



WED DOSSIER FASHION

BY BLANE BACHELOR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY C. NOEL

GROOMED TO PERFECTION *If you want your husband-to-be at his best on the big day, look no further than Rik Ducar and GroomStudio*

In the walk-in humidor at the Highland Cigar Co. along North Highland Avenue, a tiny room stacked with boxes of cigars and redolent with cedar and tobacco, stylist Rik Ducar rolls a plastic-wrapped Cohiba between his fingers. "I don't know much about cigars," he admits to his business associates and the server who's giving an impromptu tour of the bar and lounge.

But Ducar does know that cigars are an integral part of the wedding experience for many men, which is why he's inspecting the offerings. As founder of boutique consulting firm GroomStudio, Ducar has made it his mission to help the groom shine as brightly as the bride on the big day. The pioneer in a virtually untouched market, Ducar's Atlanta-based firm handles the endless details of the groom's experience, from proposal to after-party and everything—the tux, bachelor party, even the cigars—in between.

"Weddings have always been about the brides, and it's still considered the bride's day, but part of the reason we're so successful is



Left to right: Rik Ducar, owner of GroomStudio; style guy Michael J. Spencer adjusts the tie of Atlanta groom John Brunot.

that we're taking care of things on the groom's end—which makes the bride's life so much easier," says Ducar, 42, who has worked as a stylist for *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette* and *Extreme Makeover*. "There's so much service in the wedding industry when it comes to the bride, but there's nothing when it comes to the groom. And the bride really wants that for her groom, too."

The shift toward upscale weddings over the last several years converges perfectly with Ducar's vision. He calls himself the "glue" holding together a growing staff that includes style director Michael J. Spencer, who can describe the finer points of a Brioni suit and "in the same breath could tell you the difference between a Patek Philippe watch and a Rolex," Ducar says, and assistant Brittany CONTINUED...



Clockwise from left: The GroomStudio gang includes Brittany Martini, honeymoon specialist; Dana Dean, special projects manager; Michael J. Spencer, style director; and Rik Ducar, owner (seated).

DUCAR'S CLIENT LIST INCLUDES ACTRESS TIA CARRERE; MASON CARTER, SON-IN-LAW OF BRAVES PRESIDENT JOHN SCHUERHOLZ; AND NFL QUARTERBACK MATT HASSELBECK.

Beyond offering expert guidance and hands-on help, Ducar and his staff are adept at the intangibles: providing stellar customer service and a calming presence on the big day. "I love pressure. I thrive on it," Ducar says. "I love the fact that I'm the answer person for that one single day that could be the most important day in a person's life. People really look very hard for [those] who can steer them in the right direction. I love that trust."

Don't mistake that confidence with attitude, however. Ducar's crisp designer suits are tempered by an animated, almost childlike excitement about his business and a down-to-earth demeanor wholly unfazed by his proximity to the celebrity set. (Some of the top names in the wedding industry are known to clear their schedules to meet with him.) "People always take my calls," he admits almost sheepishly, "because of the business I can bring them." A sports fanatic, Ducar takes pride in the fact that he can converse with clients about the latest upset in college football just as easily as he can distinguish between candlelight and ivory as gown colors.

Tips on long-lasting relationships, however, admittedly aren't his specialty. Ducar likes to joke that he's an expert on weddings, not marriages—his lasted for less than a year. Thankfully, the short-lived union hasn't dampened his enthusiasm for his profession: "I just love weddings," he says. "It involves everything I like: I love social events, I love the dressy environment, I love their celebratory nature. It's by far the most interesting and fun thing I've ever done." ■

For more information, visit www.groomstudioweddings.com.

...CONTINUED Martini, a travel junkie who consults clients about high-end honeymoon destinations. Dana Dean, special projects manager, rounds out the team, who in November inked a deal with The Ritz-Carlton as a worldwide preferred vendor. "We do it all, from the groom's look to where he travels to his engagement ring purchase," Ducar says. "Everything that is a groom responsibility, we handle."

Ducar's career client list includes actor Jon Cryer, actress Tia Carrere, Mason Carter, son-in-law of newly minted Braves president John Schuerholz; NFL quarterback Matt Hasselbeck and his entire groom party; and other celebrities and high-end clients who fly him all over the country and the world. But he sees a unique appeal to the wedding business in Atlanta, where he moved after spending time as a freelance stylist in New York and Los Angeles. (As *The Atlantan Brides* went to press, GroomStudio was in the process of opening loft-style offices downtown.)

"I felt like this town had space for me to be something very original," Ducar says. "When you're in Los Angeles, you're just another side story. Weddings in Atlanta are so important, and it's such an innate social and societal event."

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