

PREMIERE ISSUE

Winter/Spring
2007-2008
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Getting
married away

Behind the
(DJ) music

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Behind the music

Rick Byrd, 46, has been a disc jockey for 31 years and got his start in the business working in a Sacramento roller rink at age 16. He's been a club and mobile disc jockey since 1976, and the DJ business has been his primary source of income since 1980. Byrd has worked at some of the Sacramento area's hottest nightclubs and was in charge of music at the Sacramento Kings' afterparties at Arco Arena for 10 years. He owns Wired for Sound mobile DJ service and is the president of the Sacramento chapter of the American Disc Jockey Association.

Question: How did your first wedding reception gig go?

Answer: Back in 1980 there wasn't much equipment available just for DJs, so I had to use band-type equipment with a Radio Shack mixer. The first wedding was OK, but I didn't realize then how much different it was from club work – much more than just playing music.

Q: What's the major difference between wedding receptions when you first started and receptions now?

A: When I started, DJs were band replacements. We played music and provided a microphone for the toast. Now the bar is raised, and wedding clients expect more service. The DJ acts as the master of ceremonies, the coordinator and the problem solver. At weddings, playing music is just a small part of what we have to offer.

Q: What makes a great wedding DJ?

A: I try not to think of my weddings as gigs but as events. This attitude separates me from most (hobby-type) DJs. I take the result of the event personally and put much more time into each event to make it a success.

To make a wedding seem to flow smoothly requires planning, rehearsing and attentiveness. The ability to read the crowd, to know

what to play, when to play it and at what volume level is a skill and a talent most people don't realize.

The best DJs and MCs don't have just one act. They personalize their style, delivery and music selection for each customer. Some weddings are wild and crazy, and some want a more romantic atmosphere.

The reason some DJs are in demand and prices vary is because of personality, stage presence, mic skills, uniqueness and the ability to play music.

It's all about presentation. Some of my weddings require 20 hours of prep before the reception to give the bride and groom the special day they have always wished for. This is what separates wedding DJs from house-party or school DJs.

The right questions to ask a DJ are: How are you going to make my wedding special? How is the service you provide to weddings different than (that for) a picnic, for instance? And how much planning do you do with the bride and groom?

I promise you the experience will be much different depending on your choice of DJ.

Q: What should a bride do when looking for a DJ?

A: Find a DJ who specializes in weddings. This is hard to do since almost every ad I've ever seen says "we specialize in weddings, school dances . . ." The most important thing to do is to meet your actual DJ.

Some multi-DJ companies have a great owner or salesperson, and then their rookie DJ will show up and can't deliver what the owner promised.

Ask for referrals from other wedding professionals and friends. Other wedding vendors have seen a lot of DJs and can tell you which DJs are really good.



Rick Byrd

Q: What are some things a bride shouldn't do?

A: Hire a DJ because of price or just hire one over the phone. In life, you usually get what you pay for.

DJing is a performance- and talent-driven profession. It requires practice, a desire to improve and mastering many different skills. There is a reason DJ prices range from \$300 to \$3,000 per gig.

Q: What is the American Disc Jockey Association?

A: The ADJA is an association of professional mobile entertainers. (Its) mission is to encourage success for its members through continuous education, camaraderie and networking. We believe that, through involvement in this professional organization, DJs achieve more as a group than they can individually.

I like to point out some statistics that were published in an industry magazine:

- Nearly all (brides) said they would have spent more of their budget on the entertainment.
- Within one week after their reception, 78 percent of brides said they would have made the entertainment their highest priority.
- 72 percent of brides said they would have spent more time choosing their reception entertainment.
- 65 percent of couples that chose a band to entertain at their wedding, said, if they had it to do over again, they would have chosen a disc jockey.

Rick Byrd's Wired For Sound DJ Service can be reached at (916) 344-3330 or www.yourfavoritedj.com.

– Mark Billingsley