

HAMMER PRODUCTIONS

Your Entertainment Specialist
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How To Choose A DJ

Choosing a DJ for your function is one of the most important decisions you can make to insure the success of the event. Everything else can be perfect, but if the music isn't good, the party will fizzle. Selecting the right DJ can be confusing. There are over 15,000 DJs in America, all promising they'll do a great job for you. So how do you pick the right one for you? This article will provide some guidance to help you make the decision easier.

The best and easiest way to find a DJ you'll like is to hire one you've already seen. If you've been to a wedding or a party where the DJ 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 DJ 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. You might have to go to the Yellow Pages. Look under Disc Jockeys, Music and Entertainment. You may find DJs listed any of these categories. Circle the ads in which the DJ mentions the type of party you are planning. For example, if you're planning a wedding, a DJ whose ad says "We specialize in weddings," would be a good one to call. You'll probably find several DJs whose ads look good.

How do you tell which one is best? Probably the worst way to choose a DJ is on price alone. Some DJs are more expensive than others. Prices can range from \$100 to \$2,000 for a 4 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. But, consider the law of supply and demand. There is a reason some DJs charge more money than others. They are usually worth it. More expensive DJs tend to be the more experienced DJs. They can charge more because they have a lot of jobs, and they have a good reputation. Generally, the DJs on the low end of the price scale are new to the business, and trying to get established. They could do a great job, and might be worth a shot if your party is on the informal side. But there is probably more risk with a less experienced person.

As you speak with the DJs, pay attention to their professionalism over the phone. It tends to spill over into their DJ 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 DJ to have performed for at least 20 of these events. A number in the hundreds is actually common for a DJ who is well established.

DJs 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. Get 5 or 6 names and phone numbers of people who have recently hired them. Call these references and ask about the DJ's performance. Any DJ can easily give you 2 or 3 names. Getting more names is a better test of the quality of their performance.

You might also ask the DJ if they are performing in a location where you could see them. If so, make a visit, unannounced. Observe how the DJ interacts with the crowd. Are people having fun? Are people dancing? Is the music too loud? Is the DJ dressed appropriately? These are all good clues to the DJ's skills and personality.

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Always ask the DJ about their request policy on requests. The best DJs will take requests from the audience and work them into their routine. However, do not expect the DJ to play every request. Many requests are simply inappropriate for the mood of the event. A good DJ is not a jukebox, he will blend requests with songs he feels will properly motivate the crowd. The art of DJing is timing, and this takes experience. Forcing a DJ 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 DJ 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 DJ a list of 5 or 6 songs you "must have". Just don't make that list 15 or 20 songs long.

Many DJs 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 5,000 songs your crowd doesn't want to hear. After you tell the DJ 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 DJs 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 DJ should at least have professional grade equipment. If they brand names you are familiar with at the 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 DJ power amplifiers usually have 300 to 1000 watts per channel, where consumer amplifiers that are considered powerful may only have 100 watts per channel.

Some DJ companies have more than one DJ working for them. In this case, it's important to get references on the particular DJ who will be assigned to your show. Even if the company has been around for ten years, they might have hired your DJ last week. He might be a pro himself, or he might be newly trained. Be sure who you're getting.

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