



YOUNG IRISH JAZZ MUSICIAN 2026

EVENT GUIDE

Young Irish Jazz Musician provides a platform for the best of emerging jazz talent on the island of Ireland. If you enter you will have the chance to be heard by leading Irish jazz musicians and broadcasters. If you progress to the final of the competition you will play with and be mentored by a rhythm section of professional musicians. This document contains information about the format of the event, how to enter, and what you can expect if you take part.

Young Irish Jazz Musician 2026 is organized by Limerick Jazz. Limerick Jazz has been promoting performances by leading Irish and international jazz artists since the 1980s and has been consistently active in jazz education since 2003. In 2019 we succeeded in obtaining charitable status.

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Format

There are two stages in Young Irish Jazz Musician 2026, Round 1 and the Final. If you decide to enter you will need to send us a video of yourself performing (see below). Your video will be judged by a panel of experts, who will view every entry and score the performances. The highest scoring people will go through to the Final (up to a maximum of 6 people).

The judges will write feedback notes for everyone, and you can request those afterwards. We know this feedback is important to lots of our musicians — it can be very productive to get the opinion of someone new on your playing.

If you are chosen for the Final, you'll have the opportunity to be mentored by and play with our house band of experienced professional musicians. You'll have a couple of days to rehearse with the band over the weekend leading up to the Final, which happens at University Concert Hall, Limerick. At the Final you will be playing in front of an audience and a new panel of judges. The highest scoring person will become Young Irish Jazz Musician 2026 and will receive:

- A specially designed souvenir of the event
- Participation in Limerick Jazz Festival 2027
- A bursary of €1,000 which can be spent on a recording or music studies



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Timetable

The closing date for entries is Friday, October 23rd, 2026. We will inform you if you have qualified for the Final or not. If you accept our invitation to take part in the Final, please be ready to tell us what music you want to perform.

The final will be held on the evening of Sunday, November 22nd, 2026. There will be an opportunity for each finalist to rehearse with the house band and use practice facilities during the day on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd.

Notes for Filling in the Entry Form

Who Can Enter?

You need to be between the ages of 14 and 23 on January 1st, 2026, and must be a resident of the island of Ireland when you enter.

What Do I Do?

To enter Young Irish Jazz Musician 2026, you need to send us a video of yourself playing / singing, plus your entry form, a photo, and proof of your age — a photo or scan of your passport / birth certificate / driving license. Please don't send us original documents.

You should use the information in this document to help you to fill out the form, and read the rules, terms, and conditions before completing it.

What Can You Play?

- You can play any instrument you like, or you can sing.
- You can choose any music to play, any style of jazz that you like, but we recommend that you show some contrast of tempo / feel etc. Later in the competition we may need to make sure that we can clear your music for broadcast, but we will talk to you about that if and when you go through.
- At the Final, one of your numbers must be either your own composition, or your arrangement of a standard.
- Let us know what you're playing on your video, either by filling in that section as you enter online, or on the form.
- You can play or sing solo, or with a band, or in any combination, as long as your performance is showcased and we can assess it.
- Most importantly: there must be a substantial element of improvisation in your performance, and this applies to singers as well as instrumentalists. Improvisation is one of the judging criteria so if you don't improvise you are very unlikely to go through to the next round.



How Should You Film Your Video?

- You can use a pre-existing video if you like, or you can film something new.
- Don't worry too much about the quality of the recording — you won't be judged on that, and your video won't be broadcast. It just needs to be good enough for us to assess your playing.
- You can use a camera or a phone.
- You should film each piece in a single take, so no editing or changing shot in the middle of a piece. You can edit between pieces though or send them separately.
- The total duration of the music on your video can be up to 10 minutes. Anything over that won't be viewed by the judges.
- You need to use either MPEG-4 or QuickTime (.mov)

How to Get Your Entry to Us?

