



The D.J.

“Do-not-play lists say more about the couple than playlists. When I see Bob Marley on the former, I almost faint.”

DINA REGINE

How did you segue from spinning at clubs to weddings? I used to think weddings were corny, until Yvonne Force Villareal’s convinced me otherwise. It was an all-night wedding in Mexico; I was playing A Flock of Seagulls while they were serving hangover breakfasts at sunrise.

Was that the longest you’ve ever spun for a wedding? Yes. Four to five hours is average for most weddings; six hours if the ceremony’s on site.

How do you feel about the split D.J.-band option? I dislike working with a band whose repertoire is similar to mine because I have to delete songs that they’re singing from my set. It works out better

when everybody does what they do best. You don’t want a guy in a tuxedo rapping—because invariably it’s a white guy saying, “It’s getting hot in here,” which looks ridiculous. But a theme band is fun.

What theme bands would you recommend? New York Swing is great. And there’s a fantastic klezmer band, Greg Wall & the Simcha All-Stars. Cracked Ice is awesome; all three women sound like Aretha Franklin. Recently, I did a party with Alex Donner Entertainment; they did standards and took care of the old stuff.

Once a couple decides they want a D.J., what’s next? Find out about a D.J. through word of mouth. Don’t ask for a demo, unless you’re hiring someone who

TIPS FROM THE TRADE

Make sure the cocktail and dinner hours sound different. For cocktails, Regine says, “Stick with **acoustic folk**, singer-songwriter stuff, or any other music you love that’s difficult to dance to,” such as the **Jacques Brel and French electronica** she spun for one Francophile groom. For dinner, try jazz (“no drum solos or jammy stuff”) and Brazilian. If you can’t afford a live D.J., hire the talent at hungrypod.com to fill your iPod with playlists (\$35 per hour; plus iTunes charges).

does a specific genre of music. Most D.J.’s cater to vastly different events, and you’ll learn more by sitting with them at a coffee shop than watching them play a gig.

How often do you spin at the ceremony?

Lately, about half the time. For the processional, I love the Berceuse from *Dolly* suite by Gabriel Fauré. “Little Wing” by Jimi Hendrix, and Nick Cave’s “Into My Arms” are also stunning. For the recessional, choose something uplifting. I used U2’s “Beautiful Day” for a wedding on the Hudson Hotel roof, and the song set the mood for everything being fabulous despite the worst weather imaginable.

Is there a logic to making a party danceable?

The actual dancing time is two hours at best, so you don’t have time to throw in something so obscure it’s going to clear the floor. You want to keep the music up and varied so no one is left out.

Is there a formula to the evening?

There are two formats: sets during dinner or all the dancing at once. For sets during dinner, I keep it laid-back: Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and no heavy eighties until after dinner. I hold off on the hip-hop until the cake, at which point everybody’s had so much to drink that even the grandmother doesn’t notice.

Let’s talk logistics. What are some venue-specific issues?

At 55 Wall Street and Cipriani 42nd, it’s hard to contain the sound without an echo. Then there’s volume restriction. 24 Fifth is a gorgeous ballroom, but they keep the volume so low it’s hard to get the energy level up.

What are some great first-dance songs?

The song should represent the couple, not be something they’ve chosen because it was something they read about. “At Last” is beautiful, but enough already, you know?

Is anything off-limits?

There’s no place for “I Will Survive” at a wedding. It’s a break-up anthem. I hate “YMCA,” the chicken dance, the Macarena. If your family wants to form a line, it doesn’t have to be to “Hot Hot Hot.”

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