

A photograph of a wedding ceremony. A bride in a white dress and a groom in a black suit are walking down a path, holding hands. They are surrounded by guests, some of whom are holding bouquets. In the background, a white metal archway is heavily decorated with greenery and flowers, including white hydrangeas and orange roses. The scene is set outdoors with lush green foliage.

*A couple's guide
to the perfect
Pittsburgh
wedding*

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Planner

Flashbox kiosk captures wedding memories and wishes

By Kevin Kirkland
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Brides and grooms are sometimes so busy mingling at their receptions that they miss out on some of the fun. Gabe and Heather Thaisz didn't have that problem, thanks to their photographer, videographer and Flashbox.

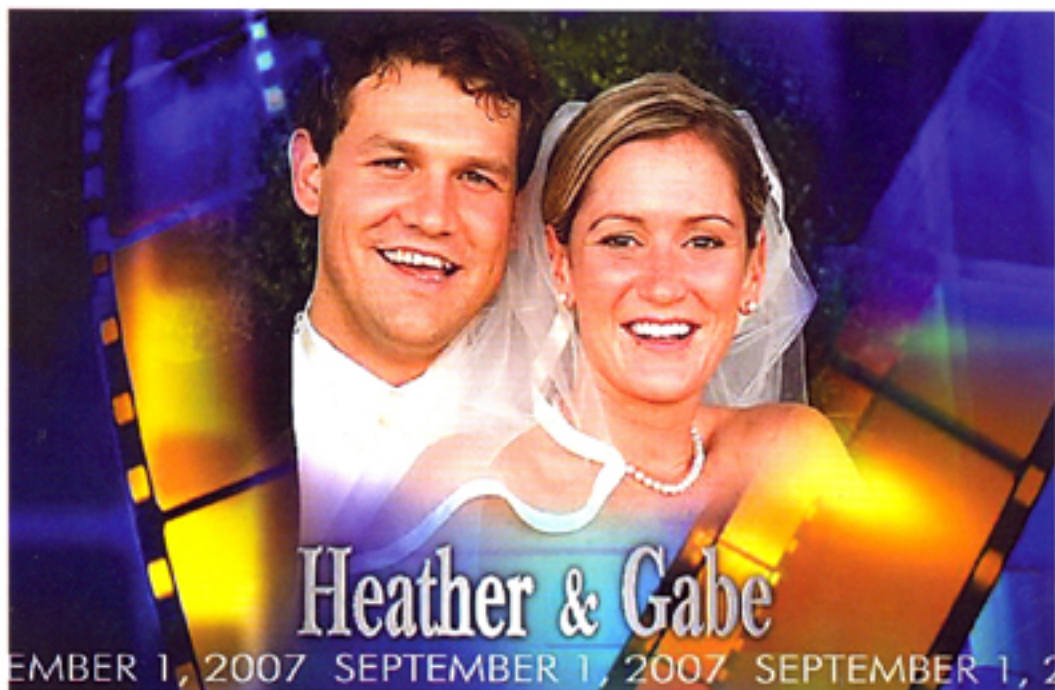
Flashbox (866-996-7700 or www.theflashbox.com), a 5-foot-tall kiosk equipped with camera and microphone, recorded nearly an hour of good wishes, family stories plus a few songs and dances by many of the 200 guests at the couple's reception in September 2007 at Fox Chapel Golf Club.

"Along with the videographer, it captured the energy and fun of the party, everything we didn't get to see," said Mrs. Thaisz, a Fox Chapel native now living in Brighton, Mass.

"A lot of family members left really heartfelt messages that we'll have for our entire lives. People are more open when they don't have a camera in their face. Maybe they forget they're being videoed."

As any wedding guest can testify, it's hard to be clever or heartfelt when you're suddenly thrust in front of a videographer's camera and microphone. That's the beauty of Flashbox: Guests can plan what they want to say and do it whenever it's convenient, even returning several times to add more if they want. Groups of up to 10 people can appear together, allowing song and dance numbers, skits, whatever.

Several months after the wedding, the bride and groom receive two copies of a 45-minute DVD containing all of the footage plus subtitles,



graphics and soundtrack. The cost? About \$1,500.

If that seems high, consider that the average cost of a wedding in Pittsburgh was \$21,463 in 2007. Wedding and event planner Bonnie

The Flashbox kiosk allows wedding guests to film and record messages whenever they want. Gabe and Heather Thaisz, above, in a still from the DVD made at their wedding reception.

Walker (412-572-5227 or www.bonniewalkerevents.com), who suggested Flashbox to the Thaiszes, thinks everyone should have it.

"It should be a staple at every wedding, just like floral arrangements or a photographer and videographer," she said. "You can go up to it when you want. You can be as silly as you want, as emotional as you want, as romantic as you want."

Flashbox is the brainchild of local broadcast executives and computer science graduates of Carnegie Mellon University. One of the chief engineers, Michael Mandel of Mt. Lebanon, had an early version of

Flashbox at his wedding last year in Boston. Now living in Santa Monica, Calif., he and his wife, Laura, have e-mailed clips from the video or posted them on YouTube for friends. Users can post the video on the Web for friends and family to see.

"It really gets hilarious stuff," Mr. Mandel said. "We just let it run as we talked and drank and got obnoxious. Years from now, we'll be able to watch it and know just what it was like to hang out with our friends."

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