



The Bitter Jester Foundation for the Arts (BJFA)
presents the 17th Annual Bitter Jester Music Festival (BJMF)
Preliminary Concerts on June 2, 3, 9, & 10
Finalists Compete for Cash & Prizes on June 25



Competition Structure:

“Band” refers to solo performers as well.
At least half the members of the entering
band must be 21 years old or younger.

\$2,000 GRAND PRIZE
2nd Place \$1k • 3rd Place \$500

PRELIMINARY CONCERTS (“PCs”): Up to 24 bands compete on summer nights (June 2, 3, 9, 10) at Port Clinton Square, 600 Central Ave, Highland Park, IL (max six (6) bands each week). **PCs start promptly at 6:00p; Bands arrive and set up at 5:00p.** Judges will score each band; one (1) band will win each PC, advancing to the Grand Finale on June 25.

WILD CARD BANDS (“WCBs”): WCBs will also be selected to advance to the Grand Finale. The WCBs are chosen by Music Festival Directors and Producers (not by judges) based on a combination of musical ability, audience appeal, attitude, sportsmanship, marketing ability & online engagement, official scores, and patent-pending magic. *At least four (4) WCB’s have won the entire Championship*, so hang tight if you don’t win your PC! **WCBs are Finalists, eligible to win all cash and prizes.**

GRAND FINALE: PC winners + WCBs proceed to the Grand Finale, all as Finalists, performing music on a large stage at a City of Highland Park sanctioned event. This is an all-day “indie music camp” event.

FINAL PLAYOFF: At the end of the Grand Finale concert, Judges select two (2) Finalists for a final head-to-head playoff. Each of the final two then performs a *single song not from their set* in a back-to-back battle for judges and the audience.

PICKING THE GRAND CHAMPION: With the help of audience cheers/applause, Judges cast final votes for a Grand Champion. A majority of votes determines the winner (there are typically seven (7) judges at the Grand Finale).

Judging Criteria:

All bands are judged on a 60-point scale based on the following evenly weighted categories:

- 1) **GROOVE & FOUNDATION** (*Tightness, rhythmic accuracy/consistency, balance/blend*)
- 2) **MUSICIANSHIP** (*How well each musician knows their instrument; Cohesion, solos, individual part-writing*)
- 3) **VOCALS & TONE QUALITY** (*Intonation; Diction/articulation and overall tone quality*)
- 4) **ARTISTIC IDENTITY** (*How clear is the Artist’s identity; Original music and/or creative takes on covers*)
- 5) **STAGE PRESENCE** (*Commanding the stage; Crowd engagement; Good execution of transitions*)
- 6) **SHOW PLANNING & PREP** (*Effective song selection/running order; Clear planning/rehearsal of transitions*)

Typically, there are six (6) judges for PC’s and seven (7) for the Grand Finale. Judges often place weight on original material. Bands performing covers *only* should focus on interpretation of the music, sound quality, audience appeal, and musicianship.

Judges are working musicians, music educators, entertainment pros, and past participants/winners. All Judges are appointed at the sole discretion of BJFA; all decisions of all Judges are final. Musicians are encouraged to speak with Judges after their concert.

Application Process, Deadlines, and Fees:

A professional judging panel reviews all submissions equally. Bands will be notified of their acceptance/rejection in April. Not all bands that apply are accepted. Two (2) music samples, a hi-res (300 dpi or higher) group photo, emergency contacts, and an Application fee must accompany each Application. Returning bands are encouraged to submit new tunes and pics. Musicians are welcome to apply with more than one band, but a separate Application & fee must accompany each submission. **There is a non-refundable Application fee of \$50 (early deadline = 03/15/23) or Late Application fee of \$60 (final deadline = 04/30/23) per band.** *Solo Artists reduce all entry fees by \$15.*

Awards and Prizes:

PC winners and WCBs are publicly recognized at the Grand Finale with certificates signed by the Mayor of Highland Park, IL, stating their accomplishment. After the Grand Finale, the Grand Champion, Runner-Up, & Honorable Mention bands will receive **\$2,000, \$1,000, & \$500 cash prizes** respectively. Cash prizes are generously provided by [First Bank of Highland Park](#).

