



*It's a nice day for a*  
**CAPITAL  
WEDDING**



What would marriage ceremonies look like if men had their way? Max Rashbrooke finds out.

**M**ost weddings, when it comes down to it, are pretty much the same. The bride wears white, or maybe cream. The groom wears a suit, uncomfortably, and gives the impression that it's the first time in his life he's met this novel form of attire. The groomsmen follow suit (pun intended).

The ceremony itself features readings of either the passage from Corinthians ("Love is patient, love is kind"), The Prophet ("Let love be a moving sea, etc., etc."), Shakespeare ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments") or, in some cases, all three. Then you get the same speeches, the same meal, and more or less the same music afterwards.

This sameness arises, I feel, from two factors: the need to satisfy a wide range of views, among parents, friends and wedding organisers, as to what makes for a good marriage; and the way in which the ideal of the perfect marriage, and all its traditional trappings, is drummed into every young girl from an early age.

The best solution to this problem, and the easiest way to introduce a bit of much-needed variety to the whole process, seems to me obvious: put the men in charge. Let them take care of proceedings.

I know this sounds counterintuitive, given how many men evince no interest whatsoever

about the arrangements for their wedding, but that failing stems, I think, from a lack of confidence among men. I'm sure that the average lad, if suitably encouraged, would be more than happy to put forward creative and innovative ideas for how to make that special day, well, special.

For my part, there being no prospective Mrs Rashbrooke in the offing, I'm free to indulge my fancy wherever it wanders. I could, for example, emulate my boyhood football hero Romário, and get married on the penalty spot of my local sports ground (with national TV in attendance). It's true that Victoria University's Boyd-Wilson Field is not the world's most glamorous location. On the other hand, it is astroturf. So there'd be none of the problems associated with muddy fields – women's high heels getting stuck in the ground and so on – that bedevil the more traditional al fresco weddings.

Sadly, the removal last year of the vertical bungee from Taranaki Street has dashed another vague idea I'd had: that it would be fun to get married while being thrown a hundred feet into the air. (The attendant nausea and sudden dislocation might, I imagine, be a fair representation of the joys of marriage itself.)

That option having been ruled out, what else are we left with when it comes to alternative, and men-friendly, options for getting married? Well, thanks to the annual Sevens extravaganza, we know that men do, in fact, enjoy getting dressed up in all sorts of silly costumes, so there have to be some options there. Medieval re-enactment is one that springs to mind (this is my mind we're talking about, remember), and who wouldn't feel more than a little surge of joy at the thought of being married as king and queen of whatever-land?

The only downside here, I feel, is that if you don't have really high-quality costumes – which, let's face it, are going to be expensive – then you run the risk of having your special day look like a bad high school production of Henry V, complete with cardboard crowns and plastic swords. It's possibly best to give that one a miss, then, along with many other of the costume-related ideas thrown up by a quick interweb search, such as getting married in Shrek outfits (no kidding).

On the other hand, the related trend for fairytale weddings has a bit more to

## FishHead's Wellington Wedding Ideas 2012

### Cake:

Want to personalise your cake? Why not have the figurines modelled on yourselves – or your alter ego. Friends who work for Weta are useful here.

Not such a fan of cake? Why not opt for a cake made out of cheese? Six tiers of different cheeses sounds pretty great to us.

### Dress:

Wellington has amazing local bridal designers. But those on a smaller budget can utilise Wellington's great second-hand shops like Ziggurat or Emporium Vintage to buy an authentic vintage dress or suit. You don't even need to buy a vintage wedding dress: just a piece you really like. Get them properly tailored and altered ahead of your big day though.

### Venue:

We are blessed with a range of beautiful wedding venues in the capital, but those wanting to think outside the box and step beyond it can try Zealandia (pictured), Nga Manu Nature Reserve in Waikanae or Wellington Botanic Gardens. Or, if you're feeling adventurous, take a helicopter to Matiu/Somes Island. Of course, this doesn't even touch the plethora of magical rural locations in the Wairarapa.

### Honeymoon:

Why spend thousands of dollars on tickets to far-away places when all you're supposed to be doing is enjoying each other's company. The Wellington region has so many great romantic spots (any vineyard in the area would be amazing in itself), but our top pick is Wharekauhau Country Estate. Just minutes away from Wellington, this luxury estate combines breath-taking views, complete privacy and seclusion, with every indulgence required for the perfect honeymoon.

### Jewellery:

Wellington has many quality jewellery stores, from traditional jewellers such as Pacific Jewellers for something wonderful and classic, or a contemporary space such as QUOIL for something utterly unique.

