

# One Sweet Day

Aaron and Kyla Maupin's magical engagement captured your hearts last June. Now these winners of our first ESSENCE Storybook Wedding contest share the love and joy of their special day with you

BY CHARREAH K. JACKSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEREK BLANKS



◀ Aaron proposes to Kyla on April 1, 2012.



## Sweet Love

"I relished every second of getting ready," Kyla recalls. "Having the women I love around kept me from getting nervous." Her glam squad included makeup artist Rhonda Peterson (left) and hairstylist Kortney Moffett. Kyla's mother, Cynthia, helped her into her "something new"—a custom Kevan Hall gown and Jean Michel Cazabat shoes. "For something old, my mother gave us a diamond for my engagement ring," she says. "Now she is always with me." Kyla chose blush Alfred Angelo dresses for her bridesmaids.

"Marriage is the pinnacle of a relationship," Aaron says. "It starts a new family." His brother Gabriel (left) served as best man. Wedding Paper Divas Diann Valentine collection invitations set the stage for the evening at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot in Atlanta. ▶







## Always and Forever

Kyla walked down the aisle as a harpist played and sang Adele's "Make You Feel My Love." "When I saw Kyla, I thought, *Wow, she's beautiful*. I realized our future had begun," Aaron says. The couple wrote their own vows and jumped the broom. "We swept away the past and jumped into our future," Kyla says. Her dad, Byron (below), also sang to them.



Aaron's groomsmen lent their support to the bride.

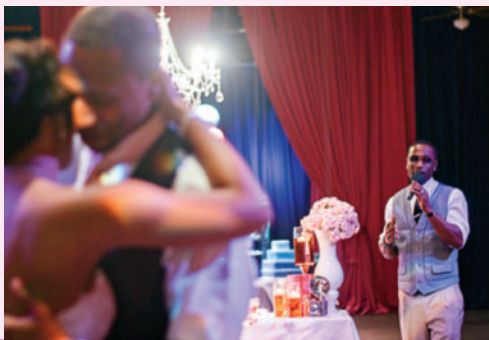
The floral arrangements included thousands of rose petals.



## BEHIND THE SCENES

The seated dinner and venue was donated by Distinctive Capital Caterers at the Georgia Freight Depot. Draping was provided by Event Drapery, Inc.; lighting by PA Universal Sound, Lighting & Media; and chandeliers by Geri Sims.

Floral arrangements were done by Perfect Creations and Design; Wildflower Linen provided linens. Music for the ceremony was performed by harpist Lyrika Holmes. Cliff Robinson Photography hosted the photo booth. Sweet Seats provided chairs and We Rent Atlanta contributed shadow box tables. The cocktail hour featured hors d'oeuvres by Bistro 404 and Voli Vodka cocktails. A cotton candy station was set up by Crave Cotton Candy Factory. Akeem Clayton Designs created the dessert bar with Candy Cake Co. cake pops and CamiCakes cupcakes. Cake Café Atlanta supplied gourmet popcorn and created the wedding cake. The groom's cake was made by Sweet Auburn Bread Co. Miniature bottles of Martini & Rossi Sparkling Rosé were served to toast the couple.



OTHER PHOTOGRAPHERS: TRACI REID AND CHERISE RICHARDS. VALENTINE, COURTESY OF SUBJECT.

## An Affair to Remember

Celebrity wedding planner Diann Valentine (whose own path to bridal bliss is captured on page 83) transformed the venue (top) into three rooms for the ceremony, cocktail party and reception using colorful drapery. "The wedding was modern with a bit of edge and southern charm, just like Aaron and Kyla," she says.

To incorporate the couple's love of sweets, Valentine included a dessert bar featuring popcorn, cotton candy and cake pops. Jelly bean-covered globes were nestled atop vases and even the wedding cake was embellished with jelly beans. "Our minds go back to a happy time with candy," Valentine says. "It's a great way to add color." Guests were served dual entrées: an encrusted chicken stuffed with spinach and Boursin cheese plus beef tenderloin in wine. "At a wedding people are looking to try something new," Valentine adds.

R&B singer Q Parker (left) surprised the couple and sang "Love of My Life" for their first dance. Tunes, from Stevie Wonder to the Wobble, were spun by Atlanta radio personality Bubby Love of V-103, who kept the crowd on their feet all night. "We love music and some of my favorite memories together are at concerts. Now our wedding is one of those times," Kyla says. □

"Any couple can have their dream wedding. Remember to have fun and include the people and things you love." —Diann Valentine



## To Have and to Hold

Aaron and Kyla started dating shortly before Kyla moved 400 miles away. "We weren't making much money and he saved his pennies to visit me," Kyla says. "Those little moments made me want to spend my life with him." Friends and family toasted their union and captured memories in a festive photo booth.



## Ever After

"We thank ESSENCE readers so much for this once-in-a-lifetime experience." —The Maupins

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