

STARLIGHT DJ SERVICES



# The Last Song Is Never the Whole Story

*True Stories from Behind the Wedding DJ Booth*

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FREE CHAPTER

*The Tillsonburg Speaker Fire*

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# A Free Chapter from The Last Song Is Never the Whole Story

Most couples never see what goes wrong behind the scenes at a wedding. That is usually by design. This chapter is one of those nights where almost everything went sideways before the guests even arrived - and the couple still walked away believing nothing went wrong.

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## Why this chapter?

Because this is the kind of story couples almost never hear. The visible part of a wedding DJ's job is the music. The hidden part is preparation, backup planning, calm decision-making, and protecting the flow of the night when something unexpected happens.

This chapter is a look below the surface.

# The Tillsonburg Speaker Fire

In early spring of 2025, I got a call from a sweet couple who were getting married in August at a restaurant in Tillsonburg. Tillsonburg is about 35 minutes from our house. Remember that, because it becomes important later in the story.

Before we get to the heart of what happened that day, you need the backstory on this couple, because it is one of the most unique wedding stories Jennifer and I have ever been part of.

They had first married each other in the early 1980s, when they were only seventeen and eighteen years old. The week before their wedding, there was apparently a huge pool party at a local home while the parents were away. From what they told me, there were somewhere between fifty and one hundred teenagers there. You can imagine the scene: underage drinking, loud music, and all the other things that tend to happen when a house full of teenagers realizes there are no adults around.

Around midnight, one of the neighbours, probably tired of the noise, called the police. The party was raided, parents were called, charges were laid, and the whole thing made the local newspaper.

Now, my clients told me they were not at that party. They were getting married a week later and were busy preparing for the wedding. I have no reason not to believe them.

I tell you this because most of the kids at that party were also invited to the wedding the following week. But after the police raid, many of them were grounded and were not allowed to attend.

Yes, that is exactly what I just said. Most of the wedding guests were grounded.

You cannot make this stuff up.

The couple stayed married for about seven years and then divorced in the late 1980s. They both went on to marry other people and have full lives. Years later, after each of their spouses had passed away, they found each other again in the early 2020s. Now in their early sixties, they decided to get married again.

That is a beautiful story. And that is where we come in.

By that point, Jennifer and I had done well over one hundred weddings and close to three hundred events. We had worked in old barns, schools, Legions, butterfly conservatories, church basements, outdoor pavilions, restaurants, golf clubs - you name it, we had probably seen some version of it.

Their ceremony was taking place in a church, with the reception at a local restaurant in Tillsonburg. They were expecting about seventy-five people. We had done restaurant weddings before, so nothing about that sounded unusual.

The bride and groom did make one specific request: they wanted music on the patio so the guests who stepped outside, including the smokers, could still enjoy the party. Tillsonburg is in Ontario tobacco country, so that detail made perfect sense. I told them it would not be a problem. We do that all the time. In many cases, we set up an outside speaker without even being asked because it improves the guest experience. But in this case, they specifically requested it.

That detail is going to matter in a minute.

Jennifer and I arrived at the restaurant at about 2:30 p.m. The cocktail hour was scheduled for 4:30, and the grand entrance was at 5:00. That gave us two hours for one reception setup plus an external patio speaker. Plenty of time. We could do that kind of setup in our sleep.

We unloaded the van and started building the system. Jennifer is my AC power and wire-management guru. She plugged in our backup rack, and suddenly we heard a loud BANG.

I had never heard that sound before.

I checked the gear in the rack. Everything seemed to still be working, so we continued. At that moment, I did not think we had a major problem. Strange, yes. Catastrophic, no.

Our usual reception setup uses three to four powered speakers. Because our system is built with matching components, we have redundancy. In plain English, that means if one piece fails, we still have options. On this day, that decision mattered more than it ever had before.

By about 3:20 p.m., all the speakers were connected to our booth, the dance-floor lighting was set up, and Jennifer plugged the main power cord into the wall. I pressed play on the mixer to do a quick sound check.

