



**Screen Music & Sound
Guild of New Zealand**
Te uepū Kaitito Whakaata

New Zealand Screen Composer Fee Guidelines

This document is intended to provide guidance for composers and screen producers on what constitutes a reasonable fee for original music commissioned for New Zealand screen productions.

These figures have been compiled by SMSG in consultation with a panel of practising New Zealand screen composers and compared with typical fees for similar production types in Australia and the United States. They are intended to serve as **guidelines only** and represent a foundational floor that is reasonable and realistic in the New Zealand screen production environment.

SMSG emphasises that composers can determine their own market value based on reputation and experience, and that the “hard costs” of any given project may vary significantly, depending on the specifics required. Composers, including SMSG members, are not obliged to refer to these guidelines when determining fees.

These figures were compiled in 2022 and are subject to review and adjustment for inflation.

Typical inclusions:

Most screen productions in New Zealand commission original music for a flat fee, which includes the composer’s creative fee alongside digital programming, mockups and revisions, and orchestration. A flat fee assumes a locked picture cut; music editorial time required to conform to picture recuts is additional.

“Hard costs” are also to be considered **additional to the stated fee**, and may include performers, conductor, engineers, studio/recording venue, music librarian and music premix.

Composer Fees

(Figures are x \$NZ1000 and do not include GST)

Production Type	Low Budget	Medium Budget	High Budget
Feature (NZ-Funded)	\$20k–\$40k	\$40k–\$70k	\$70k–\$150k+
Documentary Feature	\$10k–\$15k	\$15k–\$30k	\$30k–\$55k+
Telemovie	\$15k–\$20k	\$20k–\$40k	\$40k–\$70k+
TV Drama/comedy (hour – per ep)	\$6k–\$7k	\$7k–\$10k	\$10k–\$15k+
TV Drama/comedy (1/2 hour – per ep)	\$4k–\$5k	\$5k–\$7k	\$7.5k–\$12k+
Factual/reality (hour – per ep)	\$5k–\$6k	\$6k–\$9k	\$10k–\$15k+
Factual/reality (1/2 hour – per ep)	\$4k–\$5k	\$5k–\$7k	\$7.5k–\$12k+
Short film	>\$2k	\$2k–\$5k	\$5k+
Advertisement (TV)	\$1.5k – \$5k	\$5k-15k	\$15k+
Advertisement (Web)	\$0.5k	\$2k-5k	\$5k–\$12k+
Video game (buy-out/ per track)	\$0.5k–2k	\$2k–\$8k	\$8k–\$20k+

Hard Costs:

Performers: NZ\$100 – \$150/hour

Conductor: NZ\$200/hour

Recording venue: NZ\$500 – \$2000/day

Music premix: NZ\$1000 – \$2000/day

Legal:

- Composers should seek legal advice when entering into a contract.
- This document is not a contract or legal agreement.
- A standard contract template is available to SMSG members at no cost in the *Member Only Resources* section of our website.

Don't work for free – your time, talent and skills are valuable!

Ownership of copyright:

Depending on the budget level, composers should generally strive to retain ownership of the copyright of any composed works.

- For lower budget and mid-level budget productions composers should be able to retain ownership of any composed works. This allows the composer to potentially licence tracks for other productions or production libraries in the future.
- For larger budget productions generally all ownership in perpetuity goes to the production – but royalties should still be payable.

Royalties:

Regardless of ownership of any music composed, royalties should still be paid to the composer via rights organisations such as APRA. Some larger commercial production companies and television networks may require split publishing. This should be reflected in the level of the fee.

Buy-outs:

Buyouts are unusual for film, television and other screen composed work, and should be avoided. However, buyouts are standard for music composed for video games, as no royalties are collected or paid out. Fees should reflect this.