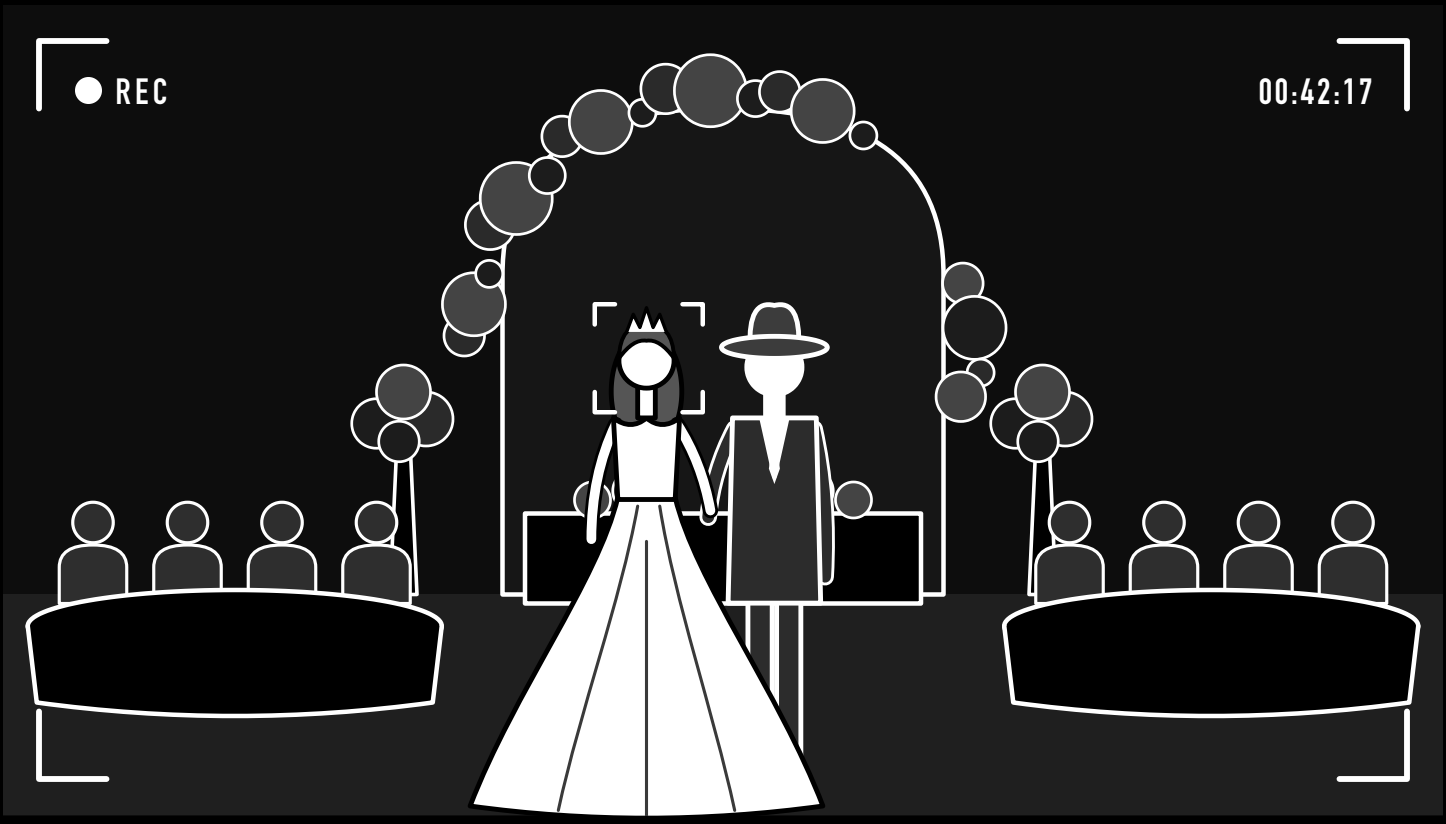
FROM MY CAMERA



WHAT THE CAMERA SEES

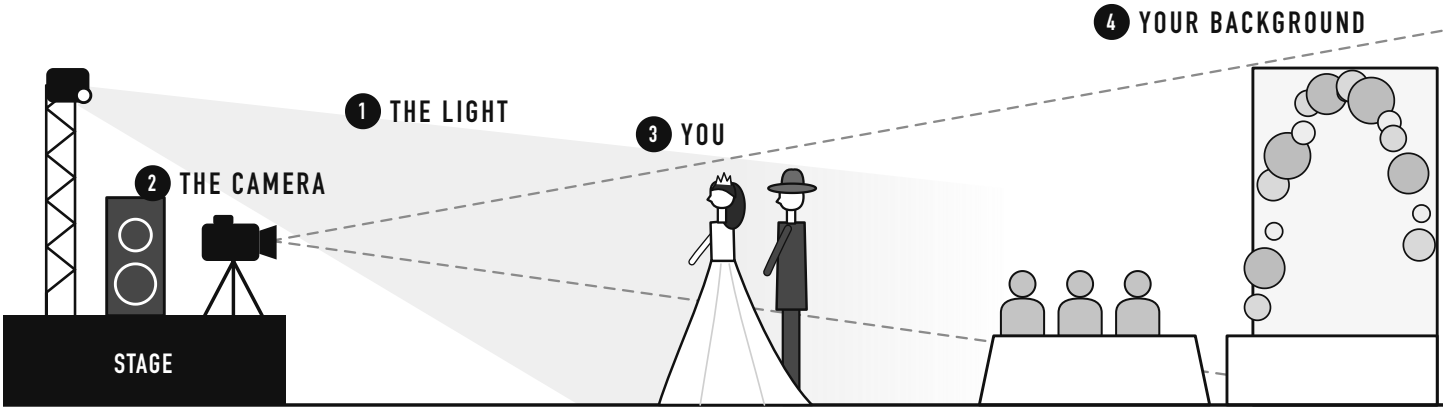
How to set up your venue so your family and your décor are behind every dance. For quinceañeras and weddings.

AUDEN B. CABELLO
PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY · MIDLAND, TEXAS

YOUR GUESTS WATCH YOU. THE CAMERA ALSO SEES WHAT'S BEHIND YOU.

When you walk onto the dance floor, every eye goes straight to you. Nobody notices the speakers or the door at the back. My camera does. It records everything in the frame, and that frame is what you'll be watching twenty years from now.

I've filmed quinceañeras and weddings since 2015, with five video cameras and one for photos. What changes the look of a dance the most is decided weeks earlier, when the venue gets set up: which way the quinceañera or the couple will face. It comes down to three ideas.



