



ULTIMATE GUIDE

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO WEDDING DJ PRICING IN THE BALTIMORE - WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA

BY MICHAEL THOMA

What the other DJ's won't tell you.



The Ultimate Guide to Wedding DJ Pricing

Planning a wedding can be crazy, stressful and downright scary. Since this is probably the first wedding you've ever planned, it's hard to know where to begin! On top of that, you have to figure out how much it costs to get what you want without blowing your budget.

And wedding pricing is all over the map!

How do you figure out how much it should cost for a wedding DJ?

The first thing you need to do is educate yourself about prices in your market. So give yourself a pat on the back for doing the smart thing by reading this report. :)

If I were you, I'd be asking myself, "Why should I listen to YOU?"

That's a good question! So let me introduce myself.

My name is Michael Thoma from [M & T Event Entertainment](#) and I have rocked hundreds of awesome weddings over 15 years.

I know how much it costs to get a great wedding entertainer and where you can afford to cut corners.

I've also talked to brides and grooms who didn't invest in hiring the right DJ...and lived to regret it.

After seeing so many of my couples overwhelmed and frustrated over wedding costs, I just HAD to do something about it!

There are wedding DJs in every price range.

I'm not here to "sell" you on my business. I know what I do is amazing ([my happy couples agree](#)), but I'm not for everyone.

You deserve to know the truth about wedding DJ pricing.

I'm here to help you make an informed decision about what's right for you.

The honest truth about DJ prices

I hear these questions constantly:

How much do you charge?

Why are you so expensive?

Your DJ is responsible for 80% of your success. I am here to “peel back the curtain” so to speak about what most DJs are afraid to give you: the real price up front. It has been debated for a long time that we as professionals need to know some key information like, “How many hours would you like us for?” and “Are you getting married there too?” or even “How many guests will you have?” These questions seem to make you feel uncomfortable and you stop answering us.

I do not have any psychic powers and without this knowledge, I can only guess what you need. I am not dodging the question; I am merely ascertaining how much equipment I will need and what I will need to plan for. You say “Why can't you just give me a price?” and I say “Why won't you talk to me?” The wedge has been set between us and it does a great job driving us apart. It is counter-productive to say the least. What if I said “My rates range from \$1200 to \$2500”? What does it tell you? Absolutely nothing except that I am charging \$300 to \$500 an hour, right? Ummm...Not even close.

The difference between products and services

Choosing your professional is an emotional decision. When emotion is removed, people shop on price and now a service becomes a product. In retail, products are on the shelf with the price clearly marked. You can choose to buy it from a box store, grocery store, pharmacy, convenience store, etc. The same products with slightly different prices. Only a few pennies difference depending where you go but the exact same product.

With services, it is a little different. Each owner has chosen the way that he will do business. Let's choose lawn services for instance. There are two single-op companies. Bill has a push mower. He takes 30 minutes to mow a lawn and charges \$40. George has a riding mower with zero turn capability and can do the same lawn in 10 minutes but charges \$100. Who will you choose?

Which is the important factor to you: **price** or **quality of service**? What if I said that Bill's concern is getting the lawn mowed and moving on to the next stop, while George calls the client to arrange a scheduled appointment. He makes sure that pets will be safely inside and asks if there will be any children that might be taking a nap. He understands the importance of looking beyond the task and wants to provide a full, positive customer experience. George mows the lawn with a bag attachment for the clippings, then trims the grass and cleans up using a blower. Now which is the better deal? Both of them cut your lawn but one cares about you, plus he left your lawn looking a whole lot neater. This philosophy holds true in the DJ world too.

Let me give you another example; coffee. Ah, the smell of caffeinated brown liquid that we all cannot do without! Is all coffee the same? NO! There is gas station coffee, convenience store coffee, donut shop coffee, specialty barista coffee, etc. Where does your loyalty lie? Are you good with a \$2 cup of Joe or do you insist on the \$8 coffee? Congratulations! You have just understood how DJs are different.

Good v. Bad DJ Set-ups



All Djs are the same

There is a common misconception that every DJ is the same. No wonder people think that I just pull numbers out of the air and charge whatever I want. There is a reason that I charge what I do. First, you must understand the difference between each level of service.

There are 3 price ranges for wedding DJs in our market:

#1 – Bargain DJs Under \$500

#2 – Average DJs \$600 - \$900

#3 – Wedding Specialist DJs \$1,200 and Up

Let's explore what you can typically expect in each of these ranges.

BARGAIN DJ'S

Obviously, there may be exceptions in each of these categories. But in general...

