



# Kerrville's 2024 Grassy Hill NEW FOLK Competition for Emerging Songwriters

The Kerrville Folk Festival Foundation, and the Community who attend our festivals, support and encourage diversity, equity, gender parity, and inclusion of all cultures and races and religions. Our *GRASSY HILL NEW FOLK COMPETITION FOR EMERGING SONGWRITERS* – a major song contest that is a career-builder for New Folk Finalists and Winners – honors these values. We welcome your original songs in any genre, culture and language.

How will the New Folk contest evaluate your songs? Our judges seek outstanding songcraft and compelling performance. We want original songs that make us shiver and say, “Awww, I wish I’d written that!” We crave clear-sounding lyrics, originality that doesn’t need overproduction, and music that makes our hearts fly away. KFF Poet Laureate Charles John Quarto says, “A song is a tiny play that’s going on before your very ears.” New Folk rewards songs that inspire listeners from “curtain going up” to “curtain going down.”

## CONTEST TIMELINE

- Contest opens for submissions on January 15, 2024.
- Deadline for completed entries is 11:59pm (Central Time) March 15, 2024.
- 24 New Folk Finalists are announced around April 14, 2024.
- The Finalists compete at the festival May 25 and 26, 2024.
- 6 New Folk Winners are announced May 26, 2024.
- The 6 New Folk Winners each play 20-minute sets at the festival June 1, 2024.

## HOW TO ENTER

1. You may enter from January 15 to midnight (Central Time) March 15, 2024. Online at [www.kerrvillefolkfestival.org/newfolk-guidelines](http://www.kerrvillefolkfestival.org/newfolk-guidelines), click “Submit Entry” and complete the form and pay the \$47 entry fee.
2. Send us .mp3 audio recordings (no video) of two of your original songs. You must perform each song yourself. On each song’s recording, do not say your name, nor the song’s title, nor any other intro. Just record the song itself.
3. We invite all genres of songs. We welcome music-with-singing, acapella, music-with-spoken word, instrumentals, lyrics in any language, and co-writes.
4. You can record by any method, from mobile phone to full studio production. [Suggestion: at the Finalist competition (see Rule 9), Finalists must perform their two songs *solo or with just one side person (duos get no side person)*. You should consider submitting recordings that sound as simple as the way you would perform if you are selected as a Finalist.]

5. Do not submit lyric sheets.
6. On your recordings, **SING YOUR LYRICS CLEARLY.** We'll judge by ear with no lyric sheets, *so we need to hear each word you sing.* [Suggestion: This is another reason to submit a simple recording – so your lyrics aren't “drowned out by the band.”]
7. You may enter the New Folk contest multiple times in a single year: submit two songs with each entry fee. (Please do not submit a particular song more than once per year.) If you enter multiple times, and if more than one entry qualifies as a Finalist, your best-scoring entry (*and its two songs*) will count you as a single Finalist.
8. You keep all rights to your songs, except the Festival may record and live-stream the Finalist competition May 25 and 26. You must have the permission of your co-writers to record and live-stream your two songs. If you are a Finalist, and you want a video clip or recording of your performance at that show, we'll give you one to use as you choose.
9. **FINALISTS.** On or around April 14, the festival announces the top-judged 24 entrants as New Folk Finalists. On May 25 and 26, these Finalists compete by singing their two songs live at the festival: each solo artist performs solo or with one additional person; and duos perform together with no additional people. If a performer can play multiple instruments at the same time, that's fine. No performance may include recorded sound or live-played “loops.”
10. **WINNERS.** At the Finalist competition, 5 New Folk judges (different from previous levels) select 6 NEW FOLK WINNERS. These WINNERS each perform a 20-minute set of their original songs at the festival on Saturday, June 1.
11. **FINALIST PRIZES.** Each New Folk Finalist gets an 18-day wristband for themselves and a guest to the 2024 Kerrville Folk Festival, to camp in the campground and attend all stage shows. At our long-established New Folk camp (upon request, we'll provide you with a loaner tent, sleeping bag and pillow) you can camp with fellow Finalists in a friendly, creative, sing-around-the-campfire setting. You can eat at our Backstage Kitchen. You'll get a souvenir cup and drink tickets. You can participate in the Festival's mid-week Songwriter School at half price. Discounts are available to attend the Southwest Regional Folk Alliance conference in September. In Kerrville Folk Festival's grand 52-year tradition, you'll truly experience the Festival's “Welcome Home!” hospitality.
12. **WINNER PRIZES.** Each New Folk WINNER gets \$750 cash, two wristbands to our 2024 fall Welcome Home Fest, and an invitation to tour in the 2025 Grassy Hill New Folk Winners House Concert series in Texas.
13. **ENTRY EXCEPTIONS.** You may not enter if you are a prior New Folk Winner, or if you are booked as a 2024 Kerrville Folk Festival performer. Finalists forfeit their entry if they appear onstage at the festival May 23 – 26 (except at the Finalist competition May 25 and 26).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

***I have several recordings of my songs. Which should I enter?***

Album cuts, band recordings, solo or live recordings – they're all permitted. Your best strategy is to submit a recording that sounds the way you'd perform it live at the festival if you get selected as a Finalist – in other words, solo or with just one side person. Keep in mind that your songs will be judged without lyric sheets, so SING YOUR LYRICS CLEARLY.

***Can I submit songs in languages other than English?***

Yes. 2022 New Folk Winner Javier Jara sang both of his songs in Spanish. If your lyrics are not in English, and if you are selected as a Finalist, you may be asked to provide lyric sheets in the original language and also in English translation.

