

Chapter 1

Stills + Audio

Fusion, at its most basic, is the addition of real-time audio to your still coverage.

This is a very simple and stress free way to augment and personalize your existing coverage without compromising your still work. We explain how to set up audio in Chapter 8, but it is a fairly easy process. By choosing to start slowly, adding only audio, you will quickly see the benefits audio offers you, without compromising your ability to make still images.

The Value of Audio Coverage

Whether you have been married or not, as a wedding photographer, you know how chaotic a wedding day is. The cliché that everything happens in a blur is true. The day flies by with few of the details sticking in your memory (see Figure 1-1). Couples rely on their photographers to help them recall those moments, and most wedding photographers are able to do that well.

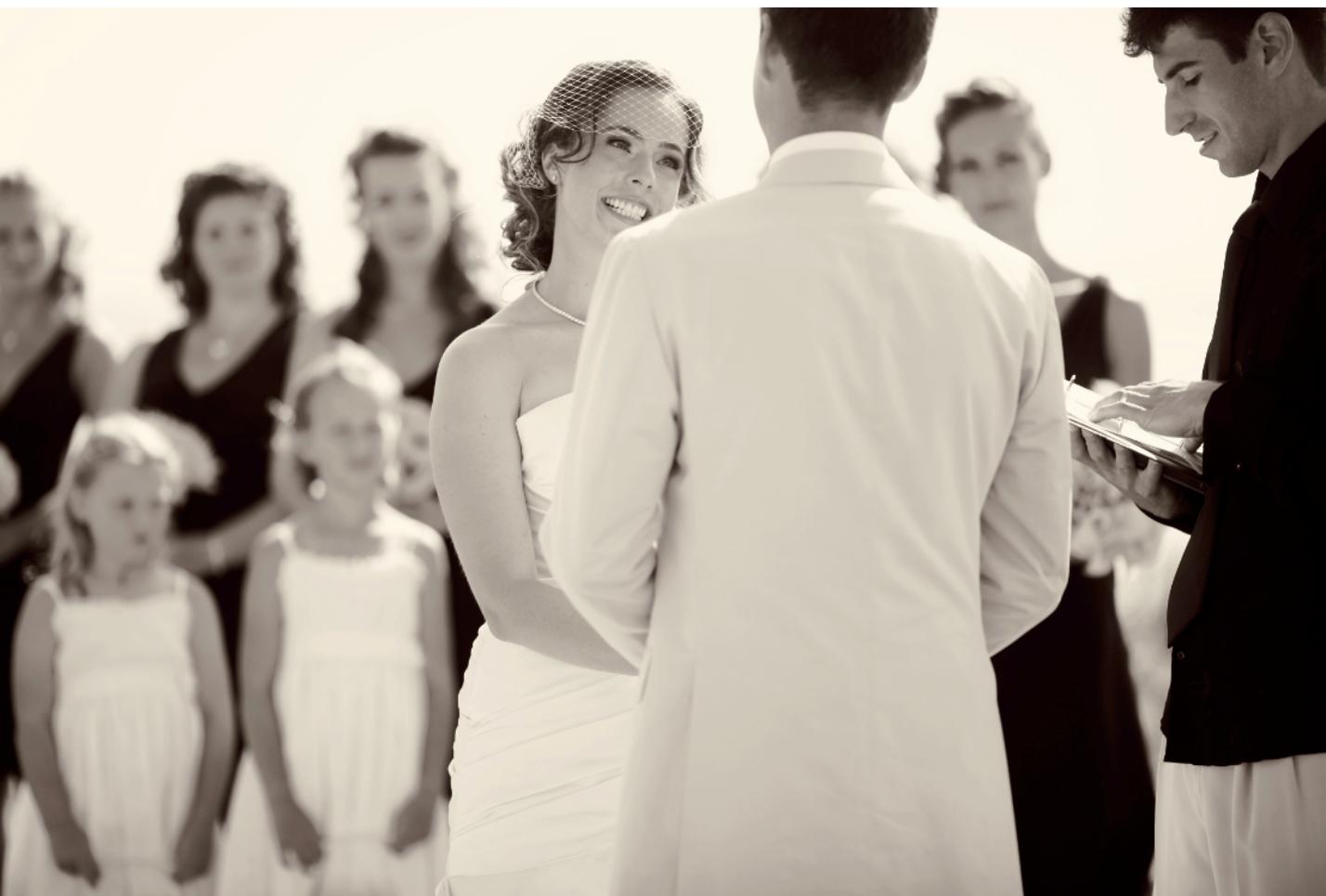




FIGURE 1-1 *As she puts on her veil, she is overcome with the excitement of the moment*

But the words our couples share with each other are often lost forever. They know they spoke vows to each other – every wedding has vows. They know that one of them cried and one of them laughed – your photographs show that emotion (Figure 1-2 is a good example). But, what they aren't always able to recall is the way the words were spoken, the way his voice broke, and the way her voice held steady through the tears. We can't give them that in our still images. Yet, it is those words

