

# Make my day

From flawless photos to that dream dress, every bride wants her wedding to have the wow factor. Eilidh MacAskill lifts the veil on three top talents you can turn to

**The dress designer**  
**Sarah Arnett, 39, co-owns**  
**Simultané, a Brighton-based**  
**boutique that specialises in**  
**wedding gowns**

"I never really thought I would become a wedding dress designer. Initially I trained in textiles and worked for brands such as MaxMara, Calvin Klein and DKNY before starting up on my own. But my partner Simon and I have always loved Brighton, and it seemed like a good idea to start a wedding boutique here.

The space we have now has three floors, a shop on the ground, sampling and production on the first and our offices on the second. My company is different because we come from the fashion arena. Our dresses are not too sparkly or detailed and, believe me, that is all too rare in this industry. Because we're not a traditional wedding dress shop, people appreciate the lack of scary shop assistants. When they see real people in trainers they start to relax.

Absolutely everyone gets a 90-minute appointment in the store and we try to help them avoid becoming uptight and anxious. We also make sure that women buy dresses that suit who and what they really are. It's a bad idea to go for something that's so removed from your real self that no one recognises you on the day. I often think women are under too much pressure to make themselves into a red-carpet star.

Part of the job is to keep the mother of the bride from looking at the dresses while the bride makes her choice. Really, my biggest advice for brides would be to ban their mothers from the shop. Mums say terrible things like, 'Oh darling, don't

you think your hips look big in that?' You could write a book on the psychology involved.

I had a part-time job in a wedding shop about 15 years ago and then it was all about dresses that were straight and slinky. Now women are obsessed about the shape of their upper arms and their cleavage. But frankly you can always disguise some body parts and enhance others.

There is a trend at the moment for lots of 30s styles as it was such an elegant time. Having said that, we did our first puff dress last week and it looked amazing. It was corseted with a wide-necked jacket that tied at the back with a bow in soft pink – a very tasteful princess look.

The average cost of one of our wedding dresses is £1,500. I remember one girl who chose a lace coat to go over her dress but went for the most expensive lace we had. It came to around £900 just for that. I did question the fact it was so over her initial budget but she said it was OK, she'd spoken to her fiancé and he was happy to forget their honeymoon as she wanted the jacket so badly. I thought, 'Oh, my god... spend £400 and have a great honeymoon instead.' I often wonder whether that marriage lasted."

*For more details on Sarah's dresses go to [www.saraharnett.co.uk](http://www.saraharnett.co.uk).*

**The cake maker**  
**May Cleo-Cadman, 31, owns**  
**Maisie Fantaisie, a bespoke cake-**  
**making shop in London**

"Even when I was a child I knew I wanted to bake. My parents got me into cooking when I was eight but to be honest I never thought it would be

any kind of career. It all got serious when I was at film school and landed a part-time job in a bakery shop. I made a few cakes a week until I graduated and eventually started Maisie Fantaisie in 2003 (my husband calls me Maisie).

I do about 200 weddings a year – I'm not really interested in any more than that. We could take on loads but I love the idea of home baking and actually making the cakes myself.

Having a website is very useful – some of the work is done entirely by email if the bride is sure of what she wants and she lives too far away. Usually though I organise a tasting where customers can come and see what they are getting. Chocolate fudge and vanilla sponge with jam and cream butter are always popular choices.

Mostly I'm in contact three months before a wedding, although I have had people start the process eight



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months before. With a non-standard cake we might liaise 10 or 15 times, on everything from flavours, styles and colours to delivery and set-up. But sometimes brides just see something they love on the website and simply send me the delivery details.

I spend about a week making each cake (sugar flowers can take days to dry) and often have five on the go at once. Because they are so labour-intensive and ingredients are expensive, my cakes cost around £750 for a three-tier, but that will serve about 150 people.

I have had some interesting requests over the years. One customer wanted a very traditional cake with pillars and daisies – but she had also taken up pole-dancing classes and wanted a pole-dancing figurine sitting between the pillars in a slinky dress and veil. Another customer wanted a Victorian birdcage

sitting in her cake. I'm not sure why. In the past year or so I have noticed a change in trends. When I first started, people wanted colour and gerberas and daisies, but requests have gone back to the more traditional whites and ivories, sugar flowers and sashes. I make quite elaborate sugar bows, cascading satin sashes, ruffles and lace detail that look fabulously voluptuous and classic. But for extra bling I can add some diamanté. Mini cakes are still popular. They used to be just cup cakes but now it's more about individual iced cakes that can double up as favours.