Bargain DJs are:

- Less experienced
- Working part-time
- Focus on quantity, not quality

Most bargain DJs are like Wal-Mart. They offer low prices and try to appeal to everyone. Most are amateurs or hobbyists. They have a regular "day job" and provide entertainment on the side. They may be truly passionate about what they do, but they often aren't as easy to reach, their communication is less reliable, and they may not be available for meetings and phone calls as much as you would like.

Some of these are brand new DJs who don't know how to conduct themselves well on the microphone because they primarily "spin" at local clubs. They are obnoxious and cheesy. They believe music is better when it's loud and that everyone is constantly on spring break. P.S.~ They LOVE the open bar. Free drinks!!

They may only have club mixes for songs and very rarely are they radio-edit. That means every vulgar word will be heard at your reception! They often have very little experience with weddings and typically do not have a very detailed Itinerary, if any.

You'll typically find mixed reviews of these DJs as their performance tends to be inconsistent. You may catch a good one on a good day..but then again, you might not.

Some of these DJs are working full-time offering a budget service. I call these "McWedding" entertainment companies.

These DJs focus on QUANTITY of weddings, rather than delivering QUALITY service. Their performance tends to be more standardized and lacking in personalization because of the need to serve lots of couples with a minimum investment of time to make money.

It's kind of like going to McDonald's. They focus on feeding people as quickly and efficiently as possible. Get 'em in, get 'em out.

Will you get what you order? Sometimes.

Is it going to be a gourmet meal? Not a chance.

AVERAGE DJS

Average wedding DJs:

- Are more reliable and consistent.
- Play music and make simple announcements.
- Have decent reviews.

Next is the Old Navy DJ. They tend to take their businesses more seriously. Most of them are full-time or on the way there. They have a little more class and are a bit trendier. They can make announcements on the microphone but the music choices are conservative. They are mindful that this is a wedding and try to treat the event with some respect. Beyond that, they play elevator music during dinner and wait until everyone has eaten. You will hear the same phrases over and over. "This is a special song or request or ladies and gentleman, at this time". They wait for the chance to play dance music so that they can get the crowd involved. Boring.

Often this DJ entertains for all kinds of events, including weddings. They also do bar mitzvahs, birthday parties, high school reunions, corporate events, proms and karaoke events.

They aren't wedding specialists, so they may not be experienced or equipped to deliver top notch service that's catered for a wedding.

They're more like an Applebee's. It's standard, average food. You have more opportunities for customization, but it's still not going to be a gourmet meal.

As the average price suggests, you can expect pretty average service.

WEDDING SPECIALIST DJS

Now we come to the wedding specialists. They will perform at other parties but weddings are their passion and where they really shine. If your entertainment is important to you, these are the guys and gals you want to hire.

Of course, I'm biased because I happen to fall into this category, but there's a reason these entertainers cost more.

Wedding Specialist DJs have LOTS of experience.

They've personally performed for hundreds of weddings and have decades of experience.

These DJs invest in regular training in voice over work, mixing, music production, improvisation, comedy and practice weekly to keep their skills sharp..

They buy the best equipment-- In fact, most bring \$8000 worth to a wedding, plus backup. They subscribe to legal music sources, maintain websites, insure their equipment and carry liability insurance. Plus, the daily cost of running a business. Office phones and cell phones so they can be contacted anywhere, online planning forms

and software to make planning easier for you and access to a music library to help you choose songs.

They attend industry events to learn more about weddings and what's happening in the DJ world. They often belong to DJ associations like the ADJA, NAME and take classes to improve on a regular basis.

Some of them are musicians with college degrees in a music background. They know music intimately and it translates to smooth, creative mixes and an enhanced ability to read the crowd and keep the dance floor rocking.

Wedding specialist DJs charge a premium because they deliver a premium service.

Expect things like:

- Custom mixes
- Extended Grand Entrance introductions
- Stunning light shows
- Master level speaking skills
- Creative ideas and customization

Many of these wedding specialists also offer additional services such as photo booths and even help coordinate the wedding.

They understand that their role is about so much more than playing good music; their job is to make sure everything goes smoothly.

You'll find nothing but 5 star reviews of these wedding specialists for good reason. They deliver. It's like eating at the restaurant of a famous 5 Star Chef. You can expect the highest level of skill, professional service and attention to detail at every step of the way.

