



The 4EVER Group

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No Time For Retakes!

The Fundamentals of High-Quality Ceremony Coverage
By Ken Ehrhart

OVERHEAD #1 - Ceremony 101

Welcome everyone. As they just told you, this workshop is CEREMONY 101... now the first thing I'd like to do is to find out what we're all dealing with here. How many of you have NEVER shot a wedding before?

Just a few weddings?

Years and years of experience, you just LOVE to hear us talk?????

What we're going to be covering today will help all of you. The newbie and those who've got some weddings under their belts. I promise.

What we're going to be talking about and demonstrating today is How To Produce HIGH-QUALITY CEREMONY PRODUCTIONS...

Ceremony Coverage isn't always going to be easy. But it doesn't have to be THAT HARD either. Sit back, relax... and we'll see if we can't bring more LIFE to your wedding coverage.

We'd like to start our time together with a quote from some of the judges from last year's AAA Awards and from judges of other competitions...

OVERHEAD #2

*“The weakest categories were Ceremony
and Reception Coverage...
they SHOULD be our strengths.”*

The weakest category. Wedding videographers and the weakest part of our productions are WEDDINGS.

Well hopefully today, we can start to change some of that. I'm going to talk about the things that I do...
the things I use in my everyday productions that make my work more creative... and easier to watch.

OVERHEAD #3

We're going to talk about the absolute importance of

PREPARATION

You've already started your preparations by
EDUCATING yourself... joining 4EVER Group, attending this convention... attending my fine workshop... all a great start in preparing to be a professional wedding videographer.

I'm also going to talk about preparing yourself by:

- having the right equipment to do a quality job,
- having the right fundamentals
- having the right attitude

Pre-Production Planning

If you, as the producer/director of your wedding movie... are surprised by anything that happens during your ceremony... you haven't properly prepared yourself for your days work.

Visualization

I'm going to talk about how important it for you to VISUALIZE... Or actually SEE your finished movie... before you shoot a foot of tape at the ceremony.

Clear Communication

The importance of clear communication between you and your clients... AND between you and your staff. Most times, when things go wrong, it's almost always because of poor communication.

Microphone and Camera Use and Placement

If you can't hear and/or see what's happening, what's the point?

Post-Production Editing Techniques

You've probably all heard, I can save it in post.

Well... sometimes you can! A talented editor can sometimes turn bad video into an amazing awarding masterpiece. I'll touch on the art and the craft of EDITING.

Style

Finally, to wrap things up... how to put it all together to find your style... your individual "voice" that will allow you to produce work of unparalleled quality.

So... let's get started.

OVERHEAD #4 "PREPARATION"

Preparation. How should you prepare to be a professional wedding videographer? What do need to have in order to videotape a wedding?

There are a lot of different options now for professional wedding videographers when it comes to equipment. Which option YOU choose, is really going to have to be up to you.

I'm not a technical person... I don't know anything about how or why my equipment does what it does.

So no buy this camera or that from me.

Compared to 13 or 14 years ago when we started shooting weddings, you have a real RANGE of choices for equipment. Find what fits your needs and go with that. That's the best I can tell you. Now, there are some fundamental things you need to have, in my opinion... if you're going to produce a quality product. And that's what I'm really about here. PRODUCING A QUALITY VIDEO.

You need a **GOOD CAMERA**... there's really no reason to be less than a three chip digital camera now-a-days.

Get a decent **TRIPOD** for each camera too. Doesn't have to be a top of line tripod, but something that will allow you to get steady shots.

WIRELESS MIC... I would say you should have a minimum of two wireless mics, no matter what type of video you're going to produce.

Personally, I have 5 wireless microphones... I use Lectrosonic mics because, for what we do... I've found them to be the best. They are rugged and very well-built - you can bang nails in with these things.

I've had very few if ANY problems with drop outs and/or interference with these systems. I use both the VHF and UHF models... and I've got two wireless hand-held attachments as well.

I have very few instances now where I need to use any additional hard-wire mics. I still have them packed, just in case though.

Finally, you're going to need a good **NON-LINEAR EDITING SYSTEM** so you can put all your weddings together.

Again, everyone has their favorite here, I happen to use the MEDIA 100 at the moment... but find something that you feel comfortable with.

There's everything from the Cassie to Premier... Final Cut Pro... Media 100... AVID. A great many options to choose from. What I like and prefer in an NLE would I'm sure be different than what someone else would like. To each his own.

