

SCRIPT: “What Happened to Mabrouk?”

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December 13, 2017

“What Happened to Mabrouk” is an audio documentary that shows the evolution of weddings along a five-decade period. Join the Baby Boomers and the millennials is a journey throughout time, and the struggles each faced.

MUSIC: FADE IN: “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream - Wedding March*” by Mendelssohn

The wedding ceremony has existed through all cultures and religions, but each celebrate differently. Some wear white to signify purity, some dance to show happiness and some don’t dance to show respect, some give vows to live on forever, and some break a glass to commemorate the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream - Wedding March*” by Mendelssohn.

NAT SOUND: FADE IN: *crowd during wedding zaffa.*

And here’s how we’ve been doing it in Egypt. There are five pillars that support a successful wedding; the Dress, the Guests, the Decorations, the Location, and the Entertainment.

NAT SOUND: FADE OUT: *crowd during wedding zaffa.*

MUSIC: FADE IN: “*The Family Waltz*” by Bouhafa Amine.

During the age of the Ancient Egyptians, the women used to wear a long dress or tunic made of linen which sometimes would be covered by a bead-net on their wedding day. In Galal Amin’s book, Whatever Happened to the Egyptians, the concept of a seamstress was more common than buying an actual wedding dress. May Abou Wafia and Hossam El Din got married in the late 70s, and their son Mohamed got married forty years later, to me.

MAY ABOU WAFIA (MA): *“Actually. I got married. I was 19 and I was very attached to my fiance Hossam. So when they told me we’re going to England to get your wedding gown and everything. I didn’t want to leave them for one month because they were travelling for one month. My eldest sister went and they chose my wedding dress for me.”* (27 secs)

Mohamed and I got married in August 2017, and my dress was one my biggest challenges. It was hard finding a dress that matched all of my specifications and I was not willing to let anything go. I didn’t want anything traditional, so I went for mermaid-esque dress with a twist.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: *“The Family Waltz” by Bouhafa Amine.*

MUSIC: FADE IN: *“Dokko El Mazaher” by Farid Al Atrash.*

The Ancient Egyptians only had the groom’s family attend because the ceremony consisted of the bride moving her things into the groom’s house. During most of the 1900s, family got priority over friends when it came to the guest list. Weddings was more family oriented and friends came last. Which was true for May and Hossam’s wedding.

MA: *“The young age weren’t that much. Most of the people were my father’s friends or my mother’s friends. Family. We used to invite all of the family not we choose members of every cousin. No. All of the family should be invited .”* (21 secs)

Hossam El Din Ezzo (HED): *“But in my son’s wedding. It was last summer. Their friends let us say they did the show of - laughs- that wedding. They’re dancing, laughing, having a nice time and the elder people were enjoying the food and the atmosphere.”* (29 secs)

MUSIC: FADE OUT: *“Dokko El Mazaher” by Farid Al Atrash.*

MUSIC: FADE IN: *“Sous Le Ciel De Paris” Accordion cover.*

According to *Women in Ancient Egypt* by Barbara Watterson, weddings were very simple despite them being known for extravagance. During the 1970s, the concept of wedding planning began in Egypt in the hotel industry, where hotel managers would control everything related to the wedding. Hana Ezzo is a startup wedding planner that has worked with one of the oldest wedding planners in Egypt.

HANA EZZO (HE): *“Back then, the hotel would suggest a couple of flower setups that the couple could choose from. And that was it, no wedding planner.” (7 secs)*

MA: *“Well, I was very young at that time so actually my mother did all of the stuff. I didn’t interfere in anything. In our day, the mothers used to do everything and we just attend our wedding. Not like today.” (15 secs)*

HE: *“Most unique wedding I planned was for a couple that really wanted something out of the box. After meeting with them several times, I noticed their great love for animals and farms. And we came up with the boots, flats, and cowboy hats wedding.” (13 secs)*

In my wedding, I paid attention every detail from the fuschia flowers to the stainless steel chairs and tables. And I didn’t want the wedding planner to interfere with my decorations or anything related to the wedding.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: *“Sous Le Ciel De Paris” Accordion cover.*

MUSIC: FADE IN: *“Hammam fe Amsterdam” by Khaled Hammad.*

In the 1940s and 1950s, Galal Amin couldn’t recall a single wedding that was not held at the homes of families concerned. It was in the early 1970s that the wealthier classes began to hold wedding parties in the large hotels, and this gradually changed the nature of the wedding ceremony.

