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That Bride: Sonya Yeung of Bliss Creations

THAT BRIDE, WEDDINGS | BY LAUREN

When the wedding planner becomes the bride!

We can't stop staring at the stunning photos from the wedding of Sonya Yeung, the founder of destination wedding planning company, [Bliss Creations](#). As an expert in event planning and weddings, Sonya was fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to create her own dream wedding in beautiful Boracay to now-husband Shaun. Read all about her hilarious hen 'do (*neon bubble football was involved!*), why they chose Boracay and how planning her own wedding was so different to working with clients!



All love stories start somewhere. How did you two meet?

We met in Boracay in 2005 at a mutual friend's birthday weekend. Shaun was working in finance in London at and had flown in for the event. We both had partners at the time so just enjoyed the weekend's revelries and then went our separate ways. It wasn't until Shaun moved to Hong Kong in 2008 that we began getting to know each other better.



Where was your first date?

I'm not sure we really had a first date! When Shaun moved to HK we spent a lot of time together and soon we were inseparable.

Can you tell us about the first time he said he loved you?

We both can't really remember, oh dear! But we both remember one special night in the early days when Shaun invited me over for dinner and he made **a delicious oxtail stew**. We are both foodies, so I think we were both in heaven. What's the saying? You can win someone's heart through their stomach? Well, it worked! His stew is now infamous amongst my family too.



Every bride has a proposal story. What's yours?

After a wedding in the Maldives, we stayed on for an extra couple of days by ourselves. We were enjoying the sunset on the beach, when Shaun started talking about us and I kept interrupting totally unaware of what he was leading up to. It didn't click until I saw him on his knee proposing! I don't surprise easily, but I was totally taken off guard and couldn't believe that it was actually happening.

Tell us about the ring.

The ring was **Shaun's grandmother's wedding ring**, so I feel very honoured to have received it. It's a gorgeous brilliant-cut diamond on a gold band and amazingly the style is exactly what I would have chosen. I love it and wear it with another modern ring, which creates a very unique look.



What did you do for your hen party?

My bridesmaids did all the planning – it was fab. We started with a **great meal at Butcher & Baker**, with plenty of bubbly. Then, they surprised me with a trip to [Hyperspace](#) for a hilarious hour of neon bubble football followed by more games and quizzes for me to see how well I knew Shaun. We ended the night playing truth with funny questions giggling throughout. We had such a great time!



How did you go about planning your wedding? Did you go the DIY route or did you hire a wedding planner to help you out?

I'm from Canada and Shaun is from South Africa, but because we met in Boracay and it's Bliss' specialty, it was never a question that it would be a destination wedding. We of course wanted it to be in Boracay where we met, so we went down ten months before the wedding to make sure it truly met our expectations. We chose Friday's Boracay Beach Resort because of its spacious beach front and lovely atmosphere. It is very simple but tastefully done and suited our aesthetic. Naturally, **my team and I took care of all of the logistics** but in the last few days just before the event it was vital that I had one of my team there doing the coordination on site and following up on all the small details, making sure everything ran smoothly. Admittedly, on the day in the lead up **I couldn't resist, I was on my walkie-talkie checking on things from my room!**



Who helped you create your perfect day?

My team at Bliss helped me plan all the details and coordinate with the vendors. I arranged all the flowers and kept the décor simple, romantic and intimate – succulents were placed at each setting and elegant vases of white orchids, cream roses and pink lisanthus dotted the length of the table. The wedding cake was made by a recipe supplied by one of my bridesmaids who is an excellent pastry chef. She was in charge of decorating it too, so I was shocked to find a much larger cake than she had initially suggested, but it still looked and tasted great! Many of our friends and family helped to carry decor items such as vases and lanterns to Boracay.

Shaun and the groomsmen were in charge of setting up **the lanterns and lighting**, a signature look of Bliss Creations, which only Shaun knows best. **My dress was custom-made by Pier 94** and the bridesmaids' dresses are Adrianna Papell. Shaun's suit was made by Sam's Tailor. His and the groomsmen's ceremony shirts and party shirts are custom-made by JJ Threads. We chose Mayad Studios as our videographers and Love Train Studios for our photography.



Tell us about the dress.

I tried on various dresses and in the end I kept going back to an image I came across in the beginning and chose Bendy and his team from Pier 94 to custom make it. My wedding dress is understated but elegant with a lovely jewelled neck and back-line which meant I didn't have to think much about jewellery. It's made from a beautiful white Indian silk dupioni – I love the textures in the silk and **I insisted on pockets**. It fitted perfectly and was very comfortable to wear. At the end of the night, I didn't want to take it off and am now trying to come up with ways to wear it again.

