

Capturing that special day!

Photographer Kid Chan on the craft of taking wedding pictures

Chan loves weddings, no Kid-ding

International business graduate Kid Chan never meant to take up photography, less so wedding photography, writes **MANVEET KAUR**.

KID Chan's career has really clicked. You see, he is a photographer, and he is steadily building a reputation as one of the most sought-after wedding photographers in Malaysia. But if you're looking for traditional style wedding photos and portraits, Chan will, firmly but politely, tell you to hire someone else.

"I believe in a journalistic, candid approach to wedding images," he says. "I try to capture how people 'feel' about the event... that is, capturing the emotions of the day."

More precisely, Chan says that his style of photography is known as "wedding photojournalism" where he looks for "the pictorial essay rather than a mock-cheque shot."

"Actually, it's quite simple — a wedding photojournalist covers a wedding similar to how a Press photographer would cover any other event — by observing and recording the highlights on film," he states matter-of-factly.

He explains that throughout the wedding festivities, a precarious balance between staged and spontaneous is achieved. From getting dressed to the first dance, Chan watches with an astute eye. Elegant portraits and family groupings are photographed quickly and with a sense of fun. The rest of the time is spent unobtrusively stealing the candid moments that will make a lifetime's memory — a mother's teary grin, a child's hug, a tender conversation — moments that very few others, if any, will notice.

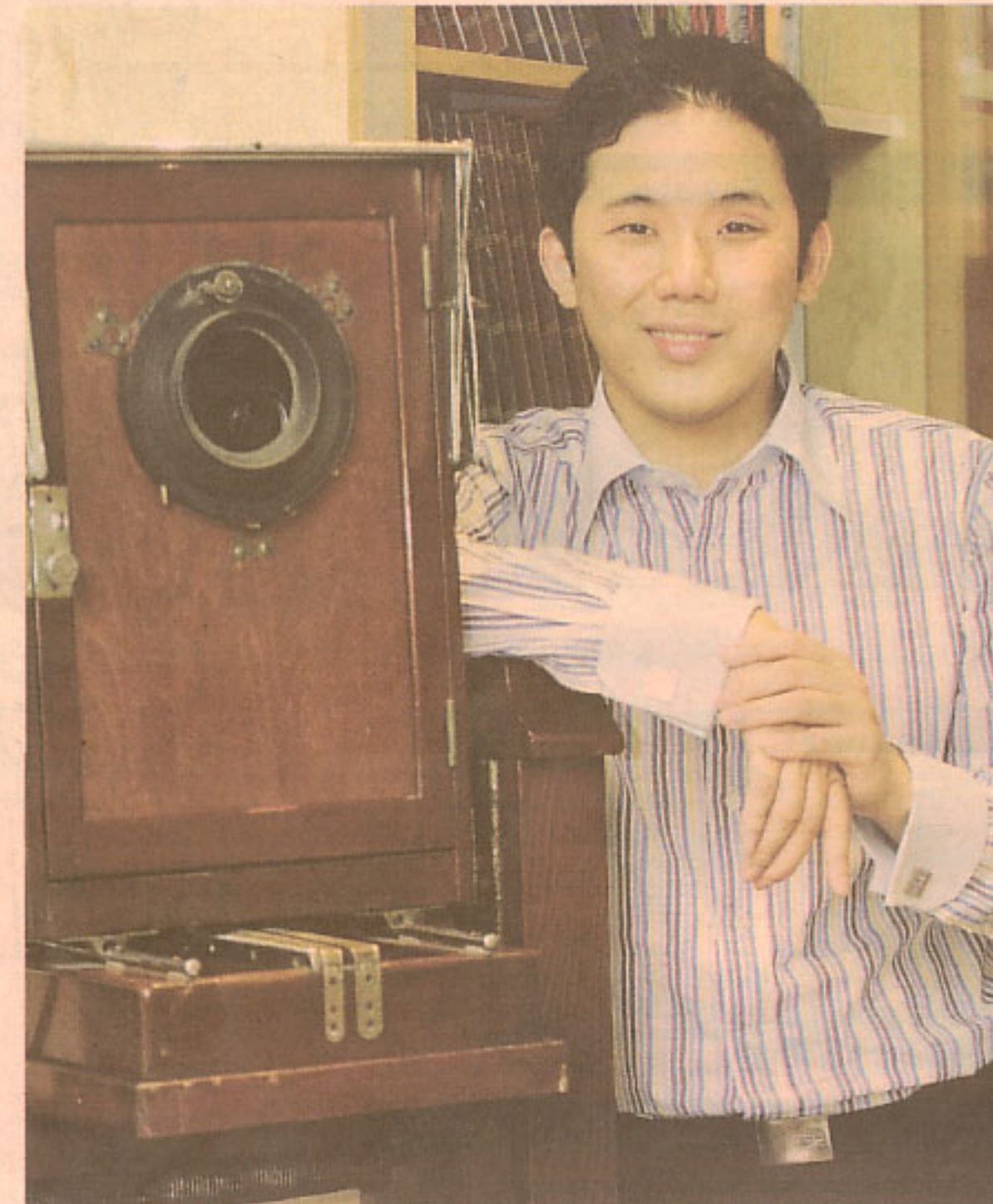
This is in contrast to the "traditional" photographer who attempts to create a perfect portrait with each shot. The results are that his stunning artistic images not only "wow" his clients but have earned him the admiration of his colleagues. (Neither approach is better or worse than the other, Chan says, "they're just different. And the bride and groom need to know what they want.")

