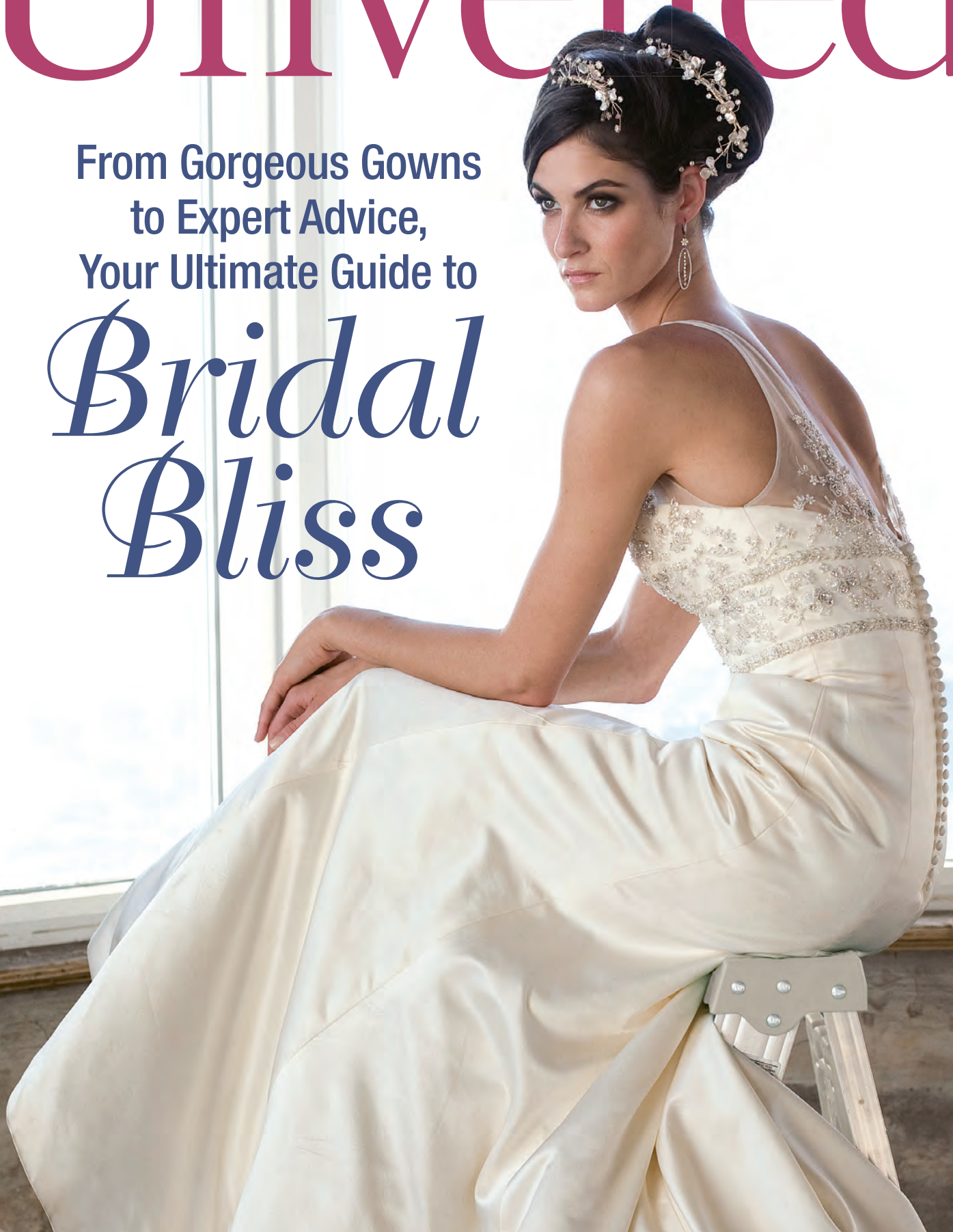


St. Louis Magazine's 2009 Unveiled

From Gorgeous Gowns
to Expert Advice,
Your Ultimate Guide to

*Bridal
Bliss*



Unveiled Table of Contents



72



88



96



108

On the Cover

Photograph by Susan Jackson. Enzoani Chanel silk satin gown, \$2,625. From Simply Elegant Bridal, 1004 Olive, 314-241-8201, simplyelegantbridalstl.com. Hairpins, \$115 each. From Saks Fifth Avenue, saksfifthavenue.com. Yellow-and-brown diamond drop earrings, \$3,525. From Elleard Heffern Fine Jewelers, heffern.com.