### Gifts:

If the happy couple has registered their wedding list at a store such as Kirkcaldie & Stains, you can make sure you aren't buying them their fifth teapot by picking a gift on the list. But if the couple hasn't and you're stuck for what to get them, how about a painting or a photograph of a Wellington location? Perhaps you can find one of where they met (or first made out)? Contemporary art is always a good choice, provided you know the couple well enough to make an informed choice...

### Transport:

If you don't think you can relinquish the planning reins to your future husband, why don't you let him pick the mode of transport. Hopefully he chooses classic cars instead of quad bikes or go-karts.

### Photographic locations:

Instead of having photos taken outside the church, try locations around the city that mean something to you as a couple. A great way to relieve stress on the big day is to take the photos before the ceremony so that afterwards you can get straight on with spending time with friends and family.

Make your photos unique to you as a couple. If you love wine, how about choosing a wine cellar as your location? Rows of oak barrels make a fantastic framing device, and there's something about the closeness of the space – and the slow span of winemaking – that's extremely romantic.

### Flowers:

Go nostalgic. Hydrangeas, camellias – all the flowers you grew up with. If they're in full bloom back at home, get your mum to pick some from her garden. For beautiful and unique flowers, try Flowers Manuela on Cuba Street: they pride themselves on tailoring flowers specifically to the person and the event.

### Other:

Why not have one of your speakers customise a song by taking an existing tune and putting new words – about you and your partner – to it. It's cute, it's personal and it makes 'that song' yours for ever. Alternatively, use your craftiness, or that of your friends, to full effect. What about paper decorations (see picture) or knitted place-settings? It is often the little touches that people remember most.



**Previous page:** Helena and Sean pose for photos outside the circus in Wellington. Mary Sylvia Prescott Photography. **Above (clockwise from top left):** Musicians Lisa and Dave made their beautiful bouquet from sheet music. Jenn Hadley Photography; Sheryl and Chris' cake, made of lamingtons with personalised figurines. Jenn Hadley Photography; Anna and Duncan take a boat ride at their Zealandia wedding. Mary Sylvia Prescott Photography; Charlie and Richie's classic rural Wairarapa wedding. Mary Sylvia Prescott Photography; A classic American car at Jonny and Danielle's Wairarapa wedding. Mary Sylvia Prescott; Heading to the country – a picturesque Wairarapa wedding. Destination Wairarapa; Tim and Amy dance to Newtown Rocksteady at Tarueka Estate. Victoria Vincent Photography; Kate and Ken's unique table decorations, made by the bride. Jenn Hadley Photography

## Sarah Harpur takes a look at wedding fashion for the Kiwi man

I am by no means a fashionista, nor an expert in wedding attire. It is with great shame that I confess my mother convinced me to attend a cousin's wedding in a leopard-print dress. With ruffles. At the time, I thought I looked delightful; now I realise I looked like a cast member of *Jersey Shore*. We can safely say I am not in any position to condemn those who dress 'uncool'. However, I have heard enough mutterings from the 'cool' that I feel the following matter should be addressed. It seems New Zealand men have terrible wedding fashion. I have spoken with several people, both men and women, who think Kiwi blokes dress for weddings like members of a *Blues Brothers* tribute band. Apparently, a black shirt with a white tie, sunglasses and sneakers is a common look; and there are many who think this look should get hit by a train. I am torn both ways. On one hand, yes, this is a wedding and you should make an effort to dress appropriately. But whilst poor fashion may evoke sniggers from the bored and trendy guests, it is in no way an actual crime.

The mere fact that you have cast aside your favourite Woodstock Bourbon T-shirt that you won at a car show to wear a shirt, a tie and shoes, is a heartwarming gesture in itself. For every 'Chloe' who turns her nose up to your lack of 'geek chic' attire, there will be a 'Kazza' ogling you from across the room, saying "phwoar" to her mates and planning a pash with you in the cloakroom.

I guess my point is to be aware of the cause and effect of your clothing choice. If you want to impress the fashion aware, lose the indoor use of sunglasses and go for a shirt that is lighter than your tie. If you couldn't give a damn what anyone thinks, wear the black shirt/white tie combo with pride! All the Kazzas, Shazzas and Shanaynays will be yours.