There are, no doubt, a few other small things you'll need to get, but for the most part... this should be the big ticket items.

We're talking maybe \$10,000 to \$15,000... for an initial investment. In the big picture of "out of pocket" expenses to start a business these days... that's not bad deal.

So... what we're going to go over now with you is what WE USE, equipment wise to produce videos. Again, ask 10 other videographers what they use, you'll get 10 different opinions. So, here goes.

(10 MINUTES)

(Show equipment from production bag and explain what I like/don't like about each)

OVERHEAD #5 FUNDAMENTALS

Now that you've got an idea of equipment to use to shoot weddings, you've still got to know HOW to use all this state of the art stuff.

I could spend days, even weeks explaining all the fundamentals of shooting video. No time to touch on everything here. What I will talk about though is one of the things I see that new people and even experienced videographers need help with.

OVERHEAD #6 COMPOSITION

How many of you have heard of:

HEAD ROOM?

LOOKING ROOM??

RULE OF THIRDS???

Okay, I'll touch on these three briefly, because they are the mistakes I see most often. You need to properly compose your shots or all your investment and hard work will be for not.

The rule of thirds is simple really...

CLIP #2 THIRDS VIDEO

Break the screen into a bit of a tic-tac-toe setup. The lines are drawn on the horizontal and vertical thirds of the picture frame.

You want to keep these thirds in mind when composing your shots.

For wedding videos that are going to be viewed for years and years to come, it's usually best to stay rather conservative and straight-forward. Any questions about composition??

Now where has all this preparation led us...?

OVERHEAD #7 - ATTITUDE

To having the right ATTITUDE to shoot weddings. If you're prepared correctly for your shoot, it will show in your attitude. You will have confidence in your abilities to produce a quality product.

Don't be afraid to have an EGO... just make sure you really can back up what your EGO is telling you... you can do. If you're unsure of yourself, it will show in your coverage because you will hesitate at a critical moment.

Now, once you've actually prepared to shoot a wedding video, it's about time for you to start **PLANNING** how you're going to shoot said video.

OVERHEAD #8 "PLANNING"

I cannot overemphasize the importance of **PLANNING** when it comes to producing... really, any project. But especially when it comes to producing weddings.

We all know the mantra... no second chances, no retakes. Common sense, if nothing else, would dictate that you be as prepared as possible before you point a camera at anyone or anything.

Modern technology won't do it all for you. It's the space between your ears that will help you grow and mature into a solid video producer.

When it comes to the wedding ceremony... I always, always... **ALWAYS...** prepare, prepare... **PREPARE.**

OVERHEAD #9 "STRATEGY"

I always have a **STRATEGY** in mind.

That strategy can vary from wedding to wedding... and venue to venue. It's not set in stone.

Simply put though... it's a simple strategy. Cover the event... the wedding... in the best way possible by preparing my shooters **AND** myself for almost anything that may arise.

OVERHEAD #10 VIDEOGRAPHER'S MANUAL

I've put together a **VIDEOGRAPHER'S MANUAL** for those people who shoot with me. It goes over what I'm looking for out of **MYSELF** and those who work and/or shoot with me.

It's a good **FIRST STEP** in training assistants... and it can be a good learning tool for you to refer back to if you've had a long break between shoots.

(5 minutes of talking about contents and showing it)

Now, my own preparations start the day before the wedding by reviewing all the information I've gathered from the bride and groom.

Doing simple things like charging batteries... cleaning lenses... packing bags.

They all start getting me into the proper **MIND-SET** for what I'm about to do.

I always, always... ALWAYS (*see a trend here folks*) attend the rehearsal. It's my opportunity to immerse myself into my production. It's my chance to actually watch the movie I'm about to produce.

What do I mean by "watch the movie" I'm about to produce?

OVERHEAD #11 "VISUALIZATION"

It means I **VISUALIZE**... I SEE what's going to happen unfold in my mind.

At the rehearsal, I stand everywhere I might place a camera. I look all around... not just at the obvious shots. I want to know all the possibilities of each camera position. I want to pre-visualize possible obstacles that might be in our way. Things like flowers, the wedding party members and the like that might block my shots.

I want to be prepared to move and change things to my favor, in advance. I'll actually see the shots that will unfold from that spot.

Don't be afraid to **VISUALIZE**... it's not really that hard. If you have to... just close your eyes for a moment and imagine the wedding ceremony unfolding before your eyes.....

