

Capturing the Action

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR WORKING WITH PHOTOGRAPHERS

By Mike "Dr. Frankenstand" Ryan

If you think mobile DJs have challenges with weddings, compared to photographers, DJs have the flexibility of a contortionist. The following interview with wedding shutterbug Laura Christin of Laura Christin Photography in San Diego focuses in on ways we DJs can make the photographer's job easier and at the same time develop a lasting business relationship.

Despite my personal dislike of most wedding planners and in particular the "day-of" variety, I like wedding photographers. They can be like comrades in battle: welcome partners in dealing with the pressures of presenting successful nuptial celebrations.



However, and I do apologize to their industry, I realize that I have failed to fully appreciate the special challenges they face.

BASIC MISCONCEPTIONS

Photographers just take pictures, right? How hard can it be? Sound familiar doesn't it? "How much, just for playing music?"

Timing is the biggest challenge photographers face, and as we all know, weddings rarely start on time. Christin shines a light on this subject: "What few vendors realize is that photographers

are working against a setting sun. If hair and makeup run late, I lose that time before the ceremony, and I have to crunch in a lot of photos during cocktail hour. It becomes even more stressful if the ceremony starts late. And if it is scheduled closer to sunset we then we have an even shorter window of time to shoot pictures. The best case scenario for photographers is if we can stick as close to schedule as possible. I emphasize that importance to my couples in the planning stages."

Timing also affects the photographer's bottom line. How many times have we DJs been pressured to get all of the reception activities done before the photographer goes off the clock? According to Christin, "Some photographers offer unlimited hours, but most photographers operate on an hourly basis. I'm one of the latter. When the couple books me it's usually 6-12 months out and a reception schedule hasn't been set yet. So we have to guess as to how much time we'll need to get all the shots. I tell my couples to let the DJ know what time they have me booked until. That way we can make adjustments to the timeline in advance of the wedding day, or the couple can decide to hire me for additional time if necessary."

There are two "sessions" of scheduled poses photographers have to capture on the wedding day. One before the ceremony, and one directly after the ceremony. What, if anything, can a DJ do to help the photographer?

While there isn't really anything a DJ can do to help with the first session of photos, Christin says, "If the DJ is able to get the ceremony started on time photographers would appreciate that tremendously! I schedule photos of the bride alone, then the bride with her bridesmaids, then the bride with her immediate family and finally the same shots with the groom and his side. That way, after the ceremony I just need to photograph the couple with the entire wedding party and then a few family photos with the couple. I have the majority of the cocktail hour time to take portraits of the couple together."

BETTER NETWORKING

Most DJs introduce themselves to the wedding staff, including the photographer(s), and exchange business cards. But card swaps alone aren't enough. Christin: "There has only been one DJ in my seven and a half year career that has ever emailed me prior to the wedding to introduce himself, share the timeline with me and ask for my thoughts regarding it. That struck me as so impressive. This DJ also followed up with me after the wedding and scheduled a lunch date to learn more about my business (and share information about his).

I felt important!

"The DJ valued my needs...he wasn't just selling himself. So I feel safe giving out his name to future clients. When I refer a vendor, if they don't do a good job, in large part, that's on me. My clients trust my judgment, so I never refer a DJ just based on just their business card. So I think that in this business, where there are so many DJs and so many photographers, we really need to stand out and go the extra mile to get on someone's referral list.

Anyone can hand out a card."

I have often made the mistake of thinking that photographers are also video experts. Both use cameras, right?

Christin says my view is out of focus: "Photography and video are completely different animals. There are some companies that offer both services. It's easy to be confused. But each takes a different skill set and different equipment other than the camera. I have personally chosen to specialize in still photography.

CHANGING LENSES

I asked Christin if she had any misconceptions about DJs. "Yes, like lapel microphones work in any scenario and DJs just chose to use the microphone stand instead. I now know that the choice is based on other factors like wind.

"I've also had the misconception that reception activities can be easily moved around in the timeline. A DJ once explained to me that he needs a certain flow of events to make them run smoothly. Which I totally respect, and was eye-opening for me."