Kuala Lumpur-born and bred Chan, 27, very openly admits that he is "an accidental photographer."

"I always saw myself working at some high-powered dynamic corporate job, that's why I majored in international business," he says.

So when he graduated from Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia, he worked as an executive assistant to a prominent businessman for two years before giving up all the perks (company car, credit card, expense account) to join his family business — a photo studio called Portrait One.

"My heart wasn't really in the corporate world, and truth be told, at 22, I was heading for a burnout," he recalls. "I was a keen amateur photographer while in Western Australia so I wanted to



CHAN: Patience, tact and sensitivity needed

pick it up again."

He went through a short training stint at a commercial studio, Studio 88, and professional photography soon beckoned him. Chan embraced it wholeheartedly, realising that this was the medium that would allow him the freedom of artistic expression he was seeking.

But never did he expect that he would end up taking wedding photos. "I started out as a fashion and commercial photographer," he says. That's where one earns serious money and respect, not wedding photos.

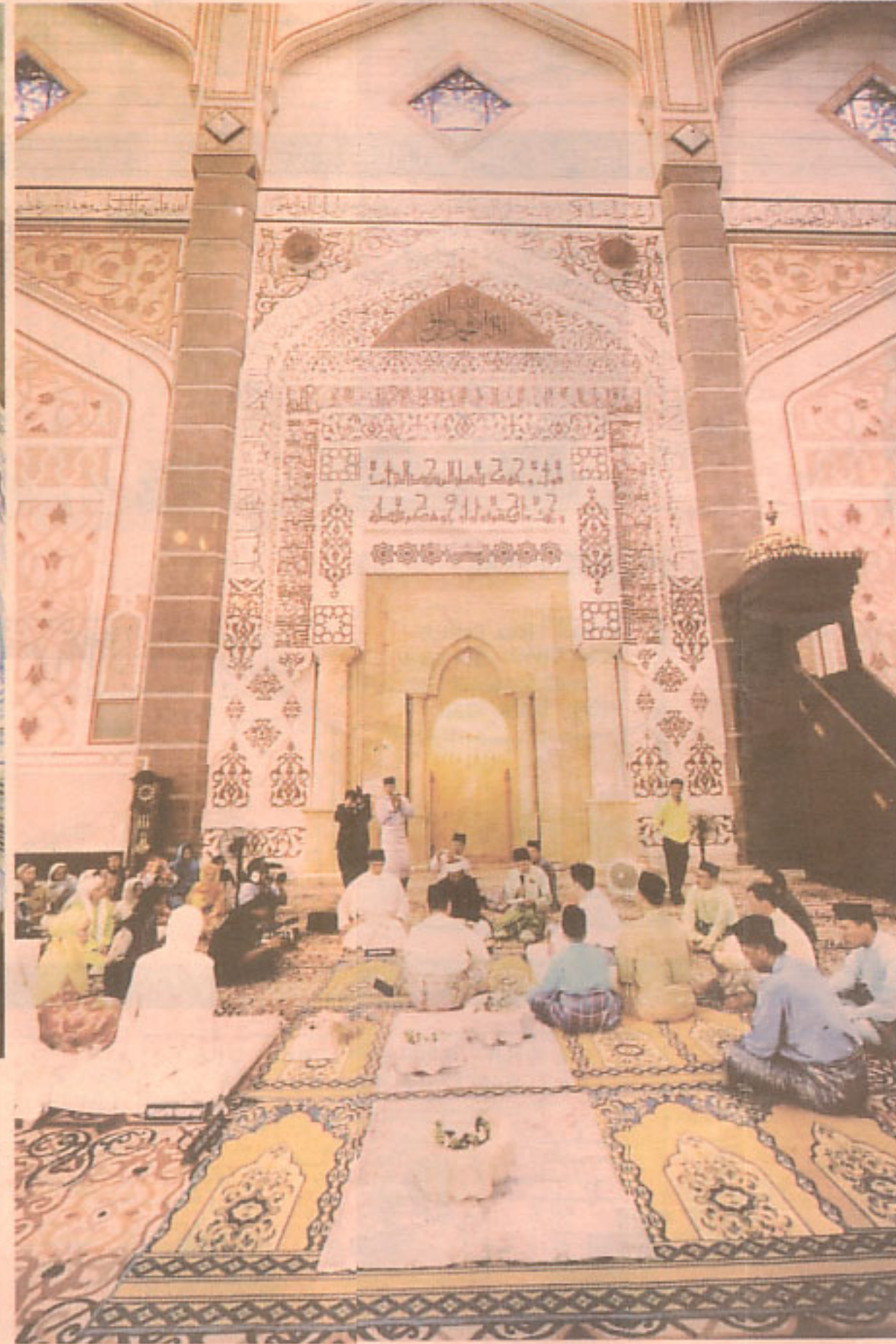
"I shunned the wedding circuit like it was the plague," he adds candidly. He explains: "Weddings can often be quite stressful, especially if it's on the larger scale. And you'll have various family members calling you and giving you instructions, often not in a very respectful or pleasant manner," he says. "I mean, do I really want to put myself through that sort of ego-beating on a daily basis?"

Through his corporate and government contacts, he was doing okay getting commercial work. But he was also under a lot of pressure to take up wedding assignments.

