Everyone loves a good wedding. There’s nothing better than witnessing the love and union between two people surrounded by their closest family and friends. As the world comfortably progresses into the 21st century we are seeing more and more people from different backgrounds, cultures, and religions joining together and forming relationships. This in turn has created the opportunity for them to have a unique wedding celebration that commemorates their love in an all-inclusive fashion, and showcases a blend of their beliefs and cultural identities. Multicultural and multi-faith weddings are now far more common than they used to be, and although many of the same principles of ‘traditional’ wedding photography apply, there are extra aspects to be aware of to ensure the couple get their special day captured just right.

Be organised

Audrey Russell (www.facebook.com/tandemphoto.co.uk) is a photographer based in Scotland. As well as photographing newborns, babies and families she has also for the past 15 years been running her wedding photography business Tandem Photo (www.tandemphoto.co.uk), with her partner joining the business eight years ago.

Audrey is a passionate photographer who loves the challenge of capturing a multicultural or multi-faith wedding and has plenty of experience in the subject. Audrey’s years of being out in the field have taught her to ask plenty of questions in not just the lead up to the wedding from the bride and groom, but also to get information from their close family and friends on the day so she has a thorough understanding of what is about to happen. “You just need to be as organised as possible.” Throughout her career she has captured a number of multicultural weddings including a Pakistani and Scottish blend, a Chinese and Scottish mix, and a Scottish and English combination, in which the bride’s parents who

“Each one is so different and you don’t want to miss a thing”

Left
Sarah and Ash

The Scottish and Iranian couple conduct a traditional Persian wedding ritual where four female members of the family hold up a canopy

Below
Anna and Nick

This couple used elements from their Scottish, English, Thai, Chinese and Polish backgrounds for a unique celebration

Right
Yuvna and Mike

This couple had a Hindu wedding. Yuvna is from Mauritius and Mike the UK. Yuvna, the bride, designed and made her beautiful dress herself
MULTI-FIATH WEDDINGS

GO PRO

When asked which multicultural wedding stood out in her career she tells us about the union between Anna and Nick Lao-Kaim, who drew on their English, Scottish, Chinese, Thai and Polish ancestry and showed this through a number of different rituals and traditions. This included Scottish bagpipes, Polish vodka shots and a traditional Chinese tea ceremony that honours and shows gratitude to parents and elders. To find out more about Anna’s wedding and the logistics behind it read her blog at http://bit.ly/3xeB6lc.

It takes two (sometimes)

With so much to capture at a multicultural wedding Audrey often works with another photographer to ensure nothing is missed, however for Anna’s and Nick’s wedding she was shooting solo. “They only wanted one photographer on the day itself, so I definitely had to be quick on my feet!” Luckily for Audrey the couple were very organised which made the whole day logistically easier. “I always say to any couple to have a relaxed day plan it well and have a schedule. That way everyone knows what is happening, and you can relax into it.”

One wedding where Audrey luckily had a second shooter was for a couple called Sarah and Ash who are Scottish and Iranian. They marked their day with many different ceremonies including a humanist ceremony, and a traditional Persian wedding knife dance. “It’s a big wedding or there is lots going on, consider a second shooter” Audrey advises. “In the case of Sarah and Ash’s wedding I was taking detail shots when the couple suddenly started to do a traditional canopy ritual.” In this symbolic act a piece of material is held by four female members close to the couple to show their unity. “Luckily my second shooter managed to capture it all as I wasn’t near by.”

Excitement

Raja Shah (www.raja-shah.com) is a photographer based in North London, and has experience in capturing all types of wedding ceremonies including those that blend cultures and religions. Having followed in his father’s footsteps into the wedding photography industry, Raja has spent years shooting weddings (from film to digital) and has refined his skills to develop his unique style.

Raja, like the other photographers interviewed for this feature, has noticed an increasing amount of multicultural and multi-faith weddings in the past few years. “Ten years ago it was almost unheard of to have a multi-faith wedding, however in the last ten to six years they have become far more common.”

were from the Caribbean and their family were traditional dress. “It’s a total photographer’s dream,” she tells us. “It can take you out of your comfort zone, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing if you enjoy the challenge.”

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Abigail, tell us more about what you do. I’ve always loved capturing beautiful moments, from assisting with a photoshoot of Princess Diana at the start of my career, to photographing for different companies and magazines around the world. I set up Abigail’s Studio in the heart of the Chilterns in 2015 to allow me to concentrate on my weddings and portraiture. I apply creativity, whilst capturing what are the most momentous occasions in our lives.

What do you have in your kit bag? I have the Nikon D4s, and my go-to lenses are the AF Nikkor 80-200mm f/2.8, AF-S Nikkor 17-33mm f/2.8, AF Nikkor 35mm f/20 mm f/1.8-3.4.5 lens. AF Nikkor 60mm f/2.8.

How many multicultural weddings have you photographed? All weddings combine different cultures to a point, and families have their own traditions. The ones that stood out the most for me included different religions such as Hindu and Sikh, Christian and Mormon and Christian and Buddhist. I’m not sure exactly how many I’ve shot, but there have been quite a few!

Is there more to consider when photographing a multicultural wedding? It is very important to listen to your client. I always highlight that I am not a traditional photographer for their culture, but often they want to step away from tradition and are looking for a fresh take on the ceremonies. It’s also vital to find out exactly what needs photographing before quoting, as some events can run over multiple days.

How much pre-planning do you do? It is really important to do pre-planning with the couple, as well as with the families. In some cultures it is traditional to have a photographer for the bride and a separate one for the groom, so it’s really important to work out what you are expected to cover.

What images do clients want captured? I get a lot of requests for different ceremonies. I’ve photographed wedding events as diverse as a Chinese tea ceremony and a Mehndi (henna) party, to friendly competitions of men lifting each other. It’s a lot of fun.

For more, visit www.abigailstudio.co.uk or www.facebook.com/Abigailstudio

Abigail’s top tips for multi-faith weddings

- Do your research. Find out about aspects of the ceremony you’re not sure about. Be aware of cultural sensitivities and prepare to work around these if needed.

- Dress for comfort. Make sure you are wearing comfortable and quiet shoes – you are sure to be on your feet a lot.

- Bring your own style. If they’ve hired you, they like your style and aren’t necessarily looking for a traditional cultural feel to their images.