MA: *“At that time we had a very big wedding. It was 1978. November. We had our wedding at Hilton, Nile Hilton. It was the best at those days.” (20 secs)*

I always wanted to get married by the sea, so I had to have a destination wedding. It was in a hotel called Rixos along the coast of the Mediterranean.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: *“Hammam fe Amsterdam” by Khaled Hammad.*

NAT SOUND: FADE IN: *My wedding’s ambience playing “Ya Mesahar Einy”.*

It has been suggested that Egyptians have a natural predilection for boisterousness, and are not disturbed by loud noise. Music formed an important part of Ancient Egyptian life, and it found its way into many contexts in Egypt like temples, palaces, workshops, farms, battlefields and the tomb. And I can assure you that music still is as important.

SFX: FADE IN: *Zaghoorta.*

SFX: FADE OUT: *Zaghoorta.*

That was a zaghoota, it is a celebratory ululation by women, and it serves as an expression of happiness.

NAT SOUND: FADE OUT: *My wedding’s ambience playing “Ya Mesahar Einy.”*

NAT SOUND: FADE IN: *My wedding zaffa ambience.*

MA: *“The zaffa we used to go down the stairs from Hilton with many belly dancers putting the chandeliers on their head.” (10 secs)*

The Zaffa in Egyptian culture is wedding march, that is made up of a musical procession of bendir drums, bagpipes, horns, belly dancers and men carrying swords.

HED: *“Artists you call the fananeen, there were a lot of them. It was Shadia, Samir Sabry, Mohamed Nouh, Zizi Mostafa, Nahed Sabry.” (15 secs)*

Hossam went on to list the endless celebrities that performed at their wedding.

***MA:** "In the Kosha very bored and sleepy. The wedding was around 10 hours. It finished at 4 o'clock in the morning. So it was very tiring for us." (13 secs)*

The Kosha is a seating area for the couple placed in front of the guests on a stage, from which the bride and groom reign as though king and queen.

***HE:** "Nowadays couples are getting more creative with their grand entrance. And they started discarding zaffas from their wedding. The main entertainer now is the DJ with sometimes an act or two. The idea of bringing entertainers from abroad is more common such as aerial drummers, fire dancers, poi shows. Also the type of entertainment is completely different from before." (25 secs)*

***NAT SOUND: FADE OUT:** My wedding zaffa ambience.*

***NAT SOUND: FADE IN:** Carolina K. performing during my wedding.*

For our wedding, the only thing my husband was invested in was the entertainment.

***Mohamed El Din (ME):** "We got Carolina K. The vibe was amazing. Everyone loved her and she she actually put on a great show a great show. And I really think it was a success. We also brought one belly dancer. I don't like them that much. But i was forced to, so yeah." (19 secs)*

I insisted on the belly dancer.

***ME:** "My wife and I were apparently the centre of entertainment in our wedding. The main point why we did that we wanted to be different. We wanted to be more of a party so the guests can enjoy themselves. They can dance, they can drink, they can eat, do whatever they want. Not like traditionally like when my parents got married, everyone had to get like the biggest stars. Which is necessarily it's the same thing now, we could do that but we thought to ourselves 'why not throw a party, a decent party that everyone's gonna love and have fun in.'" (34 secs)*

Today, the wedding ceremony are no longer an exchange of vows, nor a celebration of marriage.

It transitioned into a wedding party that includes more friends and less family. Dresses aren't personalized by a seamstress, but rather designed by international designers. Entertainment has

become more of a party and less of a free concert for the guests. And modern electrical equipment has left little room for small talk and gossip.

This audio documentary was produced by Mariam El Zaghl for the Audio Production course of Fall 2017 at the American University in Cairo, taught by Professor Kim Fox. I'd like to thank my interviewees May Abou Wafia, Hossam El Din, Mohamed El Din, and Hana Ezzo. Music credits to Wedding March by Mendelssohn, The Family Waltz by Bouhafa Amine, Dokko El Mazaher by Farid Al Atrash, Sous Le Ciel De Paris Accordion cover, and Hammam fe Amsterdam by Khaled Hammad.

***NAT SOUND: FADE OUT:** Carolina K. performing during my wedding.*