

About the Challenge

The International Blues Challenge represents the worldwide search for those Blues Bands and Solo/Duo Blues Acts ready to perform on the international stage, yet just needing that extra big break. Each Affiliate of The Blues Foundation has the right to send a band and a solo/duo act to represent its organization at the IBC.

The **IBC** is judged by blues professionals from across the world who have years of experience in listening to, producing, and creating blues music. The Blues Foundation has established a set of criteria by which all acts are evaluated throughout the five days of the IBC.

Affiliated organizations are required to stage a regional preliminary IBC competition, with the winner of that event representing the organization in the International Blues Challenge held annually in Memphis, TN along historic Beale Street. While Affiliated Organizations are encouraged to follow The Blues Foundation's structure and rules during their local challenges, each organization is free to structure its preliminary rounds as it sees fit, as long as a true challenge between multiple acts takes place resulting in a single band and/or solo/duo act being identified.

2018 IBC SCHEDULE

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.
- Missing act check-in or act registration on the first day of the event

- Each night the act neglects to check in with its Venue Coordinator at least 20 minutes before the first performance begins at the assigned venue.
- 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 missing Finals Orientation
- Showing up late and/or not being ready to perform on time at the Finals
- Performing in any other venue in the city of Memphis during formal IBC hours and in direct conflict with Blues Foundation programmed activities

The Blues Foundation strongly suggests that after meeting with their Venue Coordinator for their required check-in each night, each act remain in their assigned 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.

Affiliates and/or Acts are prohibited from contacting any IBC venue for any reason, and any act that directly contacts a venue leading up to or during the course of the International Blues Challenge will be subject to disqualification. The Blues Foundation 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 will then 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 Quarter-Finals the act in each venue with the best two-day total of Aggregate Act Ranking will advance to the semi-finals.
7. For the semi-finals, the act in each venue with the best Aggregate Act Ranking for the night will advance to the finals.
8. For the finals, the act with the best Aggregate Act Ranking will be the top finisher.
9. 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.

Venue Assignment and Order of Appearance

All venues will be assigned randomly with the only consideration being required equipment determined by each act's registration materials. The order of appearance of acts in each venue is also random.

Other Considerations

1. Backline and Equipment

The Blues Foundation will provide backline and sound. The setup on stage will include a drum kit with snare drums, amps, keyboards and mics. The backline in each venue will be based on the act's registration information. **Drummers** should bring their own cymbals and kick pedals. **Harmonica** players may (but are not required to) bring their own harp amp. **Keyboard** players are allowed (but are not required) to bring their own keyboard and keyboard amps. Keyboard stands will be provided. Effects racks and other auxiliary equipment are permitted.

Musicians *must* include on the online registration form any additional or special equipment needed.

Competitors are *prohibited* from bringing their own guitar amplifiers (harp amps and keyboard amps being the only exceptions). Musicians should bring their own DI boxes. Every effort will be made to provide suitable equipment. Exceptions to this prohibition may only be granted pursuant to a formal written petition submitted in writing and received via email by the Event Producer (joe@blues.org) no less than 60 days prior to the quarter-finals competition. Make sure to also include a request in the act's online registration. With the number of bands participating in each venue, it is impossible for us to allow every player to bring an amp, space considerations prohibit it. Thus, any petition for an equipment waiver must include a compelling reason for exclusion.

2. International Musicians

Musicians from outside the United States are *highly* encouraged to ensure they have a valid passport or that there is sufficient time to obtain a passport before coming to Memphis should they win their local challenge.

3. Participation in Showcases and other Events

There are a number of showcases, jams, and other programs happening on Beale Street during the IBC. Musicians are free to participate in these events should they be invited but they should ensure that such events are not interfering with official IBC activities.

Should you have any questions or concerns, The Blues Foundation staff is always an email or phone call away to assist you.
Please do not hesitate to call on us:

Barbara Newman, President & CEO

barbara@blues.org

(901) 527-2583 ext. 12

Joe Whitmer, COO/Affiliate Relations

joe@blues.org

(901) 527-2583 ext. 11