
WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HIRING A BAND

SCHEDULING – A GOOD BAND IS PROBABLY BUSY

Know that a professional band is a business and operates on a schedule and time lines. They have to plan and prepare music. This is especially true if your event or venue has particular tastes or even specific songs that might need to be prepared in advance. (Think of the special dances at weddings)

When booking a band, aside from the event time, you will need to plan some time for setting up and tearing down of equipment. The band will want to go through a sound check to test their equipment prior to the performance. This needs to be done in a way that it doesn't impede others involved in the event. The more elaborate the event, the more prep time will be needed.

EXPECTATIONS – WHAT ARE YOU HIRING THEM TO DO?

Yes, we want a band to play music!

Great! For how long, for what crowd, and for what occasion?

DO YOU EXPECT THE BAND TO PLAY FOR A SOLID BLOCK OF TIME OR WILL THERE BE SCHEDULED BREAKS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS?

Musicians perform better if they have some time to settle into a groove and get comfortable with their stage. Identify the front man or band leader and communicate announcements or specific breaks that you require. Having something to announce gives musicians time to tune and fill dead space between songs, so don't feel awkward asking the band to make announcements, but do so in advance. This allows them to plan a smooth transition into the next song or segment of the event.

IS THERE A DRESS CODE FOR THE EVENT?

This may seem a little silly, but musicians are typically creative people and may assume that you know how they usually present themselves at a gig. If you have an event that a higher standard than casual is expected, you may want to convey that in advance.

WILL THE BAND BE PROVIDING ALL OF THE GEAR?

There are no set standards for a band to be a band. Some rely on a PA and/or lights being available to use at the venue, while others own their own to varying degrees. If there are multiple bands or DJs it is a good idea to have a common set up to reduce disruptions during your event. It's not a bad idea to have a representative of the band survey the location for adequate power and staging space in advance. If you've never loaded in a band, there might be some logistical aspects that are easy to overlook.

BUDGET – BE UPFRONT

As mentioned above, a band is a business. There's a cost to equipment, transportation, and upkeep of their craft. Sure musicians love to play music, but it's still work to put on a show. A band either

makes a living playing music, or the members have to forfeit time with family or take time off from their main source of income to play your event. Don't insult them by expecting them to volunteer their time for "exposure" or because you don't have the budget for it.

Some bands may be willing to support a cause or play a benefit that's near to their heart, but they should receive something of equal value to their pay for consideration. For instance, many charities reward sponsorships for donations (include logo on a T-shirt, web-blasts, or advertisements). Sponsorship levels or perks should be based on what the band usually charges for their services. You should never tell anyone that the band "played for free". It will ruin a band's reputation and they will get flooded with non-paying gig opportunities from everyone who wants a free band at their event.

FORM OF PAYMENT

It should go without saying that payment should be due when services are rendered, but some things you consider are:

CHECK

While a band is a business, they may not have a checking account under the band's name. Bands change members and often names fairly regularly. If you plan on writing a check, clarify who the check needs to be made out to.

CASH

It might surprise some people but most venues pay bands in cash. This often works to the favor of the band leader who can divide the night's pay up as the band tears down. It's also another reason why most bands don't keep a checking account.

DIGITAL PAYMENT

There has been a real uptick in digital money transfers through online apps like Venmo. The band may have a digital payment option. These are typically instant and paperless. Confirm this with the band prior to the event.

TIPS

In addition to the agreed upon fee for the band, there is an expectation that tipping is not only acceptable, but encouraged. Bands that play in clubs almost always encourage patrons to tip the waitresses, bartenders, or anyone else who is providing a service in the venue and do so with the belief that patrons are being encouraged to tip the band if they play a request or special song that the patron connects with. If your event does not encourage tipping the band, you will want to communicate that. When determining a fee, bands will assume that they will receive some level of tips and will feel cheated if they discover that tips were discouraged or even not allowed by the venue or event.