2014 International Blues Challenge
Official Rules and Event Summary

Act registration will open in the fall of 2013.

1. Who can enter?

A Blues act cannot enter the International Blues Challenge (IBC) directly. Only a Blues Foundation Affiliate may sponsor an act. The act is eligible as long as it has not ever received a Blues Music Award nomination. An act may not participate in the IBC in three consecutive years. An act may be a band, solo/duo or youth.

2. What is an affiliate?

The International Blues Challenge is restricted to acts sponsored by a Blues Foundation affiliate. A list of Blues Foundation Affiliates is available at Blues Foundation Affiliates. Each of The Blues Foundation's 200+ Affiliated Organizations has the opportunity (but not the obligation) to sponsor one or more acts in the IBC. (If your nonprofit blues society is not an affiliate, contact Jay Sieleman at jay@blues.org). Each Affiliate may enter a Band in the Band Division and/or a Solo/Duo act in the Solo/Duo Division to compete in the 30th IBC in 2014. Each Affiliate may also send a youth act for the Youth Showcase.

An Affiliate must be affiliated with The Blues Foundation no later than the conclusion of the IBC of the preceding year to be eligible to sponsor an act for the IBC. (The 2013 IBC concluded February 2 so to sponsor an act in 2014, the society had to be an Affiliate by that date.)

Any questions about affiliate eligibility please email jay@blues.org or call 901-527-2583 ext 12

3. What is a Blues Music Award nomination?

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). A searchable database of past nominees can be found at Blues Music Awards Search tool. All other musicians who have had peripheral and/or professional contact through performance with a Blues Music Award nominee, including but not limited to, touring band members and studio musicians, are deemed eligible for the IBC. The exception is band members of a band nominated for Band of the Year. Each member is considered a Blues Music Award nominee even though the band name, not each band member's name appears on the final ballot.

For the purpose of the IBC, being named on a final ballot for the Blues Music Awards is the dividing line with regard to eligibility. The Blues Music Award is considered the highest award a
Blues artist can receive for excellence in their craft. Artists whose names have appeared on a final ballot for the Blues Music Awards have achieved a level of recognition within the Blues world that sets them apart from all other Blues artists. It is one of the measuring sticks by which a successful career in Blues music can be gauged.

4. Are there other restrictions?

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.

Affiliates are allowed and often do impose additional eligibility restrictions for their own competitions.

5. What is a band? What is a solo/duo? What is youth?

The IBC adheres to the following criteria for what constitutes a band, what constitutes a solo/duo act, and what constitutes as a youth act.

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.

Youth - any act that all members are under the age of 21 at the time of the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. PLEASE NOTE: Youth acts can be appointed by the board of an affiliate. A competition is not required.

6. How does an Affiliate enter an act?

Affiliates in Canada and the United States must conduct an open, judged live music competition. Affiliates in these two countries may not appoint an act.

The Blues Foundation recommends that Affiliates in all countries produce a live music competition to choose their act(s). All affiliates may be required to conduct a live competition and exceptions, if we even allow any, will be subject to advance approval. If you already have a competition, you have nothing to worry about. If you do not already have a competition, but you are going to produce one this year, you have nothing to worry about. If you are hoping to send someone without a competition, you best start talking to Executive Director real soon and have a real good reason for not staging a live music competition. And even that may not work!! This
represents a continuing tightening of the rules in this regard that affiliates have been advised of in recent years.

Do not ask to appoint an act(s) if you are in Canada or the United States, if the act includes a board member or officer of the Affiliate, or if the act is not from your geographic area. If the act is appointed rather than selected through a competition, the Affiliate must submit a copy of the official meeting minutes at which the Affiliate took the action to sponsor the act(s). The Blues Foundation reserves the right to deny any or all appointed acts.

An Affiliate's entrant is considered a representative of that Affiliate in every capacity. Thus, the Affiliate remains liable for any problems created by its representative.

All digital applications, as well as findings of eligibility and registration requirements for IBC are the responsibility of the Affiliate, NOT THE ACT.

7. What else?

Affiliates are not only encouraged, they are expected to enforce these rules to ensure that their acts are indeed eligible.

