

Setting Your Wedding to Music

Gwen Hall

DJ Versus Live Music

You've said "I Do", the ceremony site has been selected, you've chosen your reception venue and now it's time to make the Big Decision...Wedding Music. The looming question remains DJ or Live?

Both choices have advantages but in today's market place brides don't have to choose. It's no longer an "either or" proposition. Whether you choose a DJ, live music or a combination there are many things to consider when making the big decision.

Variety

This IS your day but you have asked friends and family to celebrate it with you. Many have traveled great distances at their personal expense to share this day with you. It is important to give consideration to all of your guests when choosing the music. While you may love Indie Electra music, be a rock solid rock fan, can't live without your country, big on blues or the number one hip hop fan it all may sound to noise to grandma who thinks Nat King Cole was the last great singer. The key to selecting the right music is to choose a band or DJ that offers a variety of styles, genres and plays something from all decades of music. Everyone who is celebrating with you should hear some of their favorite music throughout the night. Ask your prospective band or DJ to see their song list. If you see only one style of music, this may not be your best choice. Most bands have websites or a music myspace. Listen to their audio samples or watch their youtube posts. Check their calendar and stop to see them live if possible.

Venue

The second consideration is your venue. Will you be hosting your reception indoors or under the stars? The size of the venue can often dictate whether you have room for a full band, a duo, a trio, or the more compact DJ set up. If you have an outdoor event scheduled, consider the entertainment you select for your indoor "rain" option. You will need to plan to move your band or DJ inside if it rains. Remember water and electricity don't mix. Be sure to ask yourself the question, can your outdoor band fit into your indoor venue?

Helpful Hints: *Find out information about how early the entertainment can arrive to set up, accessibility to a power supply and where they should load in. It's also helpful to provide the band with a point of contact for the venue in case they need to speak with someone regarding technical issue.*

Volume

Almost any settings can be overpowered by a large band or a DJ who is really proud of his new 1 million watt speaker system. Music should be the soundtrack to your evening. It should be the punctuation to your joy. Guests came to help

you celebrate. They want to talk and get to know their new family members or to reminisce about old times. They did not buy a ticket to see the band or listen to a DJ. Many counties are becoming more stringent about noise ordinances. Make sure you select a band or DJ who is there from a "heart of service" not to serve their own egos. Interview your band or DJ and take notice whether they spend more time talking about themselves than finding out about your needs. That will be your first clue to as to the type of service they will provide at your event.

Vogue

Beach communities are full of bands and DJ's who traded in their dress shoes for flip flops and their neck ties for tie dye. If your wedding is a simple yet elegant affair, your entertainment should reflect your style. Ask to see photos of the band or DJ. Be clear about your expectations for dress before you sign the contract. Most destination weddings are more casual than church weddings at home, but brides still want their guests, their service staff and their entertainment to dress for the occasion.

The Contract

Regardless of the type of entertainment you choose, it is imperative to have a signed contract. The contract should clearly define the specifics for your event. The date, the start time, the end time, the per hour charge if the reception extends beyond contracted time, length of band breaks, cost and terms of payment should be included in the contract. Most bands and DJ's require a 50% deposit with the balance due at the end of the event. This is as important to the bride as it is to the band. It protects everyone and makes sure everyone understands what is expected.

The Big Decision

Live music adds a very personal element to any special occasion and a good DJ should be the master of the mix AND an entertainer. Older guests relate more to live music while the 20 something's in the group may prefer a DJ. Most bands find it difficult to keep current with the top songs on the charts in a spectrum of genres because that list changes on a weekly basis. So what's a bride to do? The ideal solution is to find a band that can play a variety of music early in the evening and provide DJ services later into the night and during extended breaks. Duos and trios that can provide both services are ideal for venues with limited space. Hiring a full band with DJ services is an excellent choice for large venues. DJ's are the perfect choice if you are dealing with a tight space for set up or if you want only the current top 40 or club music for your event. Remember choose your entertainment based on the VVVV. Variety..something for everone. Venue how does the band or DJ fit the venue inside and out. Volume..less is more & Vogue..will the band or DJ look good in your wedding album?

Look for entertainment that does limit you to an "either or decision". A band and DJ combination is optimal. If you can't find that option, then choose a band, duo, trio or DJ that most closely fits the 4V's of setting your wedding reception to music!