- 63 Things We Love: Bridal Edition
Buy, wrap, give, smile
BY NICOLE BENOIST EDGERTON
- 67 Weddings for All Seasons
Must-read tips, no matter the month
BY SHERA DALIN
- 72 Joyful Declarations
Seven St. Louis couples share their wedding albums
- 84 Vowing to Go Green
How to have a greener wedding
BY MARGARET BAUER
- 88 Let Them Make Cake
A top pastry chef's sticky situation
BY STEPHEN SCHENKENBERG
- 91 Immodest Proposals
How 18 St. Louisans popped—and answered—the question
BY JEANNETTE COOPERMAN
- 96 Love in the City
A bridal fashion portfolio
STYLING BY NICOLE BENOIST EDGERTON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN JACKSON
- 105 Getting Groomed
So what's the guy's role in all this? Depends on who you ask
BY DAN MICHEL
- 108 Seeking Su Destino
Three destination-wedding spots to tempt you away
BY SUSAN MANLIN KATZMAN
- 112 Putting a Personal Touch on It
A dozen wedding planners on how to make your wedding yours
BY ALLISON REILLY

Vowing to Go *Green*

SLM talks to wedding and event planner Rachel McCalla, founder of Lucky You Productions, about environmental-friendly weddings—and learns a lot in the process. Turns out it's not so tough to go green here after all

By Margaret Bauer



You've been a wedding and event planner for more than a decade. Does it seem like the demand for eco-friendly weddings is growing?

I get a lot of people that say, "I really want to do that." And that is what counts to me right now. Maybe they don't do it, maybe they do, or maybe they ask me to help them do little parts. They say, "Well, look, Rachel, I want you to be my wedding planner, and I want to do some facet of my wedding in an eco-friendly fashion, so let's determine what that's going to be. I can't do the whole thing, but I can do these three things." And then I help guide them along that process of how to do it.

For instance, maybe someone's already picked their venue and the venue doesn't really compost, or they don't offer recycling, or they can't buy local foods, and the bride and the groom are already on a budget, so they can't pay to have someone come up and do these things for them. But we can find other ways to make their wedding green.

Is it harder or easier to make the wedding fit a budget if you go green?

It's not harder. It's just a matter of approach. As long as you decide upfront what you want to do, it typically doesn't add any more. You just have to be able to get the right kind of venue, and you have to be a little bit smart about it. If you're getting married in December and want peonies as your flower, well, peonies are only available like four weeks out of the year; so if you wanted to have a green wedding, you couldn't get those. But a lot of my green brides, they don't want that stuff. They just want to get married and do it in an eco-friendly way.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KATHERINE BISH



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Are there things about St. Louis that you find make hosting green weddings easier?

I have a really, really strong relationship with the EarthWays Center, which is part of the Missouri Botanical Garden; they are a wonderful partnership to have and a great sounding board for me, too.

Who else do you work with on producing local green weddings?

Mad Art Gallery will work with you on going green, and that's a good venue—their chef will go local with you and will definitely try to offer you some green options. And I know a lot of caterers that do green catering. Two people I use are Gourmet Foodworks and Local Harvest. Patti Long Catering will help me go green, too.



Green weddings are really trendy right now, but I think that's good, because the more people know about it, the more people will *start doing it.*

You try to find places that are LEED-certified, and if you can't, the bride and groom can offset the energy through the AmerenUE Pure Power program or by donating to the Sierra Club or WWF [World Wide Wildlife Federation]. The other thing you can do is have it in someone's back yard or in a garden. Or you can go to

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your venue and say, "I want to be here, but you're gonna have to offer me recycling that evening." And then that's where I step in and say, "These are the contacts that we need to use to make recycling happen."

I also just found out that Kim Garner's BEST Transportation is going to offer a hybrid limo in 2009. I use M. Haley Design—she's a green invitation maker—and Mathew Rice, who is the dessert chef for Veruca and will do things organic and local for me. The EarthWays Center just had their Green Homes and Renewable Energy Festival, and I met a woman who said there are five new Missouri native flower growers out there with greenhouses. So now I can actually get Missouri flowers almost year-round.

A lot of people ask me what I do about wedding dresses and bridesmaid dresses. The one thing you can do is have them made here. You can have them made by a seamstress—you're giving someone a job—or you can wear a dress that was used before, or maybe have your bridesmaids wear a dress that they have already worn or ask them to just go out and try to find a dress that is more eco-friendly in these colors.

Are there locally or regionally made wines you recommend for couples getting married here?

If you like drier wines, there's Augusta's Mount Pleasant Norton—that's a dry, red wine. There's also Les Bourgeois Winery and Vineyards in Rocheport, near Columbia. Another thing that some of my brides have done is get Frey wines from California, which are organic and sulfite-free.

What direction do you see green weddings heading in?

Green weddings are really trendy right now, but I think that's good, because the more people know about it, the more people will start doing it. More venues are probably going to offer these kinds of options because it's less expensive for them. A lot of people still believe that if it's green, it's going to be more money—but it's not the case at all. It's actually going to be less money, because you're doing everything local. And now, with all the options that we have, it's becoming easier and easier. So I think it's a good thing to try to do it—it's really not all that hard. ●

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