

Photography *James Moes*Words *Maybelle Morgan**true***ROMANCE***(true story)*

JESSICA & SIMON

UTAH, 28 JUNE 2014

It's 6.30pm, a sweltering 32°C and a wedding is taking place on a hand-built wooden platform seven miles north of Moab, Utah. Wedged between two National Parks, Arches and Canyonlands, craggy expanses of red-rock terrain provide the dramatic backdrop to the ceremony. The seeded eucalyptus, lamb's ear and cream peony floral arch might have wilted a touch in the dry heat, but only serves to add to the rustic aesthetic. The bride wears Castañer espadrilles and walks down the aisle to Sixties South African singer Miriam Makeba's *Table Mountain*. The groom waits in a khaki linen suit and the wedding officiant wears shades.

So began the June wedding of NYC-based jewellery designer Jessica Barenfeld, 33, and photographer, model and co-owner of Lynn and Lawrence hand-knitted beanies, Simon Howell, 42.

The two met through mutual friends five years ago, at Jessica's birthday picnic in Brooklyn's McCarren Park, and were engaged four years later, following a road trip with friends to California's Big Sur. 'We were a little bit inseparable from the start,' Jessica says. ›

#ELLEWEDDING

Planning the wedding itself was a less straightforward affair: 'We were a little late in deciding a definite plan and place,' Jessica explains. 'But I knew I wanted something outdoors and everyone together for two days, so eventually began searching for marquee and tent rentals. We ended up stumbling across this incredible glamping ground, Moab Under Canvas.'

Characterful, with tipis and luxurious safari tents, the only problem was the challenging terrain. 'We had to build a wooden platform because there was no flat ground when we got there, it was just rocks and sand. It was probably the hardest terrain ever to have a big event on,' Jessica remembers. 'But it was so beautiful in the end, the backdrop was everything.'

Thoughtful features from the duo included Rwandan-woven welcome baskets in each of the tipis (offering aspirin, eye masks, ear plugs and the weekend's itinerary), and personal gifts for the bridal party, created by Jessica: 'I made a ring for my matron of honour: a fine gold chain, with a double-drilled diamond baguette. And for the rest of my bridesmaids, embroidered pom-pom-adorned make-up pouches.' There were wooden-handled paper parasols for sun-exposed guests, and meticulous details continued right down to the table settings. Jessica elaborates: 'Being a jewellery designer, I've always been fascinated by precious stones. So after visiting this amazing rock store, we decided to name each of the dinner tables after minerals; each place setting had a sample laid on the napkin. There was pyrite, peacock ore, Utah selenite, rose quartz... 11 types in total.'

The actual day of the wedding involved tacos for breakfast, followed by a group three-hour rafting trip down Colorado River. 'We stopped off by the side of the water for a picnic with beer to chill out,' Jessica recalls. 'Then we went straight back to the campsite to get changed.'

The bride opted for two outfits: 'I married in a linen J.Crew dress that I ordered online, then after dinner I changed into a silk Givenchy ballgown, which had these beautiful panels cascading backwards off the straps, like wings, and a pair of sparkly Margiela heels. Simon wore a three-piece linen suit from RRL by Ralph Lauren and a straw hat from Pork Pie Hatters.' And aside from a touch of mascara and lipstick, the bridal party remained barefaced due to the incredible heat.

And the bridesmaids' dresses? 'They were my favourite part. I had spent a month in Rwanda making jewellery for a project for Anthropologie, and I fell in love with Dutch wax prints. I knew right then and there that it would be the material for my bridesmaids' gowns. The work of Sixties Malian photographer Malick Sidibé further provided inspiration for the style and cut.'

For the reception, the 110-strong party was split into 11 tables: the layout inspired by Native American sun-dance ceremonies. Jessica explains: 'The dance floor was the central zone; the beating heart of the evening, with the DJ booth on one side and the tables coming off like the hours on a sun dial.'

A friend of the couple, Jonny Santos, was the DJ, playing everything from Journey to Phoenix and Trini López; the cake was a strawberry shortcake, and moscow mules were the drink of choice. 'The whole thing was love-filled,' Jessica muses. 'Moab is such a wonderful place because it feels like you're on another planet. At night, there are more stars than there is sky. It was like we were all marooned on a deserted island together, having this amazing, beautiful time.'

● jessicabarensfeld.com; lynnandlawrence.com



Top row, from far left: Simon and his mum Barbara Howell; time out at the reception; the officiant and the groom wait at the makeshift altar. Second row, from far left: the bride emerges from her Deluxe Safari Tent; walking down the aisle with her stepfather William Hunnicutt; guests during the ceremony



Photography: James Moes (jamesmoes.com)

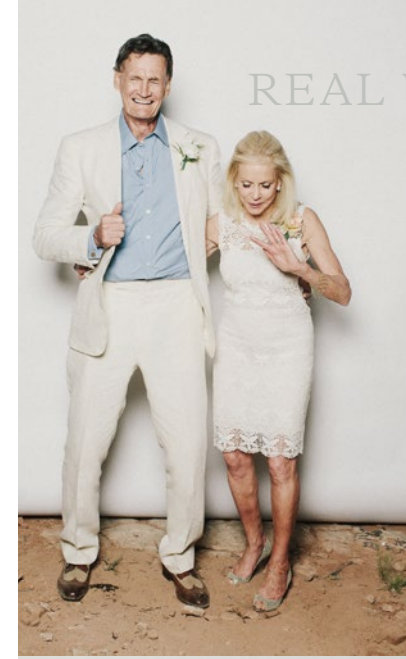
'WE TOOK NO TIME AT ALL TO GET READY, WALKING STRAIGHT OUT OF THE TENT, DOWN THE STONE STEPS AND ON TO THE AISLE' — JESSICA



From far left: Moab Under Canvas; the bride and her flower girl Izzy Pincham get ready; Jessica and Simon take their vows; parasols in the desert heat

Far right: the bride, groom and wedding party in the bridal photo booth

From below left: the wedding strawberry shortcake; 11 tables at the reception; matron of honour Karie Titus; Jessica and Simon start the toasts



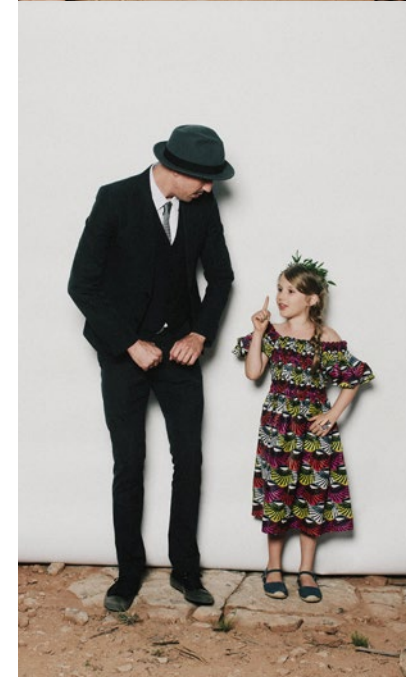
'AS TWO CREATIVE, DETAIL-ORIENTED PEOPLE, THE LITTLE ADDITIONAL TOUCHES HERE AND THERE WERE REALLY IMPORTANT TO US' — JESSICA



Photography: James Moes (jamesmoes.com).

Above, from left: glamping at Moab Under Canvas; Jessica and Simon; a precious stone table decoration; Izzy in a Dutch wax-print dress with a bouquet

Below from left: Jessica and Simon during the best man's speech; the bridal party; performing the hora at the reception



REAL WEDDINGS

ELLE WANT TO BE IN ELLE WEDDING? Send your pictures to wedding@elleuk.com