



Orange Blossom Blues Society - OBBS

Central Florida Blues Challenge – CFBC

2024-2025 Official Rules

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 so long as it has never received a Blues Music Award nomination. The International Blues Challenge is restricted to acts sponsored by a Blues Foundation affiliate. OBBS is an Affiliate in good standing with the Blues Foundation.

The CFBC adheres to the following criteria for what constitutes a band and what constitutes a solo/duo 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.

Eligibility Criteria

Restrictions:

An act is eligible so long as it, or any member of the act, has never received a Blues Music Award nomination. An act may enter the IBC a maximum of 3 times, after which they are no longer eligible. They may not participate in the IBC in three consecutive years, i.e., there must be a break of at least one year after competing in a first or second IBC.

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.

At least one member of the competing Band or Solo/Duo must be a member of the Orange Blossom Blues Society and the acts must predominately perform within the State of Florida.

Officers and/or directors of the OBBS, their affiliates, official sponsors, any person working on the organizing committee and immediate family members of each are not eligible to compete. The OBBS

board of directors will stand as the final arbiters of any eligibility disputes. All such disputes must be presented to the OBBS board of directors in writing and in a timely manner. All contestants must register by the pre-determined deadline, in the format requested, before competing in the CFBC.

If a Band or Solo/Duo act has already won a sanctioned and affiliated blues challenge, they must notify the OBBS so that a decision can be made on their eligibility and OBBS reserves the right to allow their slot to go to another Band or Solo/Duo act.

Scoring Criteria

The Blues Foundation recommends that all affiliated organizations in their competition use their established scoring criteria. Categories include talent (vocal & instrumental), blues content, stage presence, and originality.

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 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”)

Vocal Talent: The acts vocal skills.

Instrumental Talent: The acts instrumental skills.

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 the scoring.

The OBBS recognizes that blues standards are an integral part of any working band’s repertoire and playing an interesting well thought out arrangement of a song will not be looked upon in the same way as playing a cover tune “lick for lick”. If an act successfully brings their own identity to an old standard, this will not be counted against them. However, it is understood that this may not hold true for the IBC competition in Memphis where playing cover tunes is highly discouraged. Please choose your material wisely.

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.

Point System

To reflect the relative importance of each category in the success of a band, a band’s core in each category is weighted. The weighted multipliers will be blues content (4); vocal content (3); originality (2)

and stage presence (2). Raw score for blues content is multiplied by four, talent multiplied by three, 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 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 may also be applied.

Blues Challenge Format ([International Blues Challenge - Blues Foundation](#))

Band Competition - Sets can be no more than 20 minutes long.

Solo/Duo Competition - Sets can be no more than 20 minutes long.

The organizer reserves the right to change this format depending on the number of bands participating. The final set length will be communicated to all participants prior to the date of the competition. But in all cases the set time will not exceed 20 minutes.

Personnel — No changes can be made to any band personnel between the close of registration of the local event and the Final event in Memphis. The musicians that perform on stage at the local event must also perform in Memphis. Call this the "no ringer" rule. You can't stack the deck and perform as a trio at the local level and then show up in Memphis with a 10-piece band. You can't hire Buddy Guy to play guitar for you either. This may seem like a silly rule, but the members of the band or duo act must remain consistent through all levels of the competition.

Scoring System for Judges

Here is the scoring procedure for the IBC. The OBBS will use the same procedures for the CFBC.

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.

Scoring Matrix:

- 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 the Chicago Blues Festival, Tampa Bay Blues Festival or Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival.

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.

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

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

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.

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.

Staging and Equipment

The Orange Blossom Blues Society will provide backline and sound equipment. The setup on stage will include a basic drum kit, guitar amps, bass amps and mics. Drummers should bring their own throne, snare, cymbals and kick pedal. Harmonica players can bring their own harp amp. Keyboard players must bring their own keyboards, keyboard amps and stands. Effects racks and other auxiliary equipment are permitted. Musicians must include any requests for additional or special equipment needed on the application.

Competitors are prohibited from bringing their own amplifiers (harp amps and keyboard amps being the only exceptions.) Please bring your own 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 by the organizing committee prior to the competition. Mail such a petition as part of the band's application. With the number of bands participating, 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.

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

Order of Appearance

The order of appearance for each band/act is random. All names will be pulled from a hat to determine order. Order will be determined one week prior to the start of the event. All bands/acts must be at the venue 30 minutes prior to the start of their set.

Other Points of Consideration

The Orange Blossom Blues Society reserves the right to use any contestant's name, voices, pictures, visages and other likeness for the purpose of advertising, publishing and promoting the CFBC event or The Orange Blossom Blues Society.

The Orange Blossom Blues Society reserves the right to videotape or otherwise record all CFBC performances. The Orange Blossom Blues Society shall retain total ownership of all recordings, 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.

Prizes

As a registered affiliate of the **Blues Foundation**, the **Orange Blossom Blues Society** will sponsor the following winners of the CFBC. The dollar amount for each category will be determined by the Board of Directors as a direct result of contributions and revenue generated by the Central Florida Blues Challenge to assist the winners in covering a portion of the costs associated with a trip to the International Blues Challenge (IBC) in Memphis, TN in January 7-11, 2025.

1st Place Band - TBD

1st Place Solo/Duo - TBD