

How do I Choose the Right DJ for My Wedding?

Choosing a DJ for your wedding reception is one of the most important decisions that you can make. Everything else can be perfect, but if the music doesn't flow and the DJ cannot read the crowd, the party will fizzle and end early. There are thousands of DJ's in Canada. You must somehow narrow the choices. You can do this by asking your friends or family for a good reference from an event they might have recently attended. Another alternative would be to ask a friend that was recently married who they used and what if anything they would change.

Start your search on the web.

Image is very important and as such, a clean user-friendly professional looking website is a good start. Chances are if the company has spent money, time and effort on their website, they also do this on their service. Try emailing companies and see which ones return your message or call the quickest. This shows that they are a full-time business, not just a weekend-warrior.



Take a look at the references and testimonials on the website. Are they old and out-dated? Are they anonymous? Anyone can post testimonials from a great show they did in 1996, but in the entertainment business, you are only as good as your last gig! **LOOK FOR RECENT TESTIMONIALS.**

Does the company have an active blog? In my research, I have only found 2 companies in Canada that actively publish and update their blog. This again shows commitment & dedication to their business. Updating a blog takes a lot of time, effort and creativity so if the blog is good, chances are the service you get will reflect that.

Does the company have a "real" office or do they work out of their garage/basement/mother's sewing room? This is a VERY important point because with the advent of the MP3, it has become increasingly easier for bedroom DJ's to collect illegal music and become a "so-called DJ". What these people typically lack is professionalism, experience, knowledge, backup equipment, insurance, proper licensing and affiliations with accredited associations (ie. International Special Events Society (ISES), Meeting Planners International (MPI), Canadian Professional DJ Association (CPDJA)).

Professional Activities outside the business.



Many DJ's go into business because of their love of music, but not necessarily their business acumen. It is important that when you hire a DJ company, you realize you are hiring a **service business**. I stress this, because some of the best DJ's I have met do not have the required skills to run and operate a successful DJ business. There is A LOT involved with providing quality DJ Services beyond just showing up to spin. Planning the itinerary and music portions of the wedding are actually 80% of the work. This is why in my business, we have a full-time Manager of DJ Services that

takes care of all this prep-work so the DJ's can do what they do best, Rock the crowd!



Separating the professionals from the bedroom DJs can help you avoid becoming a horror story. Nobody wants an irresponsible music person who shows up late or not at all, doesn't motivate your audience, plays inappropriate music or uses out of date, faulty equipment.

Once you have narrowed the field, it is important to keep focused on what feel or vibe you are looking for. Hiring DJ Tiesto for your wedding (while very cool) might not be such a good idea as he only plays one style of music (trance) and as such is not prepared to take requests from your aunt Ginny or

Gramma Jean. Conversely, hiring a "Wedding DJ" that hasn't seen the inside of a nightclub since 8-tracks were popular might not be a good idea either. What you need is to find that balance between a professional person who is cool enough to know that the chicken dance should not be played during dinner (unless you want that), but responsible enough to show up on time, dressed appropriately for your wedding.

How important is price in selecting a DJ?

Well, ask yourself this before we get into the nitty-gritty of this answer; "Will I remember that my DJ only cost \$500 or will I remember that my guests were all gone by 10:00PM and no one had fun?"

I don't think we need to get all gloom and doom, but I have heard horror stories about DJ's not showing up, showing up late, getting drunk, hitting on Brides Maids and even getting in fights with guests. So with that said, ask yourself this question; "How much is quality, reliable and professional entertainment worth?"

Ferrari performance from a Honda Civic?