1

Whatever is behind you is your background.

To see your face, the camera stands in front of you. Everything on the other side ends up in the frame: a decorated wall and your family, or the band's equipment.

2

The light comes from the stage.

The DJ's or the band's lights are the strongest in the venue. Facing the stage, that light falls on your face. With your back to it, it shines straight into the lens and you turn dark, backlit.

3

My main cameras go by the stage.

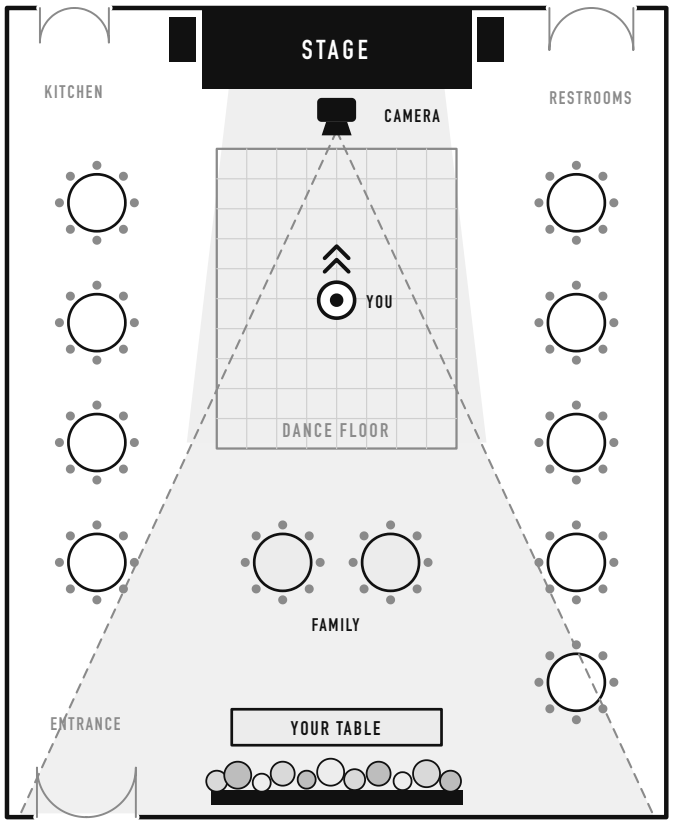
From there I see you and, behind you, your family and your décor, with the light at my back. The other cameras take wide and close shots, and one rides on a gimbal for moving shots.