- Download the entry form at www.limerickjazz.com/education/young-irish-jazz-musician, fill it in and email it to us with a photo of yourself and a scan or photo of your proof of age. Please type into the boxes on the form before you download it for signing.
- Either include a WeTransfer, DropBox or similar file-sharing application link where we can pick up your video or upload your video at limerickjazz.com/education/young-irish-jazz-musician. Please don't try to email a video file as an attachment.
- However you deliver your video to us, you must use either MPEG-4 or QuickTime (.mov)
- We will get in touch to let you know that your entry has arrived. If you haven't heard from us within a couple of days, please contact us.

What Will Happen to Your Entry?

Your entry and all the others will be shown to a panel of judges. They won't know anything about you apart from your name and they will mark everyone's playing in the same way, using the criteria below. We can't return your video, so please make a copy for yourself if you need one.

At every stage, the judges will mark you on these aspects of your playing:

- Performance
- Interpretation and stylistic awareness
- Improvisation
- Instrumental or vocal technique

At the later stages when you're playing with a live band, the judges will also score you on your interaction with the other musicians. Please bear in mind that the judges will be looking for potential as well as existing accomplishment.



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Your Contact Details

Your email address is the most important part of the form. This is how we will contact you, so please take care to write clearly / avoid typos and use an email account that you check regularly.

Expenses

We want as many people as possible to feel able to apply to Young Irish Jazz Musician and we don't want cost to be a barrier. If you go through to the Final, we will pay your travel costs up to a cap of €150 and will provide two nights hotel accommodation (twin room) for you if you need it. We can reimburse the cost of public transport (you need to keep your receipts), or if you're driving, we will pay you a rate per mile towards your petrol costs. We will also pay travel expenses for an adult to come with you.

How We Support You

We will let you know what's involved before every stage and we're always available to answer questions — just drop us an email or call us. If you take part in the Final, we will guide you through the process and you will be mentored by the professional musicians in our house rhythm section.

Rules, Terms and Conditions

This is where you can find the rules and the contractual part of entering Young Irish Jazz Musician, where we describe what you and Limerick Jazz are agreeing to. Most importantly, by submitting a complete and valid application either online, by email or by post, you are consenting to the filming of your performances and allowing us to broadcast them.

We also list the rules and explain how we handle your data and our approach to working with young people (our Child Protection Policy will apply to participants of all ages). You'll need to get your parent / guardian to give their consent by countersigning the form for you.

We strongly recommend that you read these terms and conditions and if you have any questions or would like us to clarify anything, please contact us at any time. You can find our rules, terms and conditions on our website: limerickjazzfestival.com/youngirishjazzmusician

Instruments

Apart from pianists and drummers, you need to provide your own instrument. We will provide a piano and a standard drum kit. We can also provide an amp if you need one, but you need to let us know in advance. If you play multiple instruments and want to enter on more than one, please do, just send us a separate form and video for each one.



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Time Limits

Each round has a maximum time limit to make sure that everyone has the same chance to impress the judges. This time limit applies to music only, so any gaps between pieces don't count. If you go over the time limit on your video, the rest of it won't be watched. At the Final, we know that things can stretch a bit and you might overrun a bit when you're performing live. We ask that you try to stick to the time limit and suggest that you give yourself a bit of leeway. Any significant overrun might be considered when it comes to the scoring.

- Round One: 10 minutes
- Final: 15 minutes

House Band

We provide a professional rhythm section for the Final. If you play piano, bass or drums, you will replace that member of the rhythm section and play as a trio. If you're a singer or play a frontline instrument, you will join the rhythm section to make a quartet. All the musicians will be professional jazz musicians, and you will have time to rehearse with them in advance. They will help and support you through the process.

Music Charts / Scores

If you are playing or singing with one of our rhythm sections, you will need to provide charts or written out scores of your pieces for the band members plus a copy for the judges.

Filming

There will be cameras filming your performances at the Final, plus you will be interviewed on camera at various points. We may also make short films about each finalist.