



The Jazz Music Awards recognizes jazz as an American musical art form, birthed from the experience and innovation of African Americans, rooted in blues, ragtime, swing, bebop, and creative improvised music, including Latin jazz, mainstream, smooth, and other contemporary forms, or hybrids.

The Jazz Music Awards Category Descriptions

Best Mainstream Artist

The category recognizes the accomplishments and body of recorded work (albums, singles, features, and videos) by a solo artist, during the eligibility period, whose music is inclusive of and guided by jazz tradition, whether instrumental or vocal.

Best Contemporary Artist

The category recognizes the accomplishments and body of recorded work (albums, singles, features, and videos) by a solo artist, during the eligibility period, whose music represents what is currently considered smooth or contemporary jazz, whether instrumental or vocal.

Best Duo, Group, or Big Band

The category recognizes the recorded works by a duo, group, or big band, during the eligibility period, whether instrumental or vocal.

Best New Artist

The category recognizes a solo artist, duo, or group who released their first solo project under their own name for consumer purchasing (physical and/or digital) during the eligibility period, whether instrumental or vocal. Artists who have appeared on another artist's project as a featured artist or side musician are eligible.

Best Vocal Performance

The category recognizes the recorded performance of a jazz vocalist as a solo artist, or as a featured artist on the project of another artist, released during the eligibility period.

Best International Artist

The category recognizes an instrumental or vocal performance by a solo artist, duo, or group, not of American origin nor based in the United States.

Best Mainstream Album

The category recognizes a single body of work of five or more new recordings, inclusive of and guided by jazz tradition, whether instrumental or vocal, released during the eligibility period.

Best Contemporary Album

The category recognizes a single body of work of five or more new recordings that represent what is currently considered contemporary or smooth jazz, whether instrumental or vocal, released during the eligibility period.

Song of the Year

The category recognizes the best performance of a single song by a solo artist, duo, or group, whether instrumental or vocal, released during the eligibility period. [The final round of voting is an online fan vote.](#)



Awards of Distinction

Jazz Legacy Award

This will be given to an individual, duo, or group who by his/her/their body of work and sustainability of their careers have uplifted and preserved the heritage of jazz music while forwarding its legacy in the tradition of jazz masters that came before (preceded) them. The nominees and winners will be chosen by a specially selected craft committee with expertise in the field.

Innovator Award

The eligibility criteria for the **Innovator Award** are as follows: Candidates must be musicians who have developed their own methods, theories, and/or musical language that have been widely acknowledged as innovative by peers and/or institutions and widely acknowledged to challenge convention. The candidates must currently be active musicians whose work has had a profound impact on others in the field. The nominees and winners will be chosen by a specially selected craft committee with expertise in the field.

Composer Award

Eligible candidates for the **Composer Award** must be composers who have consistently demonstrated profound excellence and substantial creativity in music composition (instrumental and/or vocal) and must currently be an active composer who is widely acknowledged with distinction in the field. The nominees and winners will be chosen by a specially selected craft committee with expertise in the field.

Educator Award

Candidates for the **Educator Award** must be a current, full-time jazz educator in a public or private secondary or post-secondary school, who is widely acknowledged to have contributed substantially to the educational development of a multitude of professional musicians and whose pedagogy includes music theory, ensemble direction, and/or private instruction classes. (Musicology, ethnomusicology, and/or music analysis classes excluded). The nominees and winners will be chosen by a specially selected craft committee with expertise in the field.