"It got to a point where it became very difficult to say no."

Chan started doing a few weddings in a photojournalistic style and soon realised there was an increasing demand for this type of wedding photography. He now photographs around 50 weddings a year all over the country — most of which are high profile. His portfolio includes the weddings of Paula Malai Ali to Tengku Kudin, Raja Emilia to Ikhwan Radhi and Mohamed Ridzuan (son of Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop) to Ezrin Suraya.

"I have done weddings where there were eight Sultans in attendance," says Chan, who is currently the only Malaysian who is a member of the Wedding Photojournalist Association. "I do shoot a lot of regular weddings but of



the various traditions and customs, including the order of the day and the protocol of what is to follow, what is to be done, the way it is to be done and also when."

Chan says the biggest misconception is that they are just there to snap pictures. There is also the pre- and post-production process that is equally important and very labour intensive.

"Some photographers can attend a wedding and be so focused on getting THE shots of the shoes, rings, flowers and cake that they completely miss the emotional impact the day is having on everyone around them," he admonishes. "You must also be well-versed in terms

Wedding pictures courtesy of KID CHAN



Imperial Kuala Lumpur and you'd be greeted by a huge photo banner of wedding pictures but they are all of Chan and his wife Shirley.

"Might as well use my wedding photos for the display right?" he says laughing.

No stranger to having his work published, Chan's wedding pictures have appeared in many bridal and women's magazines. But he says his most enriching work was capturing the birth of his four-month-old daughter Faith, which was then published in *Ma & Pa* magazine.

