

## Face the Music and Dance!

Budgeting music for your wedding reception.

Jeremy Shrader, Jeremy Shrader Music

When budgeting for your wedding reception, entertainment should be high on your priority list. To help with determining how much to spend, try breaking down the cost per person, similar to food or drink costs. Think of it as a private performance for your closest friends and family. If you were to take them out to a show, what type of show would it be and how much would the cover charge or ticket price be per person? What you spend will have a direct effect on the quality of the entertainers that you hire. Not to say that spending more will guarantee a great band, or that you have to spend a lot to have quality music, but the old adage "you get what you pay for" certainly holds true for entertainment for your wedding. Here are some guidelines, compared to ticket prices, to make budgeting a bit easier:

**\$0 – Open Mic Night** - When you go to a coffee shop or bar for an open mic-night, you will typically pay no cover charge to hear up-and-coming musicians perfect their craft. The musical experience of the performers will range from none at all, to music students, to somewhat proficient songwriters and hobbyists. There are some real gems hidden in there, but overall the show will be mostly amateurish. (Some upscale restaurants and bars will have live bands or musicians without charging a cover. Usually, the venue is paying the band a set fee, not based on ticket sales).

**\$5 – Opening Act** - At a music show, you may pay a cover charge to hear several musicians or bands. There are usually one or two opening acts, which may be newer groups who are still developing their song lists and fan-base. These bands are good for warming up the crowd for the big attraction, but may still be a little rough around the edges. Other times, an opening act may be a smaller group, such as a soloist or duo, that has great talent and experience, but their sound is more reserved in order to build up to the main act or set a more laid-back atmosphere.

**\$10 – Headliner** - This is a band that has been around for a while. They have developed a following and are experienced performers who can entertain a crowd. They may be on the cusp of greatness and know what it takes to put on a great show. They have professional equipment and look the part. These musicians may have years of experience behind them, as well as a formal musical education. Putting on a great show is what they are all about.

**\$20 – Regional Touring Act** - These bands have really got their act together and have spent time on the road, visiting other cities and winning fans and friends everywhere they go. Their setlist is streamlined and their show is perfected. These bands are often as talented as more popular artists, but for one reason or another have not gotten the recognition they need to put them on MTV. They also have more expenses for travel and equipment. This could also be an established local band with many members, such as a 16-piece jazz orchestra.

**\$50-200 – Superstars** - Ticket prices for popular mainstream artists can range quite a bit, but if you are paying \$50 or more for a ticket, chances are you are seeing a seasoned professional. Not everyone can afford to hire Tony Bennett to sing at their wedding, but if you can, you definitely should!

These prices are meant to be an approximation and should give you some idea of how to budget, per guest expected. Bands or musicians who have to provide their own sound and lights may charge an additional fee on top of this, but keep in mind they are professionals who have other expenses in addition to their salaries. The entertainment at your wedding reception will help your guests feel at ease, have a great time, stimulate conversation, or want to dance! Think about the tone that you want to set and the range of ages and backgrounds that will be in attendance. This could be the greatest show of their lives!

[www.jeremyshradermusic.com](http://www.jeremyshradermusic.com)

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