

AUDIO PRODUCTION GLOSSARY

IRAA 2026 Category Guide: Navigating Your Nomination Path

The **Indian Recording Arts Awards (IRAA)** recently concluded its nomination phase for the 2025 edition, receiving an overwhelming response from audio professionals across the country. With jury evaluations currently underway, the winners are expected to be announced in December. Looking ahead, nominations for IRAA 2026 will open in January, inviting submissions for tracks and audio released between January and December 2025. The awards ceremony once again supported by **GENELEC**, will be held in May, in conjunction with the prestigious **PALM Expo**.

Over the past 19 years, IRAA has conferred approximately 1,700 awards to 1,400 recipients, solidifying its position as India's foremost platform for recognizing excellence in audio production. These ceremonies have evolved into landmark events, celebrating not only technical mastery but also the creative spirit of sound engineering. They bring together the most influential gathering of recording engineers in the country—arguably among the most significant globally.

Beyond recognition, IRAA serves a deeper purpose: it facilitates the professional validation of sound engineers, elevating Indian audio talent to global prominence. The awards aim to spotlight sound engineers not merely as technical experts but as creative contributors who deserve equal recognition and royalty rights alongside lyricists and composers.

The final mix engineer plays a pivotal role in shaping the artistic identity

of a track. Their decisions—ranging from spatial placement and frequency balance to dynamic movement and sonic character—are inherently creative, not mechanical. These choices define the emotional and auditory experience of music, making the sound engineer an indispensable part of the creative process.

Understanding the Award Categories

As the 2026 nomination cycle approaches, it is essential for potential nominees to familiarize themselves with IRAA's award categories. Each category is designed to honor a specific dimension of audio excellence, ensuring that every aspect of sound engineering artistry receives its due recognition.

To assist nominees in selecting the most appropriate category for their work, IRAA provides a comprehensive table of terms and definitions. This resource is intended to guide nominees in submitting their entries within the correct context, ensuring that their creative contributions are aligned with the category criteria and accurately represented during the evaluation process.

IRAA remains committed to advancing the status of sound engineers in India, championing their role as vital creative forces in the music and audio production ecosystem.

Film	Motion picture / feature film, typically 75–180 minutes in length, released in cinema theatre, television or via streaming platforms
Web Series	Video Content released online via streaming platforms or websites, in episodic format with multiple episodes forming a season or series
Advertisements	Commercial advertisements (products, services, film trailers etc.) released in cinema theatres, television or online on streaming platforms or websites.
Documentary	Non-fictional video, or docudrama, released in cinema theatres, television, or online through streaming platforms and websites, and aims to present facts, real events, and actual people, often using interviews, archival footage, and on-location recordings.
Short Films	Motion picture that is significantly shorter than a feature film (less than 40 minutes)
Foreign Films	Movies produced outside India.
Recording Engineer - Songs or Background Score for Films, Web Series, Independent Music	Professional capturing high-quality audio during music production by setting up microphones and equipment, managing signal flow, and ensuring clear, precise recordings of vocals and instruments.
Mixing Engineer - Songs or Background Score for Films, Web Series, Independent Music	Professional who blends individual audio tracks into a balanced, polished mix by adjusting levels, applying EQ and compression, panning sounds, and adding effects, shaping the song's clarity, dynamics, and emotional impact before mastering.
Mastering Engineer - Songs or Background Score for Films, Web Series, Independent Music	The final audio specialist who polishes a mixed track for release by applying EQ, compression, stereo enhancement, and volume adjustments for clarity and consistency across playback systems and also handles sequencing, track spacing, and format conversion for streaming, CD, or vinyl.
Music Producer - Songs or Background Score for Films, Web Series, Independent Music	Professional with overall creative and technical control of the entire music project and the recording sessions that are part of that project, and makes creative and aesthetic decisions that realize the artist's / production's goals
Sound Designer - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Documentaries, Short Films	Director of Sound' ultimately responsible for all creative, aesthetic & technical aspects of a film's audio track and supervises the entire sound crew of the overall soundscape of a film.
Mixing Engineer - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Documentaries, Short Films	The re-recording mixer or film mixing engineer responsible for blending all the audio elements of a film including - Dialogue, Music and Sound Effects into a cohesive final soundtrack.
Dialogue Editor / ADR Engineer - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Short Films, Documentaries	Professional who assembles and integrates the original dialogue recorded on location, as well as that dubbed in the studio (ADR) into an understandable and smooth dialog soundtrack for a film
Sound Editor Effects & Ambience - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Documentaries, Short Films	Professional ensuring that every sound cue supports the visual storytelling and is responsible for selecting, editing, and integrating sound effects and environmental audio to enhance the realism, mood, and emotional impact.
Foley Artist - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Documentaries, Short Films	Professional who performs and records synchronized sound effects, such as footsteps, cloth movement, etc to match on-screen actions using a variety of props and surfaces, ensuring precise timing.
Foley Engineer - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Documentaries, Short Films	Records and edits synchronized sound effects by operating microphones, managing signal routing, and ensuring high-fidelity capture. Uses DAWs to layer and sync sounds to picture, maintaining realism and continuity in the mix.

