

*A selection of
articles on
Wedding topics!*

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**Offered as a CDJA tip program to prospective wedding couples
who want to plan with more confidence and understanding!**

Choosing a Venue

There are many considerations when selecting a venue for your wedding reception. The first thing to consider is how many guests would be in attendance as this has a great bearing on the type of hall to select. Basically there are two types of venues other than a tent in a friend or relatives very large yard. Let's take tents first.

Tents come in all shapes and sizes and therefore you can rent the exact size you need and that's a plus. You don't require a liquor license because you're giving away the alcohol instead of selling it. What you will require besides a caterer will be washroom facilities other than what is at the house. These portable units rent for \$1500.00 to \$5000.00 for one night. Besides plenty of on site parking you'll also need to rent tables, chairs, linens, dance floor, staging, lighting coolers etc. All these items plus the tent can run many thousands of dollars and if you're unlucky and have inclement weather; it could be a washout. Feeling lucky?? Tent weddings are possibly the most expensive alternative to a hotel reception or ethnic hall venue.

Hotel receptions are great if you're having a lot of out of town guests and you can get reduced rates for their overnight accommodations. Their reception packages can get a little pricey starting at \$100.00 per plate including bar service. Keep in mind that there will be extra costs as you add in the cost for cutting up and preparing the wedding cake and cost per bottle in corkage and pouring fees if you want your dinner wine poured by servers at the dinner table. Receptions in a fine hotel can be well worth the extra and will make a reception that you'll remember for a long time.

Ethnic halls are probably the best bargain for your hard earned money if you're not concerned about having your reception in what amounts to a box. We usually recommend lights to enhance the visual appeal and they work well to create a festive ambience. The food served at these halls is often excellent and the price is reasonable with packages including bar service for 5 and 7 hours. Normally, you'll have the option of family style, a la carte or buffet and the price will vary a little depending on what you require.

There are bargains in every category and there are days of the week that you'll get a better rate on your service. Try a Friday or Sunday wedding and save money on everything including your DJ.

There is nothing written in the Ten Commandments that says "Thou Shalt Always Have Weddings on Saturdays" at least, not as far as I know.

Ted Chamberlain,

Ted's Tunes

Niagara Falls Chapter

Wedding Section

Today's Bride

With the advent of the internet; today's brides have resources never available in the past. Thousands of websites devoted to the needs of the couple who are arranging their wedding ceremony and reception are only a mouse click away. Many of these sites will advise the couple on everything from what to wear, venues, cakes, stag & does and entertainment etc. This article will focus on the entertainment portion of the reception.

Dancing at your reception in North America has a very prominent place in a reception. Many ethnic groups do not regard the dance portion as important as eating or putting on skits or playing games but they incorporate dancing into their evening to satisfy the mix of their guests. Many couples take the entertainment very seriously and want to choose all the music for the evening. It works if they happen to choose the right music however many couples don't have a grasp on what it takes to motivate a dance floor and proceed to choose their personal favourites with no regard for the motivation factor. This is when the DJ needs to advise the client as tactfully as they can that some of their selections may not work and explain why. Some clients accept this because they respect the experience of the DJ while others take a harder stand and simply tell the DJ that it's their wedding and that the music requested is what they want played with no deviation from the playlist. It becomes very tricky for the DJ on the night of the reception when guests begin making requests for more danceable music and the bride has limited the options for the DJ. Most DJ's, if left to play what they know works, can rock the dance floor and send the crowd home with sore feet however they don't always have that alternative.

Experience counts in this business and any DJ Service worth their salt has an obligation to advise their clients if the music they've chosen will negatively impact their reception. Today's bride also needs to recognize that while it's true; it is their wedding; an experienced DJ Service also has their reputation at stake at every function. Music for listening is not necessarily music to dance to and it's our job as DJ Services to drive this point home during our consultation or the reception may not go as well as anyone wants.

We're in the business of playing events that everyone enjoys; our business depends on it.

Ted Chamberlain,

Ted's Tunes

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Selecting a Wedding DJ

Selecting a disc jockey for what is arguably the most important event of your life is a bit like betting on a race horse. When you're at the races you read all about the horse, who, what and where he's been trained and you select the horse based on several things - his past performance, who he has raced against and where. You review his performance history but in the end sometimes you just go on a gut feeling and sometimes that's what it comes down to when selecting a disc jockey.

A successful disc jockey has to love his chosen profession and has to love music because if he/ she is just in it for the money they are not in business long. Disc jockeys need to be thick skinned yet polite and tactful as some clients and guests can be difficult as the party progresses. This is why I personally recommend that my DJs do not drink any alcoholic drinks while working. Disc jockeys do not make large sums if you consider the time away from the job site that's involved with preparing and setting up for specific events and running a successful DJ Service which also includes equipment maintenance, music purchases and proper AVLA licensing. There is a lot of behind the scenes preparation involved, especially with weddings since every bride wants their event to reflect their taste in music. DJs sometimes get play lists of nearly 200 songs at the celebration which would take 4 nights to play. Sometimes the majority of these songs (while they may be great to listen to) won't get the invited guests out of their seats and that's where your DJ's experience comes into play.

Brides need to ask the DJ what his experience level is with regards to weddings because if you hire a DJ with primarily bar experience you could be in for a disappointment. A DJ with wedding experience tends to be more multi-dimensional in his knowledge of music genres and therefore can more likely respond to the needs of a party with an age range of 8 to 80 years. I personally will not hire a DJ under 30 years old because life experience and DJ experience at playing private functions are the two most critical components you DJ posses.