The Blues Foundation will stand as the final arbiter of any eligibility disputes. All contestants must register by the pre-determined deadline, in the format requested, before competing in IBC. Any Band found at any time to have been ineligible at the time of the competition will be stripped of its award(s) and the Affiliate may be liable for financial restitution of cash and other prizes to The Blues Foundation.

Any International Blues Challenge questions please email joe@blues.org or call 901-527-2583 ext. 11

Scoring Criteria

The Blues Foundation recommends that all Affiliated Organizations in their competition use our established scoring criteria. Categories include Talent Vocal, Blues Content, Stage Presence and Originality.

1. Blues Content: Everyone has his or her own interpretation of what is and is not Blues. Thus, any given three-judge panel will include members with varying opinions of Blues, covering the spectrum of Blues whenever possible, from the most traditional to soul/blues and rock/blues. Bands should pick material carefully. At the Memphis semi-finals and finals, the judges are Blues professionals, not a bar crowd, and are likely to be unimpressed with song selections that are uninspired. (Call this--with all due respect to Sir Mack Rice and Wilson Pickett--the "no Mustang Sally rule.")

2. Vocals: The acts vocal skills.

3. Talent: The acts instrumental skills.
4. 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.

5. Stage Presence: Over the years, the quality of talent has risen so dramatically that we no longer consider this an "amateur" competition. Most contestants have performed on stage enough to know that they are not simply playing music, but putting on a show. This category rates how "sellable" a band may be.

To reflect the relative importance of each category in the success of a band, a band's score in each category is weighted. Raw scores for Blues Content is multiplied by four, Talent and vocals by three and Originality and Stage Presence are multiplied by two. The total in each category represents the Weighted Score for that category. Total possible weighted score is 140.

**Penalty Points**

A Band is penalized one point from its Total Weighted Score (see below) for each ten seconds that it runs overtime. There is no penalty for using less than the allotted time.

At the producing organization's discretion, a policy of penalty for excessive time loading-in and out will also be applied.

The weighted multipliers will be Blues content (4); talent and vocals (3); originality (2) and stage presence (2).

Affiliate's and/or Act's are prohibited from contacting any IBC venue, for any reason. Violations of this rule will result with point deductions from the act(s) raw score. The Blues Foundation is your ONLY contact for this competition.

In addition, IBC participants can lose points for non-compliance with administrative aspects of the competition.

-Online application was filled out completely, accurately and before the deadline
-Act photo was supplied by the deadline and in the format and size requested.
-Act bio was supplied by the deadline and in the manner requested.
-Act checked in at Band Check-In on first day of event.
-Act checked in with Venue Coordinator at their venue at the required time.
-Act was in the right venue at the proper time and ready to perform.***
-Act showed up and on time to Finals orientation.
-Act ready to perform at proper time in finals.

***Venue Coordinators have the authority to act on behalf of The Blues Foundation to insure that the event goes smoothly in their designated venue. In the event that a band scheduled to play in a specific slot is not able to perform for whatever reason, the VC will have the authority to deduct a point from the band's overall weighted score for that night's competition. The next band scheduled to play will be asked to step into that slot. Should that band, for whatever reason, not be able to perform when asked, the VC has the authority to deduct a point from that band, and so on. With that in mind, The Blues Foundation strongly suggests that after a band has met with
their VC for their required check-in, they stay in the venue and are available to perform at the VC's direction, regardless of which slot they are scheduled to play. Bands that have missed their designated slot will be allowed to perform later in the night but will still suffer the loss of a point on the weighted score.

These items demonstrate professionalism and seriousness about the competition or the business side of the blues.

**SCORING SYSTEM FOR JUDGES**

*Here is the scoring procedure for 2014 IBC.*

1. All categories and weightings are as previously stated.

2. Each judge will indicate his or her Raw Score (a whole number between 1 and 10) in each category and turn that information over to the scorekeeper.

   - 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 such as Telluride or King Biscuit Blues Festival.

3. The scorekeeper will multiply the Raw Score in each category by the established multiplier to get each judge's Weighted Score in each category for each act.

4. The Weighted Scores from each category for an act are added together to determine the acts' Total Weighted Score for each judge.

