

Want To Use an Officiant's "Discount" Sound System?

This is an increasing phenomenon. With the bleak economy more and more wedding vendors are attempting to reach into the pockets of other vendors. This is such a shame. Many wedding officiants are bad-mouthing DJ services as having too steep of pricing for their services and offering low-cost alternatives. There are so many problems with this issue that it's hard to find a place to start.

First, when was the last time that you knew of any wedding officiant who really knew anything about sound and/or music? The truth is that most officiants enter the industry by going online, filling out a form, sending in a few dollars to the state and "bang" they are a wedding officiant. In time many officiants develop an ego and start to think that they know more about sound than a DJ or a sound man. Ludicrous!

Second, it has been my observation that almost all weddings start late. On average, I would personally say that the majority of weddings start almost 15 minutes late (Traffic, weather, locating bridal party, wardrobe problems, general chaos, etc.). (If I only had a dollar for every time there was a delay in the ceremony and the officiant says, "We have to start NOW! I have another wedding to get to!")

However, most officiants must work multiple jobs to earn a living meaning that they are working 2, 3, 4 or even more jobs per day. With having to travel across broad regions, these vendors are rarely on time. Setting up sound for a ceremony means assessing the facility and power sources, setup, teardown, sound checks, troubleshooting, etc. Officiants rarely, if ever, will do these things. Many audio professionals recognize that silence is uncomfortable. Still, unless an officiant is willing to arrive 1½ to 2 hours in advance for parking, setup, sound checks, last minute details with the bridal party and/or venue staff and at least 45 minutes of seating music, things will quickly go awry. Even still, it is more professional and comfortable for plenty of recessionary music to be playing as well at the end of the ceremony. Most officiants that I have witnessed are performing multiple weddings per day and are usually in a hurry to get to their next job.

Play it safe and hire a qualified DJ. If you want to send your officiant running for the hills just ask him a few questions like:

- What is your amplifier output? At how many ohms? What is your current ohm load?
- What is the frequency response of your sound system?
- What are the "crossover frequencies" of your speakers?
- What is the frequency range of the microphones that you use?
- What are the key frequencies of the human voice?
- What is proximity effect? What is proximity boost?
- What is the "Fletcher-Munson Free Equal Loudness Contours Graph" and how does it affect the amplification of the human voice during a ceremony?
- What is the correct way to address a mic?
- What is a "noise floor?" What is "headroom?"
- What are "standing waves?" What is a "LENRD?"
- What is a phase anomaly?
- What frequencies contribute to listener fatigue?
- What is a compressor? How can you "manually compress" a signal?
- What is the difference between "shelving equalization," "graphic equalization" and "parametric equalization?"
- At what frequency does music start to sound "muddy?"
- At what frequency do you boost to increase fullness in the human voice?
- At what frequency do you boost to increase boominess in the human voice?
- At what frequency do you boost to increase presence in the human voice?
- At what frequency do you boost to increase sibilance in the human voice?
- At what frequency do you boost to increase air in the human voice?
- In how many feet does it take for a 20Hz audio wave to fully form?
- How do you maximize your signal?
- Is your signal -10db or +4db?
- What is ambient noise?
- What is reflected signal?
- Are your mics dynamic, condenser or ribbon?
- Is the polar pattern of the mics that you use cardioid, half-cardioid, super-cardioid, omni-directional or figure 8?
- What is the difference between an "A-B" mic placement and an "X-Y" mic placement? What are the advantages or disadvantages of these placements?
- Are your mics high impedance or low impedance?
- What is a vocal's "placement" in a mix?
- What do you do in the event of wind?
- What are the effects of wind on audio?
- What happens if you are directed to reposition and re-setup your sound system?
- Who troubleshoots your system if there is feedback while you are performing your duties as an officiant?
- What happens if someone accidentally unplugs something or changes an adjustment in the sound system while you are performing your duties as an officiant?
- Who will adjust volume and intonation levels "on the fly" for voice and audio?
- Who fades the music once the bridal party and/or bride reaches the alter?
- How am I assured that someone will accurately recognize cue and fade points?
- Who will "loop" music tracks if there are delays?
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- What do you do in the event of delays, wardrobe malfunctions or errors of the bridal party?