SO FOR EVERY MOMENT THE QUESTION IS THE SAME: WHICH WAY WILL YOU FACE?

SAME VENUE, TWO DIRECTIONS

The tables and the décor don't move. Only the direction you face on the dance floor changes, and with it, where I have to stand.

A FACING THE STAGE

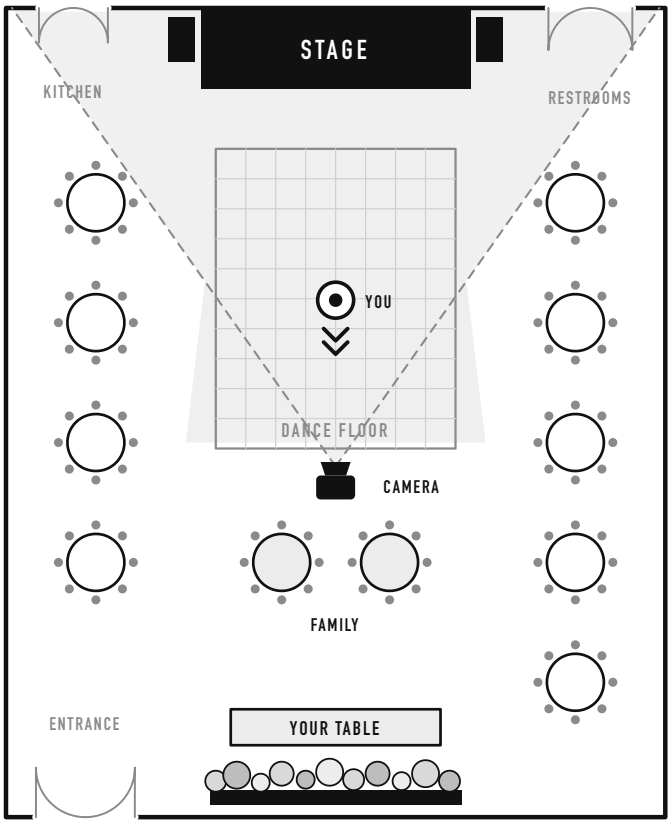


WHAT THE CAMERA SEES



Behind you: your décor and your family. The stage lights are on your faces.

B BACK TO THE STAGE



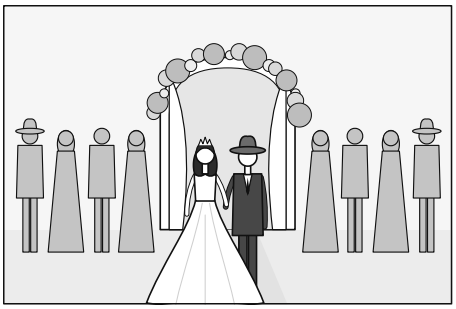
WHAT THE CAMERA SEES



Behind you: speakers, light towers, equipment cases and sometimes the restroom door. The light hits you from behind.

Plenty of venues end up like option B out of habit, and hardly anyone thinks about it from the camera's side. Deciding it before the day is enough.

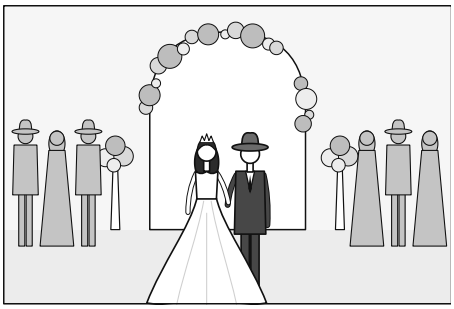
MOMENT BY MOMENT



YOUR GRAND ENTRANCE

The camera faces the door you walk in through, so that door is your background. Come in from the side opposite the stage and walk toward it, into the light. If the venue has more than one door, pick the one you can dress up with an arch, drapes or lights, not the one by the restrooms or the kitchen.

