

A man with a beard and a topknot hairstyle is sitting at a desk in a recording studio. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and is looking at a computer monitor. His hands are on a keyboard. The studio is filled with various pieces of equipment, including a mixing console, a microphone, and other electronic devices. The lighting is warm and focused on the man.

END GHOSTWRITING IN MEDIA COMPOSING

A guide to best practice



THE IVORS ACADEMY

INTRODUCTION

No composer should be invisible on a film, television or games soundtrack they've contributed to.

If you've worked on a score, you should be credited – on screen, on IMDb or as an award nominee. Proper credit matters. It helps you secure future commissions and gives productions the confidence that you're the right person for the job.

Yet too many composers have been denied credit and royalties because they were hired as ghostwriters.

Members of The Ivors Academy have come together to call for an end to this unfair practice. By [signing our pledge](#), you're helping to build a fairer, more transparent and respectful industry for everyone.

This guide offers practical advice on how to collaborate with other composers and writers, and what to do if you're asked to ghostwrite. I hope you find it useful – and the best insights often come from speaking with other members of the Academy to share experiences and establish best practice.

Dru Masters

Chair of the Media Council, The Ivors Academy

WHAT ARE ADDITIONAL MUSIC WRITERS AND GHOSTWRITERS?

An **additional music writer** is someone who either composes a cue from scratch or makes a significant creative contribution to an existing cue.

A **ghostwriter** is an additional music writer whose involvement is not disclosed to the production. As a result, they receive no screen or IMDb

credit and are excluded from cue sheets, meaning they lose the royalties they are legally entitled to.

Composers working in supporting roles such as editing, conforming or revising cues under the lead composer's creative direction are not usually considered additional music writers, unless they make a significant contribution to the composition.

WHAT IF I'VE BEEN USED AS A GHOSTWRITER?

Ghostwriting may be more common in some areas of composition, but every songwriter and composer deserves proper credit.

If you've been asked to ghostwrite or have experienced it, you can [report it to our Ethics Committee](#) anonymously. Your report helps us understand current practices and strengthens our work to build a transparent and fair industry.

WHY SHOULD I CREDIT ADDITIONAL MUSIC WRITERS?

Lead composers may work with additional writers to meet deadlines, manage overlapping projects, or scale up production. Crediting these collaborators benefits everyone.

For lead composers:

- Demonstrates leadership and the ability to manage a creative team.
- Builds loyalty and trust among collaborators.
- Supports the next generation of composers through mentorship and access.

For additional writers:

- Proper credits help emerging composers progress from “additional music” to lead roles.
- Inclusion on cue sheets ensures they receive royalties, the foundation of a sustainable career.

Fair crediting strengthens the entire composing community.

TOP TIPS FOR FAIR COLLABORATION

- All writers should be formally contracted with a production. If additional writers are used, contracts can be arranged through **Certificates of Authorship** or **side letters** between the lead composer and additional music writers.
- Certificates of Authorship are usually provided by the production.
- It is the lead composers’ responsibility to ensure all contributing composers on cue sheets.
- Agree writing splits in advance and register them with your **Collective Management Organisation (CMO)**.
- Omitting writers from cue sheets can cause clearance issues, disputes or litigation.
- Keep records of **cue sheets, contracts and authorship statements** when submitting your work for awards.
- Those composers represented by an agents can ask for their support to ensure all writers are properly contracted and credited.
- Use PRS for Music’s [‘Search Cue Sheets’ online tool](#) to check that your work has been submitted accurately.

- Cue sheets must reach PRS for Music at least **two months before** distribution to ensure royalty payments.
- Enter data **consistently across cue sheets**, including composer names, cue titles, tunecodes, durations, publishers, performers and usage type.
- Broadcasters are responsible for submitting cue sheets to PRS for Music, but if they don't, you can submit them yourself directly at searchcuesheets@prsformusic.com.

END GHOSTWRITING – SIGN OUR PLEDGE

Help us to end ghostwriting and ensure every composer's contribution is recognised and rewarded.

As a composer, I pledge to:

1. Be fully transparent with productions about who will compose the music.
2. Ensure that all contributing composers are credited on cue sheets, on screen where possible, and on IMDb.
3. Accurately submit work for awards consideration that fairly credits everyone involved in the composition.

[Sign the pledge.](#)

THE IVORS ACADEMY AWARDS POLICY – CREDITING SCREEN COMPOSERS

The Ivors Academy celebrates the craft and exceptional achievements of songwriters and composers by bestowing Ivor Novello Awards. Judged by

songwriters and composers, for songwriters and composers, an Ivor Novello Award recognises excellence in craft and creativity.

For those award categories that recognise screen composition, production cue sheets for the entire broadcast/production must be submitted at the point of entry. Where there is more than one composer, the percentage of cues each composer has written must be clearly marked.

From 2026 those entering music for award consideration will be asked to confirm that the production cue sheets provided list all composers who wrote a cue from scratch or who provided significant new creative input into an existing cue. If a composer does not include all additional writers on a production cue sheet when entering music for award consideration then they will be ineligible for consideration.

Correct as October 2025.