

What's in a Band? A behind-the-scenes look

Behind every successful band there is ... not necessarily a woman, but certainly a number of people wearing several different hats. This article takes a look at the behind-the-scenes activities that go to build a band. It's not a fixed structure, and one person may take on several roles. This (in no particular order) is how a band *might* organise itself:

Initiator of the band – the person who gathered these musicians together in the first place, and maybe decided on a name for the band. It might have been a serendipitous meeting of like-minded musicians, or a planned search for a desired set of instruments. Someone, somewhere, said “Let's make a band!”

Contact person – takes the bookings, ensures that band members are available for the date, collects all the event details and negotiates fees and expenses. S/he might also arrange travel.

Publicity and presentation – manages advertising and promotion of the band. This is likely to include posters, business cards, advertisements and managing a website. On-stage presentation is also a likely focus.

Music arranger – researches each dance to seek out the specified lead tune, analyse the dance structure and find matching tunes in suitable keys, which are then arranged into a “set”. The music is then published in a form that all can read, with chord symbols and any required markings for performance. Many arrangers use a specialist music-notation program, which works a bit like Word but with the screen “pre-painted” with the five lines of the stave.

Rehearsal director – sets up a schedule and leads rehearsals so that the band achieves its musical goals.

On-stage leader – the person who leads the bow-and-curtsey chords and monitors the tempo to keep it steady for dancing. This is probably the band member with whom the MC confers on the night.

Sound manager – is in charge of setting up all the sound amplification equipment, checking sound levels and instrumental balance before the dance starts, and keeping an ear on the sound as the event progresses to maintain quality and appropriate volume. May or may not be a playing member of the band, but is always worth his/her weight in gold! At the end of the dancing, the sound equipment needs to be packed away carefully but efficiently under his/her direction.

And then all these roles come together to produce what you hear on the dance floor.