

## Inspiration is contagious at Renaissance, a studio built on a foundation of art, design and fashion

*Reviewing Clint Russell and Shawn VanDaele, Lead Photographers & Owners, Renaissance Studios Photography*

*Review is written by Staff @ The Ring and is based on • Interviews with this vendor • Interviews with past brides*

*For Photographers Clint Russell and Shawn VanDaele, photographing weddings is much like telling a story - a story that's presented in gorgeous, sentimental, fun and creative photographs. Clint and Shawn have built their company, Renaissance Studios Photography, on a foundation of art, design, and fashion (elements that can be seen in each of their photos). "Since we're artists first, it's important to us to get unique, fun and magazine-quality shots throughout your whole day." They want to make sure all their brides and grooms get full bragging rights when it comes time to showing off their final photos. That's why each of the members of their large team of ten professional photographers shoots just about every moment and detail that they can. From quirky little moments, editorial style candids, and fun, vintage twists. And when they're not catching fabulous photos of the bride, groom and wedding party, they're covering the wedding guests in their fabulous 'Smile Booth', a featured service that brides can't help but love.*

*We sat down with these two gentlemen in their sweet Milton-based studio (their home base for the Ontario-wide weddings this company photographs), browsed some samples, and got a taste of what a wedding day shoot would be like with a photography company whose love and enthusiasm for taking great photos is both contagious and inspiring. Let us tell you more...*

### Personally speaking...

Both Clint and Shawn started their photography careers through self-taught methods and styles. Clint says he's had a camera in his hands for as long as he's known he had thumbs. Eventually, Clint studied at the College of the North Atlantic in Newfoundland.

Shawn went through school at the Ontario College of Art & Design and on top of being a Lead Photographer and Owner of Renaissance Studios, he's also the Creative Director for Premier Salons and Spas (at Holt's, Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue). Both guys have been shooting for almost ten years, and have been covering weddings for the last four.

In 2006, Clint and Shawn put their creative genius together and opened Renaissance Studios Photography. They started out focusing on portraits and fine art photography, which lead to casually shooting weddings for friends who were looking for a funkier spin on their wedding photos. "We came to understand that our style was something unique and different in the wedding industry, and since word travels quickly - the business truly built itself," they told The Ring.

Now, four years later and with forty weddings in 2009 alone, Renaissance has added ten new (to them, not to the biz) photographers to their team so they can expand their reach across Ontario and make sure they don't have to turn down a photography opportunity. Clint says that each photographer was hand selected for their unique style and work ethic, so their work blends seamlessly with the guys'. "We took our time choosing the best of the best in the industry," they say, "people whose work we admire and aspire to... the best and most experienced shooters in the industry who share our creative vision and quirky photography style."

Many of the photographers also have pretty impressive portfolios, like shooting for the Juno's and Country Music Awards, and offering their services for non-profit organizations like ORBIS International, documenting Kenya's battle with blindness and the medical faculties' work to help prevent it.

While Clint and Shawn edit and process their own photos by hand, they also recently welcomed Margaret Kelly to their team of editors, who also edits images for American Vogue magazine.

And we're not the only ones who find Renaissance's work website worthy, as they have had several weddings featured on WeddingChannel.com as the 'wedding of the day'.

### Artists first, then photographers ...

Since they've been photographing weddings for a couple of years now and have been a part of just about every facet of the wedding day, Clint and Shawn have built their foundation on art, design, and fashion, which they say carries into all of their photos. "Working in the photography industry shooting portraits, and editorial-style images lends itself perfectly to wedding photography as we introduce elements of fashion photography throughout the whole day," says Shawn.

That being said, they aren't locked into one specific shooting style as they like to try something different with every photo shoot in order to truly tell the story. "It's our passion for storytelling that comes across in



the photos and we believe each photo should stand on its own as well as in the whole collection," they say. "We say our style is 'modern-vintage', which translated means quirky and timeless with a retro twist and a splash of modern love story."

