

SQUARE ROOT



Square Root founders Alex Amidi and Jeffrey Johnson took Orange County by storm with their breathtaking designs and fabulous parties. Jennifer Myers talks to Alex Amidi about how the company creates the county's best events and weddings

If your wedding plans have been inspired by Sophia Coppola's movie *Marie Antoinette*, or you're determined to have a wedding that could grace the cover of a magazine, or just want it to be the most talked-about event of the year, there's only one Orange County event promotion company to call: Square Root.

Since its inception in 2002, Square Root has dramatically transformed the shape, look and style of Orange County's events, weddings and parties. Though this can be attributed mainly to the creativity of the dynamic pair who own and run the company, Jeffrey Johnson and Alex Amidi, these two are not just young upstarts, but professionals who have paid their dues over years of experience and created a company based on their very real talents.

While Jeff was born into a family of florists, from his grandfather on down, and even including his stepfather, Alex fell into the industry when one afternoon, he was left to watch the florist shop he made deliveries for.

"Sure enough, during the 20 minutes that the owner was away, five customers came in wanting fresh bouquets! Since they didn't know I was just the delivery boy, I gave it a shot, and discovered I had a talent for it," remembers Alex. Although interested in painting and art from a young age, that fateful day at the shop made him realize that floral design may play a part in his future. "It's like doing a live painting, combining the shapes and colors of flowers to create an arrangement," explains Alex. "I fell in love with flowers!"

It didn't take long before Alex and his girlfriend, a floral designer at the shop, left the company to start their own business, and it didn't take much longer for some "creative differences" to appear when the couple was working together. In order to save the relationship, Alex handed over the home business to his girlfriend, and went out looking for work.

This is where the paths of the two talented, future owners of Square Root cross. Jeff's stepfather, as manager of famed Los Angeles events company Mark's Garden, had brought Jeff on board after he had returned to California after working all across the globe as a floral designer and events planner. Ever with a keen eye, Alex went straight to Mark's Garden, knowing that a position with the company respon-

sible for the Academy Awards after party would expand his knowledge of the industry. Although they weren't hiring at that time, they asked him to create an arrangement to test his skills. Alex must have created something incredible, as within an hour Mark's Garden had called him back with a job offer!

Alex's gamble had paid off, and then some, as during the four years at Mark's Garden he not only gained experience, he also formed a great working relationship with Jeff Johnson. When Jeff took another job with an Orange County events company, Alex didn't immediately follow, although he missed his friend and coworker, and Jeff invited him several times.

Finally, Alex succumbed to Jeff's persistent calls and visited Orange County, realizing that maybe it was time for a change. Between Jeff's pressure and the beauty of the area, Alex caved in and joined the company Jeff worked for. It wasn't easy for Alex to adjust at first; many of the Orange County floral designers were talented, but didn't have the experience or the imagination required to deal with events on the scale that Jeff and Alex were designing.

Nor was their boss convinced that Orange County was ready or willing for some of the pair's ideas. He told them that the "L.A. look" wouldn't work in the area, and that they had misread the clients. But these two were confident in their ideas and their clients — they argued that the OC affluent society would embrace these events, especially when they



Held at the Ritz Carlton, Laguna Niguel on September 8, 2007, Heather Myerscough and Brian Richardson's wedding was photographed by Karen French Photography

discovered it was available. Jeff and Alex pushed the envelope, created masterpieces in the shape of parties and weddings, and began to gain a reputation as trendsetters.

Jeff and Alex started to be known around the OC as "the boys" — the two new kids on the block that created fantastic event after fantastic event. But soon they found that it wasn't going to work out with the management of the company they were working for, mainly because Jeff and Alex did not agree with their business practices.

They quit, and started Square Root the next day, out of Jeff's garage. After only one month, they were doing so well that they moved to a warehouse in Santa Ana, and a few months later, started hiring employees. The reputation they had gained from the work they had done in the previous company helped the new company, as many clients followed them, and

recommended Square Root to others.

The first year was tough, not only because of the usual trials and tribulations of starting a company, but also because the proprietor of the company they worked for previously sued them, for allegedly stealing his clients. Jeff and Alex managed to create a successful business in spite of the extra pressure, and made more than enough money to stay afloat and to pay the lawyers. Thankfully, soon after the first year were able to reach an amicable settlement in the lawsuit.

In fact, the current success of Square Root has surprised them both, and exceeded their greatest expectations. They thought they'd do a couple of weddings a weekend with a few freelance employees and have a nice thing going. Now they have 22 full time employees, 14 part time employees, and a combined warehouse and office space of 14,000 sq. ft.

Because Square Root is not a "flower shop" but an event production company, a lot of their warehouse space is taken up with the company's custom-made furniture, fabric treatments, lighting packages, dance floors, and other items that combine to make their magic happen. In fact, the Square Root warehouse is a bit of an Aladdin's Cave, and brides delight in exploring the stacks and rows of décor, vases, ornaments, chairs, fabrics, tables and glassware, all in a myriad of shapes, styles and colors.

