

**BLUES FOUNDATION OFFICIAL IBC RULES INCLUDE:** The only artists who are deemed ineligible for the International Blues Challenge are artists whose have been nominated for a Blues Music Award-whose name has appeared on a final Blues Music Award ballot-in the 30 + year history of the Blues Music Awards (and formerly the W.C. Handy Awards). An act is limited to two consecutive appearances at the IBC and must then sit out at least one year before being eligible to compete again. An act under the same name will not be allowed to compete three consecutive years. An individual may not compete in more than one act in any capacity. A musician cannot compete in the Band Division and the Solo/Duo Division, even if that musician represents a different Affiliate in each.

#### **DEFINITION OF BAND / SOLO/DUO ACTS:**

**Band** - any act with three or more musicians. Vocalists are counted as musicians for the purpose of this competition. Both electric and acoustic instruments are allowed.

**Solo/Duo** - any act with one or two musicians. Vocalists are counted as musicians for the purpose of this competition. Both electric and acoustic instruments are allowed.

## **RULES AND SCORING CRITERIA**

IBC judges are Blues professionals and aficionados with a deep understanding and historical perspective of all blues forms. Any given three-judge panel will include members with varying opinions of Blues, covering the spectrum of Blues from the most traditional to soul/blues and rock/blues.

#### Scoring Categories and Definitions:

- **Blues Content:** The sound and feel of the music should be true to any of blues sub-categories: traditional blues, country blues, soul blues, blues rock and/or contemporary blues. Judges will be listening for inspired and original song selections or new takes on blues standards. Creative reach is encouraged.
- **Originality:** Original work is encouraged. Cover tunes are allowed but playing the recorded rendition lick by lick is discouraged, will not be looked upon favorably by the judges, and will be reflected in scoring.

Acts must indicate if their songs are their own original material (this can be done at the start of the set or before each song as appropriate) and/or identify the covers that they are playing and acknowledge the originator.

- **Vocals:** The act's vocal skills to include concepts of tone, musicality, meaning, and expression.
- **Instrumental Talent:** Ability level on all instruments featured within the act.

- **Stage Presence:** The ability to command the attention of the audience by the impressiveness of one's manner and appearance on stage. Judges will consider how an act connects with and engages the audience in the music. Proper use of microphones and amplification will be considered.

## Basic Scoring Calculation:

Judges will score acts on a 10 point scale, with 10 points being the highest score received and 1 point being the lowest. The following weights will be used in calculating final scores:

- Raw scores for Blues Content will be multiplied by four
- Raw scores for Originality will be multiplied by three
- Raw scores for Talent and for Vocals will be multiplied by two
- Raw scores for Stage Presence will be multiplied by two

The maximum Total Weighted Score an act may receive is 130.

Penalty Points:

**An act will be penalized one point from its Total Weighted Score for each of the following:**

- Missing the online application deadline or not completing online application completely or accurately by the deadline.
- Neglecting to check in with the Venue Coordinator at least 30 minutes before the first performance begins.
- Excessive time loading-in before and/or loading out after a competition performance
- Failing to acknowledge that a song is a cover and/or not giving credit to its originator
- Each ten seconds that it runs overtime during a competition performance.
- Finishing 3 or more minutes before its allotted performance time expires.
- Showing up late and/or not being ready to perform on time at the Finals

The Sonny Boy Blues Society strongly suggests that after meeting with their Venue Coordinator for their required check-in, each act remain in close proximity to the venue in order to be immediately available to perform at the Venue Coordinator's direction. The Venue Coordinator will be responsible for assessing Penalty Points based on IBC rules.

***Acts are prohibited from contacting the venue for any reason, and any act that directly contacts the venue leading up to or during the course of the Challenge will be subject to disqualification. The Sonny Blues Society is your ONLY contact for this competition.***

# SCORING SYSTEM FOR JUDGES

1. Each judge will indicate his or her Raw Score, between 1 and 10, in each category and turn that information over to the Scorekeeper using the following scale:
  - **1-3** – Typical of a beginning blues band
  - **4-5** – Typical of a local weekend band
  - **6-7** – Typical of an advanced local band but not yet ready to headline a major blues club
  - **8-9** – Typical of the quality of blues artists who headline major clubs
  - **10** – Typical of those who play the main stage at major festivals
1. The Scorekeeper will multiply the Raw Score in each category by the established multiplier to get each judge's Individual Weighted Score in each category for each act.
2. The Individual Weighted Scores for each category will be added together to determine each act's Total Weighted Score for each judge.
3. Any penalty points assigned will then be deducted from each judge's Total Weighted Score to obtain the act's Net Weighted Score for each judge.
4. After all acts have been judged and each act's Net Weighted Score per judge calculated, each act will be ranked by judge based on that judge's order of scores, with the act receiving the judge's highest Net Weighted Score being given a ranking of 1, and so on for that judge. This will reveal each act's Final Ranking Number for each judge.
5. The Scorekeeper then will total the Final Ranking Number from all judges for each act to determine the Gross Final Ranking. This figure is averaged (divided by the total number of judges) to Achieve the Aggregate Act Ranking.
6. For the preliminaries, the top 2 acts with the highest Aggregate Act Ranking for the night will advance to the finals.
7. For the finals, the act with the best Aggregate Act Ranking will be the top finisher.
8. In the case of a tie, the Scorekeeper shall calculate the sum of all Net Weighted Scores from all judges for the tied acts. The band with the higher sum of Net Weighted Scores wins.

