

# CHOOSING A BAND OR A DJ: WHAT TO DO?



## **By Steve Prentice, Musical Director, Dorset Park Band**

When you are looking to entertain your guests, one of the primary questions regarding entertainment is whether to hire a live band or a DJ to deliver the music. The choice generally is easy: it comes down to cost, and DJ's are cheaper. They play the exact tunes that your guests know and love from the radio and YouTube and given that they are usually a group of one, maybe two, they will likely be more reliable in terms of showing up.

DJs provide a great service, much like Starbucks or Subway do: a consistent packaged product, tweaked for your own preference, at a reasonable price.

However, most event planners and brides that I know do not consider Starbucks or Subway when selecting a caterer. They want a team of people who will deliver excellent food, prepared specifically for the event, in a professional and dignified manner. And that, believe it or not, is what great event bands do. They are not wild rock and rollers; they are focused on delivering a unique excellent multisensory product that generates a sense of event.

### **A great band generates excitement and feeds it to the audience.**

Live musicians are alive. They see the audience and the audience sees them. There is a personal connection; eye to eye, smile to smile. A live band can see what works, what motivates people to dance, what makes them happy. They deliver music as a gift – carefully created and hand delivered. It is a very personal experience.

### **A great band knows a lot of tunes and can play what your audience wants.**

A great band consults with the client; works with the client to determine which tunes and sequences would work best. A great band is responsible enough to rehearse regularly and fully, so that the delivery of the tunes is respectful, to both the audience and to the original artist. Most bands are not tribute acts. They interpret tunes faithfully and assign the singing duties to those who can best deliver. They have a wide range of tunes to pull from, and their experience helps deliver them in the most effective manner.

### **A great band is a special event - a sense of occasion.**

Your guests see people on stage; talented musicians who are ready to give their all for the audience's enjoyment. This performance will be unique; the band will talk to you and interact with you. No other party or bride will have exactly the same collection of tunes, jokes, comments and special memories. Their product is as valuable as the food on the tables and atmosphere of the event itself.

## Choosing a Band or a DJ – What to Do?

### **A great band looks great.**

They dress the part. They dress to impress the audience, to look like something special. They are great-looking people holding great -looking instruments, under great looking lighting. There is a certain wonder to seeing musicians; they hold the key to the magic of an evening. They deliver energy and enjoyment. You only have to look at the air-guitar players that every audience reveals that show just how many people wish it was them up there on that stage, looking cool, delivering the pleasure. It's not just the music. It's a whole look and feel.



### **A great band means the music does not have to stop.**

Event planners often worry that the music and momentum stops the moment the musicians take a break. But great bands are already on top of that, ensuring additional music is made available over the PA during the breaks. The momentum never ends, but the excitement always rebuilds when an audience sees a band return to the stage and pick up their instruments.

### **A great band has passion.**

Musicians love to play music and it shows. They live to deliver joy to audiences, and audiences pick up on this. It becomes part of the vibe of the moment and of the memories that last long after.

### **A great band is reliable.**

Working musicians are craftspeople, not divas or rock stars. They understand the importance of an event, and they understand that the event starts long before its actual date: planning and preparation are essential. A great band works hard to make its clients' lives easier and stress-free by removing the worries about hiring a group of musicians. A great band shows up early, sets up and sound checks efficiently and with respect to others who are also setting up. They constantly monitor for satisfaction and take care to craft their performance in an agile way that rides the momentum of the event. Great bands are all about excellence in customer service throughout the entire multi-week life of an event.

### **Are great bands expensive?**

Well, they cost more than DJs do. But they deliver more also. A band of three or four or even six musicians represents decades of practice, education and experience in the business of delivering a quality product. Like a great catering company, chef, emcee or event planner, their value is in their experience and professionalism, and their price reflects that. Great bands need never be prohibitively expensive; but they do deliver above and beyond what they charge. They deliver a very human and very tangible emotional product that is more than just music. It is an integral part of the event itself.