

The BAmF Guide to DJ Applications

Introduction

Hello, Prospective DJ! We're glad you're here.

At BAmF, we care deeply about DJs and the application process. Every year, we spend over a hundred hours reading, listening to, deliberating over, and giving feedback on DJ applications. Every year, we're amazed by the thoughtfulness, passion, and amazing music we hear from DJs new and old. We always learn something new, and we're constantly working to improve the process.

We've condensed our lessons learned into the following guide to DJ applications. This is not a universal source of truth; different events pick DJs differently, and often prioritize different things. This is only a guide to how we pick DJs for BAmF. That said, we hope that this will help you avoid some common pitfalls, put together a stronger application, and wow us with your amazing DJ talents. This document is intended as a signpost or a helping hand, not a list of demands.

Finally, we want you to succeed. We believe that our community grows richer with more voices and more perspectives, and we want you to spin for us. Applications are competitive, but we offer this page, application feedback, and coaching for new DJs to level the playing field as much as possible.

Our philosophy on DJs

DJs are a critical part of BAmF. DJs set the tone for the party, control the energy of the crowd, and they can make the difference between a good and a bad night. Even beyond a single party, DJs are tastemakers. Each time a person plays a set, they're steering our culture and helping expand micro as a dance form. We put a lot of thought and effort into choosing who spins for us.

All of that said, **DJing is a service position**. A DJ's job is to play what the floor wants, not what the DJ wants to hear. Getting to play cool new music is the reward for throwing an amazing party. You only get to do that if the crowd is following along with you.

What we look for in DJ applications

First of all, we read every word you write, and listen all the way through every track you submit. We've been on both sides of this process, and we know (and value) how much work you put in.

When we review applications, we're trying to answer a few essential questions;

1. If we put this DJ in front of a crowd, can they carry us on a compassionate, engaging, seamless musical journey? (i.e. will they play an awesome set?)
2. Does this DJ have thoughtful and informed opinions about micro?
3. Does this DJ have new and compelling contributions to micro as a dance?

Let's break that down a bit;

Will they play an awesome set?

Unsurprisingly, this is judged mostly on the tracks you submit. Unique, mind-blowing, impossible-not-to-dance-to micro tracks are absolutely what we want, and there are a few additional things we're looking for;

- **Transitions** - This should be no surprise. We think the best micro sets roll smoothly from one track to the next, matching elements like rhythm, instrumentation, genre, or energy level between tracks. This lets dancers drop into a deep, meditative connection where time just disappears. Rough transitions tend to break that spell.
- **Variety, but not too much variety** - We know you're excited, but please don't try to fit every genre in your library into your application. We almost always find that few things done well is much more compelling than many things barely stitched together. If you find yourself trying to hit more than three big themes in a ten-track demo set, consider simplifying.
- **Energy management** - We want to see smooth transitions between low-energy and high-energy tracks. Sudden drops in energy can be okay, but sudden jumps in energy can be very jarring.
- **Listen all the way through** - We listen all the way through each of your tracks, and we expect you to do so, too. A 20-second silence or weird intro or awkward break in the middle also breaks the trance. We know that a good DJ can fade that out or make an edited version, but to level the playing field, we're going to listen to songs exactly as you submit them.

Have they thought about micro?

This is where your written answers really get to shine. DJs aren't just a critical part of our event; their musical choices steer micro as a dance form. We want to make sure you've done some thinking about what micro is, where it's at now, and where you would like it to go. We also want to see genuine excitement and love for micro. We care deeply about this dance, and we'd love to hear that you do, too.

Do they have new and compelling things to say?

Micro is evolving and changing every time we dance it, and new music feeds that development. We want to elevate DJs who are taking the time to search for new music and will take us to exciting new places.

- **Safety Songs** - Before we get too deep into new music, we have to talk about current music. We cannot put you in front of a crowd unless we know *for sure* that you can play tracks that sound familiar to the average dancer. If your set starts to go off the rails, you need something familiar to draw people back. The best applications show understanding of the familiar by including some tracks that sound like what's being played right now. Bonus points if they're new tracks that we haven't heard yet.
- **Classics** - There's a few hundred tracks that are micro classics; instantly recognizable, played frequently for years, and well known. We think you should have these in your library, but including them in your application doesn't tell us much about your personal style, taste, or ability. If you need to reach for a classic track because it just makes the transitions perfect, then go for it! But otherwise we'd like to hear something new.
- **New, but not too new** - We're excited about new music, but at the end of the day, DJing is still a service position. You have to play what the floor wants to hear, and your job is to build a bridge between where they are and where you'd like them to be. We're looking for DJs that can hit that sweet spot between "boring" and "overwhelmingly new."

What should we do with these tracks when we're done listening to them?

In case you're wondering about this question, here's some more detail.

We value your consent and respect your choices. Your application will be evaluated the same, regardless of which option you choose.

Many of us are DJs too, and the application review process usually takes 4-8 weeks during which we aren't able to spend time searching for our own music. We'd love to be able to add tracks that we like to our personal libraries.

1. If you choose "Save these tracks if you like them" then we will save the tracks we like! However, we will not DJ them until after the BAmF Yearly.
2. If you choose "Please forget all of these tracks", we will not save any of the tracks. We will do our best to not look at artist names or track titles while we're reviewing your set.