## Final Round Structure

Sets will be scored using the same criteria as all other rounds. All Final Round judges will not have served on any previous round, so each band will be performing for a totally new set of ears. Additionally, no judges in the Finals will be members of The Blues Foundation Board or from any Affiliate for maximum impartiality.

## Other Considerations

## **Backline and Equipment**

The venue will provide backline and sound. The setup on stage will include a 5pc Yamaha Stage Custom drum kit with snare, 8 channel powered mixer, 2 mics with stands, bass amp and PA system with 2 monitor speakers.

- You will need your instruments! Please bring a DI if you use one.
- All backline equipment provided will be quality, professional gear that you should be familiar with.
- Midi and looping devices to enhance performances are not barred from the competition but are frowned on by the judges, as this competition is about LIVE music performance!

**Drummers** must bring their own cymbals, cymbal stands, and kick pedals.

**Harmonica** players must bring their own harp amp.

**Guitar** players must bring their own guitar amp.

**Keyboard** players must bring their own keyboard, keyboard stand and keyboard amp. Effects racks and other auxiliary equipment are permitted.

**Horn** players should bring their own stand.

Competitors are *prohibited* from bringing their own bass amplifiers (harp amps, guitar amps and keyboard amps being the only exceptions). Musicians should bring their own DI boxes. The use of pedals, stomp boxes and other auxiliary equipment is allowed.

## **FAQs**

### **HOW MANY ACTS WILL PERFORM EACH PRELIM NIGHT?**

- Up to 5 acts will be chosen to compete in each night of the prelims

### **WHAT SET LENGTH SHOULD I PREPARE FOR EACH ROUND?**

- Prelims – 25 minutes
- Finals – 30 minutes

Note: There will be 10 minutes breaks between band performances and 5 minutes breaks between Solo/Duo Acts, to give you time to set up before you begin your performance.

### **WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I AM COMPETING AT THE VENUE?**

The Blues Foundation will provide up to 4 volunteers in each venue:

- The VENUE COORDINATOR (VC) will be the contact for your venue. That person will direct and manage the stage. Please remember, your relationship is with The Sonny Boy Blues Society and our representatives, not the venue.
- The TIME KEEPER (TK) will keep up with your performance set length. Your time begins when the act addresses the crowd or the first note is played, whichever comes first. The time stops when the last note is played or when the last word is spoken. Salutations and closing remarks count as part of your set time. The TK will operate the venue stop watch and alert you when you have 2 MINUTES remaining. You will also be signaled at the 1 MINUTE, 30 SECONDS mark and then again when TIME IS UP. Any act that runs over time will be penalized one point from the Total Weighted Score for every TEN SECONDS that it exceeds its set limit. Your venue coordinator may also apply penalty points for excessive time loading-in and out, at his or her discretion.
- The JUDGES ASSISTANT (JA) is charged with assisting the judges, preparing the score sheets, and maintaining the integrity of the scoring.
- A VENUE ASSISTANT (VA) will assist with stage duties and deliver the score sheets to Headquarters.

### **WHEN SHOULD I ARRIVE AT THE VENUE?**

All acts **MUST** arrive at the venue at least 30 minutes before the **FIRST** act begins **EACH NIGHT** of the competition. Upon arrival each night, it is your responsibility to check in with your **VENUE COORDINATOR (VC)**. Failing to check-in with the VC will automatically result in a one point deduction from your Total Weighted Score.

Performance times printed in our schedule are only a guideline, and should not be considered exact. Venues can and often do run ahead of schedule. As such, it is your responsibility to have at least one representative from your act in your venue at all times once the challenge begins, and that representative should be able to make contact with all members of the act at all times should they choose to leave the venue ahead of your performance. The venue may be missing an act, someone could be sick, or the venue could be running ahead of schedule, so you should be prepared to go on stage ahead of your assigned time should your Venue Coordinator request that of your act. If you are not ready to perform when the VC calls you, you will have points deducted from your Total Weighted Score, or you could be disqualified, regardless of the time printed in the schedule.

### **WHO DOES THE SONNY BOY BLUES SOCIETY SELECT AS ITS JUDGES?**

Judges are industry professionals and blues fans with years of experience in producing, promoting and attending blues music events. Each night of competition, three different judges will evaluate you based on The Blues Foundation criteria.

### **HOW MANY ACTS ADVANCE TO THE FINALS?**

- The top 2 solo/duo acts and top 2 bands from each preliminary night will advance to the finals.
- 4 Solo/duo acts and 4 bands will compete in the finals.