Sync Sound Engineer - Film or Web Release, Web Series, Documentaries, Short Films	Professional who records audio on set, ensuring sync with visuals and manages field recording equipment, microphone placement, signal levels, and timecode alignment to capture clean, synchronized sound and reduce reliance on ADR.
Instrumental Music (Non-Classical)	Music composed and performed without vocals, focusing on instruments, in genres other than classical.
Indian Classical Music	Traditional form of music based on the concepts of raga and tala, primarily divided into two major systems Hindustani (North Indian) and Carnatic (South Indian) and featuring instruments like sitar, tabla, veena, and flute, along with vocal renditions.
Devotional / Spiritual Music	A genre expressing faith or spiritual connection, featuring lyrics or melodies praising deities using instruments, chants, or hymns. Common forms include bhajans, kirtans, gospel, and sacred chants.
Traditional / Folk / Dance Music	Music rooted in cultural heritage and traditions, using indigenous instruments and regional languages. Performed at festivals and social gatherings, it emphasizes rhythm and movement for communal dancing.
Rock Music	Genre characterized by electric guitars, bass, drums, strong backbeats, and expressive vocals, rock emphasizes energy and emotion, spawning subgenres like punk, hard rock, and indie rock.
Blues Music	Music characterized by use of the 12-bar structure, expressive vocal delivery, and lyrical themes with focus on emotive guitar work and call-and-response phrasing.
Metal Music	Genre marked by heavy distortion, aggressive rhythms, and powerful vocals, with subgenres like heavy metal, thrash, death, and black metal.
Electronic Music	Genre that uses electronic instruments and digital technology for sound creation, produced with synthesizers, drum machines, samplers, and software and spans styles like techno, house, ambient, and drum & bass
Pop Music	Genre characterized by catchy melodies, repetitive structures, and polished production, often incorporating elements from other genres such as rock, R&B, and electronic music and structured to be accessible to a wide audience.
Acoustic Music	Performed using instruments that produce sound naturally without electronic amplification, such as acoustic guitar, piano, strings, and percussion.
Rap Music	Characterized by rhythmic spoken lyrics delivered over a beat, often featuring rhyme, wordplay, and storytelling.
Hip-Hop Music	Encompasses rap music, DJing, breakdancing, graffiti art, and fashion and is built around rhythmic beats, sampling, and lyrical expression.
World/Fusion Music	Blends musical elements often combining traditional instruments and rhythms with contemporary styles like jazz, rock, or electronic, creating a global sound that transcends regional boundaries.
Immersive Music Mixing	Advanced audio production technique that creates three-dimensional soundscapes by positioning music elements around and above the listener using multiple audio channels, rather than traditional two-channel stereo through immersive formats like Dolby Atmos Music and others.