

Making The Move from Club to Mobile
(and vice versa)
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Having been a DJ for 30 years now, I have done just about every type of event that a DJ can do-from backyard pig pickings to corporate events to high-end weddings. In my younger days, I even did a ton of club gigs. The purpose of this article is not to necessarily give you the differences between club gigs and mobile gigs, but rather to give you an idea on how to make the leap from one to the other if you are wanting to expand your reach.

Let's say you are a mobile DJ and want to explore some extra revenue in the slow months by doing club shows. When I say "club", I am referring to bars, restaurants, any type of hospitality venue that serves booze and where you would normally have a weekly residency.

GEAR. In these club environments there may be a DJ booth and installed gear. Bonus right? Maybe. If you are used to doing mobile shows and suddenly show up in a venue that wants you to use their gear, you are going to be lost. I compare it to golfers. If you are used to playing with Titleist clubs and all of the sudden you have to switch to Ping, you are going to be shanking balls into the woods all day! Take the time to visit the venue before the gig, or at the very least, get a list of the equipment that is in the DJ booth and venue. If you don't think you can work with it, ask them if it's ok to at least bring your own coffin (turntables, controller, etc.). This should go without saying, but always show up with your own laptop.

MIXING. If you are coming from the mobile world into the club world, you are going to need to brush up on your mixing skills. I'm not saying you have to scratch and cut like Jazzy Jeff (who killed it at MBLV by the way), but you will be taken much more seriously if you can at least beat mix. There are several videos out there that can teach you the basics. You can even sign up for classes at your local Scratch Academy if there is one in your city. The bottom line is that the patrons are going to eat you alive if your mix is all over the place and they are breaking their backs trying to dance because of sloppy transitions. I call it the "shoes in a dryer" mix. Think about it for a second and you'll get what I'm saying.

MUSIC. This is always going to be the most critical part of any event. In a club situation, most of the time you are going to need to be very current. Make sure you are getting the latest subscriptions from Promo Only, X-Mix, Chartbusters, etc. There is nothing worse than "getting caught with your pants down" and not having that brand new Drake or Lil' Wayne track. You'll feel like a dud all night!

Now let's flip it and talk about club DJs that may want to get into the highly lucrative world of mobile DJing. When I say mobile DJing, I am referring to doing private parties, weddings, corporate events for hire.

GEAR. Again I want to mention gear here. If you want to make the jump to mobile DJing, you are going to have to have a complete system which includes a pair of 12-15" powered speakers, speaker stands, your preferred choice of controller/decks, bags and cases, cables, a great wireless mic, and other odds and ends at the bare minimum. Prices have come way down in the last few years, but this is still a sizable investment and you'll need to figure out how many shows it will take to pay it all off.

MCing. I played in bars before I was even old enough to be in them and I think I would say maybe three or four things a night. Stuff like "LAST CALL" or "It's Suzy's birthday, whoopee!". If you are going to be a professional mobile DJ, you better get used to the microphone, and be good at it. For weddings, your duty doubles. You are the DJ AND the MC. Be prepared, know what you are going to say before you take the mute button off. The only way to get good is to watch other DJs and practice, practice, practice! The worst thing you can do is go out there before you're ready.

PLANNING. Mobile shows are also going to require more planning and prep time than a club show. Yes, with club shows you need to have your music current and be ready to rock, but with private events, especially weddings, there are going to be special songs at special times, multiple announcements, tough names to pronounce, other vendors to work with, etc. Make sure you are ready well in advance of showing up to the gig.

ATTIRE. My standard look for a club gig was jeans and a too tight t-shirt, but for mobile events, you need to look the part of the guests (or better). When I advance the show with the client, I always ask, "What are the gentlemen going to be wearing". That's a sure fire way to make sure you don't show up under-dressed which is always a bad look for someone that is going to be front and center all night long.

HOURS. If you are coming from clubworld, you are probably used to doing 10pm to 2am (or later) sets. I think I'm too old for that now, HA! In the mobile world, most events in my market (Raleigh, NC) are about 3-6 hours long and usually start around 6 or 7pm.

PERFORMANCE. The skills that you picked up in the club scene will help you get more business (especially from the younger demographic). They grew up going to clubs and hearing DJs that can actually mix. It's a skill that many mobile DJs don't have.

YOUR BOSS. You are probably used to the bar manager or owner being your boss if you are a club DJ. Well in the mobile world, at one gig, you might have five bosses. The bride, the groom, the mother of the bride, the father of the groom, the nagging maid of honor, etc. You will have to learn to work with them all!

I hope this article helps. I think there are pros and cons to both types of DJ gigs and feel like if you are doing one type, then with some practice, you can get into the other and potentially double your income! Boom! Good luck!