5. Any penalty points will then be deducted to obtain the act's Net Weighted Score for each judge.

6. After all acts have been judged and each act's Net Weighted Score for each judge calculated, each act will then be ranked for each 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. So, in a competition with five acts, for example, each judge ends up with the acts ranked 1 - 5 based on each judge's personal scoring habits. This results in the acts' Final Ranking Number for each judge.

7. Next, the scorer totals the Final Ranking Number from all judges for each act to determine the Gross Final Ranking. That figure is averaged (divided by the total number of judges) to Achieve the Aggregate Act Ranking. For the semi-finals the act in each venue with the best two-day total of Aggregate Act Ranking will advance to the finals. For the finals, the act with the best Aggregate Act Ranking is the top finisher.
8. In the case of a tie, the scorer 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.

Notes for Competitors on the Memphis End

Act Check-in

To avoid point deductions, plan your travel to Memphis carefully. Each act must check in between 11 am - 2:30 pm January 30, 2013 at Club 152, 152 Beale St.. You will receive your credentials as well as your venue assignment at check-in, not before. Attendance of Act Orientation at 2:45 pm at Club 152, 152 Beale St. is required. Orientation will review contest rules, introduce key people, and seek to resolve any questions or special problems that contestants may have. Any competitor failing to check in by the orientation without special arrangement will be disqualified.

2014 Blues Challenge Format

Band and Solo Duo Competition
Band and solo/duo quarter-finals are a two-day competition (Wednesday & Thursday night). All bands and solo/duo acts are required to play both Wednesday and Thursday night at the same venue. Two or more top scoring acts from each venue will advance to the semi-finals.

Wednesday & Thursday quarter-final sets will be 25 minutes long. Sets for the semi-finals will be 30 minutes long. PLEASE NOTE: All set lengths are subject to change, notice will be sent to all affiliates and acts.

Acts that advance to the semi-finals will be announced on Thursday night in the venues. The venue assignments and playing times will be announced Friday on our website, Facebook page and listed on a printed schedule that will be available by 1pm at the IBC store.

Youth Showcase
The Youth Showcase is a one day event held on Friday afternoon. Youth acts are NOT required to attend the four day event.

The Youth Showcase is not judged, however all competition rules, regulations and restrictions apply.

Deadline for ALL acts to register is November 24, 2013.

Youth Act - any act that all members are under the age of 21 at the time of the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. PLEASE NOTE: Youth acts can be appointed by the board of an affiliate. A competition is not required.

Plan your travel to Memphis carefully. Each act will need to be checked in no later than 2 pm January 25, 2014. When you check in you will receive your credentials as well as your venue
assignment. Attendance to act orientation at 2:30 pm at Club 152 is required. Acts not checked in before the meeting are subject to disqualification.

The Blues Foundation reserves the right to change this format depending on the number of bands and number of venues participating.

Once the participating Beale Street venues have been assembled and all entry forms received, the number of performing acts in each venue can be finalized. Each act is assigned to a participating venue by a scientific process known as "drawing slips of paper with band names on them out of a hat." Adjustments may be made in the cases of, for instance, number of band members, size of venue stage and other production concerns as determined by The Blues Foundation. Quarter-Finalists will return to the same clubs as they played the preceding night.

Final Round Structure
Sets will be scored on the same criteria as 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.

Staging and Equipment
The Blues Foundation will provide backline and sound. The setup on stage will include a drum kit with snare drum, amps, keyboards and mics. The backline in your venue will be based on your registration information. Drummers should bring their own cymbals and kick pedals (Yes, you will need your cymbals, you might want to bring your own snare too) and Harmonica players CAN (but are not required) bring their own harp amp. Keyboard players may (but are not required, we will provide) bring their own keyboards and keyboard amps, stands will be provided. Effects racks and other auxiliary equipment are permitted. Musicians must include on the Affiliated Organization's application any additional or special equipment needed.

Competitors are prohibited from bringing their own amplifiers (harp amps and keyboard amps being the only exceptions.) Please bring a DI (if you use one) 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.

The Blues Foundation reserves the right to approve or restrict any and all equipment an entrant wishes to bring on stage.

