**How to Negotiate as a Headlining Tribute Band**

Negotiating your tribute band as a **headliner** is both an art and a strategy. Here's a clear step-by-step guide to help you negotiate with confidence, professionalism, and leverage:

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**1. Know Your Value**

Before negotiating, make sure you can clearly articulate your worth:

* **Draw**: How many paying fans you consistently bring to shows (ideally 150+ for mid-size venues)
* **Venue Fit**: Show you’ve played similar-size venues successfully
* **Production Quality**: Mention your sound, visuals, lighting, costumes, or likeness to the original band
* **Track Record**: Share links to video clips, past events, or press if available

Tip: If you can prove you *sell drinks and tickets*, you become a business asset — not just a band.

**2. Start with Confidence — But Be Realistic**

When asked your rate, respond with:

“We typically headline at $800 to $1,200 depending on the night and market — we draw around 175+ people and bring a strong, themed show that keeps fans in the room and spending. Let me know how close we can get to that range.”

Why it works:

* You're giving a range, not a fixed demand.
* You mention what you *bring to the venue* (not just what you want).
* You invite collaboration instead of confrontation.

**3. Offer Proof of Draw**

Attach your gig history in the pitch:

* Date / Venue / City / Attendance
* Include a quote or comment from a past booker if possible

Example:  
*6/1 – House of Blues Anaheim – 215 paid*  
*4/12 – Alex’s Bar Long Beach – 165 attendance*

**4. Negotiate Terms, Not Just Rate**

If the rate isn’t ideal, ask for added value:

* Higher merch cut (or no cut)
* **Guest list tickets** for your fans
* A **free meal or drink tab**
* Hotel room or gas stipend
* **Control over local support acts** (you bring a friendly opener)

**5. Anchor with a Flat Guarantee + Incentive**

Try a **hybrid deal** like this:

“We’d be happy with $800 guarantee + 80% of anything over 100 tickets sold — that gives us incentive to help push the show.”

Or:

“We can do $600 guarantee plus $5 per ticket over 100 sold.”

**6. Put It in Writing**

After verbal confirmation, follow up with a **simple contract or email summary**:

* Date
* Pay rate
* Set length & call time
* Load-in info
* Tech needs
* Promo responsibilities
* Payment terms

NTBA members can use the official NTBA Tribute Band Performance Agreement.

**7. Don't Burn Bridges**

Even if the money isn’t right this time:

* Be polite
* Say you’d love to stay on their radar for future shows or festivals
* Recommend a smaller room or earlier slot if available

**Bonus Scripts:**

**If they say “What’s your rate?”**

“We typically headline in the $900–$1,200 range, but we’re flexible based on the room and night. We’ve got a solid draw in the region and love bringing a crowd that sticks around.”

**If they counter with a low offer:**

“Appreciate that. That’s a little below what we usually accept, but if we can add a merch table, 2 drink tickets, and a percentage on the back end, we can probably make it work.”

GOOD LUCK!!!! Remember, always go in high. You can always come down.