

Storm Clouds on the Horizon

Could you be in danger of losing 50 percent of your business?

A disturbing trend seems to be developing in some areas of the country. Owners and managers of various party houses and banquet facilities are informing brides and grooms that the disc jockey they have hired will not be permitted to perform the announcing duties at their reception.

If not the DJ, whom? Believe it or not, the grand entrance, first dance, ceremonial cake cutting and garter/ bouquet toss are being announced by the banquet manager or someone supplied by the hall. Not to be overly critical but, with a few exceptions, these people are not qualified. They may know the shtick but, they typically have the personality of a dead house plant. Their announcing broadcasts the fact that, to them, this is just another event. To make matters worse, the house PA system, with those tinny sounding ceiling speakers, adds an annoying edge to their voice, while muffling every syllable.

But it doesn't stop there. They are also telling couples and their families that the hall will provide the arrival, cocktail and dinner music! If this is the start of a trend, will it reduce you to just a CD spinner? In years past, the worst complaint registered by clients who didn't like their



DJ was that "he/she just played music... they showed no personality and didn't say a word the entire evening!" Now, just as we are getting established as all-around, personable entertainers and MC/hosts, some party hall people are trying to send us back into the past—not to mention what it will do to our profit margin.

On the grand scale, if you lose the first half of all your four or five hour wedding receptions you will effectively lose 50 percent of your business. And what if you won't comply? These same party halls might just start telling the Joes and Marshas of the world not to book your DJ company because you refuse to do things their way. It is their house, isn't it? Don't they have the right to dictate what goes on at every event?

BY ART BRADLEE



At a recent meeting of DJs in Rochester, N.Y., organized by Michael Bonanno of Stage Entertainment, a list of complaints from party hall managers was read. The list included the following:

- DJs not calling ahead to arrange setup and to settle other questions.
- DJs not closing exterior doors while loading or during setup, to save on hall utilities.
- DJs not asking for permission to use party house supplies (i.e. dollies, table cloths, tables, etc).
- DJs setting up before asking if there are any special instructions from the hall manager.
- DJs showing up after the event has started in their street clothes and parading through the festivities.
- Unprofessional announcement procedures by DJs
- DJs taping down cords with sticky tape that ruins carpeting.

Banquet Facility Etiquette:

1. Call the hall one week prior to the event to find out who the banquet manager or person in charge will be and introduce yourself to him/her.

2. Let the banquet manager know that you will be arriving one hour prior to the start of the event to set up your equipment and to do a sound check.

3. When you arrive at the event, introduce yourself to the manager prior to setting up. Before you take even one item from your vehicle, go in, introduce yourself, shake hands. If you need to prop open the door to make your entry easier, ask first. Unload your gear quickly and efficiently and shut the door as soon as possible. On days when the heating or air conditioning is working overtime, leaving a door wide open for even a moment longer than necessary is careless and unprofessional. Show them you care about their bottom line... maybe they'll start thinking better of you.

4. When working a reception, make sure your schedule matches theirs. Work out all the details such as:

- a. How long will cocktails be available?
- b. What time is the meal scheduled to begin?
- c. Make sure that the champagne is poured before announcing the toast.
- d. How do they want you to announce the dinner and when?
- e. Ask if the wait staff needs time to clear the tables to get ready for the cake cutting before announcing the cake ceremony.
- f. If the party is going well, find out if the banquet manager will object to any overtime before asking the client if they want overtime.
- g. Don't EVER help yourself to ANY food or drink unless asked by the client or the banquet manager. If the client tells you to help yourself, let the banquet manager know that you have been invited by his/her client to partake of the food.
- h. Never ask for, accept, or buy alcoholic beverages, or smoke anything while on the job!

WHAT'S UP?

On the surface, it might seem reasonable to assume that the party halls are doing this simply as a way to upcharge the customer. But the fact is, most of them are offering their services at no additional charge. So if their motive is not profit... what is it? Could it be that a segment of the DJ community is actually responsible for this new modus operandi?

Here's something to think about. Have you, or any of the DJs you employ, ever been rude to a banquet hall owner or manager? Have you ever acted without regard for the fact that, just like you, they have a schedule to follow? Are you, or anyone else from your company, projecting a lousy attitude? Maybe you aren't even aware that certain banquet halls don't recommend your company because of something said months or years ago.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

When a party hall in your area decides to cut DJs' play time by taking over the announcing and/or music, ask to meet with them. Like a professional, first find out why they have decided to go this route. If it's because they have had a long list of problems with DJs, maybe you can help solve their problem. Plead your case. Let them know how this policy will effect your business.

If they refuse to listen, you really have no choice but to let them to do it their way, even if the customer is the ultimate loser. You certainly don't want to

Are party hall managers in your area turning a cold shoulder to DJs? Your comments are invited. Write to: "Feedback," Mobile Beat Magazine, P.O. Box 309, East Rochester, NY 14445. Or e-mail your comments to mobilebeat@aol.com

alienate them entirely. In those instances where a couple has hired you partly because they want you do the announcing, suggest to the bride and groom that they call the hall and request you be allowed to do the announcing. Make sure they leave you out of it and not give the impression that you put them up to it.

NIP IT NOW!

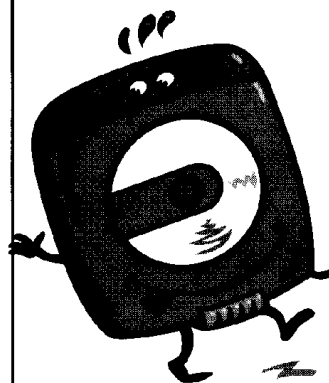
If you don't already have one, maybe it's time to develop a policy of banquet hall etiquette for your DJs. This may even be something the various DJ associations in our country could draft jointly. For the time being, I've included a few points to ponder in terms of designing something for your own use. I offer this to experienced DJs as a refresher, and to beginners as something to establish as policy.

It just may be that if we start showing more consideration for hall owners and managers, perhaps we can head off this nasty trend before it becomes regular practice, destroying the progress we've made in establishing ourselves as professionals. Remember that the majority of new business comes from word of mouth. Banquet managers can spread the word about your business better than anyone. The question is, will it be good news or bad?

Art Bradlee operates America's Best Mobile Entertainers' Consulting Services (888-MOBLENT). Contributing to this article was Eric J. Dillman of Holly Springs, NC.

Shine it up and Show it off!

MB's DJ/KJ Van & Truck issue is coming soon!



HURRY!
Send in your photo by JULY 10, 1998

Send in your DJ truck or van photo!

Mobile Beat's annual DJ/KJ Truck & Van issue is coming soon. To have your vehicle displayed with the best in the world, just send us a photo! Send a crisp, clear, color photo of your custom painted DJ truck, van or trailer to:

Mobile Beat Magazine, Truck & Van issue • P.O. Box 309 • E. Rochester, N.Y. 14445