

**Y**ou have just said “YES!” Your head is in the clouds and you have found the venue of your dreams and hey, it looks affordable. Right now, you need to know that your dream is only half paid for. Your specialists will make as big a difference to your function as it will to your budget. This is not the time to make a mistake that cannot be undone and the success of your dream is our passion. The good news is that even the most unlikely dreams come true if you are determined. You will need a plan that is based on the real world—here are some guidelines:

- 1 Have a Budget**—It is no good looking at stuff you can't afford. Ensure that your budget is balanced. A decent menu has got to be higher priority than stunning hand made designer invitations. Remember that every quotation is a 'best case scenario' and you will need extra cash to fulfil your dream.
- 2 Shop Around**—Using the venues' Recommended Specialist List is a good place to start, but do not limit yourself to this list. Experienced and gifted vendors are going to be more expensive but that does not mean that the 'new kid on the block' won't get it right. It does mean that the risks are greater so be careful. Get the best value for your money that you can afford and don't be afraid to ask for discounts in off-peak periods.
- 3 Be Informed**—You cannot make a good decision until you have got a good idea of what you want and what you can expect to get for your money. Don't be afraid to ask questions, especially from potential specialists. These professionals have attended hundreds of weddings and have intimate knowledge of what works and also, the strengths and weaknesses of the different venues. Their advice doesn't mean that your choice is a 'no-no'. If you have chosen a stunning new restaurant it is likely that their banqueting team are inexperienced at running weddings, but a good MC or professional co-ordinator can turn this around.
- 4 Emotional Decisions**—This will be your most likely mistake. Be careful that you do not choose vendors because “they are so nice” or “they really understand me” without making sure they can deliver. If they do not have an excellent professional track record take extra care. Check their credentials especially with your chosen venue.
- 5 Check the Contract**—Read the contracts carefully and be even more nervous if there isn't one. Make sure that your specialists have put in writing every possible cost that you may be liable for. Delivery times (which includes the photographs and video) must be confirmed in writing and even penalty clauses applied. Once the deposit is paid, there is no turning back—let the buyer beware.
- 6 Communicate**—listen to advice, but remember it is your wedding to do your way. Be clear about your expectations and ensure that your specialists understand your priorities.

Finally, plan the perfect day but don't expect perfection on the day. So what if your cake collapses, it merely adds to the uniqueness of an awesome occasion.

# The Re check

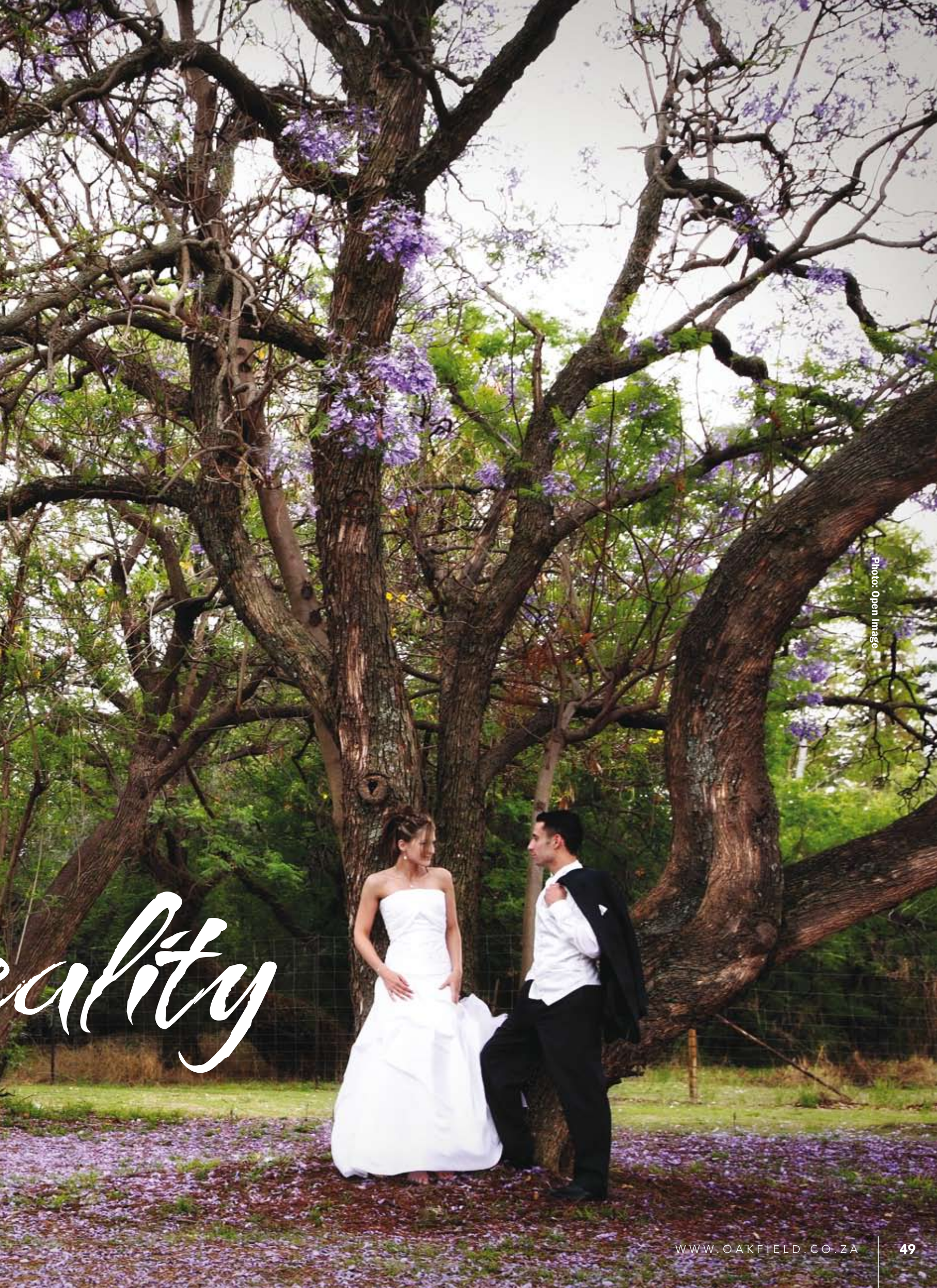


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*Reality*