**Negotiating your fee.**

Negotiating the fee as a tribute band requires preparation, confidence, and understanding of both your value and the venue's expectations. Here’s a step-by-step guide to help you successfully negotiate a fair rate for your performances:

**1. Know Your Worth**

* **Market Research**: Before entering negotiations, research how much similar tribute bands in your genre and location are earning. Tribute bands often charge more than regular cover bands due to their specific niche appeal. Look at competitor fees and the typical rates venues are paying.
* **Band’s Track Record**: Consider your band’s experience, fan base, and reputation. If you have a loyal following or you’ve played successful gigs at reputable venues, use this as leverage to justify a higher rate.
* **Social Media & Online Presence**: Show how active and popular your band is on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube. A strong online presence with a good following adds value to the venue in terms of attracting an audience.

**2. Understand the Venue's Perspective**

* **Venue Size**: Small clubs or bars generally have smaller budgets compared to large concert venues or theaters. Be mindful of the venue’s capacity and pricing structure.
* **Ticket Prices**: If the venue is selling tickets to your performance, ask about the ticket price. Higher ticket prices can justify a higher band fee, as the venue will be making more profit from the event.
* **Bar Revenue**: Venues often rely on bar sales for revenue, so if your band draws a large crowd that tends to spend money, you can use this to your advantage in negotiations.
* **Event Timing**: Are you playing on a prime night (Friday or Saturday) or a slow night? If it’s a less popular time (like a weekday), the venue may be more willing to negotiate to fill the space.

**3. Showcase the Value You Bring**

* **Draw Attention to Your Following**: If you can guarantee a large crowd, especially if the venue doesn’t have built-in traffic, emphasize this in negotiations. Provide evidence of previous ticket sales or attendance figures at similar venues.
* **Promotional Efforts**: Offer to help promote the event through your own social media, email lists, or local media connections. Venues value performers who actively help drive attendance, as this reduces their promotional costs.
* **Unique Experience**: Tribute bands offer a unique experience that regular cover bands can’t. Highlight how your tribute to a specific artist or band offers nostalgia, a particular fan experience, or even themed events that will set the venue apart.

**4. Set a Minimum Price**

* **Establish a Base Fee**: Set a minimum fee that you’re comfortable accepting. This should cover your travel, equipment, and time. While it’s important to be flexible, knowing your minimum rate ensures you’re not underpaid.
* **Be Transparent**: Let the venue know your minimum fee early in the discussion so they can manage their expectations. If they can’t meet it, discuss other options (such as revenue sharing or reduced equipment setup requirements).

**5. Consider Different Payment Structures**

* **Flat Fee**: A straightforward payment where the band is paid a set amount, regardless of attendance. This provides security for the band but may be a tough sell for smaller venues.
* **Door Split/Percentage**: Agreeing to take a percentage of ticket sales or a portion of the door money. Typically, this is 70%-80% for the band, but this can vary. Make sure to get clarity on how ticket sales will be tracked.
* **Minimum Guarantee + Percentage**: Some bands negotiate for a minimum guaranteed fee and, if ticket sales exceed a certain amount, the band earns a percentage of additional revenue. This is a win-win for both parties.
* **Bar or Drink Deals**: If ticket revenue isn’t expected to be high, you can negotiate a percentage of the bar sales, particularly if your band draws a crowd that spends heavily on drinks.

**6. Don’t Forget to Factor in Expenses**

* **Travel Costs**: If the venue is out of town, ensure the negotiated fee includes travel costs (gas, tolls, etc.). For longer distances, accommodation costs should also be covered.
* **Equipment & Set-Up**: If the venue does not provide sound and lighting equipment, factor in the cost of renting or transporting your own equipment into the final fee.
* **Crew Payment**: If you have additional crew members like sound technicians or roadies, factor their fees into the overall amount you request from the venue.

**7. Present a Professional Contract**

* **Be Organized**: Present your terms in a clear, professional contract. This document should include the agreed-upon fee, date, time, length of the performance, and any other terms (like equipment needs, load-in times, or hospitality).
* **Negotiation Flexibility**: While you should stand firm on your value, be willing to compromise on smaller details like timing or sound check schedules if the venue can’t meet your ideal fee.

**8. Build Long-Term Relationships**

* **Repeat Business**: If the venue enjoys working with you and your performance brings in a strong crowd, you have leverage for future gigs. Building long-term relationships often leads to more consistent work and potentially higher fees over time.
* **Referrals**: If you perform well, the venue might refer you to other venues or events they’re connected with. This can also give you negotiation leverage if you have other offers lined up.

**Example Negotiation Script:**

**You**: "We’re excited to perform at your venue, and from our past performances, we typically draw in a crowd of [X] people. We’d like to propose a fee of $[X], which aligns with our experience and travel requirements. We’re also open to discussing a door split or percentage of bar sales if that works better for your budget."

**Venue**: "That might be a bit higher than we usually pay."

**You**: "I understand. We believe we’ll bring great value to your venue, especially with the promotion we’ll be doing on social media and the audience we’ve built. Would you be open to discussing a minimum guarantee with a percentage of the door, so we both benefit from a strong turnout?"