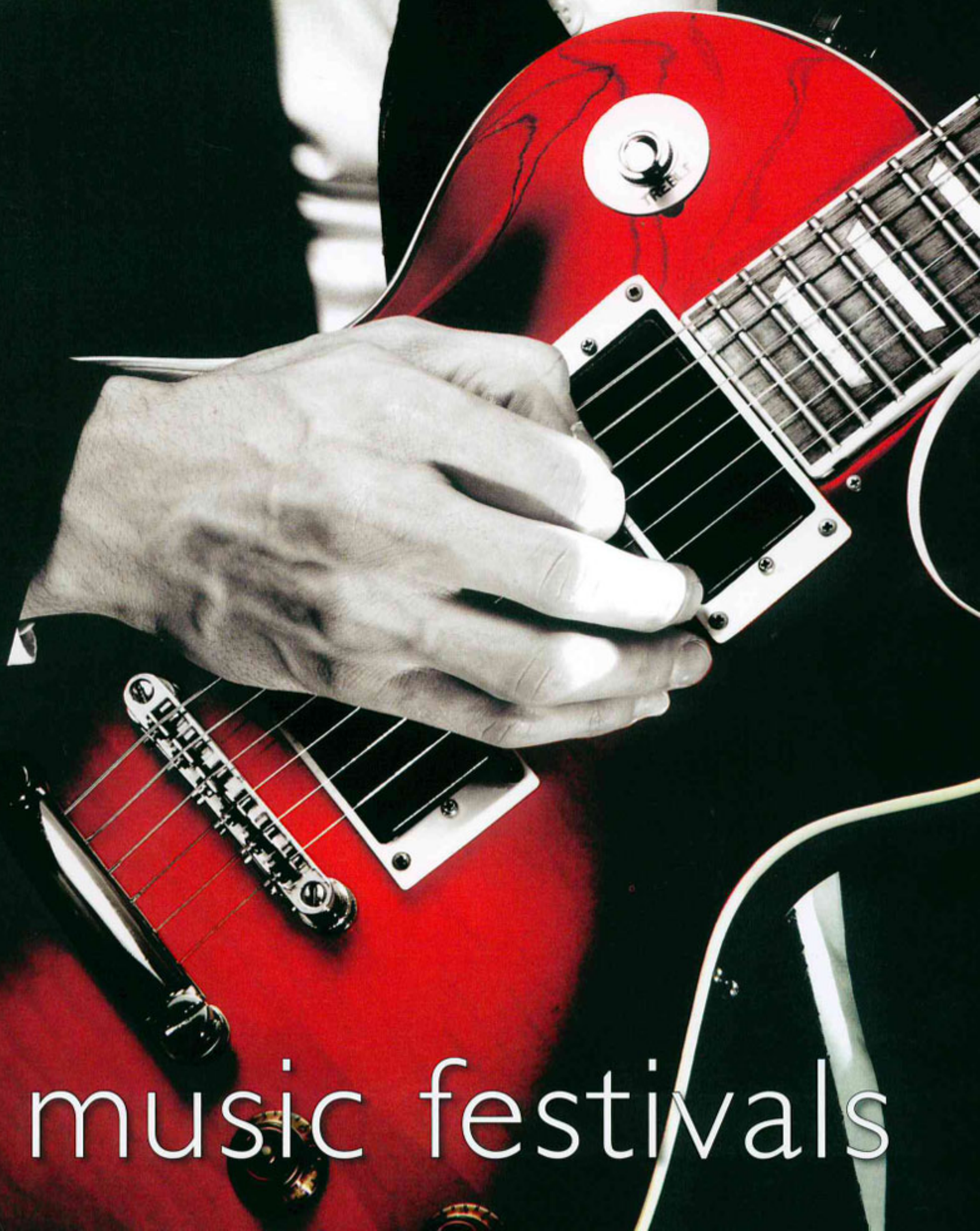


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Cocktail *CRAZY!*

If your wedding guest list has outgrown your reception venue and you cannot possibly cross anyone off, or the budget has outgrown available means, you may want to consider a cocktail reception. In fact, these sassy celebrations are fast becoming the rage. They are classy and upmarket, allow for an extremely social atmosphere, yet cost less than a traditional reception.



■■■ For instance, Lauren and Mark's wedding had a "sophisticated lounge club feel" with a DJ spinning Latin jazz and lounge music. Lauren had originally booked a more traditional setting for their wedding. "Then I realised that I didn't want a huge production so I freaked out and put all my wedding stuff under my bed for two months." The couple then began planning a smaller reception and decided to forgo the formalities of a sit-down dinner: "We didn't want a 'wedding wedding'. We wanted a party that happened to be a wedding. And that is how it felt," says Lauren. "It was fun and informal. At 22h00 we changed into jeans and T-shirts and joined our guests at a local dance club."

Here are some great tips for a fabulous cocktail wedding reception:

- The wedding invitation should specify that it is a cocktail wedding reception. This will give guests an idea of proper attire, while also letting them know that a full meal will not be served.
- Select a suitable location. If the venue is too small, it will frustrate guests trying to mingle and it will hamper efficient drinks and food service. However, a large space with too few guests will look sparse. It is all about the balance.
- Allow three to four hours for a cocktail wedding reception, although this may extend a little if you have a great DJ! If you anticipate things carrying on for an extra hour or two, make sure you cater sufficiently.
- Consider having a "coat check" where guests can safely

stow their jackets, bags and other paraphernalia.

- Most caterers suggest ten hot and ten cold food items for a three to four hour cocktail reception. Opt for foods that vary in flavour, colour and style.
- Consider setting up elaborate food stations to serve dishes directly to guests. Consider having a dessert table filled with delicious and decorative mini desserts. Make it a feature and include your wedding cake.
- Do not serve anything that requires more than a small fork to eat.
- Stagger the food distribution and provide enough so that your guests are not all racing to MacDonald's for a late night meal on their way home.
- Bear in mind that a cocktail reception is centred on cocktails. You should therefore not limit your bar as guests will expect a variety of drinks to be available.
- If the venue is large enough, consider more than one bar area so that your guests do not have to wait for their drinks.
- Avoid the problem of too much to drink and not enough food – it is just not a pretty scenario for anyone!
- There should be enough seating for roughly one third of your guests. Clusters of sofas with coffee tables as well as bar tables and bar stools are a good mix for cocktail wedding receptions.
- Music should initially be light and encourage socialising. If you anticipate a party later on, save the "louder" music for the last hour or so. ■