

Article of the Week July 5 2010

The issue this week – Photography or Fraud

The Formal is a milestone in your social development and a pretty important night that you'll want to remember and look back on with fond memories. For that reason, I think it's imperative to have the event photographed professionally. In that respect Formal photos are no less important than wedding photos and whom you choose to take care of that important task is a matter for serious consideration.

There are 4 ways that your event can be photographed...

- Do It Yourself
- Cheap & Nasty Professional
- Uninvited Fraudster
- Upmarket Professional

We'll take a moment to look at all of these so I can explain the differences.

D.I.Y.

This is where you pretty much rely on people bringing their own cameras and using these, and mobile phones to capture all the various moments of your night.



Although this costs nothing the thing you need to remember is that these will be very non-creative images with poor light, focus and clarity. It's also likely that many of the people taking these shots you may never see again so therefore never see the photos. Although people will all want to take their own shots anyway, you shouldn't rely on this as your overall method of photography.

Cheap & Nasty

This is where a professional photographer will come along and snap posed shots, either at tables during dinner, or in front of a backdrop somewhere nearby and bring the photos back printed and stuck into little cardboard folders before the end of the night.

Although some of the shots may be nice the fact is that the photographer has to get back to a lab to process the prints, stick them in folders and get them back to the venue before the Formal ends. This process places enormous time pressure on the photographer, especially if it's a big guest list, say more than 150 guests.

That time pressure means that...

1. He'll be rushing to snap the shots and won't have time to be creative with angles, lighting, backgrounds or second attempts.
2. He'll be snapping as many shots as he can early in the night and disappearing early to process them, missing many of the significant portions of the Formal.
3. There will be a very limited number of shots taken so you'll likely only appear in one shot.

The other issue here is that the prints will also need to be paid for so don't be fooled by photographers who charge little or nothing to come to the Formal because the photos themselves may cost anywhere from \$5 to \$25 each to buy on the spot and that will annoy the guests.

One of the worst things about this method of service is that photos that are paid for often get lost or damaged between the venue and home for any variety of reasons and then you're left with nothing.

Uninvited Fraudster

This one you need to be very careful and vigilant for. These are the guys who find out about your formal from other sources and although are not booked, invited or permitted to attend your Formal by either the organisers or the venue, somehow show up anyway.

What these guys do is take a whole series of photos, mostly outside the venue as people are arriving. The photos are very nice and creative however, these guys often disappear without even entering the venue, mainly because they know what they're doing is not legal and the venue would question them if they go inside.

The photos will then mysteriously appear on a web site with your schools name on the gallery and the photos will be available for sale via on-line credit card purchase.

This is dodgy and illegal practice on so many levels I can't even begin to detail them here. These guys must be avoided at all cost.

Upmarket Professional

This is the company you want at your Formal. These guys use high-quality digital equipment and the latest and greatest creative methods to capture everything.

They'll be there from the start of the night when you arrive and stay to capture all major events during the night from entry, throughout dinner, entertainment, speeches & awards, cutting of the cake and some really awesome and artistic dance floor shots late in the evening.

They stay until late because...

1. Everything's digital so there's no film to process & print.
2. They can snap hundreds and hundreds of shots so nothing is missed.
3. They don't need to bring prints back to the venue.

The reason they don't need to bring prints back is because all their shots will be uploaded to a web gallery from which you can pick and choose the shots you want. You'll probably end up in dozens of shots so you can download as many as you like.

In most cases, the photographers fee, and at least one download is part of your ticket price but additional shots are only a few dollars each on-line because there's no processing involved, which keeps the overheads down.

There's nothing to get lost or damaged, and you can keep going back to the web gallery months after the Formal.

This is the only kind of photography we use, and recommend.

Don't leave this important aspect of your Formal in the hands of the rushed or the dodgy. Make certain only a total professional delivers the best you could wish for.