

“My Expert Advice” WEDDING BANDS 101



The music played at your reception can make or break your party, and the band you hire will be a major factor. We asked **Marc Topaz**, of Marc Topaz Music and Entertainment, who reps some of the fastest-booking groups in the Tri-State area, for tips on choosing the right band.

1 MEET THE BANDLEADER IN PERSON. It's not always an option to see a band play live, as most established groups neither play

showcases nor invite couples to see them perform at another couple's wedding. “We arrange for the bandleader to meet the couple in person, so they can get a real sense of whether the band would be a good fit for them,” says Marc. “The bandleader will bring photos and up to ninety minutes of live recorded music, and will talk about the group members' musical backgrounds and what makes them unique. By the end of the meeting, the couple are extremely familiar with the band—much more so than if they just saw a twenty-minute performance.”

2 THINK THROUGH AND REQUEST THE SONGS YOU WANT PLAYED. Find out how to let the band know what music you want at your wedding. “We send out a request form about ten weeks prior to the event, which gives the couple the opportunity to tell us what genres of music they think their guests will respond well to, and specific songs they want the band to include, as well as a ‘don't play’ list, which is equally as important,” says Marc. Some bands have an attitude about what they're willing and not willing to play. “Your band should play songs that you request, without charging you a fee for learning new music,” says Marc.

3 VARIETY AND AUTHENTICITY ARE KEY. “Groups that are cheap usually end up providing a result that coincides with the amount spent,” says Marc. “But that's not to say the most expensive band is always the best band, so you have to be careful. It's about musical quality—you want to make sure the band is able to present a variety of music styles, all with a high level of authenticity.”

4 FEWER INSTRUMENTS = LIMITED REPERTOIRE. “For a full, authentic sound, I recommend booking at least six band members—ideally, nine to twelve,” says Marc. “To present everything in a song's original recording requires a certain number of musicians, so if you hire fewer than that, you sacrifice the authenticity of the sound. Also, not having enough instruments means certain songs will be difficult to play.”

5 ASK ABOUT A SOUND ENGINEER. “A lot of bands have one of their musicians set up a small PA system and then hope there won't be any feedback or noise problems during the set,” says Marc. “But for a truly authentic sound, you want the levels and effects to be adjusted on a song-by-song basis. We provide a two-man sound engineering team to actively monitor the sound throughout the event. It makes a big difference.”

Back & Forth Music for the Aisle

Music expert **Jessica Meyer**, of the New York City-based Venus Ensembles, offers traditional and modern picks for two of the most important trips you'll ever take: the short walks up and down the aisle.

The Processional

TRADITIONAL PICKS

“Winter: Largo” from *The Four Seasons*, by Vivaldi
 “Flower Duet” from *Lakmé*, by Delibes
 Entr'acte from *Carmen*, by Bizet
 Second movement from Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, by Bach
 Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, by Mascagni

MODERN PICKS

“One Hand, One Heart,” from *West Side Story*
 “What a Wonderful World,” by Louis Armstrong
 “Can't Help Falling in Love,” by Elvis Presley
 “Bitter Sweet Symphony,” by The Verve
 “In My Place,” by Coldplay

The Recessional

TRADITIONAL PICKS

“Brandenburg” Concerto No. 3, by Bach
 “Spring” from *The Four Seasons*, by Vivaldi
 Hornpipe from *Water Music*, by Handel
 Alleluia from “Exsultate, Jubilate,” by Mozart
 “Autumn” from *The Four Seasons*, by Vivaldi
 “La Réjouissance,” from *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, by Handel

MODERN PICKS

“Embraceable You,” by George and Ira Gershwin
 “All You Need Is Love,” by The Beatles
 “Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours),” by Stevie Wonder
 “Beautiful Day,” by U2
 “Yellow,” by Coldplay
 “Tonight, Tonight,” by The Smashing Pumpkins