No sound.

That was odd.

Then Jennifer looked at me and said, "Why is there smoke coming out of two of the speakers?"

I yelled, "Unplug it!"

She did, but the damage was already done.

Two of our speakers had fried internal amps. The other two had blown fuses. I had owned those speakers for seven years and had never once had to replace a fuse. And there was nowhere to get the right fuses on a Saturday afternoon at 3:30 p.m. in Tillsonburg.

Now I was starting to freak out.

The clock was ticking. I had one working speaker on the patio, running on battery as promised, and four unusable speakers sitting inside the reception room. The bride and groom were arriving in less than an hour and a half.

This is where that thirty-five-minute drive from home became very important.

I still had one more speaker at the house.

We made the decision immediately. We pulled the working patio speaker inside and used it for the reception, still running on battery, because there was no way I was plugging another speaker into that wall outlet. Then I jumped into the van and drove home to grab the last working speaker.

Let me tell you: that was not a relaxing drive.

I tried not to break the speed limit too much, but I knew every minute mattered. I burned at least an hour in travel time, and the whole way home and back, I was running through every possible failure point in my head.

What if the battery died? What if the second speaker did not work? What if the couple arrived before everything was ready? What if guests noticed? What if this became the one wedding where the music simply did not happen?

I got back to the restaurant at about 4:40 p.m., just as guests were arriving. I set up the sixth speaker on the patio, and we ran the entire night with one battery-powered speaker inside for the reception and one battery-powered speaker outside on the patio.

That was it. That was the system.

I did not know how long the batteries were going to last. There was no backup to the backup at that point. But this was what we had, and we needed to make it work.

The amazing thing was that nobody knew the difference.

The music played. The announcements happened. The guests enjoyed themselves. The patio had sound. The reception kept moving. From the couple's perspective, everything was normal.

Jennifer and I, on the other hand, were on pins and needles the entire night. Every time I looked at the battery indicator, I felt my blood pressure go up. We were both silently hoping those speakers would make it to midnight and that nothing else would go wrong.

The batteries held.

We made it to the end of the night.

Two days later, we received a five-star review from the groom. I am not exaggerating when I tell you his comment was: "If you want nothing to go wrong, hire Starlight DJ Services."

Jennifer and I laughed when we read that. Not because the review was funny in the usual sense, but because he had no idea how close the night had come to going very wrong.

To this day, the bride and groom still do not know what happened behind the scenes. Unless they read this book, they probably never will.

As for what caused the failure, we still do not know for sure. Our best guess is some kind of power surge or electrical issue in the building. What made it strange was that it only affected the speakers, not the computers, lights, or mixers.

After the wedding, I spoke with the technician at the shop that repaired the two damaged speakers. He recommended that we start using an outlet tester. We now use one religiously. We also carry spare fuses for the speakers.

You live, and you learn.

I later told a couple of other DJ friends about what happened. Both of them said that if they had been in that same situation, they would have been finished. They usually carry only two speakers, and they do not have battery-powered backup options.

Without the extra speaker, the battery-powered setup, and the ability to adapt quickly, that wedding celebration could have had a very different ending.

That is the part most people never see. A wedding DJ does not need a backup plan because things might go wrong. A wedding DJ needs a backup plan because eventually, something will.

The couple only experienced the result: a reception that kept moving, a patio with music, guests having a good time, and a night that felt effortless.

That is always the goal.

# The Lesson Behind the Story

A wedding DJ does not need a backup plan because things might go wrong. A wedding DJ needs a backup plan because eventually, something will.

Most couples never see the problems that get solved behind the scenes. They only experience the result: a reception that keeps moving, guests who stay engaged, and a night that feels effortless.

That is the difference between hiring someone to play music and hiring someone to help protect the experience.

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## Planning Your Wedding?

If this chapter made you think differently about what a wedding DJ actually does, the next step is a short consultation with Paul and Jennifer. We will talk through your venue, timeline, ceremony plans, music preferences, guest experience, and what you want the night to feel like.

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