


THE
heart
OF THE *South*



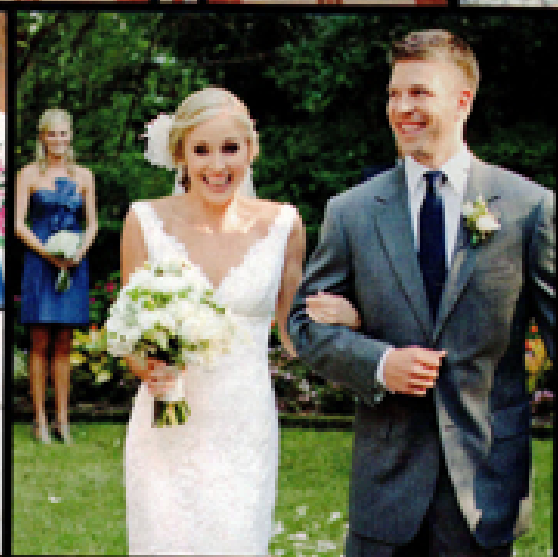
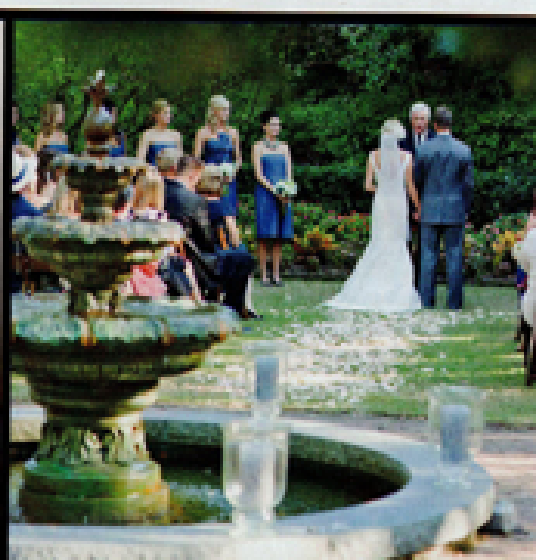
THIS PAGE While the pair shopped together for wedding bands, "Ross picked out my engagement ring with zero help," says Amanda. "I'm in awe of him." **OPPOSITE** The couple descended the stairs after their welcome toast.

IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT WHEN THIS ATLANTA COUPLE VISITED CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA. THEIR WEEKEND WEDDING HONORED THEIR ROMANCE WITH THE CITY—AND EACH OTHER. | PHOTOGRAPHS BY CORBIN GURKIN



- VENUE Thomas Bennett House, Charleston; thomasbennethouse.com.
- EVENT DESIGNER & FLORIST Tiffany Snyder; tkema.com.
- CATERER Cru Catering; cru catering.com.
- BAKER Jim Smeal; weddingcakesbyjimsmeal.com.
- TENT Snyder Event Rentals; snydereventrentals.com.
- STATIONERY InB Design; inb-design.com.
- LIMO Charleston Black Cab Company; charlestonblackcabcompany.com.
- BRIDE'S DRESS Romona Neveza; romonaneveza.com.
- PHOTOGRAPHER Corbin Gurkin; corbingurkin.com.

AMANDA & ROSS Although her wedding photos would indicate otherwise, Amanda Marion, 28, will tell you she's hardly a southern belle. "I grew up in Florida, which doesn't count," she says. In fact, she and Ross Sims, 29, had not been to Charleston, South Carolina, together until they scouted it for their wedding. (The couple, who work in sales and live in Atlanta, wanted a breezy, coastal destination.) "The city drew us right in and shaped the mood of our day," says the bride, who tied the knot in October at the Thomas Bennett House, a 19th-century mansion. "When I walked in, I got chills. I didn't have to envision anything—I could have married Ross on the spot." It's a good thing she didn't, because the party was worth the wait: Event designer Tiffany Snyder used a clear tent and wrought-iron lighting fixtures to play up the gracious garden, where guests mingled among southern-food stations (shrimp and grits, praline-crusted chicken) and danced to R&B and country tunes. Thanks to pre-wedding fun like a waterfront barbecue, "everyone loved Charleston," Amanda says. "That made our day even more beautiful." —*Lee Dwyer*