The warehouse of items is what makes Square Root so amazing, not just for the things



The event on these two pages are from the wedding of Danielle Gordon & Todd Schlichter, on December 29, 2007. It was held at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel, coordinated by Kevin Covey and photographed by Karen French Photography.

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themselves, or what they create with them, but that a bride or her coordinator can deal with just one company for all aspects of the party, from the marquee to the lighting to the flowers. What could be easier, not only for the coordinator, but for the bride and groom? No worrying about eight different companies delivering goods at the right time on the day, just a flawless execution of the perfect day by a team of consummate professionals.

And the phrase "consummate professionals" describes Square Root exactly. After years of watching, learning and implementing what does – and does not – work, Jeff and Alex have the combined experience necessary to produce incredible results for their clients. They are also one of the only companies of their kind that offers benefits such as health insurance and paid vacations. Neither Alex nor Jeff had these things when working their way up, and



they learned the hard way that this destroys any loyalty between employees and management. Jeff and Alex wanted to create a team that is happy and secure with their job and continually motivated, which again helps the end product become a success.

All of their employees have been with Square Root since the beginning, and been personally trained by Jeff and Alex, and some bring their experience to the company, as they were designers who inspired Alex when he was starting out. Square Root is also fortunate to have two talented, creative leaders, unlike many companies formed of a partnership, who have one partner who crunches numbers and stays behind the scenes while the other is the creative director. With both partners being proficient in both business and design, Jeff and Alex are not only interchangeable, but also able to divide and conquer, if you will. "Give each of us a team

of Square Root employees, and we will both create amazing events," Alex says with a smile.

Even with their success – or is this, perhaps, the secret to their success – the owners of Square Root will not allow the company to rest on its laurels. "We're a little edgier, and always strive to come up with the next best thing," says Alex. "Because the minute you come up with something special, everyone else starts copying it, and it's in all the magazines. We work hard to be trendsetters."

The Square Root look is very clean and modern, while also being romantic and elegant at the same time. Jeff and Alex want Square Root's events, especially weddings, to appeal to all ages, not just the "cool" LA types. Alex likes to call Square Root the "Armani or Calvin Klein" of the event production companies, because their look is appealing and stylish. They also carefully monitor all their marketing and advertising campaigns, making sure that they are in the right magazines, and that their ads are as up-to-date as the Square Root events.

Alex Anidi's Top Tips For Brides


- 1 Always have a coordinator! Helps having a professional to aid in allocating your budget, but decide what your main focus/priority is and stick with it. Some people are happy with a small arrangement for the table in order to spend more money on the location, the food or the overall decor.
- 2 Don't be scared to ask big places like Square Root for a quote! Many of these companies are happy to do smaller events. Can create a wonderful ambiance that doesn't cost the earth. They can be competitively priced, since they have the wholesale contacts and facilities to do everything themselves.
- 3 Don't worry about the colors or trends that you see or read about in magazines – these things come and go, while your wedding photos will last forever. Make sure to create a wedding full of the things you love! You'll always look back at your memories and photos and be glad you did. "Let your style speak for you," recommends Alex.



Amber Peek and Tommy Thayer were married on June 4, 2006 at the Aviara, San Diego. It was coordinated by Gail Garceau, and these photos were taken by Crandall Photography.

Square Root's portfolio covers a very wide range of themes, from Art Deco to Marie Antoinette, and even Indian weddings, that traditionally stretch over three to seven days! Also, with Alex's Persian heritage, the company specializes in lavish weddings incorporating all of the proper customs, including sofreh.

What's next for Square Root? Alex confides that they are working on a book that will showcase the company's history and top events, which will surely be a big hit. Otherwise, Jeff, Alex and the Square Root team are busily planning Orange County's next glamorous, not-to-be-missed event...will it be your wedding?

For more information and to discuss your next event, contact Square Root at [949] 380-3320 or squarerootdesigns.com. 



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- ☞ Power of the People: Hire people that are capable and that have resources to provide everything. For instance, a small florist may have great floral designs, but can't cater for your 350-guest wedding. Amongst other things, they won't be able to chill your flowers properly before the event, and in California, that can be a big problem!
- ☞ Cutting corners: one person may provide a quote that's cheaper, but analyze why this may be. The company with the bigger quote

may actually be giving you more service that will be crucial to make their part of the wedding happen! Don't be afraid to ask for a detailed quote, and to ask questions about what the price really includes.

- ☞ Cake concerns: Alex and Jeff have seen many wedding cake disasters. Tiers sliding off the top, frosting cracking to release the fruit from inside, frosting melting!!! Make sure that the van bringing your cake to your wedding is refrigerated, keep the cake out

of the sun as much as possible, and keep it refrigerated until the last possible moment.

- ☞ Higher ground: If you're holding a reception or ceremony outside, and there's been rain or it's expected, it is vital to create a space that will not slide. A legitimate events or marquee company will know how to prepare the ground the tent to ensure a safe party area, even if it starts to rain. Don't forget to protect the lighting and music equipment, as electricity and water don't mix!