

There are new rules of engagement

By AIMEE TJADER
Star Tribune

An unsuspecting woman cast her fishing line into a Twin Cities lake recently only to reel in a dazzling diamond ring, which had been attached to the hook by professional divers underwater.

An Ikea shopping trip for another couple ended with the future groom breaking into song and dance before getting on one knee.

To stage his proposal, a self-proclaimed "thrill-seeker" enlisted the help of a pair of Minneapolis cops to fake his arrest for homicide in front of his future bride.

Those stories may be rare, but more people are finding elaborate, sometimes extreme ways to propose marriage, wedding industry experts say. For many couples, the marriage proposal has become part of the wedding build-up, complete with paparazzi-style photography to capture

the moment, and often, an audience.

Some grooms-to-be are even hiring a "proposal planner" - for a fee of \$2,000 to \$10,000 - who all but promises that the bride-to-be will say yes.

"I'm only getting married once, so I wanted this to be an engagement to remember," Ryan Calhoun, 28, said of his "shocking" arrest proposal, which he said had little romance but plenty of adrenaline. "It was a little risky, and it takes the right woman to do something like this."

From engagements that create public spectacles to private, jet-setting fairy tales, popping the question is not just becoming a bigger deal. It's big business, too.

Amy Lynch isn't surprised. The Nashville author and researcher of generations Y and Z said couples are getting married later in life and typically living together before they're engaged, therefore demystifying the proposal process - to the point that

they feel the need to turn it into an event.

"Marriage isn't the usual marker of adulthood that it used to be," Lynch said.

"It's a bigger decision to make, so the proposal and the wedding have accorded more importance."

Local jewelers say popping the question with a ring is no longer enough. Most women want to pick out their engagement rings, yet nearly 70 percent of women surveyed feel the "Surprise factor" is essential to the perfect proposal, according to a joint survey by theknot.com and Men's Health magazine.

Having been in the business since the 1970s, Rich Nordstrom, manager of Bergstrom Jewelers in St. Louis Park, said he's pleased to see that guys are going the distance to propose, because it hasn't always been that way.

"This is something you're going to remember forever and

reminisce about," he said. "Since she already knows she's getting a ring, there's more pressure to surprise her so that moment is burned into her memory forever."

Meaghan Butzer, 31, of Minneapolis, says her "fairy tale" engagement is the topic of conversation at the Edina, Minn., salon where she works. How he proposed is usually one of the first things inquiring minds want to know.

Butzer's fiancé, an airline pilot, surprised her with a recent trip to Mackinac Island in Michigan via an open-cockpit airplane that was used as a military trainer in World War II.

"He put so much thought and effort into it - it felt like a fairy tale," Butzer said. "I wasn't expecting it at all ... I wasn't wearing clothes suited for oil to be dripping everywhere, but he'd packed my flight suit."



MCT PHOTO
Jason Dailey and his wife Shelly, of Richfield, Minnesota have been married for three years. Jason, who spent months forming the perfect marriage proposal, gave her a painting of the very spot where they were standing, Buckingham Fountain in Chicago. The painting depicted a couple wearing the same clothes as Jason and Shelly and the man on a bended knee.

New brides return to old custom

By KRISTIN TILLOTSON
Star Tribune

Emma Rosen is soon to become Emma Sugerman. Rosen, 25, who works in health care marketing, will legally take the last name of her husband-to-be, medical student Noah Sugerman, when the two marry this summer.

Vanessa Messersmith, 32-year-old owner of the hip clothing shop Blacklist Vintage, took the name of her husband Jeremy, a musician, when they married six years ago. Both consider themselves to be feminists, and neither made the decision lightly.

The majority of married women in America have always chosen to legally assume their grooms' last names. But at the end of the 20th century, more women retained their maiden names as a

way of retaining individual identity.

A widely-noted Harvard study of college-educated women found that between 2 and 4 percent in

1975 kept their names. Those numbers sharply increased through the 1970s and 1980s before declining in the 1990s to just below 20 percent in 2001.

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