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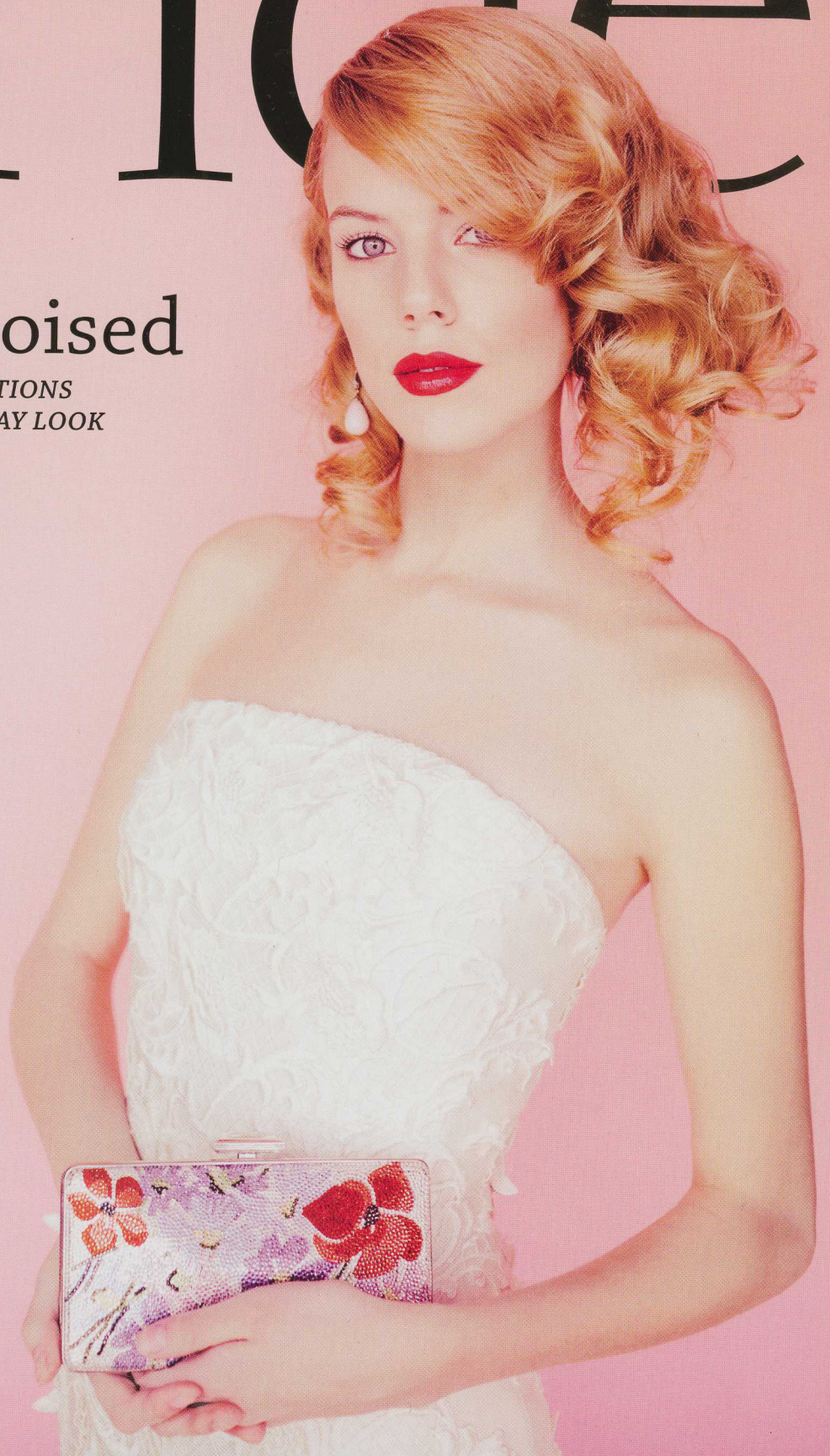
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New hope for bridesmaids



From the Lela Rose collection: A cocktail-length strapless silk taffeta bridesmaid dress.

Anyone who's seen *27 Dresses* knows that bridesmaids' attire can be rather unique. But The Dessy Group is offering a new line that your bridesmaids can likely wear again and again. They've tapped Lela Rose — the Texas-born designer whose creations have been worn by Jessica Simpson and Selma Blair, among others — to create modern bridesmaids dresses. Rose's designs combine exquisite elements from her signature collection, such as layered crinkle chiffon and pleated cotton faille. To find a local retailer, visit dessy.com.

CHINA CLOSET OFFERS WEDDING PLAN 'TUNE-UP'

Even if you don't want to hire a full-fledged wedding planner to handle every detail of the big event, you can still benefit from some expert advice. The Wedding Tune-Up is two-hour intensive consultation with Carolyn Hefner of The China Closet in downtown Birmingham. Hefner reviews the goals and basic structure of your event, then pinpoints the things that need attention and in what order. Her fee for a two-hour private consultation is \$250. Offsite consultations can also be arranged, and all members of the wedding party are welcome.

Hefner says the Wedding Tune-Up is ideal for brides and grooms taking a hands-on approach. "I have lots of women come in who are very on top of their wedding plans," she says. "They've spent incredible amounts of time doing research — especially online — and have very definite ideas of what they want." Having coordinated hundreds of events, Hefner is privy to details that most brides-to-be haven't even considered — and can help avoid myriad mishaps.

For more information, call 248-258-6480 or visit thechinacloset.com.



BRIDAL BARGAINS

Looking to cut corners in today's economy? Kathy Byrum, of Dream Wedding and Event Planners in Canton, advises couples to prioritize and distinguish nuptial needs from nuptial wants. Some couples focus on the wedding setting; others spend more on photography or fine wines. "Decide what the most important aspects are to you as a couple," Byrum says. "Then look for ways to economize elsewhere."

Other tips:

- 1. Get married on off-peak days.** For example, a Thursday evening at Dearborn's Henry Ford Estate is \$1,500 compared to \$2,500 on a Saturday.
- 2. Hold the ceremony and reception at one venue** — bed & breakfasts, public parks, or golf courses — to minimize rental, décor, and transportation costs.
- 3. Inquiries for gown rentals** — which run about \$250, including cleaning fee — are up this year, says Richard Kreiner, of the Elegant Lady bridal salon in Oak Park. He also counsels clients to ask for discounts: Many shops have unadvertised price-matching policies.
- 4. Décor, centerpieces, and more may be available for the taking** at freecycle.com, says wedding and etiquette author Leah Ingram, who also hosts suddenlyfrugal.com. Cash-strapped couples can even use digital services such as evite.com and pingg.com and eschew paper invitations.
- 5. Tell your photographer you want a CD rather than prints.** You'll get raw images with no cropping or retouching, but you'll write a much smaller check. "You can [always] come back later for the other services," Byrum says.

CENTERPIECE PHOTOGRAPH: ISTOCK