

Dream COME TRUE

A lucky couple wins the Ultimate San Diego Wedding contest



FOR RACHEL STEWART AND MATTHEW O'DONOVAN, it was love at first sight. As second generation San Diegans, they connected over their deep passion for their hometown, especially the city's sports teams. The two had been planning a simple courthouse ceremony followed by a small party—it was all they could afford as young working parents. But when they heard about the Ultimate San Diego Wedding contest, Rachel's dream of a perfect fairytale wedding became a possibility—if only they could win.

Two hundred couples entered the buzz-stirring contest sponsored by bridalinsider.com. Rachel and Matthew were ecstatic when they made it into the top three. After radio and television appearances, the finalists all held their breath when it was time for the denizens of San Diego to cast their votes. "Even to this day, we can't believe we won," exclaims Rachel. Over 30 local wedding vendors and industry professionals donated their time, services and products to make this dream wedding come true.

Photography by Carrie McCluskey



GET THEIR STYLE

A Sweet Addition, asweetaddition.com, **Abbey Party Rentals**, abbeyparty-rentals.com, **AC Makeup**, acmakeup.com, **Audra Rene Studio**, audrarene.com, **Best Beverage Catering**, bestbeverage.com, **Bliss Events**, blissevent.com, **Britt Scripps Inn**, brittscripps.com, **Carrie McCluskey Photography**, mccluskey-photography.com, **Concepts Event Design**, concepteventdesign.com, **David Patrone**, davidpatrone.com, **DJ Daniel Peterson**, djdanielpeterson.com, **Eden Restaurant**, edensandiego.com, **El Cortez**, donroom.com, **Elite British DJ**, elitebritishdj.net, **Elite Image Limousine**, eliteimagelimousines.com, **Enticing Tables**, enticingtables.com, **Joe's on the Nose**, joesonthenose.com, **Giuseppe Fine Catering**, giuseppecatering.com, **Guitarist Anthony Garcia**, agarciauitar.com, **Heather Elise Photography**, heatherelisephotography.com, **Kathy Wright & Co.**, kathywrightandco.com, **Kevin Viner Magician**, kevinvinermagic.com, **Live Event Artist**, live-eventartist.com, **Love at First Invite**, loveatfirstinvite.com, **NR3 Video Productions**, nr3videoproductions.com, **Plates & Napkins**, platesandnapkins.com, **Sensational Treats**, sensationaltreats.com, **Service Staff (Food Team)**, services-taffsandiego.com, **Starlight Photo Booth**, starlightphotobooth.com, **Sweet Cheeks Baking Co.**, sweetcheeksbakng.com, **The White Flower Bridal Boutique**, thewhite-flower.com, **The Boudoir Divas**, theboudoirdivas.com, **A Better Deal Tuxedo**, abetterdeal-tuxedo.com, **Vows From the Heart**, vowsfromtheheart.com

On January 19th, the bride and groom tied the knot at the El Cortez, surrounded by 75 family members and friends. The bride wore a striking Martina Liana gown from The White Flower Bridal Boutique. Rachel Welland of Bliss Events, who served as the event coordinator, divulges, "I had a great time working with the participating vendors and showcasing their talents to design the perfect winter wedding, honoring the style and history of the El Cortez venue. Rachel and Matthew are wonderful people who really deserved this special treat. I will never forget this experience for the rest of my life."

The bride adds, "There were so many memorable touches, from the bouquets and wedding dress to the cake and the most unbelievable sweetheart table. I had never seen anything like it. We felt like a king and queen."

Another truly special surprise, a local painter from Live Event Artists, created a portrait of the couple having their first dance. The stunning completed canvas was presented to them at the evening's end, as a "heirloom that will be passed down to our children, and theirs," gushes Rachel.

Matthew enjoyed some of the light-hearted aspects of the event. As an extreme Chargers fan, he loved the surprise lightning-bolt Chargers cake, while the photo booth was another home run. "Our friends had so much fun with all of the props and taking silly pictures," he exclaims. Feather boas, hats, mustaches, and cut outs of the bride and groom making funny faces fueled the merriment.

"No words can describe the gratitude we feel for those who made this happen. All the vendors that participated in the wedding were so talented, kind, and incredibly generous. We feel extremely blessed," chimes Rachel.

See additional photos from the Ultimate San Diego Wedding at exquisiteweddingsmagazine.com.

