

Event Entertainment: Hire a DJ or a Full Live Band?

Almost everyone that has hosted an event has faced the age old question: “*should we hire a DJ or a live band?*” Perhaps you already know which type of performance you are after. But if you are still undecided, consider the advantages and disadvantages of both choices to help you reach a decision.

Setup Flexibility

A well-equipped and organized DJ can set-up and adjust their gear relatively quickly, easily adapting to the unique space of the venue. Set-up for a band is more complex and takes more time to assemble and break down at the end of the night. This extra time can mean more expenses. Also, depending on the size of the band, they may be less flexible as to where they can set-up, and which venues are suitable.

Volume Level

A full multi-piece live band is going to be LOUD. Even at non-amplified volumes, an assemblage of instruments and vocalists adds up quick. A band can't really adjust their volume below a certain point. If you have a large event with the stage off to one side, this might not be an issue. Also, you can only hope the band has a good sound tech. One poorly-adjusted EQ knob may mean life or death for your ear drums when the trumpet player takes a solo. Studio recorded music has excellent production quality that is already in balance, and will sound good at any volume. A skilled DJ with a high-quality sound system can reproduce the excitement and sense of space provided by a live band with relative ease.

Stage Presence

If the goal is to “put on a show” at your event, this is where a live band really shines. It is hard to deny that an energetic live band can easily command the attention and interest of a crowd. Perhaps you want a less intrusive presence, keeping the focus on the event itself. A skilled DJ gets people excited and dancing without diverting attention away from the primary focus. If the DJ also has “MC” skills, they can help to keep the event progressing along, and divert guests attention where it is needed.

Music Variety

A band is limited to the songs they know and have practiced. A DJ equipped with a vast library can cover virtually any song in any genre. Maybe you'd like smooth jazz background music during cocktail hour, some mellow rock when dinner is served, and Top-40 pop hits on the dance floor. Perhaps the Bride and Groom want to show off their newly acquired Salsa Dancing skills. It's entirely up to the hosts of the event to decide on the music, and whether they want guests to be able to make requests. Ultimately a DJ can provide more variety and flexibility than a band, and keep all guests happy.

Cost

Typically speaking, a band is going to cost substantially more than a DJ. A multi-piece band can easily reach costs of \$3000+. A good DJ with a state of the art sound rig can be hired at or below the \$1000 range. Also, you decide if the band or DJ will be fed dinner- one mouth to feed vs. several. It is important to discuss all of these things with the band or DJ prior to the event, and get everything in writing to avoid discrepancies and unforeseen fees or charges.

Conclusions

To sum up, there are reasons for and against hiring a live band or a DJ. The decision will ultimately reflect the specific needs and desires you have for your event. You might consider a band if you have a medium-large venue, you want to “put on a show”, and you'd like an exciting entertainment centerpiece commanding the attention of your guests. If you want less intrusive entertainment, a wider array of songs and genres, and to keep the focus on the event itself, but still have incredible sounding music that makes you want to dance, consider a professional DJ. Lastly, if budget is a big concern for your event, a DJ may be the best choice.