



THAT'S.
Entertainment

Your entertainment should be your pièce de résistance, the final hurrah of your wedding. From the reception staples to the wedding wow factor, **Laura Bury** helps you find the perfect entertainment for your big day.



The food has been polished off and the speeches have been given. Your dad has finished regaling the reception with embarrassing tales of your youth, while the best man has managed to embarrass the entire room by telling the guests, and you, what your groom was really like before he met you. So what's next on your wedding agenda?

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

Music is always a crowd pleaser and can really set the mood for the evening. If your wedding is a laid back affair you could have some light music, like reggae or soul, pumped through the speakers of the venue, while if you're looking for the big white wedding, a harpist or a pianist may suit. Niamh Francis, an accomplished pianist who caters for weddings (www.niamhfrancis.com) says the average rate for a pianist to play at a reception would be €200 for two hours. "This of course can vary from musician to musician, as a highly experienced professional may charge more and a young student musician may charge less; but it would be no less than €150 and rarely more than €200."

The most popular choice for a wedding reception is a band followed by a DJ. A wedding band may conjure up images of *The Wedding Singer*, but rest assured this is no longer the case.

There are a huge range of wedding band genres, from jazz and swing to indie and even Madness tribute bands. Although it is your wedding and you should choose something that you are happy with, do remember your guests – if 20 per cent of your guests are at retirement age, you don't want them to have to sit through The Killers all night; after all, Aunt Mary and Co are usually the first ones on the dancefloor. This is not a cheap option and will set you back about €1,500, with a DJ weighing in at approximately €500.

If you want to avoid that cost then there is an alternative. You can purchase a good quality MP3 player with a large memory and make a playlist for your wedding. This gives you the added bonus of picking every single song you want played... of course the downside is you'll have to pick and download ever single song you want played! Once you've chosen your songs, check that your venue has a PA system, and if not you can rent one quite cheaply. A word of warning though: bring a charger and make sure you keep the MP3 player out of reach of children and inebriated guests...!

TIP: Most prices are up for negotiation, so don't be afraid to haggle if you really want something that seems a bit out of your price range

LET'S DANCE

Dancing is synonymous with weddings. Unfortunately (well, fortunately if it's not you and it's been captured on video) a lot of the time people who truly believe they're dancing like Michael Jackson are actually dancing like Michael Moore. So tell them to kick off their dancing shoes and leave it up to the professionals.

You can relive your childhood by hiring an Irish dance troop – it'll let you reminisce over all those medals won at the feis ceoil. There are plenty of fantastic groups available for weddings, like Celtic Rhythm (www.celticrhythmdancers.com). The sets vary from group to group but most last approximately 30 minutes and include crowd participation. This will cost approximately €550 depending on the location, but you'll be guaranteed that guests will be dancing The Walls of Limerick long after the troop has left.

If you want something a little more inventive, sign up dancers that will make your parents wish they grew up with the MTV generation. Stiletto Creative (www.stilettocreative.ie) organise all kinds of show-stopping dancers for weddings, including belly dancers, salsa dancers, cheerleaders and breakdancers.

SAY HELLO TO THE CIRCUS

Britney is still as influential as ever, and although we wouldn't advise you to go near 'that' haircut for your big day, you can always emulate her latest show with a little circus of your own.



TIP: No matter what entertainment you source, ensure you have a contract drawn up in case you need to refer back to it

Ireland has its very own professional artistic performance scene and you can be the ringleader of it all with the varied selection of entertainment available – from fire-breathers and jugglers to stilt-walkers, contortionists and acrobalance performers. “Our most popular package for weddings is a drumming performance on stage with three to five drummers that lasts for about six minutes and is very high energy,” explains Johnny Donnelly of Arcana. They provide a one-stop shop for creative services and can provide a samba drum and fire-breathing performance for around €970 plus VAT.

You don't have to be in Las Vegas to feel like you're a part of Cirque du Soleil. Stiletto Creative, Arcana and Galaxy Entertainments (www.galaxygroup.ie) all provide a wide range of performance artists. Remember, you don't have to have the entire circus at your wedding; simply source one or two options to suit your budget.

THE BEST MEDICINE

You know people are happy and relaxed when they're laughing. A great way to break the ice between all your relatives and friends is to hire a comedian. It will ensure that your guests are wholly entertained so you and your husband can just sit back, relax and enjoy the show. Dependent on your budget, you can even hire top comedians like Joe Rooney. It will certainly give all your guests a talking point. Audio Networks have a great range of comedians available for hire (www.audionetworks.ie).

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

If a picture says a thousand words, then why not put together your very own wedding day Ulysses? Make your guests your personal photographers. Buy a disposable camera for each table and watch the memories flow in. And of course if you develop the pictures and there are ones that should never see the light of day, you can simply destroy the evidence! Disposable cameras can be purchased from as little as €3 and are available in a wide range of stores across Ireland, including Boots and Penneys.

Another novel way to capture the moment is to hire a caricaturist. The portraits drawn could even be given as a departing gift for guests or as a perfect wedding favour – leaving you safe in the knowledge that they'll always remember your wedding. Check out www.entertainers.ie for more information on their caricature service.

Photobooth hire is a relatively new concept to Ireland but is going down a storm at weddings. You can get booths in various styles so you can choose one that will work in your venue. Your guests enter the booth and the shots are printed as they're taken, so your guests can walk away with their photos straight away. With this service you also get a personalised online gallery of all images so you can see exactly what went on! You can even opt for a hardback album of your favourite pictures of the night. This service will set you back just over €900 and travel charges are added if your wedding is outside the greater Dublin area. Visit www.photobooth.ie for more information.

CASINO ROYALE

Think 007 and opt for a casino theme. This can provide a highly energised and entertaining evening. You can hire blackjack tables, roulette wheels and, of course, croupiers to man them. Just be sure to let your guests know that it's not real money, before they think they've become a millionaire and call their boss to let him know where to put his job!

Whatever entertainment you decide on, remember that it's your day so make sure you're completely happy with your choices and everything is planned well in advance – so all that's left to do on the big day is rest easy and enjoy every minute!



KIDDIES' CORNER

So now you've got the adults looked after, how do you cater for the kids?

Children have bundles of energy and seem to have even more on a big day out. Here are some ways to keep them entertained.

Source a wedding crèche – Ireland has caught up with the times and there are now wedding crèches that will come to your venue and entertain the children, leaving you and your parent guests to enjoy a day off. Companies like The Wedding Crèche and Little Wedding Crèches have plenty of activities to keep the little ones entertained, whether it's during the dinner or the dancing.

Video games – The Wii was a wonderful invention and it's kept many an adult happy for many an hour. This is no less true for children. If your venue has a big screen, rent or borrow a Wii and some high energy games, such as Singstar, Rock Revolution or Wii Fit. It's an inexpensive way to keep them entertained for hours.

Hire a children's entertainer – An easily sourced and very effective option, an entertainer will certainly keep the kiddies happy. They range from magicians to Punch and Judy shows, face painters and balloon modellers. Really Grand Events (www.reallygrandevents.com) provide a magician and balloon modelling service that starts at €200.