FIGURE 1-2 *Photography captures the expressions of the moment, but the words that were spoken cannot be heard, leaving your couple to rely on their memories for what was said*





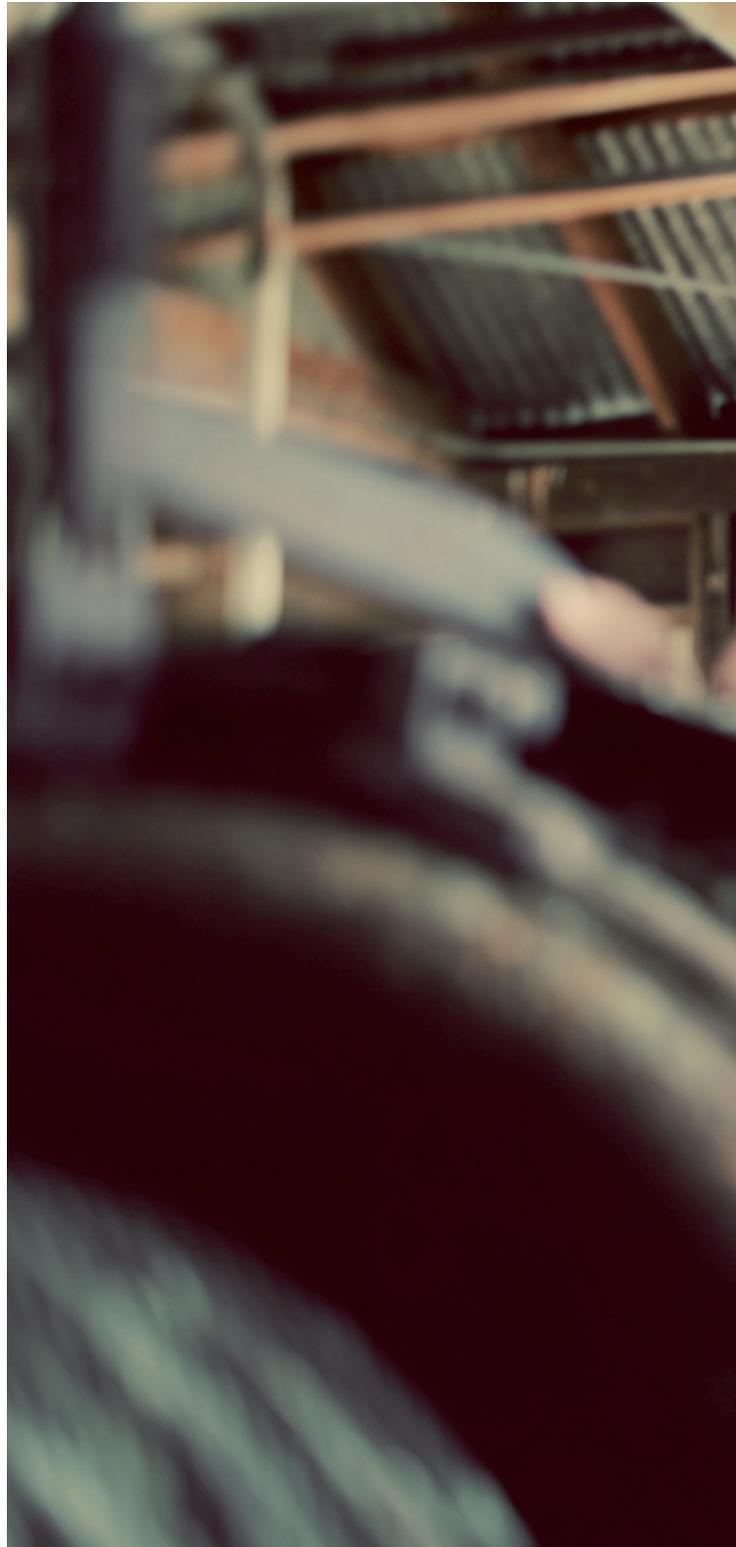
that will come to mean so much more as the years go by, as life starts to get in the way, and as memories fade. They may have their vows written somewhere, but the inflection and the power of those words are gone. As still photographers, we sometimes underestimate the power of those words and the importance of their capture.

There is power in language, not only in the vows our couples speak to each other, but also in the speeches given during the reception. We have all heard incredible speeches at the weddings we photograph – we’ve probably cried behind our cameras more than once. And we’ve probably all looked around and realized there is no one recording those words. Why not? That gift of language is one of the most important gifts our couples receive on their wedding day – statements of love and support from family, stories and anecdotes, laughter and tears – words that will likely never be spoken again.

Simply capturing the audio from those times in a wedding day is not a difficult task, as we’ll show you in Chapters 4 and 8. Blending that audio with your still images is as easy as creating a slideshow set to music.