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Amanda's father, Michael, bestowed a hug after seeing her in her gown. The flowers on the bride's Grace Footwear slingbacks looked right at home in the estate's garden. The short ceremony, which she calls "religious with personal twists," included a request for guests to bless the wedding rings. Ross escorted his new wife down the aisle. "He had that huge smile on his face all weekend," she says. Save-the-dates arrived in the form of a Charleston-history guide, with a personal note from Amanda and a bookmark with the wedding details. **OPPOSITE** Amanda paired her Romona Keveza dress (which she describes as "garden-y and easy to move in") with a hand-tied bouquet that included peonies, hydrangeas, freesias, and spray roses.



savvy savings

FAVORS Amanda's mother made benne wafers (South Carolina's famous sesame-seed cookies) and accessorized the gift boxes herself.

FLOWERS Following the ceremony, the bridesmaids' bouquets were used to decorate several of the café tables outside the tent.

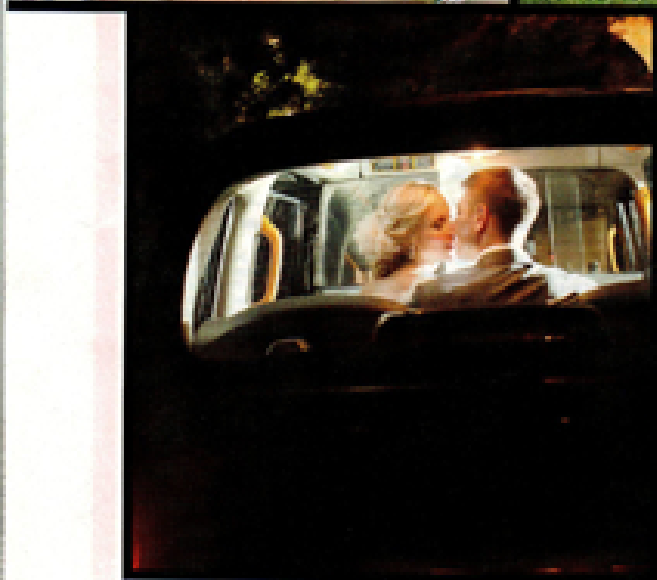
LOCATION Having a destination wedding meant it was okay to trim the guest list. "If we'd done it back in Atlanta, we would have been pressured to invite twice as many people and couldn't have had the intimate wedding we wanted," says Amanda.

STATIONERY The couple's invites, programs, and other wedding stationery were created by a graphic-designer friend.

The newlyweds chose Toploader's "Dancing in the Moonlight" for their inaugural spin. "It's been our song since we heard it at a party ages ago, and it has a great beat," says Amanda, who adds that Ross is "the type who will dance with me anytime, anywhere."



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: White-washed iron chandeliers with glass votives hung in the tree canopy over the ceremony site. Servers offered flutes of champagne and Kir royales (crème de cassis topped with champagne) during cocktail hour. Skate Rink Jakebox, a four-piece band from North Carolina, rocked out as dinner was cleared. "We wanted people to dance until they got blisters!" says the bride. The just-married couple left the party in a London-style taxi. The design of the cake's buttercream icing—which topped layers of butter cake, fresh coconut, and chocolate-Kahlúa cake—matched the lace on Amanda's dress. Lucite coffee tables filled with hydrangeas and tiny white lights added an elegant touch to one of the lounge areas.



AMANDA'S TOP 10 MEMORIES

- "Surprising my bridesmaids with a Zumba class in Battery Park the day before the wedding. I took them on a walk, and there was a teacher waiting with a boom box!"
- "Dancing with my ninety-two-year-old grandpa to 'My Girl.' He told me how glad he was to have made it to my wedding. I especially cherish the memory because he passed away a few months later."
- "Giving our toast right after the ceremony; we were still so high from all the emotion."
- "Devouring the sliders and fries our caterer served at the night's end—I'm a french-fry junkie."
- "Putting on my dress—it just fell into place and was so comfortable."
- "Getting the chance to honor both my stepdad, who waited with me in the house and escorted me to the garden's piazza, and my father, who walked me down the aisle."
- "Rehearsing the morning before the wedding—the sun was shining, birds were singing, and all the bridesmaids teared up."
- "Cutting the cake privately inside instead of in front of our guests—it was a nice, intimate break."
- "Listening to my friend Lindsay read an Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem. Lindsay's a romantic at heart, and we love her idealism about marriage."
- "Leaving the party in a glam black cab, feeling totally giddy."