***Can I submit a song that I wrote with a co-writer?***

Yes, co-writes are allowed. Your co-writer does not need to appear at the Festival unless you entered as a duo. The person who submits the co-written song and performs it live at the Festival, is the one who is eligible for Finalist and Winner recognition and prizes.

***I am under 18 years of age. Can I enter?***

Yes, with parental permission. If you are selected as a Finalist, your parent or guardian must accompany you to the Festival. If your parent or guardian cannot accompany you to the Festival, please contact the office to make arrangements.

***In past years, New Folk limited the length of songs. Is this still true?***

No. Your songs can be as short or as long as you like.

***In past years, New Folk required that songs be written in the past 18 months. Is this still true?***

No. You can submit any original song, regardless of when you wrote it.

***Can I submit a .wav file recording?***

No. You must submit a .mp3 file recording.

***I'm a procrastinator. What is the latest I can submit my entry.***

The New Folk entry deadline is midnight (Central Time) Sunday, March 15, 2024. If your entry isn't fully complete by that deadline, you'll be disqualified and refunded. [Note: New Folk receives an avalanche of entries in the last three days of the contest, so New Folk judges have WEARY EARS listening to those last-minute songs. *You will get our fullest attention, and our best reception, if you submit your entry well before the deadline.*]

***Can I submit the same song or songs that I submitted last year?***

Technically, yes. New Folk judges do change from year to year, and it's possible (though, of course, no guarantee) that your song may be better received by this year's judges.

***The Entry Rules say I can't submit the same song in two different entries this year. Why is this?***

The New Folk judges will score each contestant's entry according to how *both songs* impress them. If you enter a song twice, then the judges, who listen to hundreds of entries, may get confused – “Haven't I already heard this?” – and they may judge it differently the second time. We've decided, for the sake of the judges and for you, that you must submit two new songs in each entry.

***I got an error message when I attempted to submit. What went wrong?***

Maybe you tried to upload a file in a format other than .mp3. Maybe you are trying to submit an additional entry using an email address that has already been used to enter this year's contest. Maybe you submitted a song that is already in another entry you made this year (see the prior FAQ, about entering the same song twice). Maybe you forgot to pay the entry fee. Maybe you entered more, or fewer, than two songs. In any case, you can get clarification by calling the festival (830.257.3600) or email [newfolk@kerrvillefolkfestival.org](mailto:newfolk@kerrvillefolkfestival.org).

***What is the New Folk judging process, to determine who becomes a Finalist?***

We use a two-tiered review system to evaluate the New Folk entries. At Level One, two groups of judges – all of them seasoned songwriters and likely former New Folk Winners – listen to, and evaluate, ALL the New Folk songs. That's a huge job: New Folk may receive 1000 entries, two songs apiece. Our Level One evaluation identifies the best 120 New Folk entrants. Then, at Level Two, eight other judges rate those 120 entrants' 240 songs. Level One's evaluations and Level Two's evaluations, combined, identify New Folk's top 24 entries – these are the New Folk Finalists.

***Will I get feedback on my entry?***

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide feedback on your songs due to the sheer volume of entries. Additionally, the Festival maintains strict confidentiality about the details of the actual screening, listening and scoring. On occasion, a screener or listener wants to reach out to a specific songwriter and we facilitate that introduction.

***How are Finalists notified?***

By or around April 9, we'll identify the top 24 New Folk entrants, plus several alternates. In the next four days, we'll email each Finalist, and follow up on the phone, inviting you to come to the Festival and sing your two songs at the New Folk Finalist competition May 25 and 26. If you can't come, we'll invite the next alternate.

We'll announce the Finalists to the public on or about April 14.

***If I'm selected as a Finalist, how do I get to the Kerrville Folk Festival and how will I live while I'm there?***

You will furnish your own transportation to the Festival, except we offer free rides to and from the San Antonio airport. See our Entry Rule #11, which explains your food-and-lodging accommodations at the Festival and your perks as a Finalist.

***I have a friend who is performing at the Festival, who has asked me to appear onstage with him. If I'm a Finalist, is that a problem?***

Finalists must not appear as a billed or non-billed performer on any Kerrville Folk Festival stage May 23 – 26 (except your performance at the Finalist competition May 25 and 26). However, after the Finalist competition ends (May 26, 5pm), you are welcome to join your friend onstage anytime for the rest of the Festival.

***I'm a solo singer-songwriter. The Entry Rules say I can take 1 additional performer onstage with me for the Finalist competition. Are there any restrictions on who I can have onstage?***

No restrictions. You can invite anyone to accompany you at the Finalist competition.

***If I am selected as a Finalist, do I have to perform the two songs I submitted?***

Yes. In the Finalist competition, you must perform those two songs. If you are selected as a Winner, you are welcome, but not obligated, to repeat your winning songs in your 20-minute set in the Winners Concert (Saturday, June 1).

***We submitted as a duo. If we are selected as a Finalist, must we perform as a duo?***

Yes, you both must appear. And you are not permitted to add a side person.

***I entered as a duo and I also want to enter my solo work but the system will not let me change my entry name for the second (different name) entry?***

The entries are tied to a unique email address. If you want to enter with a different name or configuration than your first entry, you will need to use a different email address for that entry.

***I still have questions. Who can I ask?***

Email your questions to [newfolk@kerrvillefolkfestival.org](mailto:newfolk@kerrvillefolkfestival.org).