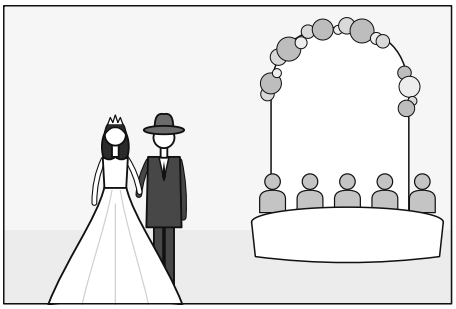
> *Stop for three seconds in the doorway for the photo, and again in the middle of the floor.*



THE DANCES AND THE VALS

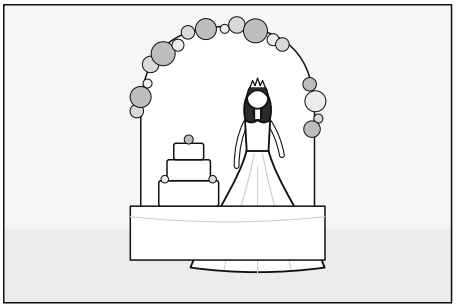
With dad, with mom, the vals or your first dance: make the stage the front of the choreography. The opening and closing poses, the lifts and the big turns, all facing that way.

> *At the first rehearsal, tell your choreographer which side the stage will be on.*



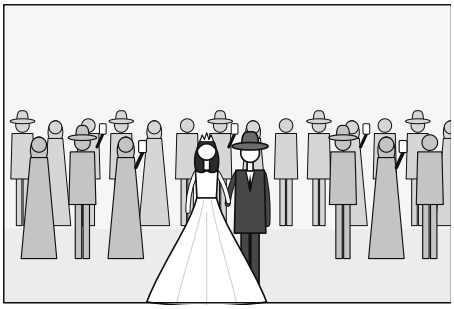
YOUR TABLE AND YOUR FAMILY'S

Across from the stage, facing it, close to the floor. That way, while you dance, your parents' and grandparents' faces are right behind you.



THE CHAIR, THE CAKE AND THE TOAST

Anything that happens in one spot needs a good wall behind it. The chair for the shoe and crown, facing the stage. The cake, in front of the décor and away from the kitchen door.



YOUR BACKGROUND SIDE

Ask the venue to keep boxes, coolers, trash cans and extra chairs away from that side. Your guests look better there: have the DJ invite everyone to circle the floor on the sides and behind you, and keep the front of the stage open for the cameras.



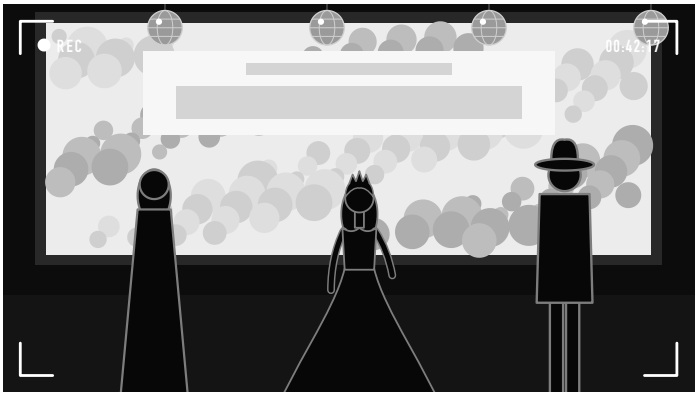
LIGHTS, FOG AND SPARKS

For slow dances, ask the DJ for a soft light on you from the stage, and keep lasers off faces. Fog and cold sparks look best on your background side, behind you.

LED SCREENS, FOG AND SPARKS

A WORD TO FAMILIES

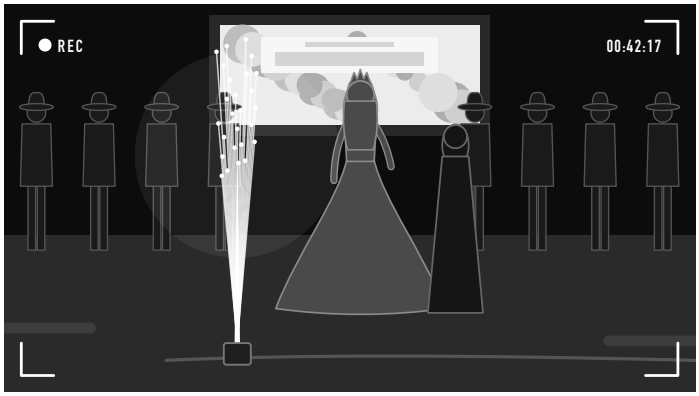
Getting all the bells and whistles is sometimes too much. Some services conflict with each other or don't complement each other. The focus is the quinceañera or the couple, and everything else should revolve around them. If it takes away from them, it was most likely an unnecessary service.



