

RED INDUSTRY COLLECTIVE: WEDDING FILMS & PHOTOGRAPHY

CAPTURING PRECIOUS MEMORIES OF EVERY SPECIAL DAY

On a film set you can immediately do a retake or even go back and reshoot something you may have missed the next day, but you don't get second chances when you're capturing a wedding. The big day is hugely special to the leading couple who want everything to look and feel like a Hollywood romance, as well as being able to relive the memory happily ever after.

No pressure then for Steve DiMaggio and his team at Color Room Films, a production company based in New Jersey. Steve and his wife Jane set up the business five years ago to exclusively produce wedding films. They shoot predominantly with RED cameras. It's a combination that has earned them awards and a reputation for being among the best around.

"We make 100 films a year and without RED we would barely be able to achieve half that amount," DiMaggio says. "Our deepest value is to deliver a wedding film that is honest and far above any previous expectation by the couple. We are able to accomplish this by keeping our rates reasonable, using Hollywood-grade equipment, and never allowing ourselves to be completely satisfied."

DiMaggio's current RED is a GEMINI 5K S35 sensor housed in an EPIC-W body, typically paired with Leica R lenses adapted for Nikon mounts. There are numerous reasons for DiMaggio's camera choice but the main one is that he feels the shooter can remain discrete and therefore capture the most natural wedding experience possible.

"I can't stress how important this is," he says. "Any other camera of this type is going to be intrusive. The larger the camera, the more it is noticed and distracts people. The RED is sleek, so for the most part people forget that we are there. It adds to the intimacy of the experience on the day and to the moments we capture."

"There is no need for external wiring besides audio, and the camera itself is not a huge eye sore," he adds. "Having batteries that last over

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two hours is great too, so I am not changing batteries during speeches, bridal prep, etc. I can leave it on all day and choose the best times to switch so I don't miss any moments."

Having a lightweight unit is also vital for a job that requires filming for eight to 10 hours at a time. DiMaggio will support the camera with a Steadicam Air 25 Monopod for



pre-wedding candid shots, switching to a Glidecam stabilizer for the ceremony, and then go handheld for reception footage supported by Holdfast straps.

“In over 400 shoots we’ve never used any additional lighting fixtures,” DiMaggio relates. “We want to be as nimble as possible and keep our footprint low. RED allows us to do this shooting in all sorts of light conditions. In a ballroom alone you can have three types of lightbulbs but the RED handles it all.

“Not having to use any kind of light is a big deal,” DiMaggio continues. “The flexibility of REDRAW checks all the boxes for us. When we’re shooting in daytime, I typically operate at 800 ISO with a Firecrest ND to take out the harshest light. In darker conditions, I switch to a higher ISO, often at lower compression. I’ve even pushed it to 3,200 ISO in ultra-low light with no noticeable color shift.”

The wedding reception is usually the most challenging in this regard. They can range from simple DJ sets with flashing lights to live bands and, at the luxury end of the scale, huge candle-lit venues.

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Color Room Films has been so successful that DiMaggio is able to employ a team to cover the demand. “Many people think it’s more complicated to shoot RED, but it’s the easiest and simplest camera to shoot with,” he says. “All our shooters are extremely comfortable shooting RED. I’m able to create my own pre-sets in the camera so

they have the frame rates or ISO they need at the touch of a button.”

DiMaggio avoids gimmicky photography but does film certain moments at different speeds. “I think it feels natural to film a 75-year-old grandmother at 72fps as they sit and take everything in and a slower frame rate to capture all the energy for the bride’s 22-year-old sister or bridesmaids. Because of the pre-sets, I can film these frame rates in real-time and I don’t need to tinker with it in post.”

Dramatically cutting down post production time is one key way in which DiMaggio is able to beat the competition and grow his business. “The average wedding videographer will be shooting 30 weddings a year in large part because they will spend three to six months in post on each one,” he notes. “That we are able to more than triple that volume, and still give the absolute best production quality, is because of what the RED enables us to capture in camera.”

The team works alongside 30-40 different wedding stills photographers a year, each with their own style. “We actually don’t have a particular style,” DiMaggio says. “Instead, RED allows us to try to match the wedding video with the photographer’s style that the couple has chosen. We couldn’t do that extreme swing in contrast and color with any other camera.”

Each film is about two hours and is accompanied by a four- or five-minute trailer.

“We shoot a linear timeline rather than skipping all over the place which keeps the story very natural. We are double booked for about 10% of bookings and on those jobs, we have to use an alternate camera and because it’s not RED it will take us considerably longer in post.”

DiMaggio says he is thinking of expanding, “but, at the same time, I’d rather ensure we have quality, not quantity, to make each one special. If we do expand our business to the next level, we would only do it with RED.”



WHAT'S IN STEVE'S BAG?

- GEMINI 5K S35 sensor
- 7" RED carbon monitor
- V-lock I/O
- (9) RED BRICK batteries
- Nikon mount
- Wooden bottom plate
- Holdfast quick release
- Wooden cold shoe
- DSMC2 side handle with wooden GDU handle