My guess is that if you don't have the inclination to own an oversized grandpa cardigan and sport a fedora hat on a jaunty angle, chances are that you don't have the inclination to be bothered by the opinion of those who do. In which case, go forth, dear friend! Gleefully wear your dated jazz clothes in the full knowledge that whoever loved you enough to invite you to their wedding will expect nothing less.

recommend it, depending on where you stand, of course. In Britain, for instance, the marriage of those two great fashion arbiters, Jordan and Peter Andre, has been hugely influential in popularising the Cinderella-style wedding, complete with pumpkin carriage. Admittedly, it tends to be favoured by people who also like spray tans, wedding dresses showing lots of cleavage and leg, and dressing up their children in mini-me bride and groom outfits. It's also probably more fun for the girls than the guys. But we can gloss over all that. Just keep thinking about that pumpkin carriage.

In the USA, of course, they do things differently. And it's perhaps no surprise that the pinnacle of consumerist culture has now given us the concept of 'retail weddings', in which your nuptials take place at, say, a clothing store like TJ Maxx. This has potential, I think. Although traditionally women enjoy shopping more than men do, there's a practical, unfussy, stripped-down aspect to getting married in a mall that would appeal to the male mind. And it is, apparently, very, very cheap.

Not everyone is a fan, of course. Bearing in mind the current American debate over same-sex unions, one article on retail weddings was accompanied by the sardonic post, 'And they say gay marriages will ruin marriage...'. But if you've always dreamed of getting married in Westfield Queensgate, now's your chance.

Not, it has to be said, that you can find many examples of Wellingtonians breaking the mould. One wedding planner I spoke to, Polly Devane of Wairarapa-based Mint Wedding Planning, said most of her marriages tended towards the classic end of the spectrum: Martinborough, wineries, that sort of thing. Although no doubt beautiful, when it came to experimentation, they were "run-of-the-mill, to be honest".

Another planner, Lower Hutt's Charlotte Wood, said she had worked on some lovely weddings that were a bit different, such as a picnic ceremony in the Botanic Gardens. But, as she pointed out, "it's more of an aesthetic thing, I guess, when people [here] want to do things differently".

Looking a little further afield, however, should you fancy a trip down south, you could always have a bungee-jump wedding in Queenstown. One outfit, the Wedding Company, has a website offering the prospect of throwing yourself off a bridge while screaming "I do". And if that doesn't light your candle, they could do you "a mountain top wedding on the Remarkables... or even a Hot Air Balloon Wedding".

They do say that danger has a stimulating effect, and I've always treasured that piece of 1970s research in which men interviewed on, and I quote, "a fear-arousing suspension bridge" were more likely to find a female researcher attractive than if they were on "a non-fear-arousing bridge". So if you're really looking for a ceremony that will cement your attraction to your partner, this kind of option makes complete sense. As does, say, a skydiving wedding, which is becoming increasingly popular in the States, to the point where there are entire websites devoted to the concept.

In fact, in the kind of 'crossing the streams' moment that threatens to rip a hole in the space-time continuum, you can get married not just while skydiving but while skydiving in Vegas. I don't think it's possible to put things better than the writers of Vegas Extreme Skydiving, who describe the experience thus: "For the more adventurous types, our own 'Skydiving Preacher' can perform the ceremony in the aircraft on the climb to jump altitude. Two 'I do's' and one kiss later, you'll find

yourself falling at over 120mph as a married man and woman."

This, I think, is exactly the kind of thing that most men would like, although personally I find that prospect terrifying (the falling, that is, not the marrying. Honestly...). As above, I'm up for something mildly frightening, but I do prefer to be strapped in. So I might be better off with, say, an underwater wedding. Again, there's no shortage of companies queueing up to get you hitched way down in the deep, and for a couple of thousand dollars US, Pro Dive Weddings will sell you "full face mask training", dive equipment and an "ordained officiant (Minister, Cantor, priest, boat captain...)", all of them presumably just as comfortable below the waterline as above. They also offer a live video streaming so that "water shy guests" don't miss out.

For the marginally less adventurous, there's the option of getting married in a marine park (Kelly Tarlton's, anyone?), as did one Chinese couple earlier this year. Their ceremony involved getting dressed up in a strange mix of scuba gear and conventional wedding outfits, diving into a tank full of fish, and trying to kiss each other through breathing apparatus and a scuba mask. Then, after clambering out onto dry land, they sealed their vows, as one TV commentator observed, by receiving "a kiss from a dolphin, before being spat on by a walrus... and nothing blesses your relationship quite like that". Water way to get married, indeed.

So, guys, what are you waiting for? It's time to man up, as the saying goes, and start taking control of your relationship, beginning with the wedding ceremony itself. As for me, I'm off to see about that field. There's a penalty spot with my name on it, I'm sure.