

**RULE NINETEEN
SPECIAL RULES FOR THE
MUSIC AWARDS**

I. CATEGORIES

A. Original Score:

An original score is a substantial body of music that serves as original dramatic underscoring and is written specifically for the motion picture by the submitting composer(s).

B. Original Song:

An original song consists of words and music, both of which are original and **written specifically for the motion picture**. There must be a clearly audible, intelligible, substantive rendition (not necessarily visually presented) of both lyric and melody, used in the body of the motion picture or as the first **new** music cue once the end credits begin.

C. Original Musical:

An original musical consists of not fewer than five original songs (as defined in Paragraph I.B above) by the same writer or team of writers, either used as voiceovers or visually performed. Each of these songs must be substantively rendered, clearly audible, and intelligible, and must further the storyline of the motion picture. An arbitrary group of songs unessential to the storyline will not be considered eligible.

II. ELIGIBILITY

- A. The work must be the result of a creative interaction between the filmmaker(s) and the composer(s) and/or songwriter(s) who have been engaged to work directly on the motion picture.
- B. A score must be created specifically for the eligible feature-length motion picture and comprise a minimum of 35% of the total music in the film.
1. If a score does not meet the minimum 35%, the composer may submit a letter to the Music Branch Executive Committee, stating reasons for the score to be accepted for consideration. All letters must be received by the due dates published by the Academy for the current Awards cycle.
 2. All decisions of the Music Branch Executive Committee shall be final.
- C. In cases such as sequels and franchises from any media, no more than 20% of the score may use pre-existing themes and music borrowed from previous scores in the franchise.
- D. The work must be created and recorded exclusively for use in the motion picture **prior** to any other usage.
- E. Only the **principal composer(s) or songwriter(s)** responsible for the conception, substantive authorship and execution of the work **as a whole** shall be eligible for an award.
1. Expressly excluded from eligibility are all individuals not responsible for the substantive authorship of the original work, including:
 - a. partial contributors (i.e., any writer or composer not responsible for the overall design of the work)

- b. performers, producers, and/or arrangers not responsible for the creation of the original song or score
 - c. music supervisors
- F. A score shall not be eligible if:
 - 1. it has been diluted by the use of pre-existing music, or
 - 2. it has been diminished in impact by the predominant use of songs or any music not composed specifically for the film by the submitting composer, or
 - 3. it has been assembled from the music of more than one composer.
- G. No more than one statuette will normally be given in the Original Score category. A second statuette may be awarded when two credited composers function as equal collaborators, each contributing fully to the original dramatic underscore for the film.
- H. The Music Branch Executive Committee has the right, in what it alone determines to be a very rare and extraordinary circumstance, to award a third statuette to three individuals who functioned as equal collaborators in the creation of the Original Score and do not work together as a recognized band or group.
- I. In cases where a group of credited composers function as equal collaborators in a recognized band, a single statuette will be awarded to the group. Each credited composer in the band must agree to the single "group statuette" option by signing and returning a Group Award form prior to the submission deadline. Final determination of the awardable composers in the group will be made by the Music Branch Executive Committee.
- J. No more than two statuettes will normally be given in the Original Song category. A third statuette may be awarded when there are three essentially equal writers of a song. The Music Branch Executive Committee has the right, in what it alone determines to be a very rare and extraordinary circumstance, to award a fourth statuette. Regardless of the number of statuettes awarded, all eligible contributions must be essentially equal.
- K. A group is defined as five or more essentially equal credited songwriters. In those cases where more than five credited songwriters function as collaborators, the Music Branch Executive Committee has the right, in what it alone determines to be a very rare and extraordinary circumstance, to allow more than five credited songwriters to be considered for the group award. Final determination of the awardable songwriters in the group will be made by the Music Branch Executive Committee.
 - 1. A single statuette will be awarded to the group. Each songwriter must agree to the single "group statuette" option by signing and returning a Group Award form prior to the submission deadline.
- L. In the case of an original musical, the composer or adapter of the instrumental score may qualify for an award if their contribution is deemed relevant and substantial.
- M. The Music Branch Executive Committee shall resolve all rules interpretations and all questions of eligibility. All decisions shall be final.
- N. It is within the sole and confidential discretion of the Board of Governors to determine what awards, if any, shall be given.