Celebrity weddings such as Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt's do tend to influence what people want – they show that you can have something a bit different. I think that today's bride believes that 'this is the day I can show off my style'. They want their

cake to reflect that.

Mind you, I try to steer clear of themed cakes. I liked the girl who wanted the pole dancer so I let that pass, and I'm currently making a cake with racing silks and a chequered flag, but generally I avoid those commissions. I really don't like them being too naff.

The great thing about doing weddings is that 90 per cent of the time you are dealing with people who are incredibly happy and upbeat. They all feel very special and it is lovely to reinforce that. On the other hand, there is enormous pressure to make it perfect. I remember one client complaining that her flowers weren't the right shade of pink – I think she'd just lost perspective.

You also have to ensure the cake gets there on time and in pristine condition, so there is a lot of logistics involved. I've made cakes for

weddings in Italy and France and was flown out to Spain last summer to make one in situ.

I got married in 2005 but I didn't make my own cake. I didn't want my guests trying to figure out why I had chosen a particular design. I had Krispy Kreme doughnuts instead and bypassed the whole issue. "

*For details on May's cakes go to [www.maisiefantaisie.co.uk](http://www.maisiefantaisie.co.uk).*

**The photographer**  
**Freelance photographer Grant**  
**Govier, 36, is based in London but**  
**shoots weddings all over the UK**  
 "Absolutely nothing can come between you and the perfect picture. I once managed to cut my hand really badly on the day before a wedding job. I was in A&E for five hours and then had to drive one-handed through the night from south London to

Cornwall for the wedding the next day. It was my trigger finger as well. Luckily, the stitches held and the photos were great. The bride did go a bit pale when she saw my hand but, luckily, I was the least of her worries on the day.

I've been doing this for about six years, along with interiors photography and corporate work. I sort of fell into it when friends started to ask me to shoot their weddings and I realised it was a really refreshing change from doing static interiors.

My particular style is non-traditional, reportage photography that will capture the energy and individual style of the day. I like to shoot in both colour and black and white – everyone tends to look more glamorous in

monochrome – it's like being lit by candles and is a sure-fire beautifier.

I concentrate on the candid shots more than the formal. I like to get those little moments of the bride and groom looking at each other when they think no one is watching, and they're thinking, 'Bloody hell, we've done it.' Or maybe an aunt with her shoes off and feet up at the end of the night or a great shot of crumpled sheet music from the trumpet section of a jazz band. You're there to record hundreds of moments in time. I've done weddings the length of the country from the Isle of Skye to the City – and each one is unique.

As the night wears on I tend to concentrate on the guests outside the wedding party because once a couple have got their own shots they love to see who was doing what when they weren't looking. It's a bit fly-on-the-wall.

In the run-up to the big day I usually try and focus a couple on a bit of planning. It can be difficult though. Some people tend to think it is enough to just give you the time and date. But it really helps for them to



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think about what they want to be looking at in 10 years time.

Even though I am hired for my reportage stuff you can never neglect the formal shots. I remind the groom to give one of the ushers the job of organising the formal groups, as folk forget that I don't usually know who is who and it would be horrendous to leave out anyone important.

You also can never really know what you're getting into. I had one wedding in a castle that was amazing but the weather was absolutely appalling.

However, it had a bit of a fashion bent – the bride was a fashion journalist and wore a vintage red dress while one of the bridal party wore a kimono. One of my favourite shots was a picture of the girl in the kimono surrounded by hazy mist as she walked in the castle grounds.

A huge part of the job is people skills. I was a guest at a wedding recently where the photographer shouted down a guy who tried to take a picture while he was still doing the formal shots. It absolutely killed

the atmosphere.

Presentation has moved on enormously in the past few years. These days, I often have the final shots printed up in a coffee table book or have a chosen shot blown up on a huge canvas. But at the end of the day, couples just want to look fantastic and have all their hard work captured for posterity.”

*For more details about Grant's photography go to [www.grantgovier.com](http://www.grantgovier.com).*