



Life of the Party

Choose the right wedding entertainment to create amazing memories for both you and your guests

By **Catherine Roscoe Barr** Illustrations by **Mandy Lau**

READY FOR THE PARTY OF ALL PARTIES? While you're obsessing over which table linens to order, don't forget that your wedding is also about hosting a fabulous occasion. So plan carefully to ensure your guests go home feeling as happy (well, almost) as you two newlyweds.

GO BIG

"The biggest party you will possibly ever throw deserves the best entertainment," says Ruby Chang of Modern Romance Productions, a local wedding photography, videography and slow-motion video-booth company. "Having great entertainment at your wedding will be one of the things that friends and family still talk about after the wedding."

Remember that you not only want to have a good time yourselves, but also create opportunities for everyone there to mix and mingle and have fun.

"A wedding without entertainment may be a decent mingle, catch-up or reunion, but it won't be a party, and it certainly won't be a party to remember," says DJ Leanne, owner of GirlOnWax DJs and Musicians, an entertainment company with more than 15 DJs and musicians on its roster.

But, in choosing the perfect entertainment, there is a lot to consider, says Chang. Aside from factoring in your venue, budget and theme, you'll need to think about what will suit the age group and personalities of your guests, while producing an experience that's true to the overall feel of your wedding.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU

Finding the best entertainment will mean guests won't be able to stop talking about it — in a good way. "I'm sure every bride and groom would agree that they want their wedding to be a great party,



That's Entertainment

Music aside, there are many ways to keep guests partying. Photo booths can be a huge hit, offering a fun activity while giving everyone a keepsake photo to take home. Newer to the wedding scene is the slow-motion video booth, where guests whoop it up in front of the camera, with the footage later converted into slow-mo action. "Having a slow-motion booth is unique, rare, fun and messy," says Chang, of her company's in-demand service that also customizes props to suit different themes.

Performing dance troupes are another growing wedding trend, but what about teaching your guests some moves, too? "GirlOnWax can provide go-go-style dancers and/or salsa, Latin and funk dance lessons for your guests. It's a huge crowd-pleaser and a great way to get everyone of all ages dancing," says DJ Leanne.

Or, how about a little magic? "Hiring a sleight-of-hand-style magician or illusionist to work the room during the cocktail hour can be a ton of fun," says Hamilton, "and we've also seen painters who paint scenes of the party, which is amazing for guests to watch."

Even going traditional can spice up your party. "Bringing in something relevant to your culture can be really great, like Japanese Taiko drummers, Filipino candle dancers or Chinese dragon dancers," says Bishop.

Here are a few more fun ideas to consider:

- Accordion player • Mariachi band
- Karaoke • Caricature artist
- Impersonators • Gospel choir
- Mimes or living statues
- Circus performers or contortionists
- Board games, ping pong or foosball
- Garden games like horseshoes, ring toss or bocce
- Vegas-style casino games
- Fireworks display
- Bouncy castle • Card reader or psychic
- DIY cocktail station

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and fun for everyone attending, which means considering all of the vastly varying tastes of the often-diverse guest list,” says Erin Bishop, owner and principal planner at Filosphi Events, and co-founder, with Rob Hamilton, of SideOne, a popular local event band.

“The wedding entertainment is not necessarily ‘all about you,’ explains Bishop. “Brides should look for something that most of the guests will find entertaining — you may love Elvis, but perhaps a two-hour-long Elvis impersonator might not be the best choice for your big day.”

FIND A TRUE PRO

So, how do you go about choosing the right entertainment for your wedding? Dig for insider information, suggests Bishop: “If you have already booked some other vendors, like photographers or caterers, ask them who they think would be a great fit, or who to avoid.”

“Find a great vendor and then trust them,” adds SideOne’s Hamilton. “Definitely let your band or DJ know your tastes, but remember that you have never programmed music for 150-plus people before, and they do it for a living. So, try to find a balance of letting them know that you absolutely don’t want to hear ‘YMCA,’ but you do want to let your cousins from Saskatchewan do a two-step.”

To ensure a good fit, always try to meet the vendor in person. “You may love a company’s work but not their personalities,” notes Chang. “It’s very important that the couple will get what they think



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will get — we want good surprises at weddings, not the opposite.”

Of course, experience can count for plenty, too, says Hamilton. Besides knowing how to read a crowd, it takes a pro to understand power circuits so the fuses don't blow, or to troubleshoot a wireless microphone that acts up. “That said, you don't want a vendor that's jaded and this is ‘just another gig;’” he adds.

SET THE TONE WITH MUSIC

“Musical entertainment is the heart and soul of every wedding,” says DJ Leanne. “The music is what creates so many incredible memories — from walking down the aisle, to the first dance, to gettin' down on the dance floor with friends and family, it's such a huge and integral part of any wedding. The DJ can make or break the wedding, which is why you have to choose very carefully.”

It's likely that music will also be a big part of your wedding, time wise. “Generally, the dancing part of the wedding is around four hours long,” says Bishop, whose six-piece dance band is SideOne's most popular request for weddings. “In most cases, four hours is more than half your reception. Hopefully, you've done your homework and found some great entertainment that not only will please you, but please your guests.”

Whatever you choose to do for your ultimate party of all parties, pick something that you'll love and that your guests will think is pretty amazing, too. 