

“So You Want to Apply to the
Bitter Jester Music Festival...”



2023 Online Application Clinic
(2024 info update)

www.BitterJesterMusic.org

What Is The Bitter Jester Music Festival?

- Annual non-profit music festival established in 2006
- Sponsored by City of Highland Park, supported by several local grants as well as various corporate sponsorships, including Elmore Pedals
- Entirely volunteer run - all the shows are free to attend / rain or shine
- There is an application process which includes uploads, answers to Q's, and an application fee

Who Is Eligible To Apply?

- At least half of the band must be 21 years old or younger
(at the time the application is submitted)
- No performers over the age of 24
- All genres of music are accepted
- Any size band, from solo performers to 10+ member mega bands (and beyond)

Why Should I Apply?

- Get incredible education materials from industry pros:
 - Pages of handwritten notes
 - Numerical scores
 - Charts / graphs
 - Verbal commentary
- Rough mix audio of your sets
- Multitrack recordings of your sets
- Get free social media promotions leading up to and during the Festival
- Learn about areas for improvement even if you don't get accepted the first time
- Access to Incredible "Industry Advisors"
- Prize money:
 - Grand Champions: \$2,000⁰⁰
 - Runners-Up: \$1,000⁰⁰
 - Honorable Mention: \$500⁰⁰
- Networking and connections with fellow performers and Bitter Jester judges
- Other great prizes and benefits:
 - Elmore Pedals
 - Navy Pier performance opportunity
 - Ravinia Festival performance opportunity
 - Satellite Series performance opportunity
 - Podcast interviews
 - Concert photo shoots
 - Deep discounts for multitrack pro mixes
 - Radio & TV opportunities
 - Future connections to paid gigs

Important 2024 Dates

<u>FEB. 1:</u>	Applications Go Live!	<u>JUN 14:</u>	Night Three Concert
<u>MAR. 15:</u>	Early Application Deadline	<u>JUN 15:</u>	Night Four Concert
<u>APR. 22:</u>	Application Deadline	<u>TBA:</u>	Wild Cards Announced
<u>MAY 10:</u>	2024 Lineup Announced	<u>JUN 29:</u>	Grand Finale Concert & The Taste of Highland Park
<u>MAY 18:</u>	Mandatory <u>Virtual</u> All-Band Orientation Meeting	<u>SEP. 2:</u>	'Best Of' Showcase Concert @ Navy Pier Beer Garden
<u>JUN. 7:</u>	Opening Night Concert	<u>TBA:</u>	Showcase Concert @ Ravinia Festival featuring Ur Mom, BJMF 2023 Runners-Up
<u>JUN. 8:</u>	Night Two Concert		

Best Practices for Online Applications

- Research the event or festival you're applying to...
- Do your homework on who has participated / competed in the past...
- Don't be discouraged if you don't think you fit...
- Communicate with the event / festival...
- Ask good questions but try to find the answers first (read the BJMF FAQ!)
- Always poke around in the application PRIOR to actually starting it if you can
- SAVE YOUR WORK IN A SEPARATE DOCUMENT AS YOU GO!
 - Will be a great copy / paste starting point for future applications
- Know that - your social media (as individuals and as a band) is in the public domain and there is always the chance that people who are reviewing your application will see it - is that good or bad?
- Applying the first time = establishing a relationship with the festival; the next time they will know your name and recognize your growth (and your music)

How Are BJMF Applications Judged?

- Reviewed by a panel of Festival Producers / Department Heads
- Music is the most important
- The review committee makes three “buckets”
 - “Must Have”
 - “Maybe”
 - “Not This Year”
- Written materials are also important, but secondary
- Supporting materials are all looked at and can play a role
- Aging Out & “Seniority” - a small part, but it will enter the conversation
- Every single application is reviewed equally and a lot of time is spent on this process including returning to many “Maybe” applications (and even some “Not This Year” applications) multiple times

How Many Applicants Are Accepted?

- 24 artists will be accepted into the competition
- Multiple Non-Competing Artists will also make the cut:
 - Up to 8 showcase bands / solo artists will be invited
 - Up to 4 featured solo performers (specifically) will be invited

BJMF Application Deep Dive

(screen share)

How To Stand Out

- Don't "phone in" the written portion or treat it as a throwaway - very important
- Write your bio(s) in the third person voice (professional approach)
- Tell us something we don't already know; Think about the purpose of what you're saying - why are you saying it and are there more meaningful ways to say it
- Make it clear that you care - this directly relates to how you'll be perceived in person
- Understand that you are competing for a spot with your entire application and that your competition cares and wants to get in just as much (if not more) than you do...
- TELL YOUR STORY! If you can get the selection panel to talk about your music AND yourselves, you're going to be memorable
- Tag us in your social media posts -. A lot of people apply and don't get in and still come out to the shows - get the networking (engagement with other performers) going early
- Proofread your application
- Above all else, be genuine

What Kind Of Music Samples?

- First and foremost, submit your best material. If this piece of advice conflicts with the next few points, heed this one above all others
- We suggest (but don't require) that you submit one song that's a well-mixed / studio recording and one song that's a live recording
- As a reminder, feel free to submit material that may not be "G-Rated" ... but understand our shows are City-sponsored and must be family-friendly / "radio" edits
- If you have swearing, for example, be prepared to briefly mention how you will adjust your material if selected to perform at Bitter Jester

Bad Bio vs. Good Bio

Examples of Poorly-Written Bios:

Example A

We are Trainwreck from Boise, ID, formerly known as Car Crash. Our group consists of Jack Jones, singer, Emma Bort, guitarist, Sarah Major, trumpet, Ted Smith, harmonica, and Greg Gregerson, drummer. We came together to create this band back in December of 2019. All of us love the adrenaline that the stage and crowd provide, love to rock out and have fun, and can't wait to perform!