SEGMENT 03 - (2:57) **(GALLES Highlight)**

Things may not always "unfold" the way you might see it and/or hope. But this simple technique WILL give you an advantage when it comes to the actual ceremony shoot.

I use this ability to speed things up on the day of the shoot AND in the editing process. It also helps me to "compress time" when I edit, which I'll talk about a little later.

Remember, if you've already "watched" the movie... you'll know what shots belong where/when during the ceremony AND during the editing process as well.

I always shoot with a minimum of three cameras. I do this because, quite frankly... I feel it's the only really **professional** way to do it.

It may not be the most economical way... and please, number of cameras at a wedding and making money are whole other seminars... the bottom line with me has always been the quest for quality.

If you're going to shoot with less than three cameras, it presents a whole group of obstacles you're going to have to overcome.

OVERHEAD #12 ONE CAMERA SHOOT

For one camera shoots, you'll have to be much more "active" during the ceremony. If you stay in only one position throughout, you'll only get one perspective. Your video will look **ONE DIMENSIONAL** and frankly, not very professional.

SEGMENT 04

ONE CAMERA WEDDING

(Live Demonstration to follow)

You'll need to be in the right place at the right time...and you'll have to be "rock steady" when you get there. ONE CAMERA weddings are a lot more work on the ceremony day and in the editing process too.

OVERHEAD #13 TWO CAMERA SHOOT

A two camera shoot is much preferred over just one, but it too will present you with things you need to do if you want to produce a high-quality complete story.

Generally, the BEST place for even two cameras is up front at a 45 degree angle to the b/g...

OVERHEAD #14 CHURCH DIAGRAM

I say this because if you put one camera up front, most will put it on the bride's side... and one in the back... many will say "they're covered". Maybe so.

But you've left out a good shot of a very important part of the wedding... **THE GROOM**. Let's not forget him. He's got enough problems.

Seriously though, you can see just from this simple example the problems that can arise from just two cameras. It's more work on site and in post.

So I shoot **ONLY** with three cameras, minimum.

All three cameras have operators and I stay in close contact with them using radios. I want to be able to control as much of the ceremony shoot as is possible.

OVERHEAD #14 COMMUNICATION

I happen to use **KENWOOD** radio's to communicate during a wedding shoot. I've also used Radio Shack radios. It's really up to you.

(3 MINUTES - demo of radios)

Proper communication is very important.

Each camera operator must understand their role in the overall production.

It's up to the person in charge... the Producer... the Director... ME... to communicate that role to them... both during the shoot and BEFORE the shoot.

If you use OR are thinking about using such a communication system on your shoots... remember to keep the chatter during the ceremony to a minimum. Use simple commands and/or statements.

Too much talking can sometimes confuse the camera operators... and frankly it can be disruptive to those in attendance. Concentrate on the pacing or timing of different shots during the ceremony.

Again... that visualization thing can help here. Think back on how you've edited other weddings and try to replicate things that worked and eliminate things that didn't.

I'll sometimes go over important aspects of the ceremony with each operator before the shoot... things I picked up either at the rehearsal... or in past critique sessions.

OVERHEAD #14 CRITIQUE SESSIONS

And I DO have critique sessions with my shooters.

It's a good time, usually within a few days of the shoot, to discuss the bad AND the good of what they did, and what I did... during the ceremony. The really hard part is making sure both parties... feel comfortable speaking their minds freely.

Just make sure you make the ground rules ahead of time so it's understood what's going to take place.

Good communications should allow you to have a variety of shots to choose from.

SEGMENT 05 (11:05) **Keeble and Brown**

(TALK OVER VIDEO)

Also... always try to have the various camera doing different things. The last thing you want is a bunch of three shots of the bride/groom and minister for the entire production. Vary between two shots, three shots... wide shots... cut-a-ways and always try to stay a few steps ahead of what's about to happen.

Now... I know that for some of you this may seem like an awful lot to keep straight AND on your mind during an actual wedding shoot. If it seems that way... don't be afraid to WRITE THINGS DOWN.

Make notes during the rehearsal... keep those notes either taped to your tripod or close at hand so that you can refer to them easily during the shoot.

Remember to always keep the BIG PICTURE in mind while you're on the shoot. The big picture being the movie in your mind. Refer to it to keep you on track.

You don't have to be panning and zooming and using dutch angles all the time during a wedding ceremony.

Straight-forward... well composed and thought-out shots that TELL THE STORY of the ceremony... along with good solid editing... will get you far in our profession. In my mind anyway... when it comes to Ceremony Coverage... over reliance on always being cutting edge and creative... can frankly just get in the way.