Kathie Howes and John Lennox had an engagement session and their September 2009 wedding photos taken by Renaissance Studios. They told us that they wanted wedding photos that were unique and reflected their style. "Renaissance Studios' flair and eye for different things did that," they told The Ring. Kathie adds that she "loved the combination of journalistic and fashion-like photographs they took." Kathie and John felt like Clint and Shawn were "old friends who happened to be shooting our wedding, and therefore we were very comfortable and we were able to relax and get some great photos."

Clint and Shawn say they think of themselves as 49% photographers and 51% artists and it's that artistic drive to create something beautiful from every shoot that keeps them inspired. It helps that they genuinely love what they do - whether it's quirky little moments, editorial style candids or fun, vintage twists, these two photographers say that they care as much as (or more than) you do about your wedding photos.

Christina Lontos had Renaissance photograph her April 2009 wedding and told us that Clint and Shawn are on top of their game when it comes to organization, quality, price and creativity. "Their creativity and attention to detail captured more than I even noticed on our important day," she says. "I swear there was nothing missing during the process... I would highly recommend (and I have) them for any occasion and affair."

Jamie Contarini had Renaissance photograph her October 2009 wedding photos, and plans to use them for a post-wedding trash the dress shoot, too, telling us that she has found her photographers for life. Jamie told us that when she met Clint and saw how genuine and passionate he was about photography, she had no doubt that she wanted Renaissance Studios to shoot her wedding. "We loved their enthusiasm. We knew that they were passionate about photography, but when they arrive at your door they are there for you." She adds that Clint and Shawn think outside of the box and the results are breathtaking. "They made sure to take all of the photos important to us and then they gave some amazing suggestions."

Starting with the engagement session and finishing with the whole wedding day, Clint and Shawn say they become involved with your whole love story in order to capture it on camera. The engagement session, which they both love doing, is a great place to start, according to Clint. "We don't just show up and take your photos. Before the shoot we talk with clients about what their story is, what story they want to tell, and we build a fun little love story that's different for every couple." They add that this carries over into the couples' wedding photos, too, completing the story and making "a truly personal and funky collection of images."

Jamie agrees that with Renaissance Studios, your photos are unique to you because they tell your story. "Renaissance Studios promises you that and they deliver... The moments are real; they are captured as they happen and not posed... this shows in the photos."

### Pictures packaged perfectly

One of the best things about Renaissance Studios (aside from their amazing photos, of course) is that they offer pretty much everything you would want or need in terms of wedding day photography, in one package, for a reasonable price. "We're just normal people, we're not 'sales-oriented'," they told us.

"Clint and Shawn possessed a great deal of professionalism and had a great way of putting us at ease with their down to earth personalities," Christina told The Ring. "There was no pushy sales pitch like most wedding photographers have." She adds that she found Renaissance's price less expensive than the value and time Clint and Shawn put into their work. "It was fun and they had a great sense of humour."

Because this package is perfect, it's called just that - the Perfect Package. For \$3295 (plus tax), you get two photographers for the entire day, "and we mean all day - from when you need us, until when you don't," Shawn says. Plus, 500+ digital, retouched proofs in an online gallery, and engagement (or boudoir) session (with a minimum of thirty final retouched images), two coffee table books of your wedding photos, private online galleries of wedding and engagement photos for at least one year, and a DVD of all your final high res images.

"We don't believe in nickel-and-diming you after your wedding for little extras," says Clint, which is why Renaissance includes everything in their packages to begin with.

"I thought Renaissance's prices were very competitive and I was shocked what we got for the overall price," says Kathie. "They offer a lot more than many wedding photographers and the package is really tailored to what the bride and her husband wants."

While you're able to print your photos anywhere, you also have the convenience of ordering them (among other things) directly through your online gallery (prints start at \$1.99 for a 4x6), which contributes even more to Renaissance's no pressure attitude. "We love taking photos, not up-selling you for things you don't need or want," they told us. "Plus, your gallery stays online for at least a year (usually longer) so you can order things like thank you cards or canvas prints at any time, on your own time. We're just normal people who love taking awesome photos."

Clients especially love the hardcover coffee table books that are included in Renaissance's packages. "They're bookstore quality photo stories that document their entire day," Shawn says. "This is usually an up-sell with other photographers; but, we include two in your package (one to keep, and one to share)."