Yes, there are car tuners out there that spend their entire lives making their Honda Civic faster and sexier, but in the end, their car will never be a Ferrari. I am not sure where I am going with this, but my point is this; no matter what a cheap DJ company promises or "throws-in", they are still a cheap company and as such will never offer you the Ferrari level service that your wedding deserves. OK, so you want to know the price range for DJ Services in the GTA. Here you go:

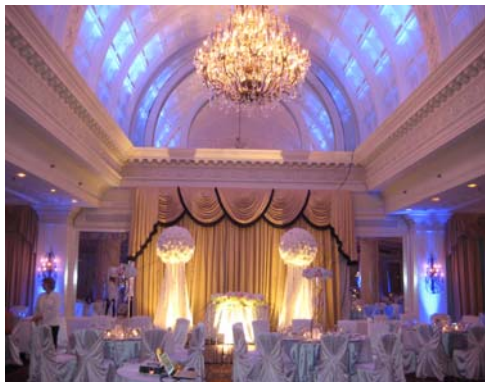


- Bedroom DJ with no website, crappy gear and some business cards - \$400-\$600
- Lower-end DJ company that hires students and trains them to be DJ's - \$600-\$900
- Mid-level good DJ company that services average clientele. - \$900-\$1300
- Professional Premium DJ company that services Elite clientele - \$1500-\$5000

Passion for Music.

Another way for you to tell whether you are dealing with the right DJ company, is to simply listen to the way they talk about music. Are they only trying to sell you on the biggest package or are they listening to you and responding with passion. It has been my observation that the very top tier DJ's all have one thing in common; they are completely and utterly passionate about music! I would even go further to observe that most of the really good DJ's hate to watch television as they are too busy looking and listening for that next new hit (think "I Gotta Feeling by Black Eyed Peas").

A DJ's job is never done. I personally spend about 10-15 hours per week looking for new music, practicing my mixes, perfecting my craft. There are many wedding DJ's that have NEVER practiced a day in their life, and it shows...



Do you think that U2 just shows up and rocks a stadium? The answer is NO. They practice, they write, they listen, they are always improving and keeping up with the latest technology to bring their audience that new song. The passion for performing is one that brings DJ's, musicians, jugglers, fire-breathers and all entertainers together as a family. Let me tell you, there is nothing on earth like feeling the energy from a crowd that is dancing, singing and screaming because of something you did or a song you played! It is incredible and it doesn't have to be a huge rock concert to make you feel it. I have DJ'ed weddings

with 30 people where everyone is rocking out and having the time of their lives and the energy is amazing!

I guess what I am trying to say in many words is that you need to find that someone who will be as passionate about the music at your wedding as you are about your soon to be spouse.

General tips on finding a great DJ for your wedding:

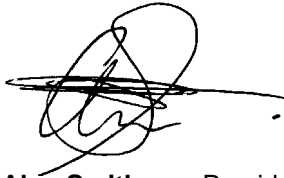
1. Narrow down your search by finding the BEST DJ websites, ones that are fun and fit your personality. Make sure to check out their blog.
2. Email or use the Contact button to see how long it takes them to respond (if ever).
3. Meet with them at their office (this is important so you can see if they are a real business).
4. Check their references and testimonials; are they from 1998 or are they current?
5. Find out who their DJ's are (read their Bio, listen to their mixes).
6. Ask them to see their liability insurance and AVLA license. This will let you know that they are professional. \$2 Million liability is standard, \$5 Million is preferred.
7. Ask the DJ or the Sales person targeted, open-ended



questions like; How would you deal with a guest requesting the YMCA when we specifically told you not to play it? What if it was my mother? This will let you know their personal experiences with dealing with different situations at weddings.

8. Ask what their policy is on music requests and guest requests.
9. Make sure you get a written agreement/contract with the terms and conditions clearly spelled out. Be wary of those one-page contracts with NO terms and conditions.
- 10. I cannot stress this one enough; make sure the DJ Company you choose is passionate about what they do! You will reap the benefits of an experienced, passionate DJ when you wedding day comes.**

If you have any further questions, or you just want my opinion on a DJ, feel free to email me any time at alan@starproductions.com or call our office to make a personal appointment.



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WINNER! 2009 Canadian Event Industry Awards - Best Use of Lighting! for Transitions Optical Cross-Country Promotional Tour.

WINNER! 2008 ISES (International Special Events Society) Toronto Supplier of the Year!

NOMINEE! 2008 Canadian Event Industry Awards – Entertainer of the Year! - Alan Smithson

NOMINEE! 2008 Canadian Event Industry Awards – Best Technical Achievement – Holiday Party

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