

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT DEEJAY

By Al Lampkin

Choosing a deejay for your function is one of the most important decisions you can make to insure the success of any event. Everything else can be perfect, but if the Deejay isn't good, the party will fizzle.

Selecting the right deejay can be confusing. There are over 15,000 deejays in America, all promising they'll do a great job for you.

So how do you pick the right one for you? Hopefully, this information will provide some guidance to help you make the decision easier.

The best and easiest way to find a deejay you'll like is to hire one you've already seen. If you've been to a wedding or a party where the deejay was great, find out who he or she was. If you didn't get their card, ask the host or the manager of the function room where the party was held.

If you haven't seen a good deejay recently, ask your friends. Your friends probably have the same taste in music as you. Maybe they've been to a function you missed. Let them know ahead of time you'll be looking, and ask them to keep their eyes and ears open.

If the first two suggestions don't work, your job gets tougher. Many of the top deejay companies do not advertise in the yellow pages since they receive almost all of their jobs from repeat business and referrals. Unless you know about these companies, the yellow pages may be your only option. Look under Disc Jockeys, Music and Entertainment. You may find deejays listed any of these categories. Circle the ads in which the deejay mentions the type of party you are planning. For example, if you're planning a wedding, a deejay whose ad says "We specialize in weddings" would be a good one to call. You'll probably find several deejays whose ads look good.

Another possible source for finding a deejay would be in the advertising section of a wedding periodical, which typically are available at most drug stores and grocery stores. There are usually ads for several deejays and other wedding specialists.

How do you tell which one is best? Probably the worst way to choose a deejay is

on price alone. Prices can range from \$100 to \$5,000 for a four-hour event. That's quite a difference, and it would be very tempting to choose the cheapest alternative.

If that's all you can afford, then you have no choice. The lower priced deejay may do a great job, and might be worth a shot if your party is on the informal side, but there is probably more risk. There is a reason some deejays charge more money than others. They are usually worth it. I don't believe you can hire a professional deejay anywhere in the country for less than \$450. In major metropolitan areas the minimum is probably closer to \$650. There are many costs involved with running an efficient business and the lowest priced deejays are probably doing something else for a living and just deejaying part time.

The cost for a wedding, according to the national average, is \$20,000. This is certainly not something you can trust to a part-time deejay. A deejay will only cost about 3% or 4% of the total price of the wedding (according to the national average) and yet they are responsible for over 80% of the activities.

As you speak with the deejays, pay attention to their professionalism over the phone. It tends to spill over into their deejay style. The most important thing to ask about is their experience with your type of event. If you are planning an event like a wedding, school dance, or company party, it would be normal to expect a professional deejay to have performed for at least 20 of these events. A number in the hundreds is actually common for a deejay who is well established. Deejays with less experience might also do a good job. And they'll usually cost less.

If you talk to one who sounds interesting, ask them for references. Any deejay can easily give you two or three names. After you have selected a potential deejay, I recommend you arrange for a meeting. It will give you a chance to make sure the individual maintains the standards you wish to project at your event.

You will also learn a lot as the deejay makes suggestions for the time line and agenda for your wedding reception. You must remember, there is no "doing over" after the reception if you had hired a deejay that was not to your liking. Choose your deejay carefully.

Always ask the deejay about their policy on requests. The best deejays will take requests from the audience and work them into their routine. However, do not expect the deejay to play every request. Many requests are simply inappropriate

for the mood of the event. A good deejay is not a jukebox, he will blend requests with songs he feels will properly motivate the crowd. The art of deejaying is timing, and this takes experience. Forcing a deejay to ignore his or her instincts by making them play every request will result in an "uneven" (and less fun) party. On the other hand, the deejay should try to play as many of your audience's requests as possible.

Try to get a feel for their philosophy of requests as you interview them. It is also appropriate to give a deejay a list of five or six songs you "must have." Just don't make that list fifteen or twenty songs long.

Many deejays boast about the number of songs they have. While variety is great, the fact is that they will only be able to play about 60 to 70 songs in a four hour show. Having the right 60 songs is a lot more important than having 20,000 songs your crowd doesn't want to hear.

After you tell the deejay what type of party you are having and who the audience will be, ask them what type of music they'd suggest. You should feel comfortable with most of his or her selections.

Many deejays also boast about having great equipment. Unless you are familiar with professional audio gear, you probably won't know the difference between which brands are great and which are budget. However, your deejay should at least have professional grade equipment. If they list brand names you are familiar with from a local electronics retailer, that is cause for further questioning. Home stereo equipment is not designed to stand up under 4-5 hours of high volume use. It could fail in the middle of your party! For example, typical professional deejay power amplifiers usually have 200 to 400 watts per channel, where consumer amplifiers that are considered powerful may have only 100 watts per channel.

It is also important that your deejay have back-up equipment with them. If an amplifier does malfunction, which is very rare with professional equipment, the party may come to a sudden stop. We recommend that all deejays carry back-up amplifiers and CD players. Even if all the music is on a computer, which is a recent trend, they should have a back-up CD player as well as CDs, as computers have been known to crash and not be able to be booted back up.

I might also mention that we have heard horror stories about deejays who have taken a deposit and not shown up. I know that sounds hard to believe, but it has

actually happened. Other deejays are hard to find prior to an event. This is why I highly recommend checking out a potential deejay's references. I also feel that the best deejays are available 24/7 in case of emergency.

The perfect deejay for you will be affordable, experienced at your type of event, and have great references. There are probably a lot of deejays out there who fit that description. As you search, remember that above all, you want your event to be fun.

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