TELL THE STORY. That simple.

OVERHEAD #14 AUDIO

Okay, we've talked about how to get some great images from your weddings... now it's time to talk about AUDIO.

As with image quality... the same problems always seem to arise with AUDIO QUALITY as well.

If you're going to produce high-quality productions... that will command high-dollars - you've got to have solid... CONSISTENT... well mixed or blended... high quality sound. Again... my emphasis on CONSISTENT.

It's better to have consistently poor quality sound... than to have the bride and groom sound wonderful, while everything else in your production sounds awful. The good only emphasizes the bad.

OVERHEAD #15 MIC PLACEMENT

Think about your mic placement during the rehearsal visualization phase of your preparations.

If you don't have wireless mics... where can you best place the hard wire mics you do have?

You can place a mic between the bride and groom and minister. Again, it's not the same as having wireless mics on each person, but it produced... at least... a consistent audio source.

I always put a wireless on the groom and on the minister. In produces the most consistent audio possible, for all involved. Let me show you what I mean.

SEGMENT 06
HARDIN VOWS
(2:14)

Any readings and/or musicians can be covered using hard wire mics or even old cameras as mics.

Many people now “tap” into the house systems for their audio. I do this sometimes... but I prefer to have the CONTROL of everything I can. If I’m relying on ONLY a house system... I’m stuck with however good or bad that system and/or operator is.

Let me show you an example of being IN CONTROL of our audio sources.

SEGMENT 07
Garcia/Forbes SINGER

On this video, we mic’d both the singer and the piano.

This way I could mix the two to my satisfaction in post. Too many times, I’ve seen house sound people make very big mistakes. I don’t want to have to rely on them doing their job right. So... I place my own mics at all the needed locations.

And if you can do it... when in doubt, mic it anyway. So often when I am told nobody will be speaking at “that” podium and then someone does. I must be prepared with a mic there just in case.

If you’re using such a way of getting audio... my advice would be to use it as a safety backup.

OVERHEAD #15 CONTROL

Always try to keep as many things in your control as possible.

Again... that word CONTROL. hmmmmmmm

Now... once you’ve gotten everything “in the can” you still have to be able to put it all together in post.

The visualization you’re going to start using will assist you, I’m sure. But this is where you can start to repair any problems that occurred during the shoot... and it’s also where you can start to use a *lot* more creativity.

If your cameras are mis-matched... get a decent TBC so that you can tweak the shots to make them look more consistent. Same with the audio.

Get a NLE or mixer that has EQ capabilities... or a compressor... so that you can bring your audio more into line.

Most non-linear systems today have a whole array of special effects for you to use. Frankly... I wish most of you would not find that section in the instruction manual. Special effects can be... and usually are VERY MUCH overused in most productions I see.

But, if you use them correctly... they can also bring a very dream like quality to your finished product.

SEGMENT 08
BECKIE'S WEDDING
(5:18)

I use very, very few such effects... but this is one that does get a workout with me. Very quickly... so as to not bore those of you who don't use after effects... it's a gaussian blur blended back on itself.

Not only does it give that dreamlike quality I mentioned, but it can hide some lesser quality flaws. It's along the lines of the "wrinkle reducing" cameras that all the major network anchors have now.

I also use letterbox a lot in my productions. It's not true 16 by 9... it is "fake" letterbox. I use it mostly for the considerable IMPACT it brings to my productions. It very much frames and draws the viewer into what I want them to see.

You can actually use that letterbox to correct any head room problems your shooters still struggle with.

If your non-linear system or mixer has DVE capabilities... simply build a letterbox in your CG program and then move the shots around in the letterbox to produce correctly composed shots.

I mostly use the letterbox for artistic reasons... but having that safety use in the hole can save many a project. The same with black and white. Don't overuse this... or frankly ANY SPECIAL EFFECT... but black and white can also hide quality problems.

OVERHEAD #16 EDITING

I'd also like to touch on EDITING for a moment.

The whole topic of editing is really another seminar or workshop... because to really get into the subject would take a lot of time... but simply put... good editing should be as transparent as possible.

What do I mean by that? I mean you want to make the actual process of editing transparent to the viewer.

If your pacing is off... if you're making cuts at the wrong time and in the wrong way... the viewer becomes aware that they're watching a video. A well-edited video actually pulls the viewer into it.