Order of Appearance
As is the case with the assignment of venues, the order of appearance of acts in each venue is also random.
Hospitality
Refreshments will be sold at the events and are the responsibility of the consumer. The Blues Foundation will host several receptions for Affiliated Organizations and acts during the course of the weekend. More details will be available on the IBC schedule page of our website and in the event program.

Other Points of Consideration
The Blues Foundation reserves the right to use any contestant's name, voices, pictures, visages and other likeness for the purpose of advertising, publishing and promoting the IBC or The Blues Foundation.

The Blues Foundation reserves the right to videotape or otherwise record all IBC performances. The Blues Foundation shall retain total ownership of all recordings and programs, and reserves the right to edit the program, the right to broadcast the program, the right to copyright the program and the right to license others to use these rights.

CONCLUSION
The IBC grows more exciting each year and the competition gets better and better. Currently the Blues Foundation boasts over 200 Affiliated Organizations, and more Blues organizations in more areas means that our worldwide search for talent grows more comprehensive each year. If you have questions about the IBC, please do not hesitate to call the Foundation at 901-527-2583 ext 11 or email joe@blues.org

Minors on Beale Street
During the hours of 6am and 11pm minors are allowed within the historic district, without being accompanied by a parent or guardian. Minors are not allowed to enter the Beale Street Historic District after 11pm unless accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, or going to a destination point like the New Daisy Theatre.

IBC Competitor FAQs

Click on "IBC News" on the top right of this page to download LAST YEARS program for examples of printed bios.
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1. Blues Content: Everyone has his or her own interpretation of what is and is not Blues. Thus, any given three-judge panel will include members with varying opinions of Blues, covering the spectrum of Blues whenever possible, from the most traditional to soul blues and rock blues. Bands should pick material carefully. At the Memphis quarterfinals, semi-finals and finals, the judges are Blues professionals, not a bar crowd, and are likely to be unimpressed with song selections that are uninspired. (Call this--with all due respect to Sir Mack Rice and Wilson Pickett--the "no Mustang Sally rule.")

2. Vocals: The act's vocal skills.

3. Talent: The act's instrumental skills.

4. 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. If selecting covers, it is important to "make the song your own".

5. Stage Presence: Over the years, the quality of talent has risen so dramatically that we no longer consider this an "amateur" competition. Most contestants have performed on stage enough to know that they are not simply playing music, but putting on a show. This category rates how "sellable" a band may be.

To reflect the relative importance of each category in the success of a band, a band's score in each category is weighted. Raw scores for Blues Content is multiplied by four, Talent and Vocals by three and Originality and Stage Presence are multiplied by two. The total in each category represents the weighted score for that category. Total possible weighted score is 140.

The weighted multipliers will be Blues content (4); talent (3); vocals (3); originality (2) and stage presence (2).

Penalty Points

A Band is penalized one point from its total weighted score (see below) for each ten seconds that it runs overtime. There is no penalty for using less than the allotted time. At the venue coordinator's discretion, a penalty for excessive time loading-in and out may also be applied.

**SCORING SYSTEM FOR JUDGES**

Here is the scoring procedure for 2013 IBC.
1. All categories and weightings are as previously stated.
2. Each judge will indicate his or her raw score (a whole number between 1 and 10) in each category and turn that information over to the scorekeeper.

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 such as Chicago or King Biscuit Blues Festivals.

3. The scorekeeper will multiply the raw score in each category by the established multiplier to get each judge's weighted score in each category for each act.

4. The weighted scores from each category for an act are added together to determine the act's total weighted score for each judge.

5. Any penalty points will then be deducted to obtain the act's net weighted score for each judge.

6. After all acts have been judged and each act’s net weighted score for each judge calculated, each act will then be ranked for each 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. So, in a competition with five acts, for example, each judge ends up with the acts ranked 1 - 5 based on each judge's personal scoring habits. This results in the act's final ranking number for each judge.

7. Next, the scorer totals the final ranking number from all judges for each act to determine the gross act ranking. That figure is averaged (divided by the total number of judges) to achieve the aggregate act ranking.

8. For the quarter finals, in the solo/duo category, the four acts in each venue with the best two-day total of aggregate act ranking will advance to the semi-finals. In the band category, for the quarterfinals. In the band category, the four acts in each venue with the best two day total of aggregate act ranking will advance to the semi-finals.