Additional non-monetary prizes may be provided by BJFA to performers at the Grand Finale, courtesy of various sponsors. MVP Awards are also given to individual musicians at the Grand Finale (a performer may not win MVP for the same instrument more than once). Specific cash prize mounts and other prize/MVP Award details are subject to change at BJFA’s sole discretion.



Bitter Jester Foundation for the Arts, NFP (“BJFA”) Shall:



- Provide an outdoor performance venue with electricity and lights for all concerts;
- Provide professional Judges for all competitions (Festival Producers never act as Judges - the Festival’s *Director of Education* and *Music Director* – both former Bitter Jester competitors – often judges on the Grand Finale);
- Provide all competition bands with: 1) Judges’ numerical scores & written feedback, 2) Judges’ scoring charts & comparative breakdowns, 3) Real-time (recorded) verbal feedback from BJMF Education Team members (Prelim. Concerts), 4) Board feed audio & multi-track audio from all competitions (barring technical difficulties); 5) A concert photo shoot courtesy of a volunteer photographer (Prelim. Concerts); 6) Various podcast interviews;
- Provide Band Liaisons at all competitions to facilitate peer-to-peer networking and to answer questions;
- Provide Emcees from the Emmy® winning [Comic Thread](#) (Best Group: *LA Comedy Fest*, Audience Choice: *Chicago Fringe Fest*) to host concerts and introduce performers;
- Provide a professional audio crew and lighting/sound systems (speakers, monitors, sound board, mic package, etc.) sufficient to handle two (2) bands set up at the same time for all Prelim. Concerts;
- Provide a professional stage, audio crew, and lighting/sound systems (speakers, monitors, sound board, mic package, etc.) for the Grand Finale Concert;
- Provide a professional Production Manager and Production Crew to coordinate the Grand Finale Concert sound checks, main competition, and the final playoff round;
- Facilitate the awarding and distribution of 1) Cash prizes totaling \$3,500 (courtesy of [First Bank of Highland Park, IL](#)), 2) Trophies, 3) MVP Awards, and 4) any additional non-monetary sponsor-provided prizes (e.g. [Elmore Pedals](#));
- Provide select promotion of all Concerts to Chicagoland communities as well as any available physical promotions (e.g. postcards, posters, etc.) for participants to use in their own promotional and marketing activities;
- Have the right to use and distribute any/all submitted and/or future Festival-related recorded images & audio for promotional or other purposes this year and in future years without exception and with no expectation of compensation;
- Be granted the non-exclusive rights to mix and use audio recordings from BJMF for use on various “Live at Bitter Jester” albums (physical and/or digital) with no expectation of compensation – proceeds to benefit the 501(c)(3) BJFA.

Agreements – Entering Bands & Solo Performers Acknowledge and Agree:

- That at least half of its entrants are twenty-one (21) years old or *younger* and no performers are older than 24;
- To perform in Highland Park, IL on one (1) Preliminary night this summer, **arriving no later than 5:00 pm for their Preliminary Round to set up and agree to stay until after that night’s winner is announced;**
- **To hold June 25 open from 7:00 am until 9:00 pm** in case they are selected to proceed to the Grand Finale. Entrants understand that all musicians must be available to meet, sound-check, *and* perform on June 25 in Highland Park, IL, in order to compete in a Preliminary Round – notify the Festival of potential conflicts ASAP;
- To allow photography & audio/video recording/editing/distribution of all of their activities at any/all BJFA-related events for use in current/future marketing/promotion/distribution of the Festival and of BJFA;
- To grant the non-exclusive rights to mix and use audio recordings from BJMF for use on various “Live at Bitter Jester” albums (physical and/or digital) with no expectation of compensation – proceeds to benefit the 501(c)(3) BJFA;
- To actively promote and publicize their appearances at the “**Bitter Jester Music Festival**” online (linking to the Festival’s [Facebook page](#) and [Instagram account](#)) as well as in person to their families, friends, and fans;
- To promote themselves widely as well as to sell/give away any available merchandise during any of their concerts;
- To dress/act appropriately at all times – all lyrics/conduct must be “rated G” – disqualification may result if disobeyed;
- That discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in immediate disqualification;
- To provide BJFA with **emergency contact info** plus other band-related info. (incl. two (2) music samples + one (1) high-res (300 dpi or higher) promotional photo) via an online Application;
- To pay a one-time non-refundable **Application fee of \$50 or late Application fee of \$60 (Solo Artists pay \$35/\$45 respectively)** plus a small online processing fee to cover a portion of the admin. costs associated with processing, handling, and reviewing applicants to ensure that each submission is given fair & equal attention;
- To provide BJFA with a signed W9 Form in order to receive any potential cash payments.