In the final analysis, DJ Services can boast about the quantity and variety of their music, their commercial grade equipment, their optional lights and fog etcetera, but what it really comes down to is the right DJ with the right kind of experience. There is no substitute for experience. You may pay a little more for it but you'll be happy you did.

Ted Chamberlain

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DJs Walk a Fine Line

While it may seem fairly simple to spin discs at an event; I can tell you from my 30 years of experience that there's more to it than meets the eye. All DJ's have their favourite formulae and combinations of songs that will encourage people to get up and dance. That's what we're paid to do. Our very survival and reputation as a DJ service depends on how successful our efforts are at filling the dance floor. We can have all the right music at our disposal but if, for some reason, we don't play it; or we're asked not to play it ; we're in for a long night. DJ's feel the pulse of the party and react to the response on the dance floor and therefore we play music that promotes that party atmosphere.

Guests often make requests that the brides or event organizers have already requested us not to play. This is explained to the guests but sometimes it doesn't go over well. DJ's have to be diplomatic when this situation arises and even more so as the night progresses due to the effects of fatigue and alcohol on some guests. Sometimes we're caught between what we know will work and what we were directed to play. This is absolutely the toughest part of the business because we know from experience what works. Music is truly a subjective thing with every person liking or disliking songs, artists or genres for different reasons. DJ's are no different but we can't simply play what we like; unless we know it'll fire up the dance floor.

Brides often ask me if I take requests and I respond by saying that it's no problem and that they should also consider how their requests will affect the dance floor. Request lists of nearly 200 songs are not necessary because it's only possible to play 50-60 songs in any given evening. Your DJ needs some flexibility to interweave requests into the evening's music without being tied to a play list like a radio station. They need to be able to utilize their experience for the benefit of all the people attending your event. This will ensure a party where your guests leave with sore feet having had a good time that they can talk about for years to come.

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Ipod Weddings - part 1

The whole issue of I-Pod weddings is a thorny one and few people understand it properly but here it is in a nutshell. I've taken my info from the AVLA website and they have authority over the music copyrights because they are the policing agency for the Music Labels and the Recording Artists who make the tunes that we use for our business pursuits. It is the AVLA who issues licences to DJs to copy music for legal, commercial playback purposes.

1) Copied Music for I-Pod weddings are legal if the wedding couple buys a one time license for the reception. Although this opportunity is available to the Bridal Couple, many shirk off this requirement and burn large numbers of tunes to their Ipod devices for their party needs and avoid the hassle and the cost of the licence. The licence allows for copying to blank media formats for commercial operations. Many couples do not realize that a wedding reception is a commercial event and not a public one. It doesn't matter to the AVLA if it is called a private party because legally (whether in a public hall or your own backyard) your event is a public performance and spectacle.

2) Many Halls and Venues don't understand or consider this situation either. They allow unlicensed DJs to perform within their premises without realizing that a federal law is being breached. The AVLA is trying to change that situation by informing all concerned about this illegal condition. Party hosts (brides & grooms) need to understand the proper aspects of copying music and using it wrongly.

The AVLA license is good for one event and any copied CD's or music on the I-Pod that was used for the reception must be destroyed or erased after the event. Whether or not this happens, is another issue for another argument. But be aware that The AVLA has authority to litigate any unlicensed event should they take offense at the illegal use of their copyrighted material.

See part 2 for another article prepared by a Professional DJ Service in the US on I-Pod weddings.

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Ted's Tunes

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iPod Weddings - part 2

The Pros and Cons of Using an iPod

Much has been written about the advantages of using an iPod or other MP3 playback device for wedding ceremonies and receptions. One obvious advantage is that you can save quite a bit of money not hiring a DJ for your wedding music. You can also have absolute control of each and every selection of music and the order in which it's played throughout the entire event.

However, the harsh reality is that in most cases, these may not be advantages at all. Just ask anyone who has been to a wedding where an iPod was used without the guidance of a professional wedding disc jockey. True, you may save hundreds of dollars, but at what cost to the quality of your wedding reception?

Keep these facts in mind:

- An iPod can't "read the crowd", but that's a professional wedding DJ's 'specialty'. A pro can change the tempo if your guests want a slow song next or a faster song played. Working with a professional wedding DJ who has a vast knowledge of all styles of music will, in most cases, make your wedding reception 'an affair to remember'. Filling your iPod with songs that YOU like doesn't guarantee that all your guests will like them as well.

An iPod can't mix the music like a professional DJ. You'll have a 2 or 3-second 'dead-air' gap between songs that can kill the energy on the dance floor. On the other hand, a professional wedding DJ can mix almost seamlessly from song to song, keeping the guests dancing until the very end.

- An iPod can't act as a Master of Ceremonies. Hiring someone who does weddings on a regular basis and knows all the formalities associated with such events is priceless. If you think a friend can do the same job as a professional, think again. Be very careful and sure of the friend or relative you ask to do this for your wedding. Unfortunately, too many friends have 'frozen' at too many weddings, and there are no "do-overs" when it comes to weddings.

There's a reason we use the words "professional wedding DJ" and not just "DJ". There is a huge difference between the occasional wedding DJ (the 'weekend warrior' that has given the industry a bad name) and the full-time professional who customizes and personalizes every wedding s/he does. I urge you to seek out a professional who can help you plan the wedding of your dreams. A professional wedding DJ will go beyond just playing the music like an iPod or hobbyist DJ. They will act as Master of Ceremonies and keep the flow of the reception going through his or her coordination and directing skills.

**Thanks to DJ Ron Michaels
at Ron Michaels Weddings
for the permission to use
this article in the CDJA
Wedding Section.*

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