9. For the semi-finals, in the solo/duo category, the two acts in each venue with the best aggregate act ranking will advance to the finals. In the band category, the act in each venue with the best aggregate act ranking will advance to the finals.

10. For the finals, the act with the best Aggregate Act Ranking is the top finisher.

11. In the case of a tie, the scorer shall calculate the sum of all Total Weighted Scores from all judges for the tied acts. The band with the higher sum of Total Net Weighted Scores wins.
Best Self Produced Official Rules
For thirty-two years, The Blues Foundation has celebrated and recognized established blues artists through the Blues Music Awards. For twenty-six years, The Blues Foundation has encouraged future blues performers through the International Blues Challenge.

Since 2005, The Blues Foundation has celebrated up and coming artists by bestowing an award for the "Best Self-Produced CD" of the year. It will do so again in 2013. Where the IBC, through its panel of distinguished judges, has been the measure of excellence for a band's live performance, the Best Self Produced CD award honors artists that have achieved excellence in the studio. Acts can be bands, solo acts, duo acts, trios, full choirs or any other combination. The purpose of this award is to assist Blues musicians in the pursuit of their professional goals.

This award complements the International Blues Challenge—the live music component of IBC Weekend. The Foundation believes this award further emphasizes the critical role of affiliated societies in the Blues world and provides another featured award for IBC weekend.

* Entries for the Best Self-Produced CD are permitted by affiliated blues societies only.
* Each affiliate is permitted one entry only.
* The CD entered does not have to be performed by the band entered in the 2013 International Blues Challenge.
* The eligibility period is the same as for the Blues Music Awards—the CD must have been released during November 1, 2012 - October 31, 2013 time frame.
* If an affiliate does not conduct a competition to determine who it will sponsor but instead appoints a CD, that CD may not include a board member or officer.
* Interested affiliates must submit 4 copies of their selection to The Blues Foundation office by November 1, 2013. The submission MUST include a note (in the package) on the affiliates letter head stating the artist and title of the submitted material is for consideration in the BSPCD.

The Blues Foundation
Best-Self Produced CD
421 South Main
Memphis, TN 38103

Submissions MUST be in our office by November 1, 2013

* Judging will be in three stages. There will be two rounds of judging by radio/print people leading to the final judging.
The finalists will be announced prior to IBC weekend. Music professionals will judge the finalists and the winner will be announced at the IBC finals.

Judges will evaluate:
(1) Blues Content
(2) Musical Performance
(2) Audio Quality of the Presentation
(3) Cover Art and Design
(4) Credits and Liner Information.

A performer who has previously been nominated for a Blues Music Award (formerly the W.C. Handy Blues Award) shall not be eligible for this competition. A CD issued in the name of an otherwise eligible performer which also includes the contributions of a Blues Music Award nominee may be ineligible, depending on the extent of the contribution. A CD on a record label that has been previously nominated for a Blues Music Award (formerly the W.C. Handy Blues Award) shall not be eligible for this competition.

**Compilations are not eligible.**

Singer, band, society or local producer may produce the actual CD as long as the performer is a singer, band or other individual entity.

Recordings with established or "known" producers within the industry are eligible as long as the recording is on the artist's independent label and not on an established national blues label.

If a recording was produced independently but an established blues label has purchased the master for distribution, the recording is still eligible until such time as the established blues label releases the recording.

The affiliates are responsible for ensuring that their submission complies with these rules. If you have any doubts or questions, contact the Foundation office.

The CDs honored to date are:

2005-Crazy, Cryin' Blues by Robin Rogers and Silver Bird by Collard Greens & Gravy (tie)
2006-Back in Bluesville by Roxy Perry
2007-We are Mighty Lester by Mighty Lester Band
2008-Sophisticated Ladies by Sue Palmer & Her Motel Swing Orchestra
2009-Hollerin' by Nathan James & Ben Hernandez
2010-Crime Scene Queen by The Informants and Fire it Up! by Laurie Morvan Band
2011-Get Inside This House by Joe McMurrian - Cascade Blues Association -
2012-Where I'm Comming From... by Dave Keller - Rhode Island Rhythm and Blues Preservation Society
2013-Solo Recordings by Steve Hill-Montreal Blues Society