Pushed further to explain his style, Chan wants badly to explain it but, like most artists, his explanations are not about technicalities.

"I'm not a very technical person," he says. "I want (the bride) to see me as a creator rather than a technical photographer."

Frustrating as this statement may be to colleagues looking to study what he does and how he does it, it seems to matter little to brides looking for something very artistically different. To them, results are the only thing that matter.

Chan talks in terms of making the wedding day fun and working with couples who give him the freedom to explore their wedding day story. But he

knows he has taken a risk by marketing his own style and vision rather than fitting himself into the expected mould. "If they make me do what they want then they probably won't be my client," Chan says. "It used to be asking the bride what she wanted and following her list. Instead I want to say, 'Yeah, I'll do some of the things you want but let me show you how I can make your wedding stylistic and fun and emotional, different than it has ever been done, different from the norm.'"

But catering to the modern bride often means catering to her mother as well because, "although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, it is also in the eyes of the cheque book holder," he says, jokingly.

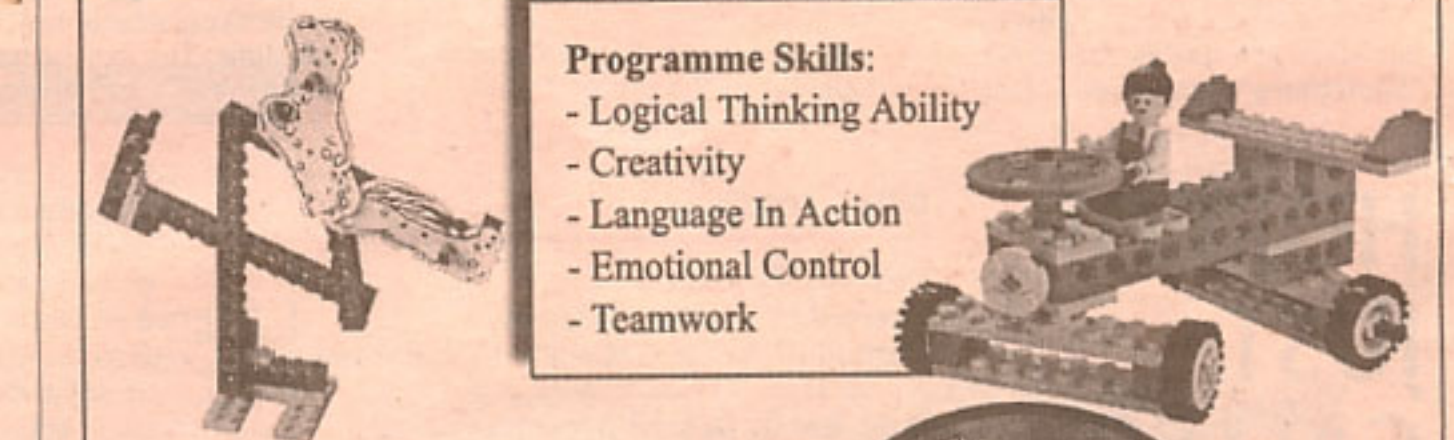
As you might expect, Chan has become something of an expert when it comes to weddings. So for the bride-to-be, he offers a few words of advice: "I've been witness to hundreds of beautiful weddings and I can tell you that it is a magical time. Do everything you can to make the details that are most important to you perfect, and then take a step back and relax. Things will just fall into place naturally."

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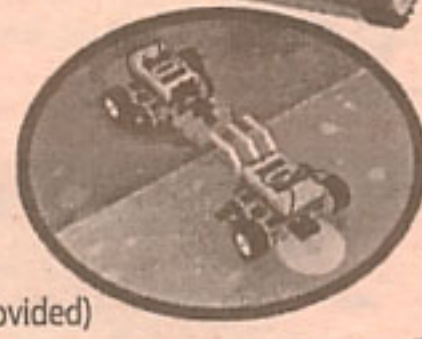
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 Payments to confirm registration must be made 5 days before the date of workshop at:
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