

## The Wedding Party

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The [article](#) in the stately Paris Review begins this way: “As Kim Kardashian recently reminded us, marriage is no longer the inevitable result of a wedding; the ritual is easily divorced from the institution.” The author—a woman approaching thirty—goes on to describe (in ecstatic prose) a fake wedding weekend. Social commentary by post-college twentysomethings in New Orleans? No: “It was a sincere effort to organize the kind of communal joy that’s in such short supply these days.”

Performed on a shoestring budget, complete with a chain-smoking rabbi and nervous groom, the whole event was both wondrously creative and wondrously odd. The groom, Matt, didn’t know what to make of the whole ceremony. The night of his bachelor party, he drunkenly mused, “You know, it’s more real than fake.”

In the days when flash mobs have integrated our cultural psyche, a fake wedding seems to fit perfectly: essentially it’s a weekend-long flash mob, more for the performers than the passersby. But isn’t a flash mob about community and camaraderie—about being in on the secret together—as much as it is about performance?

I don’t know how to react to fake weddings. Part of me wishes I came up with it, this wonderful joke, this assertion that that joy and community are necessary in our lives: and what freer joy than when there’s no pressure, when nothing is real? But part of me, either the old curmudgeon-y part or the deeper visionary (I’m not sure which), worries that in divorcing ritual from commitment we are losing something, that true joy comes from deeply committed relationships, unconditional love, and words that would’ve made me sick when I was sixteen.

Still, I wish I’d thought of it.