Now... you can also "compress time" when you edit. A catholic mass needs only to be 2 or 3 minutes long... as you saw earlier. Same weddings sometimes. The Greek Orthodox wedding usually lasts anywhere from 45 minute to an hour and a half.

I got mine down to about 7 minutes. How?

Not enough time for all the technical aspects of how to compress time...

In a nutshell though... you compress time by preparing and understanding the subject matter... in this case the wedding ceremony... and by understanding that viewers can see bits and pieces of a ceremony, and still understand what's happening. The viewer's imagination replaces the missing shots and creates an illusion of continuity.

You can even leave shots up sometimes without making an edit. It's called "setting the scene"... and what it does is allow the viewer to again use their imagination to "edit" the scene themselves.

Remember... editing is simply a way for you to make the production easier for a viewer... to well, view.

Let me give you an example... All of you are watching me give a speech right now. But how many of you have actually simply stared only at me... only at my nose, however prominent it might be.

Well, there's one guy in the back who looks like he's been staring at me intently... but actually... I think he's asleep. But seriously... think about that.

Most of you have looked at me... you've looked at the podium... the screen... the lights... your feet... the bad haircut sitting in front of you. You've moved your eyes all over the place during my talk.

That eye movement... is the SAME THING you're doing when you edit a video together. You're making easier for the viewer to keep staring at the screen because you're making those cuts for them.

Some of you like rapid eye movements... cuts. Others like to linger and take in everything. It's the ability to translate that eye movement into editing decisions that makes one a good or bad editor.

YOU are the eyes and ears of the viewer. Put together something you'd enjoy watching. Chances are... if you like it... others will too.

OVERHEAD #17 STYLE

Which leads me into STYLE. Don't be afraid to have your own style and stick with it. Here at the expo, you're going to see many wonderfully creative examples of wedding videography and editing.

Take them all in... soak them up. But don't always try to copy and/or reproduce exactly what you see. Too many times... I'll see videographers who have a whole range of editing styles because they want to appeal to the widest possible audience. Bad move.

OVERHEAD #18 FIND YOUR VOICE

You need to find your own distinctive style... YOUR VOICE... what is interesting and exciting and watchable for YOU.

There is nothing wrong with being the HARD EDGE videographer in town who's got a more "in your face" kind of style... same with being the ROMANTIC videographer. I have very much a romantic style.

I produce STORYteller videos... where the bride and groom can actually narrate their day. It all goes back to my TV NEWS background.

Not many people produce this type of video... it's not the easiest thing to get right. But it's MY STYLE... you tell me if it works.

SEGMENT 09 DEMO VIDEO (8:45)

Now I carry that STORYteller theme throughout everything I do. And you should too with whatever style you choose to produce.

Since MY STYLE is the STORYteller, my price brochure and advertising media reflect that. They look like a book. It's not just a piece of paper that has my price on it. BORING. It's something for them to read. Different things to different people.

The big marketing book I use is designed to be a coffee table kinda thing at other businesses that refer me. It just sits there for the mother/father of the bride to read while she's off trying something on.

It's designed to CATCH THEIR EYE... and it's broken into easy to navigate sections. Most times, these people won't have a ton of time to read all the way through it. So I want their eye drawn to important things.

It's professionally put together... BY ME. I print them as I need them. You can too!!

I've even got an INFORMATIONAL HANDOUT for brides that again, is in the form of a story. How to choose, A guide... etc.

All produced by me, in house... in the same quality manner I produce my videos. I want to assure a client that they will be getting what they pay for, even BEFORE they've decided to book me.

So... find what works best for you personally... and most importantly... stick with it.

I don't want this to be misconstrued... so keep what I've been talking about in mind. I don't edit for my clients... I edit for ME.

My clients hire me because of my work. I shoot and edit my work the way I do because it pleases ME.

If you try to please everyone and offer a wide range of styles... you're actually going to end up with confused and unpleased potential clients.

If you've found YOUR VOICE... you can sell it easier and producer it easier. You can have a consistent message that goes out to anyone who is considering hiring you for their wedding.

OVERHEAD #19 DESTINY QUOTE

In closing... I'd like you to see a quote by William Jennings Bryant. He once said...

***"Destiny is not a matter of chance;
it is a matter of choice.
It is not a thing to be waited for;
it is a thing to be achieved"***

I hope that some of what I've talked about today will *inspire your imagination*... and help you achieve your destiny.

Thank you for being here today, and for letting me share some thoughts with you for a while.