**How to Negotiate Your Tribute Band as an Opener**

**Negotiating as an opener is about being easy to work with, adding value to the show, and showing you’re worth a spot — even if you're not headlining *yet*. Here’s how to approach it like a pro:**

**How to Negotiate Your Tribute Band as an Opener**

**1. Position Yourself as a Value-Add, Not a Cost**

**Your job is to enhance the night, not compete with the headliner. Let the booker know:**

**“We’re a high-energy opener that sets the tone, brings 50–100 loyal fans, and helps fill the room early.”**

**2. Understand the Hierarchy**

**As an opener, you usually won’t get top pay — but you can negotiate for:**

* **A modest guarantee (e.g., $150–$500 depending on venue size)**
* **A cut of the door or $ per head from your draw**
* **Merch rights**
* **Guest list spots**
* **Future headline opportunities if you perform well**

**3. Use Smart Language**

**Here’s what to say when a promoter asks about your rate:**

**“We’re very flexible as an opener. We usually ask for $200–$300 to cover our costs, or a door split based on turnout. We bring a strong draw and make the night better for everyone.”**

**💡 4. Offer Ticket Sales Incentives**

**Offer to help sell tickets directly:**

**“We’re happy to take a lower rate if we can earn $5 per pre-sale ticket sold. We’ll help promote hard and make sure the night starts strong.”**

**This shows you're proactive, not passive.**

**5. Try This Deal Structure**

**If the show has no budget, propose:**

| **Deal Type** | **Example** |
| --- | --- |
| **Per Head** | **$5 per paid fan you bring** |
| **Flat + Per Head** | **$100 guarantee + $5 per fan after 20** |
| **No Pay but Full Merch** | **“No guarantee needed, but we’d like 100% of merch sales and promo support.”** |

**6. Get the Right Kind of Exposure**

**If you’re playing for free or low pay, make sure:**

* **You’re listed on the flyer/poster**
* **You get a shoutout on social media**
* **You can sell merch**
* **You’re in front of the *right kind of audience***

**7. Confirm It All in Writing**

**Even for small gigs, confirm these:**

* **Date, call time, set time**
* **Pay (if any)**
* **Length of set**
* **Backline available**
* **Guest list (if offered)**
* **Merch policy**
* **Promo expectations**

**Example Pitch Script**

**"Hey [Venue/Booker Name],  
We’d love to open this show. We’re a [tribute to \_\_\_\_\_], high-energy band with a solid local draw of 50–75. We’re flexible on pay, but ideally looking for $1000 or a door split. We’ll help promote and make the night a success. Let us know if we can be part of it."**

**Always Play the Long Game**

**Even if the first gig pays little, treat it like an audition for future headlining slots. Be professional, show up on time, and bring the energy.**