

party
animal

AMY COOPER

Groomed for
the top job

AT THIS week's Ultimate Wedding Planning Party, I marvelled at the formidable, slick, gold-embossed beast that is the modern wedding industry.

Brides-to-be were out in force: smart, shrewd women taking notes and assessing wares with the demeanour of high-powered project managers handling a major contract – which I suppose they should, because it is, but there was something a little steely in the gaze of some of them that unnerved me.

Mind you, at least they're empowered. As *Bride to Be* mag's editor Amelia Bloomfield pointed out, 41 years ago her publication's main cover line was: "Now you've got him, how to keep him." Another, touchingly, was: "Sex: enjoying that first night."

Bless. The only modern bride I've met who can say she slept with someone for the first time on her wedding night shagged a stranger in the bridal suite after a row with the groom. I interviewed her for a women's magazine the same year I covered a wedding during which the groom and all the male guests (except for grandfather, who was too deaf to participate) were arrested after an armed brawl. The bride's comment as her groom was handcuffed: "He shouldn't have come anyway. We'll have more fun without him."

You don't see as many brawling grooms nowadays, mainly because they're more likely to be hovering anxiously over the floral centrepieces. Once upon a time, all a man had to do on his wedding day was turn up, beam proudly and shake hands, much as if he was buying a car. Not now. These days he's Groomzilla, a creature who knows his beads from his bombonieres and micromanages each wedding detail.

He's been around for a while now and he's well known to Sydney wedding pros.

Antony Bullimore from cake designer Planet Cake says men want control because often they're paying. "They don't even bring the bride to the consultation," he says. Others, however, harbour more romantic notions. "One in 20 males we see has dreamt of a three-tiered cake since he was seven."

Unsettling but not surprising when you consider how many men rule the kitchen. Often they want to choose the menu, too.

And why not? Let them. If every woman took advantage of the untapped resource standing beside her at the altar, there would be more chilled, smiley brides and fewer anxious, goal-oriented chicks powering towards the big day like distance runners heading for the finish.

Use your bloke, girls. He's cheaper than a wedding planner and if he takes care of business, all you need to do is relax and enjoy my idea of the perfect wedding: turn up, wear the dress, accept the compliments and drink the champagne.