Detailed Rules, Regulations, and Requirements:

For the purposes of this Agreement, the terms “Band”/“Entrant” refer interchangeably to both ensembles with multiple musicians and to individual solo performers. The term “Event” refers to any BJFA produced, co-produced, and/or sponsored concerts or other functions including the Bitter Jester Music Festival and any affiliated Showcase Concerts or Satellite Series.

Each participating Band will perform for approximately twenty-five (25) minutes in a Preliminary Concert. Finalists (including Winners & Wild Card Bands) will each perform for exactly thirty (30) minutes at the Grand Finale. A BJFA Production Manager will assist with this timing at the Grand Finale. It is critical that Bands prepare a set that is exactly 30 min for the Grand Finale and, at a certain point, final Grand Finale scores will be impacted if that 30-minute time deviates.

Due to extremely tight schedules at the Events, Bands must share a drum kit that BJFA provides. Two kits will be provided for Preliminary Concerts; one will be provided for the Grand Finale. No exceptions can be made. Drummers should bring their own cymbals and snares. We encourage you to share this info with Bandmates/parents today.

Entrants will be contacted in early May regarding the status of their Application. The official lineup will be announced in early May. This Festival is extremely competitive; submitting an Application in no way guarantees participation. Incomplete Applications (i.e. missing music samples/hi-res photo/emergency contact info/Application fee) cannot be processed and will be considered ineligible. Application fees are non-refundable and are used to cover a portion of the administrative costs associated with processing, handling, and reviewing Applications to ensure that each submission is given fair and equal attention. There are also ongoing upkeep costs for the online submission system that these fees help defray.

Submission of this Application grants BJFA the non-exclusive rights to use any/all submitted materials (including audio recordings and images) and materials recorded at BJFA Events for promotional and/or marketing/other purposes for this and all future BJFA-related Events. A “Live At Bitter Jester” album may be produced featuring music recorded at the Grand Finale. Any/all proceeds will benefit BJFA; Bands shall not expect compensation. Additionally, email addresses will be added to a very infrequent email list simply to inform musicians about future applications and lineup notices.

As this is a City-sponsored Event with free, public concerts, the content, lyrics, appearance, and behavior of all Entrants shall reflect the highest standards (**consider this a “rated G” Event**). BJFA and the City of Highland Park, IL, reserve the absolute and final right to disqualify or remove any Entrants from the Events for any reason at any time with no compensation.

BJFA is committed to providing a harassment-free environment in which everyone has an opportunity to contribute at their highest potential. “Harassment” is behavior that creates an offensive, intimidating, humiliating, or hostile environment. Harassment may be physical or verbal, and may be done in person or by other means (such as texts or online). Examples of harassing behavior include but are not limited to unwelcome sexual advances or remarks, offensive jokes, and disparaging comments. You must avoid engaging in harassing actions and BJFA requests that any such actions be reported to a BJFA Staff Member immediately. **BJFA has a zero-tolerance policy.**

All rules, regulations, Event dates, prize amounts, and prize distributions are determined at the sole discretion of BJFA and all aspects of these Events are subject to change at any time without prior warning. **Please email any and all comments, questions, or feedback to Music@BitterJester.com.**

By submitting the online Application, you and your Bandmates all signify full understanding of and agree to abide by all aspects of the agreements, rules, regulations, and requirements for participation in the Bitter Jester® Music Festival. You hereby attest that you have shared this information and the contents of the online Application (including this Agreement) with your Bandmates and parents/guardians and that those individuals also understand and agree to abide by everything stated above.

SIGNATURE NOTE: Your Application *must* be signed by someone at least eighteen (18) years old. If no one in the Band is old enough, you must authorize a Representative to sign and date the Agreement, attesting to everything stated above.

NOTE FOR PARENTS: While your support and enthusiasm are very much welcome and encouraged, parents are not allowed backstage at the Grand Finale – no exceptions. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy the show while our crew works. You earned it!

GOOD LUCK!