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I DO ... AGAIN

More S'porean couples are renewing their wedding vows these days

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THE latest trend to hit Hollywood doesn't involve organic diets or plastic surgery. Over the past few weeks, couples like Heidi Klum and Seal, Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon, and Tori Spelling and Dean McDermott have all done it. They have renewed their marriage vows.

Next month, celebrity couple Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony will also renew their vows in a lavish ceremony at their California home. (See other report)

But it's not just a Hollywood fad. Local couples are also saying "I do" all over again.

Wedding planners and family life champions The New Paper on Sunday spoke to said they are seeing an increase in the number of couples renewing their vows.

For some couples, it's to reaffirm their love. For others, it's an excuse for a party.

This year alone, there have been four mass wedding vows renewal events, organised by the People's Association.

It costs less than \$50 for a couple to attend these events. And there have been up to 50 couples at each event.

One such event was the Loving You, Loving Me ceremony where 25 pairs of grandparents, who have been married for more than 30 years, renewed their wedding vows at the Safra Jurong Club on Jan 1 this year.

The People's Association is organising two more such events, Faithfully Yours in August and Mass Renewal Of Vows in October.



HAPPY MEMORIES: Madam Farhana (right) with her husband and children at her wedding vows renewal of wedding vows ceremony. Mr Teo Chee Hean (centre) was the family life champion for her ceremony.

PICTURE: PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION

During the ceremony, a People's Association family life champion (FLC) will lead the couples in reading vows from a piece of paper.

An FLC is a grassroots leader who promotes family life in the community through the organisation of various events like mass wedding vows renewal ceremonies.

FLCs have been appointed as licensed solemnisers since 2006.

Madam Maureen Chua, who is an FLC, told The New Paper on Sunday: "Asians are generally shy and do not express love for each other openly."

"The renewal of vows serves as a platform for couples to reaffirm their love and as a way to say thank you for being together."

What makes it even more special is that couples can have their "love witnessed by their children", something which, in most cases, does not happen on their wedding day.

Madam Chua said such ceremonies are common among older couples - those "40 years and above".

But another FLC, Mr Raymond Wee, feels the renewing of vows tends to be most popular with couples in their 30s.

An excuse for a party

For those still quite newly married, wedding planner Sherwin Lee of DoWed says, a ceremony to renew their vows can be "just an excuse for a party".

Last month, he organised a grand event for a couple who had been married only for a year.

Singaporean couples The New Paper on Sunday spoke to said they renew their vows for various reasons.

Madam Farhana Ismail, 30, married her husband, Mr Ahmad Faizal Haji Rosti, a 36-year-old technical officer nine years ago at the Dover Park Hospice to grant her mother's dying wish.

Madam Farhana's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and was bedridden for a year at the hospice.

Said Madam Farhana, a traffic police officer: "During our wedding, my husband and I didn't know whether to smile or not."

"It was a ceremony laced with immense sadness. I remember my husband being very upset." Her mother died two weeks after the wedding.

The couple have not celebrated their wedding anniversary as they did not want to relive the "sad memories".

But last October, when Madam Farhana's niece suggested that they renew their vows to "turn the

sadness into happiness" during the Love Is In The Air mass wedding vows renewal event, the couple jumped at the chance.

The bonus was having their daughter and son share the happy occasion with them at Pasir Ris Park.

The family spent \$300 on clothes and make-up.

At the ceremony that 50 couples attended, the men were given flowers to present to their wives.

The couples then repeated their vows together after the FLC. This procedure is the same for all mass wedding vows renewal events.

For another couple, Madam Phua Ah Moy, 61, and Mr Tan Hock Chai, 64, who have been married for 40 years, a vow renewal ceremony was a way of having the wedding they never really had.

Said Madam Phua: "When we got married years ago, we did it very simply. We didn't have much money then and didn't even go for a honeymoon."

"Since we're enjoying our old age now and yes, we have travelled to places like Taiwan since then, this ceremony was perfect to give us the wedding we never had."

They participated in the Loving You Loving Me mass wedding vows renewal event held at the beginning of the year.

There are some younger couples who decide to renew their vows after only a few years of marriage.

Madam Deborah Ho, a 36-year-old management assistant officer, had been married to her husband, 39-year-old senior technical supervisor Tony Ang, for two years when they decided to renew their vows in February.

She said she had been facing "a challenging time" with her husband as the couple would nitpick at each other's faults.

She disliked his "irritating habits" such as him removing his shoes at meal times in public.

He, in turn, disliked her penchant for buying branded handbags.

The couple renewed their wedding vows on dragon boats at the Paddle For Love mass wedding vows renewal event at Water Venture alongside 19 other couples, also in dragon boats.

Said Madam Ho: "Such a ceremony is very good for couples who are facing the teething problems of a new marriage. Renewing your vows like we did...really puts things into perspective, especially for me."

"Tony is a traditional Chinese man. When he gets into something, he will work at it. For me, the ceremony was a way of telling me to stop thinking of the 'what ifs'."

Hollywood's doing it too

HOLLYWOOD couple Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony plan to celebrate their sixth wedding anniversary next month by renewing their wedding vows.

The pop superstars wed in 2004 and renewed their vows once two years ago.

Anthony told Us Weekly magazine: "We realised the bets in (Las) Vegas (on whether their marriage would last) stopped at five years, so we're really looking forward to this one."

Lopez, 40 and Anthony, 41, are not the only ones who have redone their "I dos".

Other hot Hollywood couples have jumped on the wedding vows renewal bandwagon in the past few weeks.

Early this month, Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon celebrated being married for all of two years at an outdoor party at their Beverly Hills home, dressed in white.

Dispelled rumours

Three weeks ago, Tori Spelling and Dean McDermott (below) who have been married for four years, put rumours of a split to rest following their hit reality TV show Tori & Dean: Home Sweet Hollywood showing them in heated spats.

Heidi Klum and Seal also commemorated five years of marriage at a black-and-white affair in Mexico two weeks ago.

The couple, who have four kids, have been renewing their vows annually with a fun-themed party. Last year, it was vintage clothing.

Then there's Fergie and Josh Duhamel, who started the ball rolling at the beginning of the year.

They marked their first anniversary with a Santa Barbara wedding vows renewal ceremony.

enjoy

REAFFIRMATION: Mr Tony Ang and Madam Deborah Ho looking at their wedding pictures from two years ago. They renewed their wedding vows in February.

TNP PICTURE: BENJAMIN SEETOR



PICTURE: AP