

LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED

GREAT ENTERTAINMENT IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF
YOUR BIG CELEBRATION.

A surefire way to make your wedding stand out in guests' memories is to plan the party of a lifetime. With a vast range of entertainment options available for the modern couple—from personalized playlists to custom compositions to jazz-band serenades—the snoozy wedding singer and his painfully narrow repertoire is a thing of the past. These simple tips from Houston's top wedding entertainers will help

keep your wedding bash going all night long.

THE FIRST STEP

Before you begin drawing out the details of your big day, you'll need to book the right entertainment company to suit your special event. Lisa Wallrath of Dynamic Entertainment Productions says that the key is to ask the right questions of potential entertainers before book-

WRITER EMILY BLASIK | PHOTO ADAM NYHOLT PHOTOGRAPHER





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- LISA WALLRATH, DYNAMIC ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS

ing. First and foremost, are they available for a face-to-face consultation? “What you want to look for is someone who cares about you, wants to know about you, and listens to your ideas,” she says. “That kind of person is always willing to meet with you face-to-face.”

Secondly, it’s crucial to get a good idea of which services are offered—full packages, including lighting and sound equipment, stage decor, etc., or a la carte entertainment options, for example—and if they can provide the type of music you’re interested in having at your wedding. “Some people do not want the hokey pokey at their wedding, while

other couples are totally okay with the potential entertainer’s guests requesting songs like the ‘chicken dance’ and ‘YMCA,’” adds Wallrath, who also advises brides and grooms to check out the potential entertainer’s testimonials from other couples. “It is important to find the right fit for you!”

SET THE TONE

While most people don’t think “rager” when they envision a wedding ceremony—let’s be real, all eyes will be on you and your beloved for this portion of the event—the moments leading up to, and following, the exchange of vows, are sure

to set a certain mood that will continue into the rest of your evening. The last thing you want is to walk down the aisle to music that puts your guests to sleep or, even worse, distracts from the enchantment of the occasion.

Of course, you are the main focus here, so make sure to choose a form of entertainment that complements your personality and goes with the theme of your wedding. “Music can set the tone for an event and create a certain vibe,” says Scott Graham of Scott Graham Piano. “For a unique event, try to match the music with the theme.” Have your heart set on a 1920s Gatsby-themed

wedding? Look for a musician who can incorporate a few fancy jazz tunes into your ceremony, or provide your DJ with a list of your favorite classic love ballads. Either way, every one of your guests will be smiling—not cringing—from ear-to-ear.

COCKTAIL CLASSY

The cocktail hour is a chance for your guests to sip those signature cocktails you and your spouse have created, taste a delicious hors-d'oeuvre or two, and mingle with old friends, before you and your new spouse once again become the center of attention.

While some will be anxious to get the show started, the point is not to overwhelm their senses, but to allow each person to ease into the evening at their own pace. Lewis Grell of LG Entertainment recommends slower-

tempo music to start, although "the most important thing is the volume of the music," which shouldn't disrupt the conversations circulating through the room. Bandleader, vocalist and MC Wyn Hudson suggests going with mellow instrumentals such as "Sentimental Reasons" or "Lush Life" to create a relaxing and comfortable environment for your guests.

THE GRAND ENTRANCE

Some newlyweds plan to take a break between their ceremony and reception to snap formal photos with their bridal party, or simply spend a few quiet moments together before the party officially begins. When the bride and groom do enter the reception space, it's go-time. The couple's first appearance as husband and wife is the high point of the whole evening: Guests are sitting on the edge of their

seats in anticipation of the arrival of the two people responsible for the grand celebration at hand. So get your game face on and go all out!

To really kick off the night, it's best to choose a popular song that will get you and your guests' hearts—and fists—pumping. For those hiring a DJ or cover artist(s), Walk the Moon's "Shut Up and Dance," or "Forever" by Chris Brown, are sure to start the party off right. Jason Fajkus, creative designer for DJU Productions, recommends having a rockin' MC to lead the way: "The MC has one of the most overlooked jobs at the entire event," he says, so choose one who "shows confidence and composure to deal with any situation." Your MC will be the person keeping your evening flowing, after all, from the moment you saunter in, to the very last song.



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Lisa Wallrath
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BUST A MOVE

Whether you've planned for your guests to have a luxurious sit-down dinner or you're kickin' it buffet style, there's nothing wrong with "increasing the tempo just a bit," says Wallrath. The dancing will most likely take off after everyone's gotten enough food in their bellies, so feel free to keep up the pace of the party with a few good jams—as long as they're not being blasted through the loudspeakers.

Grell suggests having your band or DJ play music attached to happy memories from your childhood. Chances are, those feel-good songs will mean something to your guests as well. When it's finally time to bust a move, there should be a noticeable "build-up leading into the party," he adds. Get everyone on their feet with "a great upbeat classic from the '70s or a swinging Sinatra standard," says Hudson, "or even James Brown's 'I Feel Good,'"—anything that makes it impossible for guests to stand still.

While you and your new spouse are the evening's honorees, and no part of the entertainment should compromise your happiness in any way, the key to keeping guests entertained is knowing—and catering to—the audience. "I often take a look at the crowd, to get a feel for how they are responding to the songs that I play, and go from there," says Graham, who tends to provide a variety of popular hits and classic songs for every generation to enjoy.

There is bound to be a wide range of age groups at your wedding, all of which you want to see grooving and moving until the party's over. "Having an entertainer who can 'read the crowd' is the key to keeping the dance floor filled," says Wallrath. Fun and excitement are extremely contagious, and once you've got a good flow going, nobody will be able to resist getting caught up in the celebration.