



PHOTOGRAPHY MONTHLY

STUDIO OF THE MONTH

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Anthony Vazquez:

A Cutting Edge Talent with an International Flair

By Mary McGrath



example, at a Persian wedding, I kiss everyone twice.

When you're at an Italian dinner, you'd never ask for the bill, as these meals can sometimes take 4-5 hours, with several bottles of wine. South American weddings are often very sensual, especially those in Buenos Aires, with the influence of the tango, which started out as a popular street dance. Buenos Aires is also influenced by Spanish, Italian and other cultures."

Living abroad has also helped him learn more about other cultures and keeps him inspired as a photographer. In fact, he's spent six months in Italy and also lived in Buenos Aires. He also travels extensively to many parts of the world to keep himself refreshed and invigorated. Anthony is a coffee junkie, a mandatory habit when you're living in NYC and traveling extensively to many parts of the world.

It isn't often that I view a photographer's website that embraces so many varying cultures. Such is the case with Anthony Vazquez, whose specialty for large international weddings has helped him carve out a unique niche in this highly competitive terrain. Anthony's images feature Muslim, Persian, Hindu and Orthodox ceremonies, to name only a few samples of his clientele. But Anthony doesn't just focus on international ceremonies. He has a large local following thanks to his affiliations with wedding planners, his website and strong word-of-mouth.

Having a father from Puerto Rico and a mother from Italy, Anthony was immersed early into an international culture. Although he was born in Oklahoma and moved to New York City when he was only a year old, he's fluent not only in English, but also Spanish and some Italian, and dabbles in many other languages. But, it's his openness that has helped him embrace the many cultures of the weddings he's shot. When he undertakes a wedding, Anthony truly becomes a part of the family he's shooting. His convivial nature and high energy endear him to his clients--putting them at ease and adding fun to the event.

"You have to be very open and flexible when shooting an international wedding," Anthony explains. "For

Mary McGrath: How does your work differ from that of other wedding photographers?

Anthony Vazquez: My work really

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speaks to my clients. My fashion background has also helped with creating a provocative feeling with many of the weddings I've shot, but not in an overt way. It's far more subtle, but there's a certain edge to it. The images I shoot are more raw. I'm not a Photoshop junkie, but I just do some minor adjustments.

MM: Are you in charge of your own workflow?

AV: Actually, I've got a full-time digital editor, but I oversee all of the albums, the final product, printing, etc.

MM: Are there any particular wedding albums you use?

AV: GraphiStudio, Capri and La-vie.

MM: Do you shoot film or digital?

AV: About 90 percent is digital, 10 percent is film, mainly T-MAX 400, T-MAX 3200 and Kodak Infrared film, which is, unfortunately, a dying art form.

MM: What advice can you give to aspiring wedding photographers?

AV: Go to WPPI every year. Stay current with what's going on in the fashion world. That's where the cutting edge stuff is coming from. It's important to look at magazines like *GQ* and *Vogue*, so you can stay on top of what's happening. You need to do anything you can do to stay inspired. For me it's traveling. I am always open to go anywhere, anytime...it is a true joy for me. The importance of trial and error. You have to try new things if you want to grow.

MM: You mentioned that you like to



travel on your own for inspiration? Where do you like to go?

AV: South America and Patagonia. Going to these places helps by infusing my imagination with other types of images. Like hiking in Colorado, zip-lining in the rain forest, going to Iguazu Falls in Brazil. It's important to experience other things, plus I'm very athletic.

MM: So, what other types of sports do you do?

AV: Well, I'm a gym rat, but I also do a lot of cycling and hiking.

MM: Did you study photography?

AV: Actually, I'm largely self-taught. I got into photography a bit in high school when I worked at a

wedding studio. I began shooting at New York University (NYU), and pretty much photography is all I've ever done. I love what I do. I'm blessed to be doing this, and I feel very fortunate that I've achieved what I have already. I graduated from NYU with a degree in culture and communication studies, which really has helped my photography.

MM: And has WPPI made a sizable impact on your business?

AV: WPPI is an amazing tool for wedding photography. In Vegas, you get to meet the best photographers over a three-day period. People like Jerry Ghionis and Yervant are there. It's a real community of photographers. You really share and learn from each other. In fact, one of my goals is be one of the WPPI speakers.



MM: Speaking of WPPI, have you engaged much in many of their contests? Awards?

AV: No, I don't enter as many contests as I should. I'm mainly focused on my clients right now. In fact, I've got two celebrity weddings coming up. But with WPPI, I have obtained some honorable mentions.

MM: Your work has certain flair to it. Do you attribute your style to anyone in particular?

AV: Joe Buissink is my first and foremost influence. I love his black-and-white work, and his use of infrared film. I shoot in a similar way, also using film as well as infrared, and I also book myself as the second shooter.

MM: So what do you shoot, and what do the other shooters focus on?

AV: The first shooter will focus on the bride and groom, and the more basic shots. I'm the second shooter, so I'll concentrate on the edgier stuff, the more fashion-oriented shots, surrealistic stuff, more creative stuff, more photojournalistic styling.

MM: So with that flair to your work, do you often shoot any place in particular when you're in NYC?

AV: I love the meatpacking district in NYC for weddings. You don't need any clearance there. I often suggest that place, as it's very industrial, very trendy--graffiti and all. It's a very expensive area in which to live as it's been completely revitalized. Often I shoot in front of the Gansevoort Hotel, where there are cobblestones from the 1900s. Often, we'll start there for photos, but the couple will get married elsewhere.

MM: So you've been getting into fashion work as well?

AV: Yes, I started getting into fashion about three years ago when I was doing some work with the Washington Redskins. The work resulted from these connections, resulting in a swimsuit calendar. We



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actually shot the calendar in Aruba.

MM: So, let's get back to your weddings. Once the shoot is complete, where do you go from there?

AV: Well, often my clients will come to my loft outside Times Square. We'll serve wine, espresso, all by candlelight. It really sets the mood, especially with my lounge music. We'll then do a digital slide show. It all appeals to my discerning clientele.

MM: May I ask how much you charge?

AV: We start at \$6000, depending on what's involved.

MM: About how many weddings do you do a year, and how far ahead are you booked?

AV: I'm doing about 20 weddings a year, and I'm usually booked about a year in advance.

Anthony's is a rare talent well worth waiting for. His website sums it up best: "It is of the utmost importance that all my clients are thrilled with the experience and images that they receive while working with me. A hands-on approach allows me to create a collection of work that captures the true essence of your event..."

For more information:

<http://www.anthonyvazquez.com>

Anthony's Camera Bag

Cameras: Canon EOS-1D Mark II N, Canon EOS-1D Mark III, Canon EOS 5D

Lenses: Canon: 70-200mm f/2.8 IS, EF 24-70mm f/2.8L, 50mm f/1.4, 85mm f/1.2

Fisheye Lenses: 16-35mm f/2.8, 17-40mm f/4.0

Flashes: Canon 580EX

Fashion: HENSEL Porty kits with ring lights and beauty dish, assorted softboxes

Mary McGrath is a freelance writer and photographer whose work has appeared in Newsweek.com, MSNBC.com, Rangefinder, AfterCapture, Shutterbug, Professional Photographer, and many other publications. She can be reached through her website at: www.marymcgrathphotography.com.



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