Example B

WE ARE DANGER VOLE WE LIKE THE FUNK MUSIX AND THE HARDCORE MUSIX!!! WE ARE KNOWN FOR DESTROYING VENUES AND MAKING SURE YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE IN FEAR OF WHAT IS NEXT TO COME >:). ONCE YOU COME TO A DANGER VOLE SHOW YOU WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE 4EVER!!!!!!

Example C

The band was formed by people who've known each other for a while and decided to get together on a whim to have some fun. Although they're all different, their passion for music binds them together into what they consider to be a tight knit family who loves to play music. They have a wide range of influences and write and play original music as well as play covers.

Examples of Well-Written Bios:

Example A

Three-time Michigan State Fair winners Fluff Jamz is a rock-reggae quartet from Lake In The Hills, MI. Combining Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix's hard rock energy with Sublime and Red Hot Chili Peppers' lively summer atmosphere, Fluff Jamz has a fun, upbeat sound anyone can enjoy! With originals abound and tasteful improvisation, every Fluff Jamz show is bound to be a new and exciting experience.

Example B

Ocean Salt is a metal band based in Crumb Cake, KY. The band has performed everywhere from airplane hangars, backyard BBQ's, and basements to universities, music festivals, and street fairs. The trio is comparable to Metallica, Anthrax, or Manowar, offering a unique blend of metal in all its forms. Since 2018, Ocean Salt band has become known locally for its energetic live performances. Their creative originals and cleverly crafted covers make for a set that keeps both the band and the crowd moving (and asking for more!).

Example C

Rick Jackson is a solo indie-american performer focused on making music feel like home. He believes that art is capable of filling up the empty spaces in our lives and prefers performing with just an acoustic guitar and his voice, playing music in an intimate way that truly allows you to just sit back... and listen.

Unimpressive “Statement” vs. Impressive “Statement”

Less-Than-Impressive “Statement” Examples:

Example A

Stephanie's looking to play her original music in front of as many people as she can.

Example B

TO MAKE OURSELVES HEARD AND TO HEAR OTHERS. WE LOVE PLAYING MUSIC AND BEING HEARD! WE SEE BITTER JESTER AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET MORE EXPOSURE AND MEET MORE PEOPLE.

Example C

We would like to participate because we love playing music live and seeing people have a good time. It's our favorite thing to do and we hope we can make an impression on those seeing us live.

Impressive “Statement” Examples:

Example A

We've played a few shows locally and are looking to network with other musicians and gain more exposure. We're currently well-known in our region but would love to expand our audience outside of Iowa. Plus, gaining experience from judges who actually know what they're talking about, even if we disagree, would be great. And we put on one hell of a live show!

Example B

We are always looking to challenge ourselves as musicians and are always seeking out new opportunities to inspire other people. Being two young women in music, we often aren't taken as seriously as others, which can be frustrating.. We would love an opportunity to prove our talent as musicians.

Example C

Our band participated last year and it was such an amazing experience. Several of us went to see every Friday concert and it was wonderful to hear and hang out with so many talented musicians. The feedback we got from the judges after each round genuinely made us think and helped us grow as a band (we factored a lot of it into our rehearsals). We hope to be able to showcase our growth this year and continue the evolution of our sound..

What Happens If I'm Not Accepted?

- Some applications are a multi-year process - it's about growth as artists and we DO keep old submissions on file (for ever)
- Thoughtfully ask for feedback on your application if you don't get in. Being thoughtful / genuine is key. Not "why didn't we get in"
- If and when you re-apply, focus on showing growth and improvement - especially in your written application (the music will likely be more obvious); Not to be cliché, but tell us the challenges you faced and how you overcame them...

How Can I Help Bitter Jester?

- Write the dates of the festival down in your calendar (including dates when announcements will be made and the dates you said you would be available)
- **AGAIN: Write the dates of the festival down in your calendar**
- Keep track of the dates you said you would be available to perform
- **SHARE THE DATES YOU SAY YOU'LL BE AVAILABLE TO PERFORM WITH YOUR BANDMATES AND PARENTS**
- If your availability changes, let the festival know ASAP by email or DM
- Should you get accepted, try to be flexible when it comes time to actually schedule your appearance in our festival
- Help spread the word
 - Post on social media that you applied
 - Tell your teachers and friends about the event (not just the applications but the concerts, too)
- Come out to the shows!
- Tag us on social media
 - IG: @bitterjester_musicfestival
 - FB: @bitterjesterbattle

Q & A

www.BitterJesterMusic.org

(applications go live at 9pm tonight!)

Industry Advisors

- **Hamon Kim**
 - *Artist Management*
- **Lynn Orman-Weiss**
 - *Media & Broadcast*
- **Rob Tovar**
 - *Business & Creative Development*
- **Andres Tapia**
 - *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion*

Contact Information

- Production Department
 - *music@bitterjester.com*
- Music Department
 - *kevin@bitterjester.org*
- Social Media Department
 - *courtney@bitterjester.org*
 - *arden@bitterjester.org*
- Education Team / Judges
 - *michael@bitterjester.org*

The End!