

DIY Wedding. Destroy It Yourself...

by [Accent Events](#)

I was sent the following email by a good friend, a superb local wedding photographer, detailing some of the events of a wedding they had recently worked. As someone involved in the industry, they know the value of quality vendors doing the job they are paid to do. However, in this so-called "down economy", and with occasional terrible advice from bridal websites, couples are often looking to save money on their big day.

What this shows, I think, is that some corners shouldn't be cut. At between only 3-5% of the total budget, good entertainment is not only vital, but has an effect on the other important vendors at a wedding, and on the job they do.

Enjoy, if that's the right word - but it's hard not to feel for the couple...

As a wedding professional, I've learned over the years that paying people to do what they do well is really worth every penny. I have a great hairstylist, she does a great job and I pay her for it. I take great wedding pictures, but I haven't a clue on graphic design, so I pay a webmaster to do a great job. And while I understand very well the need to economize in "This Economy" let me share a true story from a wedding I photographed.

Let's just call it "The Brother with the iPod"

It starts at the reception. After the cocktail hour the banquet coordinator talks to the bride and the groom about being "announced in" to the wedding reception. This is common fare, part of the DJ's job is to also to be "Master of Ceremony" or MC for the event. Wrangling partying and drunken wedding parties into one spot is more difficult than you can imagine, and the ones who do it well always command my respect before a strain of YMCA is heard.

The bride has no idea if she is being announced in, and directs the banquet coordinator to The Brother with the iPod. He has no idea. He's supposed to do what? And when? And what should he say? The coordinator tells him to just say something generic like "Announcing Barbie and Ken Smith!". So the brother goes to the mike stand, and makes the announcement.

~ He doesn't ask for everyone's attention

~He makes the announcement while people are talking and mingling not only in the hall, but also when they are in the bar in the next room

~The bride and groom, confused, come in a different door than the videographer and I are at, poised to capture the moment.

~We scramble to the other side of the room to get the shot while a confused

bride and groom come into a smattering of applause.

The banquet coordinator herds the rest of the group in and everyone is seated for dinner. There is nothing but the noise of clattering china, coughing, and the lingering looks from people wondering what they are to do next. The coordinator asks me "Is there dinner music?" I reply that I have no idea, that's not really my area. She locates the brother at the bar, asks if there is dinner music, and he says "Uh...I hadn't planned on any" So for nearly three hours we were treated to the soft muffled strains of Muzak over the main sound system for the hotel.

90 minutes after the meal, the bride and groom stand at the bar. They can't be blamed, they are chatting, having fun, and when you are a bride and groom you have no sense of time, everything is a blur. Meanwhile, their guests have been fed, caked and coffeed for a good hour and the natives are starting to get restless. I approach them to talk to them about the time line that they had initially shared with me is running a bit late, and when were they planning on starting the first dance? They have no idea. Brother has no idea. I tell them that it's fine, but as we had discussed, overtime charges would begin for me in 1 hour. They look panicked, they booked my smaller package for a reason, and based on the time line they gave me, they SHOULD have been able to easily fit everything in. But without having someone to help with the festivities, things were behind for more than an hour at this point. They responded that they still had to go to tables to greet, what should they do? I told them that I would stay until their specialty dances were over at the overtime rate we discussed. They agreed.

2 hours later, nearly 3.5 hours after the end of dinner the Mother of the Bride approaches me very annoyed that dancing hasn't started. I tell her that the bride and groom are still greeting, and she says "Well where is brother!" People are leaving, they are sick of sitting around! We need to get the party started!" Brother is located at the bar in the other room. He comes in, fires up the laptop and the bride and groom are poised on the dance floor. At this point, he looks over to the bride and groom and says "What song did you want?"

I nearly drop 10K worth of camera equipment onto the parquet floor.

The bride responds in an annoyed tone the name of the song, snarling "I emailed you that was the song I wanted". Brother replies he never got the email. A small sibling spat arises on the dance floor. It's discovered that brother does not have that song in his itunes playlist. But hey, no problem, he'll download it right now. Except for one small thing....itunes does not sell that particular song. The bride is bereft. This was "their"song, it's not a popular tune and she wants it. So the call goes out to everyone with an iphone/ipod to see if they have the song. After 15 more minutes it is discovered that no one does. An enterprising

groomsman finds the tune on YouTube, and the first dance begins, about 45 minutes after it was supposed to. I take a deep breath, begin photographing the happy couple....

And then...oh holy hell, it's You Tube. They forgot about the buffering.

So for the entire duration of the song, about every 8 seconds, there is a 5 second pause. The bride is in tears, and not the happy kind. I'm in a quandary as to if I should photograph this, if she is going to want to relieve this moment and wonder if these photographs will be admissible in court when the bride kills the brother over the crappy job he did at her wedding. She was equally as gloomy in the Father Daughter dance that did not have the song she wanted. This is followed by the Mother Son, and the speaker quality is terrible. The people in the back of the room have no idea that the dance is going on, and there is a cacophony of talking and laughing during the specialty dances.

I leave 2.5 hours after my scheduled contracted time. Overtime charges are \$250 per hour, so they've just spent \$625 for me to photograph what could have been photographed in less than 15 minutes. I'm not even happy to make the extra money at this point, because it was not time well spent, but I have to charge all my clients in the same fair manner. I have to pay overtime for my assistant, and more pictures means more production time, etc. We talked in depth at the pre wedding consultation about the time line they had arranged, but without help of a professional, that time line went all to hell.

When I left the reception at 11PM not ONE SINGLE dance song had been played, and the hall rental was until midnight. I can't help but think that \$625 would have gone a long way towards a good DJ and not of some photos of events they won't really even want to remember.