I often asked a photographer to take a picture of me in action—but I've rarely received the pictures. Christin guesses the photographer has likely forgotten about me: "A busy studio has a lot of work to do and the clients' needs come first. Photographers can be notorious for not getting photos out to vendors. My best advice is to wait a few weeks before contacting the photographer. I'll receive requests days after the wedding from vendors, but in my production timeline, I haven't even begun to edit for the wedding yet. I wait until the client receives their photos before giving vendor their photos. Your request might get 'lost'

[CLICK HERE FOR 3 FREE ISSUES OF](#)
Mobile Beat

in that time gap. Following up a second time is not a problem! So contact that photographer again!"

Most DJs take pride in presenting a clean DJ "booth" and don't like the way some photographers leave their bags thrown about next to the DJ set-up. Christin thinks that's an excellent point. "It's actually one I hadn't thought of. I like to keep my bags hidden away not only for aesthetics but also for safety. I usually ask the DJ if I can stash my bag underneath his or her table. If there isn't room there, I find another table to put my bags underneath. But I definitely see a lot of videographers with a ton of junk everywhere and I think it's ugly! We could all use a lesson about this!" I've heard that some photographers even make music request to the DJ demanding that they ought to play this or that. Christin chuckles: "Everyone thinks they're an expert, right? The only time I've ever asked a DJ to play a song is when a guest has asked me to, and then I make it clear that it is a guest request. I personally don't care what the DJ plays and have no desire to micromanage their job! I can see how that would annoy the DJ if the photographer was trying to do their job for them."

Christin's funniest experience working with a DJ: "The DJ caught the bouquet. That bride had a good arm and threw it right over the heads of all of the single ladies and straight to the DJ! I now set up the bouquet toss so that it doesn't go in the direction of the DJ."

Bottom line, DJs make the memories, "photogs" capture them! It's a team effort. **MB**

A Fish-Eye View of How to Work with a Wedding Photographer

- Introduce yourself to the photographer prior to the wedding date.
- Share your schedule with the photographer
- Get the ceremony started on time (if it is within your control)
- Stick as close to the schedule as possible
- Avoid special lights like lasers during special dances
- Allow a few weeks before you bug the photographer for the shots of you they promised

More Photog-Friendly Tips...

True or false: Putting a mic stand in the middle of a wedding ceremony isn't a problem for photographers because they can edit out the stand? Christin says yes, but: "its very time consuming and most photographers wouldn't offer that service without charging a lot of money. I prefer not to have a mike stand in the shots. I think it's distracting in the photos and not aesthetically pleasing. But it's definitely not a huge problem to have one. The sound being correct at the ceremony, in my opinion, out weighs the unsightliness of the mike stand."

Other ways DJs can help photographers: Christin: "It's really important to give the photographer a heads up before an important event takes place at the reception, especially if we are out of the room eating or using the restroom. Some photographers need to adjust their lighting prior to an event so giving us advance notice is very helpful. I've also noticed a common (DJ mistake) during toasting that interferes with photography; the DJ will be right there trying to take the mike to pass it to the next person toasting. But they often step in between the photographer and the hug and we miss that shot. I recommend standing off to the side and waiting until after the hug. Or what would be even better, if possible, is to coordinate with each person to pass the mike to the next person so the DJ (doesn't get in the way)."

Dance floor lighting: Christin loves dance floor lighting, but "laser lights make most photographers cringe. Of all the lighting that DJs use, laser lights are the ones that our flashes cannot over power. I once had a scenario where the DJ had the laser lights going during the first dance, father daughter dance, and mother son dance. The DJ told me he couldn't turn the lights. The photos of these special, intimate moments had little green and red dots all over the couples. I ended up doing a lot of retouching work. I was not happy with the DJ! Laser lights are fine for ambiance; I just hate them dotting people's faces."



Mike Ryan started out writing for news radio, and has been a DJ in the SoCal radio market on KGB and KSDS. He mobiles as Mike on the Mike. He is also the inventor/owner of Frankenstand Powered Speaker Stands.