Who helped you look and feel your best on your big day?

I have a personal trainer that I work with once a week and run when I can so I keep in general good shape. **We went to Boracay a week early which meant I was very relaxed** by the wedding day and made sure to get lots of sleep leading up to it as well. I had eyelash extensions done before I left Hong Kong and my hair and make-up on the day was done by May Jasmin.



What was the wedding like?

It was everything we wanted from a beach wedding – **glorious weather, azure sea and sky, palm-fringed white sands** – surrounded by family and friends. There was lots of love, laughter, dancing, fun and a stunning Boracay sunset. Everyone gathered on the beach for the ceremony, which was conducted by an old family friend and mentor of mine from my time at university in Montreal. After our vows and Champagne toast, we had a Chinese tea ceremony to pay respects to our parents and senior family members. We had specially ordered a 'lechon' a traditional Filipino-style pig roast that was served along with a barbecue medley of various seafoods and sides.

We all sat at one long table to bring everyone together as one united group. We kicked off the dancing with a first dance specially choreographed for us, followed by our own playlist of music that spanned decades of memories along with modern hits to get all generations dancing. Everyone had such a good time on the big day and said the ceremony and celebration really reflected our personalities. I don't usually get feedback from EVERY guest at the weddings I plan, so I loved hearing how much they enjoyed themselves including who had spotted all the little details like the chevron wave theme on our stationery suite, gift packs, the wedding cake and the souvenir stubby holders. The **fun touches such as a mini treasure hunt, kids' table, pinata and a giant sand castle** were all a big hit!



The song for your first dance?

Our first dance was to a **medley of four songs; Ed Sheeran – Thinking Out Loud, Meghan Trainor – Dear Future Husband, Enrique Iglesias – Bailando & Flo Rida – My House.** We had a choreographed routine that was so much fun to learn and practice. When the time came though, the dance was much harder to perform in my dress than I had anticipated but we didn't care. We just carried on laughing throughout. Our dance instructor – Margaret from Ceroc – probably wouldn't have been impressed, but late night revellers got to see us perform again at 3am in our shorts and t-shirts with nothing in our way the second time around – and it was perfect! We even do it every now and then because we don't want to forget it!

What's the most valuable thing you learned while wedding planning?

We were fortunate to have over eight months to work on our wedding, but **planning my own wedding was very different to working with clients.** It was our turn to make decisions on items usually left to the clients like the food, music choices, seating plans, choosing our wedding attire, learning our first dance etc. With our busy schedules, the time was definitely needed. Having so many years of experience planning weddings in exotic and often remote locations in Asia means I know how important it is to be open to changing ideas due to challenges out of my control. When working with a destination like Boracay, where some resources are limited, and many items need to be flown in, **flexibility and patience was key.** It was nice to not feel the pressure of being responsible for someone else's wedding this time too!



Have any tips and tricks for brides-to-be?

Stay in touch with what is truly important to you and your fiancée. Try not to stress if things don't go exactly as planned. I have been planning weddings for over 11 years and regardless of how well planned you are, there is always something, but it is being able to **roll with the unexpected** that will ensure that the memories always bring a smile. If you do not have the resources to hire someone leading up to the day, definitely consider hiring someone on the day to help make sure everything runs smoothly. Get them involved early so they know exactly what your expectations are while you enjoy your dream day. Let your personalities shine through. It is your day! **Take a few moments to stand back during the evening and watch from afar and take it all in.** It will be a great picture in your mind to remember.



What do you remember most about the entire experience?

We are so lucky so many people were able to make the journey from all over the world to share our day with us. It was so much fun to be on holiday with your closest friends and family and is something we will cherish forever. Boracay lends itself to having a great time. With such friendly people, a variety of accommodation options, so many activities, a great variety of food, a gorgeous white beach and beautiful sunsets every night – I dare anyone not to have a good time!

Is there anything you would have liked to do differently?

I think the only thing is that **I didn't want it to end**. It is such a rare occasion to have so many friends and family together in one place and it was so special that I just wanted it to continue for days.



And that brings us naturally to your honeymoon. Where did you end up going?

We travel a lot so for us we didn't feel the need to do a particular trip and we had made the time to spend a week before and a week after in Boracay. Just **spending time laughing, sharing stories and relaxing** in such a great setting with our closest and dearest was the best honeymoon we could have asked for.



Lauren

Lauren was born and raised right here in Hong Kong and loves every part of the city and all its many contrasts. She loves to travel and is always on the look out for the next adventure...

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*xoxo
Lauren*