Renaissance also offers a smaller, less popular package (since it doesn't offer full day coverage and most people want that) - the **Alternate Package**, which is \$2495 (plus tax) and includes eight hours of coverage with two photographers, 250 digital retouched proofs in an online gallery, an engagement (or boudoir) session, one coffee table book, private online galleries of both engagement and wedding photos for at least one year, and a DVD of all your final images. Travel is also included in package prices, so long as the destination is within two hours of the Renaissance studio, otherwise travel fees apply.

Aside from these two packages, Clint and Shawn can also work with you to design your ultimate perfect package since they know that not all weddings or budgets are created equal.

Photography was the most important item on Jamie's list when planning her wedding, and she says that Renaissance Studios fell within her budget. "We would have paid more for the value that we received," she adds. "When you spend the day with Clint and Shawn and witness their passion, expertise and humour; it just blows your expectations away... they are professional, enthusiastic, artistic and punctual."

### Say cheese...

One of our favourite things in Renaissance Studios' services is their fun and interactive Smile Booths for wedding receptions, which is a self-serve photo studio. "The crowds go nuts over these things."

Fitted with a custom backdrop and unique props, you just snap the photo using a remote and it instantly shows up on an LCD screen. "Lots of brides are going with Smile Booths to keep their guests entertained and for truly hilarious blackmail material of their friends and family after the wedding," says Clint, with a smile and a wink. "They're usually pretty funny."

These photos are also added to a private gallery after the event (usually 700+ photos) for guests to download, email, print, and share. Smile Booths cost \$500 with any wedding package.

### Walking you through a Renaissance wedding...

Clint and Shawn recommend emailing or phoning them about eight to twelve months before your wedding to set up an appointment to meet them at their studio. Clint or Shawn (or both) always meet with the couple, along with any other lead photographer who may be covering the wedding.

From the first email Kathie received from Clint, she had a great feeling about him. "He was warm and friendly and it felt like I'd known him for years. I could tell he loves what he does and he loves people." She adds that as soon as she threw out some ideas about her style and what she and John wanted for their photos, Clint immediately went into creative mode with his ideas. "I got a great vibe off of him without even meeting him," adds Kathie.

On the wedding day, Clint and Shawn say that they don't just show up and shoot the wedding. "We engage ourselves as much as the couple would like, so we develop a relationship and comfort level that truly comes across in the photos."

"We sometimes have some tricks up our sleeve and each take certain shots we know will work together later, like as collages or mini photo stories," the guys told us. "We always shoot with the 'book' in mind and make sure we capture all the little bits of the day to completely tell the whole story later."

This was something that Kathie and John really loved about Clint and Shawn. "The details I missed in my running around are captured for me to reflect on," says Kathie. "Plus, they took some fun, fashion-like photos of us that really stand out. What they don't take is your typical photos of a wedding. Not one of our photos looks posed or ordinary."

After the wedding - literally the day after or sometimes even the evening of - Clint and Shawn send couples some teaser shots (about six to ten) to tide them over and give them a taste of their photos. They'll also blog about the wedding right away and send couples the link to share with guests.

Photos are usually ready in about eight weeks and couples can review them online on your own time. When photos are complete, a draft of the proof book is made and sent for comments/revisions. When the books are ready, Clint and Shawn package them up (beautifully, of course, since they're all about presentation) with the DVD of images and ship them out, or meet up to deliver in person. After that, everyone lives happily ever after.

### Details, details, details

- To book Renaissance Studios, Clint and Shawn recommend contacting them at least 8 to 12 months before your wedding.
- A 20% deposit is required to book, with the remaining balance due on or before your wedding day.
- Packages range in price from \$2495 to \$3295, plus taxes; but can also be tailored to fit your needs and budget.
- Travel is included within 2 hours of the Renaissance studio in Milton.

### Contacting Renaissance Studios Photography

Clint Russell or Shawn VanDaele at Renaissance Studios can be reached by email at [photos@renaissancestudios.ca](mailto:photos@renaissancestudios.ca) or by phone at 289-971-0089. You can also visit Renaissance Studios online at <http://www.renaissancestudios.ca>.