The real cost of a professional DJ

This is a business and there are certain things that you need to run it. In this case, first a website, filled with all of the content that you would expect to find, phones so that you can contact them, online planning tools to make it easier for you to plan, music subscriptions to obtain legal, edited music, transportation, plus maintenance, gas and insurance on the vehicle, software and general overhead. How about the equipment itself? An average of \$8000 worth is brought to a wedding, plus backups. Equipment is replaced on average, every three years. Take a look at Brian S. Redd's video on Mobile DJ rates: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDI6dBUiS2g>

They get to know you on a personal level and use that information to positively impact your experience. They are detail-oriented and orchestrate the event seamlessly. They coordinate with the venue and staff to make sure the meal is on time. They converse with the photographers and videographers to make sure they are there to capture the memories being made. But that's not all. An experienced DJ knows music and is able to mix seamlessly between songs. They are compelling on the microphone and think of what kind of impact their words will have. They spend 30-40 hours preparing for your special event.

They take a look at the logistical aspect of the event and create ways to stage any special activities like your Grand Entrance or the First Dance. Do you want spotlights? Guess who does that? You cannot just throw them up and hope for the best. It must be controlled to achieve the best outcome.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Is being insured important? Uh..Yes! Insurance is not a scary word. In fact you should insist that your professional DJ has it. This insurance is for you too. Suppose a piece of equipment falls over on you or one of your guests? Who is paying for the damage to the property? The hospital bills? Having liability insurance covers that.

IMPORTANT: If your entertainer is hanging something from the ceiling, they MUST have Rigger's insurance. This insurance covers anything hanging from the ceiling (flying speakers, huge trusses with lighting, etc.) Basic liability does not cover this. Make sure that they show you the policy!

How much should I budget for my entertainment?

Like I stated in the beginning, your DJ is responsible for 80% of your success.

The first question to ask yourself is, “How important is the wedding entertainment to YOU?”

If you end up with low quality or unreliable DJ, is that acceptable?

Will you still have the wedding you want without it?

Is saving some money worth the risk?

If it's not that important to get EXACTLY what you want delivered precisely to your standards, then hiring a low-priced wedding DJ might be a good idea. You'll probably find someone who shows up, plays music and gets the job done to at least an average level.

On the other hand, if having amazing entertainment that keeps your guests dancing all night long is your priority, it makes sense to invest more in someone who can deliver exactly what you want.

If you are concerned with making sure that your event is treated with the respect that it deserves, that all of your special activities have been prepared for, that your DJ puts thought into what they say on the microphone, that your music is expertly mixed, that they are insured in case of an accident and most important, that they have just as much interest in your reception as you do, hire a professional. Most of the couples I meet look to spend at least \$1200-\$1600 on their wedding entertainment to get the quality they want.

How do I find the best one?

Investigate all your prospective choices thoroughly. Stalk their web page, read their reviews, find them on Facebook, follow their time lines and read their content. Learn everything about them. **Then schedule a meeting to physically TALK with them.** I cannot emphasize enough how important this is. You must find out if they are a good match for you. Make sure they match your personality and style. Make sure that they are detail-oriented but not controlling. You want to be able to make some decisions for yourself. In the end, **TRUST** is what you are looking for in your professional DJ.

Here are some questions to ask a potential wedding DJ to learn about the value of his/her offers:

- How much and what type of experience do you have?
- How many weddings a year do you perform?
- Do you have a background or training in music?
- Are you licensed and insured?
- What DJ groups do you belong to?
- Where did you receive your training?
- May I speak to couples who've hired you?
- What will you do if my guests don't dance?

You deserve a wedding day that's exactly how you want it to be. It's my job to ask questions, listen and make your dream wedding a reality. You should hear the songs you love and none of the ones you hate! Your guests should be dancing all night long. Your wedding should entertain ALL your guests, from your friends to your grandparents. And above all, your wedding should be totally 'you.' Your style, your personality, your love story. Nothing cookie-cutter about it. You should never have to suffer through an obnoxious, corny DJ who steals the spotlight or play those cheesy songs you hate.

What Do You Get For the Price?

There's obviously a lot involved in hiring the right wedding DJ for you. This report should point you in the right direction. However, I'm happy to answer any questions you might have. If you're only interested in the lowest price, I'm probably not the guy for you.

But if you'd like to know more about what you REALLY get for the price, let's talk! We'll meet, grab a coffee and find out if I'm the right match for your wedding.

My wife Tori and I have a combined 30 years experience and weddings are our passion. I use my position as a Master of Ceremonies to create laughter, a few tears, wonder, romance, excitement and tranquility for you and your guests. We are proud members of the ADJA -(American Disc Jockey Association) and the PBA -(Photo Booth Association) Please feel free to contact me at mthoma@mntevents.com. You can call me at the office: 304-728-9653 or my cell: 443-848-1832. My website is mntevents.com and you can find me at M & T Events on Facebook.