III. SUBMISSION

- A. For an achievement to be eligible for nomination in any of the Music categories, the submission must be initiated either personally by the songwriter or composer, or by their authorized representative, or by an authorized representative of the distributing studio of that film.
- B. Submission forms must be signed by all submitting writers and must be accompanied by a complete final music cue sheet listing all music cues.
- C. Original Song submissions must further be accompanied by:
- A vocal lead sheet.
 - A digital video clip of no more than three minutes of each song, showing how the song is used in the motion picture. The clip must have captions provided per the Academy's digital submission guidelines.
 - i. For songs submitted as the first new music cue once the end credits begin, the video clip must include the last 15 seconds of the film prior to the start of the credits, for a total clip runtime of 3:15.
 - A completed "Original Song Contribution Form," obtainable from the Awards Submission site. The Music Branch Executive Committee will review all submission materials when making the determination of award-eligible songwriters.
 - i. Any songwriter whose contributions are not essentially equal must submit a letter along with the Contribution form, outlining in detail the nature of each person's contribution.
 - No more than three (3) songs from any one film may be submitted for Original Song, regardless of writer(s).
- D. Original Score submission forms must further be accompanied by:
- A completed "Music Breakdown Form" obtainable from the Awards Submission site.
 - A final cue sheet.
 - In cases where other non-submitting composers have contributed original music in the film – either by shared authorship of cues or by additional cues not shared with the submitting composer – a letter signed by ALL listed composers explaining the contribution of each must be submitted to the Music Branch Executive Committee by the submission deadline along with all other required materials. A letter simply acknowledging the eligibility of only the principal composer(s) is not sufficient.
- E. The composer's on-screen credit and submission form, as well as the actual cue sheet for the music as used in the film and supplied by the film company, shall be used by the Music Branch Executive Committee to help determine the eligibility of the score.
- F. Song submissions are due by **5 p.m. PT on Wednesday, October 14, 2026**. Score submissions are due by **5 p.m. PT on Wednesday, November 4, 2026**. New submissions will not be accepted beyond these dates; however, for existing submissions an extension may be granted at the Academy's discretion **only** for the purposes of delivery of supplemental materials such as video clips or final cue sheets.
- G. The Music Branch Executive Committee has the right, but not the obligation, to submit any eligible works in all three categories, but must do so no later than the submission deadline published by the Academy.
- H. The submitting writers and/or producers shall provide the Academy with the right to use Original Score, Original Song, and Original Musical submissions for any voting purposes, and for use in the production of the Academy Awards telecast.

IV. VOTING

- A. Works shall be judged on their effectiveness, craftsmanship, creative substance, and relevance to the dramatic whole, and only as presented within the motion picture. Extended, revised, enhanced or alternate versions outside of the film shall not be considered.
- B. The Music Branch Executive Committee requires that producers provide opportunities to view their motion pictures via the Academy Screening Room or advance theatrical screenings. This is required in instances where a title will be released after the preliminary voting cycle opens for shortlist selection.
- C. Films eligible for Original Score and film clips of eligible Original Songs shall be viewed by all members of the Music Branch who will vote in the order of their preference for not more than fifteen achievements in Original Song and twenty achievements in Original Score. The achievements receiving the highest number of votes in each category shall advance to the next round of voting.
- D. Five nominees for Original Song and five nominees for Original Score will then be chosen by a second round of balloting. Members shall vote in the order of their preference for not more than five achievements in each category. The five achievements receiving the highest number of votes in each category shall become the nominations for final voting for the award.
- E. No more than two songs from any one film by the exact same writers may be shortlisted. If more than two songs from a film by the exact same writers are in contention, the two songs with the most votes will advance to the shortlist. However, no more than two songs from any one film, regardless of writers, may be nominated for the Original Song award.
- F. If there are twenty-five or fewer qualified works submitted in any category, the Music Branch Executive Committee may recommend to the Board of Governors that nominations be limited to three. If there are nine or fewer qualifying works submitted in any category, the Music Branch Executive Committee may recommend to the Board of Governors that no award be given in that category for the current Awards year.
- G. The category of Original Musical may be activated only by special request of the Music Branch Executive Committee to the Board of Governors in a year when the field of eligible submissions is determined to be of sufficient quantity and quality to justify award competition.
- H. Final voting for each category shall be restricted to active and life Academy members.