⊗ THE SCREEN BEHIND THEM

The LED screen is the brightest thing in the venue. With it behind them, the camera exposes for the screen, and the quinceañera, her dad and her dama turn into dark, backlit shapes.

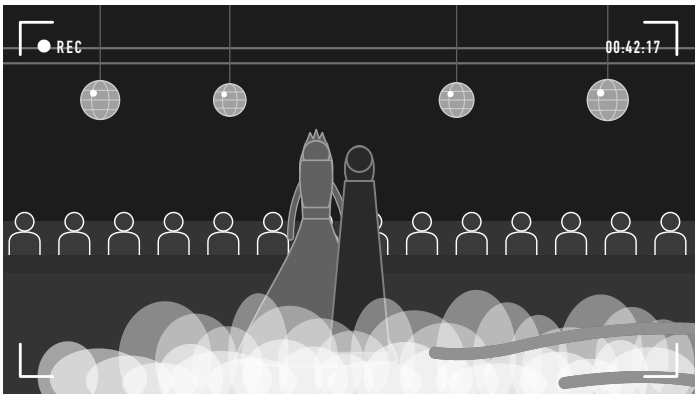
Better: Put the screen on the stage, behind the cameras, or off to one side. During the dances, turn the brightness down or show a dark image.



⊗ SPARKS IN FRONT OF THE LENS

The spark machine ended up between the camera and the quinceañera, and she walks in with her back to the camera, toward the screen. The sparks cover her entrance and flare the shot.

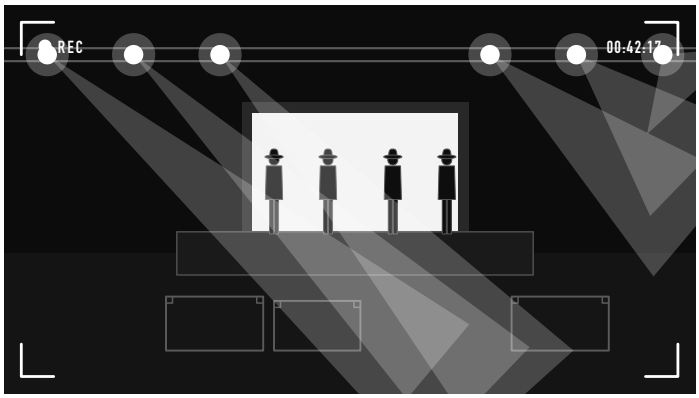
Better: Sparks at the sides of the dance floor, behind whoever is dancing. Never in the camera's path or in the entrance aisle.



⊗ FOG AND HOSES

The fog hoses ended up on the floor, inside the frame. Fog that rises fills the air, and with the lights behind it everything looks milky.

Better: Low fog that stays on the floor, hoses hidden behind the décor, and the machine started right when the dance begins.



⊗ LIGHTS AIMED AT THE CAMERA

The stage's moving heads point at the camera. Instead of faces, you get beams and flares.

Better: For the dances and special moments, lights aimed at the floor or up, plus a soft light facing whoever is dancing.

