

# I Don't Want to Miss a Thing

THE INSIDE SPINS AND HARSH TRUTHS ON THE UNHERALDED ART OF BEING A WEDDING DJ by Rick Levin

A good wedding DJ might go unnoticed, so effectively and smoothly is he keeping things rolling. A bad wedding DJ, on the other hand, will ruin your night and, at worst, immortalize your shitty time by going viral on YouTube. But a great wedding DJ can make your dreams come true.

Enter DJ Anon, a local wedding DJ who's been working the Eugene events circuit for the past couple years. "I'm just a music junkie is what it comes down to," says Anon (short for Anonymous, not his real tag). Even though he confesses to disliking much of today's pop music, he nonetheless finds satisfaction — even pleasure — in discovering which contemporary songs smash together seamlessly to create the perfect segue.

"The job is harder, and more important, than you think," says DJ Anon of putting together and playing the ideal soundtrack for each snowflake of a wedding. "Think of the most fun you've ever had at a wedding and then get rid of the DJ," he proposes. "Would it still have been as great?"

Andre Sirois, a local spin master who goes by the tag DJ Foodstamp, says he's worked upwards of 20 weddings, though he doesn't consider himself a wedding DJ, per se — rather, he is a DJ who sometimes does weddings. Unlike DJ Anon, who works under the umbrella of an entertainment contractor, Foodstamp does weddings "on a very limited basis" because he finds them, for the most part, rather stressful.

"I respect people that do it all the time," Sirois says of wedding DJs, adding that he tends to be "more picky" about the ceremonies he works. "Usually it's a friend, or a friend of a friend. I do weddings where I think it'll be fun, so I'm a little more selective."

Nonetheless, Sirois has developed a system for making those select weddings he does DJ go off without a hitch. To get things rolling, Sirois has the bride and groom burn CDs of their favorite music — an "ultimate dance party," for instance — which he listens to and analyzes. "I do a musical DNA," he says. "I kind of extrapolate on what they give me."

ANDRE SIRIOS AKA DJ FOODSTAMP



PHOTO COURTESY ANDRE SIRIOS

The key to deejaying a wedding, Sirois says, is preparation. He sets up with his own equipment, and doubles or triples up on everything — digital music backed up by vinyl, a second DJ mixer, music sequenced on two iPods. "I try to show up and have everything I need just in case," Sirois says. "These are lessons I've just kind of learned along the way. You just don't want to fuck it up at someone's wedding."

DJ Anonymous seconds that emotion: Be prepared. First, he says, "I'll meet with the bride and groom, just to get a feel for them." Even at this early point, Anon says, he's trying to establish trust — trust that flows both ways. He suggests to affianced couples that they "always meet with your DJ ahead of time, to let them know your expectations for the day, what you want to hear, and also to figure out if they know what they're doing."

Trust, however, might be only a subcategory to one of his strongest maxims: "Your DJ is not a glorified iPod." Anyone laboring under this assumption, Anon warns, is opening a can of worms — not the smallest being that, "like anything else, there's plenty of people in this business who have no business being here."

DJ Anon, in other words, is not simply a human jukebox. "I work by the hour, and spend hours of unpaid prep work studying music, practicing transitions, compiling ideas, because I care about giving you a day that you'll never forget. If I screw up, I am forever a stain on your wedding video."

But to accomplish giving you your ideal wedding, Anon first needs you to understand a few things. "It's your day, yes, but I'm a lot better at this than you are, so relax and enjoy it," he says, noting that, minus a wedding planner, it is typically incumbent upon him to play unannounced emcee — to "move things along, keep the event rolling" by getting guests seated for the big entrance, making announcements, semaphoring such crucial moments as cake cuttings, toasts and first dances.

Then there are the intangibles — rowdy kids, meddling mothers, inebriated assholes — that must be dealt with. "I am the one who will take the mic out of the hands of the guy who probably shouldn't have been giving a toast in the first place," says Anon. "Sometimes when I put my headphones on, it's so your drunk uncle will stop talking to me."

Because of such mostly unnoticed, unremarked duties, DJ Anon offers a piece of post-wedding advice: Always tip your DJ. That, and "if you really want a great dance party, make it an open bar."

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