect how she looks throughout the day.

I always suggest there be a professional makeup artist on hand. Some might find this frivolous; I know it to be an essential. The more 'duties' a bride can hand off, the better it is for her, the better for him, the better for me...and better for their great, great grandchildren looking at their wedding images 100 years from now!