

A wedding reception should be the highlight of a magical day, and your client will trust you to get it right. So when it comes to booking live music, what should a wedding planner look for? Dean Mark, Mobo Award winner, bass player to the stars and musical director of function band The Reel Deal, explains.

Dean's top five tips for booking a band

EXPERIENCE – Make sure the band you choose are experienced professionals who have played at a variety of events, so they know the etiquette involved.

VERSATILITY – The music should suit all tastes and cover a variety of musical genres to cater for all ages. A good band will also ask if you have favourite songs that they can play at the party too.

SETUPS – Does the band offer different band size setups? Depending on the size of your party venue, you may only want to hire a small six piece band or want a 12 piece which may contain a live brass section,

backing vocalists and percussion, giving you much more choice and flexibility.

TESTIMONIALS – Word of mouth is the best recommendation, when booking a band. Seeing a band live can be difficult as they mostly work at private events, so ask them to send you a DVD show reel or demo CD of their performance.

SHOWTIME – A good band will tailor the length of time to your party schedule. Most bands usually play for up to two hours with at least a 30-minute break in between. Consult with your band prior to booking on how you would like the sets to be broken.



Let music be the food of love ...

THERE was once a time when wedding bands meant a crusty group of bad musicians playing a mishmash of unknown songs from a bygone era, and wearing tacky ill-fitting suits to boot. Fortunately, times have changed.

There is nothing better than the atmosphere of raw energy and emotion when a band plays live music. So it's not surprising, then, that choosing the right band is one of the most important wedding planning decisions that you'll make for your client.

A bride will spend months and months ahead of her big day in planning all the key elements of the wedding but when it comes to entertaining guests, the majority of couples call upon inexperienced function bands.

Many function bands serving the wedding industry today are doing so on a part time basis and there are even those who sing to backing tracks rather than play 100 per cent live.

This inexperience is then ultimately reflected at the wedding party and results in guests not enjoying the entertainment – leaving gaps on the dancefloor.

To create a memorable evening for clients and their guests, planners must focus on the importance of selecting a high calibre band which not only suits the couple's taste and style but who can create that party atmosphere immediately and ensure the dance floor stays busy all evening.

It has to be outstanding and unforgettable and this sometimes can come out at a slightly higher price. Entertainment is 80 per cent or more of the success factor in any event, but amazingly as little as five per cent of the event budget is spent on it.

Bridal magazines are communicating that couples should expect to pay £1,000 for a good band. This is wrong.

£1,000 will get you a distinctly average band and is in short very poor value for money.

In comparison brides are paying a lot more for other services such as photographers – the industry needs to wake up to the fact that a band of people, who are the key entertainers for the brides big day, should be in keeping with the same level of value.

Those bands that are working full time and do have the years of experience playing high level shows behind them, project real talent and professionalism within the function band industry.

These musicians usually provide a bespoke service that covers a variety of genres, different number of musicians or types of instruments such as live brass to full percussion, and above all come with the correct PA system, and sometimes lighting too.

Moreover these bands place the emphasis on giving a fantastic show rather



Dean Mark

just playing the songs on the required set list.

Music can make or break the mood. So it's not surprising, then, that choosing the right band is one of the critical wedding planning decisions that you will help your clients with.

With careful use of investment in live music, couples can add that extra special magic that transforms an event into a truly memorable celebration.

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