As artists, we can see the nuances that separate our work from that of our competitors. But it is only the most discerning clients that can also see those nuances, particularly in a world full of similar Web sites, blogs, blog sites, albums, slideshows, and more. So, what sets you apart and makes a client choose you? What can you do to make their wedding, and your photography, stand out from the crowd?

FIGURE 1-3 *Using unique compositions and elements is one way to stand out from the crowd*





Still Photography

Starting your journey with the addition of audio, allows you to focus on what you do best – making photographs. You simply set-up the microphone and go – there are no distractions from the way you cover a wedding day.

Photographers see the world in moments frozen. Storytelling, for most of us, is done in a single image, or series of images, that allow the viewer their own interpretation of that moment. Still images never stand alone: They always carry the imprint of their



maker, their subject, and the viewer – it's a three-way relationship and people view photographs (and art in general) through the veil of their own experience. For example, a parent views an image of a child with a different perspective from someone who is not a parent. A woman views an image differently from a man. A child sees something different from an adult. Everyone who looks at an image brings something to the viewing experience that colors their reaction to it. It's why still images generate such emotion (see Figure 1-4). A wedding image might, for example, ring false with a newly divorced person, while send shivers of delight through a newly married person. That's the magic of still photography: Our imagery is not literal, no matter how much we want it to be.

Wedding photography, however, is different. It is both literal and open to interpretation, because it is both art and an historical record. While we, as photographers, strive to make art out of ordinary moments, our clients may have something else in mind. They might be less concerned with the art of moments than they are with having the images mean something to them. That's why you can see such technically awful photographs in the slideshows that show their lives up to that point. We cringe when we see those photographs, but we also realize that our clients value the memory of the moment as much as they do the image. The images become a catalyst for memory, and that can put us at odds with our clients, if we're not careful.

After more than 500 weddings, we have learned that lesson the hard way. We will spend so much time working an image that we love, only to discover the client doesn't love it all. Why? Well, quite simply, they don't feel the same emotion we do when they look at the image. Women are generally concerned about two things: how they look and how the image makes them feel. Men won't always own up to it, but they aren't all that different. And so, as wedding photographers, we are forced to create images that satisfy our needs as artists, and the needs of our clients. With that in mind, adding audio to your final presentation can only sweeten the photographs you make.

FIGURE 1-4 *Every still image is interpreted by the viewer, depending on their own experience. This moment will make some people smile and others react differently*

Blending Audio and Stills

At the risk of dating ourselves, we remember when a slideshow set to music was more trouble than it was worth. You had to scan all the images, retouch for dust, etc., and use an extremely slow, and unreliable, computer based slideshow. The music was awful, the transitions beyond cheesy, and the return almost nil. Go back even further and you had to use a slide carousel and spend a ridiculous amount of time programming it to do what you want – and then you had to ensure that you hit Play on the tape deck at the right time. (That was way before our time, of course.)

Fortunately technology has changed and our ability to create shows that set our photographs to music has become so much easier. Slideshows are commonplace today, and wedding photographers everywhere present their clients with a slideshow set to music. Really, other than the images and the music choice, the product is the same from photographer to photographer. In many ways, the slideshow-set-to-music has done nothing more than standardize the industry.





FIGURE 1-5 *The groom gives a speech to his new wife while she looks on. Imagine the power of this moment when the audio overlays the still images of her reaction and that of her bridesmaids*





FIGURE 1-6 *The groom's sister sang the song for their first dance. In Chapter 8, we show you how to capture this audio during the reception*

Our clients are consumed with personalizing their event. They scour Web sites, pour through magazines, and study photographers' blogs all in an effort to do something different for their wedding day, to make it more about them. We see more and more couples choosing to write their own vows. They take the time to personalize the words that, in effect, bind them together, thereby giving you the opportunity to give them something completely unique to their event.

By using their audio as part of your final presentation, you are giving them an invaluable gift, while giving yourself an incredible sales opportunity. To just record the audio, you don't need to be commissioned ahead of time. You can bring your microphone equipment to a wedding day, set it up, and shoot as normal. Then, you can use the audio to surprise your clients when you present their images to them. Imagine your clients in your studio simply to see a slideshow of images set to music, and their voices become part of the



soundtrack. Whether you typically sell slideshows or not, that couple will not want to go home without a copy of that show. You could have it on DVD ready for them to take home that night, giving yourself a nice extra sale.

Depending on what software you use to make your slideshows, adding audio is an easy one- or two-step process. On a Mac, for example, you can import the audio into GarageBand, edit, and rename the clip. Once you've done the import, the audio becomes available in iMovie and you can easily access it for use in your final piece (we'll show you this, in more detail, in Chapters 11 and 12). Where you decide to place the audio is up to you, but it is a straightforward process. When you check out our Audio + in the Simple Fusion chapter on the DVD, you will see how effective adding audio is to your final presentation, and how you can put a slideshow together in less than an hour.