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EXTENDED PLAY

The wedding spinners

BY DENISE BENSON

"I am a DJ, I am what I play." David Bowie's words often race through my mind as I play, especially at the handful of weddings and corporate events I'll accept each year, bending on the playlist front and questioning what that says about me.

DJing at weddings can feel like the final frontier -- and not in a wide open, wild West kinda way. Despite the fact that most club DJs do play occasional weddings, there is often a sense of shame attached to accepting such a gig. It's hard not to equate the scenario with tuxedo-clad, lifer wedding DJs who play the "Macarena" with glee, jiving up the microphone as they do so. Hot it's not, though it does seem to be what some brides and grooms desire. To them I suggest www.completemusic.ca, a thorough "mobile disc-jockey entertainment" company that means business.



DJ Glen spins Macarena-free weddings

"We'd gladly do more weddings for people who enjoy our music and don't want to hear that chicken song," says Gani of milk. He and DJ partner Felix played a friend's ceremony last year, their first such gig. "We've been asked to play weddings and said no because we don't want to be responsible for ruining a couple's special day or to endure another evening of 'What do you mean you don't have ABBA? What kind of a DJ are you?'" he says. "It isn't on our top 10 list of favourite ways to spend a Saturday night."

As summer stumbles to a close, I realize that I've played three weddings this past year alone -- a personal record considering I've only done 10 in my 16 years of spinning. Though I'll only accept these gigs if I know the people or they know me, there are still compromises and stress. The couple themselves may want my music, but inevitably there's the rest of the family and wedding party. I've played jazz standards, Irish reels, pop hits, tired disco and Frank, Frank, Frank. Still, there have been altercations: mothers demanding "music for the rest of us," uncles practically climbing on my turntables, drunken guests literally falling under them.

DJ Zahra can relate. "My best and my worst experiences have been at 1,000-plus-person Indian weddings," she says. "The best? just imagine *Monsoon Wedding*. The worst? Imagine *Bend it Like Beckham* but DJing instead of soccer. Instead of musical requests, I was asked if I was married and had any children, seniors and kids would rifle through my music, inevitably there would be a handful of men who all thought they were DJs and would tell me what I really should be doing. You feel like a juke-box instead of an artist."

Still, spinning at a wedding can be genuinely touching, not to mention great fun. I've played for couples whose love and creativity was so apparent, full rooms moved between tears and gut-busting laughter, myself and my girlfriend included. I've had wedding guests mosh to Nirvana, pogo to the Clash, scream for little-known Prince and strip to sexy house.

"The guests are always the highlight," states Gani. "At the one, there was a gay couple in

attendance and one of the guys got really drunk, was pawing us and then had a wrestling match for the bouquet."

"I always enjoy the energy that people have at weddings," agrees DJ Glen C. "They don't waste any time jumping onto the dancefloor to have a good time. I want everyone to enjoy themselves."

A resident at Club Paradise, Glen has played his share of weddings over the past seven years. He leans toward mixing R&B, old-school, reggae and soca, claiming that Cameo's "Candy" is, by far, the most requested song at weddings he plays.

His website (www.djglenc.com) is clear on what he offers: "A licensed, professional DJ, free consultations, 24/7 accessibility, a choice of quality equipment, a contractual agreement, a huge list of all-time greatest wedding songs to choose from, prompt responses, and a new friend!"

At least one of my wedding gigs earned me a new fan. At my brother's wedding in Costa Rica earlier this year, my mother got past her fear that my musical tastes would wreck the party.

"Hey Denise," she leaned over to tell me, "you are pretty good. You should play more weddings."