

Jazz Up Your Wedding!

TIPSHEET

Jazz Up Your Wedding! is run by Emma Hutchinson who used to be a professional events manager. As the singer in the band she has performed at hundreds of weddings and events and is happy to offer the following tips about hiring our band...

Hello!

It's really important to get a great band for your wedding. I can't count the number of times the happy couple have come up to me after we've finished playing and said "You really made our day!" Not only are all our musicians experienced professionals who play at an incredibly high standard, they are also reliable, dress appropriately and behave impeccably. We will always do everything we can to make sure you have great live music at your wedding and I am on hand to offer help and advice at every stage. We look forward to being part of your big day!

1. Firstly, when making an enquiry please tell me whether you want the band for background music or music for dancing as this has a bearing on the size of band and the type of musicians. A duo or trio with, say, vocals and keyboards + sax is ideal for background music, but for dance music you must have drums and I would recommend guitar as well.
2. Timings – my best advice is to allow an hour's break after dinner before the band starts playing. This gives time for the band to set up, the guests to relax after dinner and the events team at the venue to turn the room 'round (ie clear up after dinner and move the tables from the dancefloor area). This may seem like a long time to you (I can feel you panicking already!) BUT if you get the band to start playing immediately after dinner several things generally happen:
 - if it's a lovely summer evening all the guests naturally disappear outside to enjoy the weather, leaving the band to play to no-one (which you are paying for by the way!)
 - if you're running late (and most weddings do) the band has to wait around - the record for this is 1.5 hours (YES, REALLY!) - for the speeches to finish in order to set up and you lose band performance time (because the band will still finish at the agreed time)
 - after a fabulous meal your guests are too full to dance and will instead want to sit around letting their dinner go down like most sane people
 - it's only 7.30 pm and who's ready to throw themselves around a dancefloor at 7.30 pm?!

Less is often more, and the most relaxed weddings give you, your friends and family time to chill out and have a good old catch-up. An hour just flies by!

3. How big is the room the band will be playing in, and how many guests are you having? Both these factors affect the size of the band required. Why have a five piece band if you're only having 50 people in a small room? I'm happy to advise on suitable band line-ups and to recommend the right size of band for you.

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4. Our band plays a variety of music which suits the wide age range you typically get at a wedding. For example, we play swing, blues, latin jazz, lounge, soul, funk, Motown & disco. For an evening reception we generally play about 30 mins of jazz and 90 mins of funk/soul/disco (2 hours in total). But you may prefer to have an hour of chilled-out jazz after dinner, take a break and then have a hour of funk & soul. Or you may fancy having background jazz during your drinks reception followed by soul & funk for dancing in the evening! There are a range of options I'll be happy to talk through with you if it helps!
5. How long should the live music go on for? During an evening reception we generally play two or three sets of music over a 3 hour period (eg 2 x 1 hr or 3 x 40 min sets). Drinks receptions usually call for 1 x 90 min continuous set or 2 x 45 min sets played over a 2 hour period. If you're looking for longer playing times please let me know and I'll quote accordingly.
6. We supply recorded music between sets to keep the party going - we provide appropriate music on iPod. Better still put together your own party mix on CD/iPod/laptop for us to play through our sound system. That way you can basically have your own disco playing all your faves in between our sets! For recorded music after we've finished playing why not ask your venue to provide a sound system? Alternatively, we are sometimes able to offer this facility for an additional charge, so please ask at the time of booking.
7. Lights: we have zippy disco lights to light up the dancefloor area in front of the band - they flash on and off with the music and are generally groovy ☺ Check the other room lighting with your wedding venue. If the main lights are on a dimmer that's great! If they're either on or off, consider bringing in some other mood lighting. If the room lights are too bright, guests feel inhibited and are less likely to dance. If it's pitch black other than our disco lights, we can't see properly onstage (either our music or each other!) and your guests won't see us properly, either!
8. Set list - we don't have pre-determined sets. This gives us the flexibility to go with the flow on the day and react accordingly with the best songs from our repertoire to maintain the atmosphere. You are welcome to choose a selection from our songlist and we'll include as many as we can, whilst making sure there is a good balance of music on the day.
9. First Dance: if you are having a First Dance - or would just like us to play a special song at some point during the evening - we are always happy to learn it for you (given sufficient notice), assuming it's a jazzy or soul song or a pop ballad. If it's a song that would sound silly played by our band (because we don't have a string section, a horn section and 8 backing singers!) we will tell you! If you'd prefer to have the original version we'll happily play your CD or iPod track through our soundsystem for you.
10. Seeing us live - hopefully you've already watched our online video which gives you a good idea of what we look like/sound like. We play almost exclusively at private functions and corporate events so it's not generally possible to see the whole band perform live. If you've listened to us online but would also like to hear a CD (same tracks but some longer clips) please let me know and I'll happily pop one in the post to you.

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Other stuff you need to know:

Booking contract

In order to book the band you have to pay a deposit and sign a booking contract which states clearly what time we will be setting up/de-rigging, how long we will play for, for how much and the payment terms etc.

Insurance

As a member of the Musicians' Union we've got full Public Liability Insurance (£10 million). If your venue needs to see our Certificate just let me know and I'll email you a copy.

Illness

Many great musicians work in the Jazz Up Your Wedding! band (and they all know each other) so if one falls ill or gets called away on a tour with Scissor Sisters or whoever I can generally contact one of the other musicians to cover for them (I've never failed yet).

Performing area & setting up

- Space for the band, we need:
 - Trio: 3.5m deep x 3.5m wide
 - Quartet: 3.5m x 4m
 - 5 piece band: 3.5m x 5m
- Power - double 13 amp electrical socket into which we plug our extension leads
- We arrive to set up 1 hour before we are due to start playing. *If you want us to set-up earlier be sure to discuss it with me prior to booking so as not to have any budgetary surprises – it will affect the price.*
- If we are playing outside we need a **flat dry area, with full cover from very hot sun/rain etc and power right on the playing area to plug ourselves into** - a normal double 13 amp electrical socket (into which we plug our extension leads) is fine but it must be under cover ie not exposed to the rain. If you need us to move rooms between sets please let us know at the time of booking.
- *NB if there is a Noise Limiter in the room we'll be performing in please let us know before signing our contract as unfortunately we may not be able to accept the booking.*

Food & drink

Unlimited soft drinks/tea/coffee/mineral water/juices should be available to the band, plus up to two free alcoholic drinks per person (we rarely use these, in practice). We also require a meal eg cold meat salad, lasagne etc (sandwiches/rolls are not sufficient – performing takes a lot of energy.) We also need a changing-room (doesn't have to be anything flash but not the toilets).

Directions, unloading and parking

The clearer and more detailed the information you give me beforehand, the easier it is for us to get to your venue on time, set up quickly and quietly and play beautifully! In particular, please let me know if there are codes for security barriers, access to unload through back/fire exits or lots of stairs (and no lift!). We have some heavy gear to carry, so we need to be able to unload as close as possible to the performing area.