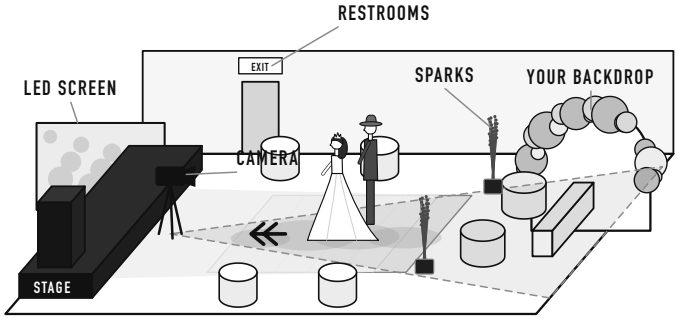
FOR ALL OF US: FAMILIES, VENDORS AND ME

DO'S AND DON'TS

MY UNSOLICITED ADVICE TO EVENT VENDORS

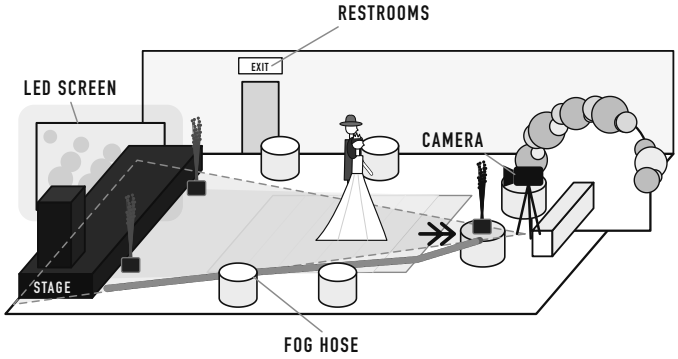
Your talent and hard work deserve more recognition. This guide helps photographers and videographers capture your best work, for you and for your clients. Churches hold a rehearsal with the priest before the Mass. Why can't all of us rehearse at the venue too, so families get the best experience?

✓ IDEAL



The camera by the stage. They face it, with their backdrop and family behind them. Sparks at the sides, low fog and the screen out of the frame.

✕ INCORRECT



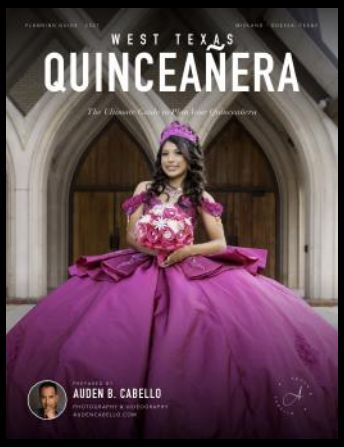
The camera sees the stage: the LED screen, speakers and the restroom door. Sparks in front of the lens and the fog hose on the floor.

	✓ Do	✕ Don't
EVERYONE	**A rehearsal at the venue with every vendor before the day, the way the church rehearses with the priest.**	**Leave the first run-through for the day of the event.**
DÉCOR	Backdrop and head table across from the stage, facing it. Something on the entrance door.	Build the backdrop next to the restrooms, the kitchen or the stage.
VENUE	Tell families at the first visit which doors they can use and where extra boxes and chairs go.	Leave trash cans, carts and coolers by the dance floor or the head table.
DJ	A soft light facing whoever is dancing, and invite everyone to circle the floor.	Lasers and moving heads aimed at faces or at the camera during slow dances.
BAND	LED screen and cases on the stage, behind the cameras. Brightness down during the dances.	A screen or lights behind whoever is dancing, facing the camera.
CHOREOGRAPHY	The stage is the front: opening and closing poses, lifts and big turns face it.	Rehearse facing one way and dance the day of the event facing another.
PLANNER	Draw the floor plan with the stage, floor, backdrop, entrance and effects, and share it with every vendor.	Place sparks, fog and screens without asking photo and video.
COORDINATOR	Before each moment, tell photo, video, the DJ and the effects team what's next and which door they'll use.	Start the fog minutes early: the air fills up and everything looks milky.
PHOTO & VIDEO	Ask for the floor plan early, arrive early and walk the venue with the coordinator.	Stay quiet when something will end up behind the quinceañera. Speak up early and kindly.

FREE GUIDES

NEED MORE HELP?

Need help with posing, finding photo locations or a guide to plan your quinceañera or wedding? It's all free on my website, in English and Spanish.



WEST TEXAS QUINCEAÑERA

The whole plan, from the first call to the last song.



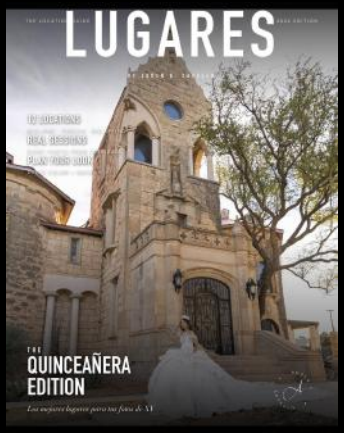
WEST TEXAS WEDDING

Everything between yes and the send-off.



POSE

Poses for your session, each with a one-line cue.



LUGARES

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