

# Band vs. DJ

Seven brides share their entertainment choices, and tell us if they regret them now. BY HEATHER LEE



ALLISON COZZINI TO JOHN NICK GAETANO



200 guests at the Peninsula Hotel in Chicago

**THE SEARCH:** Our wedding was in a different state, so I did a lot of prescreening of bands from home. We narrowed it down to two and met with each band in person; one stood out because they were more contemporary, which is what we were looking for.

**THE CHOICE:** The Ken Arlen Orchestra (arlenmusic.com). We also booked Sirens, a band of “rock violinists,” to perform with the orchestra, which expanded the band size to 15 pieces. I knew this would stand out and make an impression on our guests. They were seriously amazing—guests were talking about the music all night.

**THE INSTRUCTIONS:** We made a “do not play” list of songs as well as a short “must play” list of only four tunes, and left the rest up to them. We felt it was important to give just a few guidelines and let the band feel out the crowd and play what they felt would work at each moment.

Surprisingly few songs are actually played at weddings, so having 30 “must play” songs won’t work.

**THE RESULTS:** We’d requested a couple songs, for our first dance and cake-cutting, that the band didn’t know, and they learned them for us. I had also asked to hear none of the “same old wedding music” and was truly blown away by their creative repertoire. We actually ended up extending the party by an hour because we were having so much fun.

**THE MEMORABLE MOMENT:** John Nick plays bass, so he got up with the band and played two songs. Everyone went crazy—it was definitely one of the highlights of the night.



AMANDA JOHNS TO PJ PEREZ



148 guests at the Parker Palm Springs in Palm Springs, CA

**THE SEARCH:** We found our band online and they sent us a DVD. That was really helpful—we were able to get a feel for their performance style.

**THE CHOICE:** The 10-piece Durell Coleman Band (dcband.com). We wanted to play a lot of Earth, Wind & Fire, Stevie Wonder, and funk music, so horns were definitely a must.

**THE INSTRUCTIONS:** We gave them a list of songs not to play. We also asked them to learn a song for our first dance—they were happy to do so for a small fee.

**THE RESULTS:** They were fabulous. People still tell me they were one of the best wedding bands they’ve ever heard.

**THE LESSON LEARNED:** Be patient and give yourself enough time to find the right band. They book up early, so get started as soon as possible. Try to see the band live or at least on a DVD, because you’ll definitely get a better feel for them than you would just listening to a CD.

