

# Wing Words

*The Occasional Newsletter of the Pegasus Awards*

*Volume 1, Number 3*

## It's Nominating Season!

Brainstorming season for the Pegasus Awards ended in April. The hardworking Pegasus Administration Team has collated your suggestions and they're now – or will be shortly! – up on the Brainstorming Results Page at:

<http://www.ovff.org/pegasus/opinions.html>

Also, check out the Composers' Picks page at:

<http://www.ovff.org/pegasus/2008/brainstorm/picks.html>

We'll talk more about that page later, but right now, we'd like to talk to you about nominating songs and individuals for Pegasus Awards. In this editor's humble opinion, nominating is even more important than voting on the Final Ballot. If you take a look at the Final Ballot for the last few years, you'll see that the single **best** way to get on the ballot this year is to have been on the ballot in the preceding year. That's one of the reasons that we instituted the Two-On-One-Off Rule – it encourages people to look at **other** songs and people who are eligible for awards instead of just renominating whatever was on the ballot last year.

If you've been around the filk community for a while, you probably know that there are more than five or six songs or people out there who are worthy of a Pegasus nomination. Surely you've sat in a filk circle and heard something that made you go, "Wow! Yeah!" You could nominate one of those. Maybe you **brainstormed** one of those. Or if you didn't, maybe someone else did and reading through the results of the brainstorming poll will jog your memory.

Remember, because so **many** songs and people are eligible for Pegasus Awards, it doesn't necessarily take a **lot** of nominations to make it onto the ballot. So take a look around, nominate whatever it is that you like the best, and we'll let you know how things sort themselves out. If nothing else, it'll keep the ballot interesting!

## The Standing Categories

Four categories in the Pegasus Awards are the same each year: Best Filk Song, Best Classic Filk Song, Best Performer, and Best Writer / Composer. There are really very few restrictions on what you can nominate in these categories. The Best Classic Filk Song must be at least ten years old and, of course, anything or anyone that you nominate should be a product or member of the filk community. (It's not that there aren't perfectly wonderful examples of "Found Filk" out there, they're simply not the thing that the Pegasus Awards set out to honor.)

Erica will have more to say on the subject of "Best" later; right now, we'd like to talk just a bit about the history of the categories.

We've **always** had a Best Filk Song award, but did you know that the first two Pegasus ballots back in 1984 and 1986 had "Best Male Filker" and "Best Female Filker" instead of the performer and writer / composer categories? (They were won by Bill Maraschiello, Bill Sutton, Julia Ecklar, and Leslie Fish, just for the record.)

The "Best Performer" and "Best Writer / Composer" categories replaced those categories in 1987. Since then, they've seen a lot of worthy winners. Unlike songs, which can only win once, previous winners are eligible again after a five year waiting period. In fact, the Best Writer / Composer category has seen a repeat winner in four of the last five years.

For many years, there were only five categories in the Pegasus Awards, but in 2003, the OVFF committee decided to add "Best Classic Filk Song" to the mix, allowing us to pick up some of the older songs that had survived the test of time, but had never managed to win a Pegasus Award for one reason or another.

So what's going to show up in these categories for 2008? That's what **you're** going to tell us!

## What Does "Best" Mean Anyway?

Erica Neely

So, what does "best" mean for something like "Best Folk Song" or "Best Performer?" There are lots of ways you could measure it, of course. I tend to think that we'd never manage to get an objective list of criteria that everyone agrees on, so about the best we can do is have everyone use their own set and hope that the community converges on some set of people/songs.

In general, people nominate things they've either heard recently or were recently reminded haven't won. "Best Classic" clearly has to stand the test of time, but other categories do not. Still, it is unlikely that enough people will nominate a song/person unless it has been around long enough (or pervasively enough) to be known by many people. After all, not only do people have to know it, they have to like it enough to put it in their top five for that year!

Personally, I consider a number of factors when deciding what I want to nominate. Let's take a look at songs first. First, I think about what songs I've heard this year that really struck me as succeeding well at accomplishing what they tried to do. (If that sounds odd, it's because I'm not going to penalize a silly song for not being serious or a serious song for not being funny – I'm only going to hold them up to appropriate standards!) Secondly, what they're trying to do has to be something that resonates with me. There are plenty of good songs that just don't grab me for whatever reason. That doesn't mean they aren't good, but they're unlikely to end up in my top 5. Although this clearly introduces some degree of idiosyncrasy into my ballot, that tends to get smoothed away by the number of nominations – each of us may have particular blind spots or odd preferences, but if you put enough of us together, we can get a fair idea of what the community as a whole values.

The people categories are a little trickier. One thing I've noticed lately is a tendency to nominate excellent performers in both categories. Now, clearly, you should be nominating excellent performers in the best performer category. This kind of excellence can be expressed in many ways – a great voice, excellent instrumental skills, a great rapport with the crowd... All of those would be things that might cause you to nominate someone for best performer; you don't need each nominee to have all of those, of course. But there

has to be something about a particular performer that makes them stick out in your head.

Composer is a bit different, because this involves judging the material, not the person or people performing them. Moreover, in general I think that for someone to qualify as best writer/composer, they need to have a body of work that impresses me. A person who has one or two great songs is unlikely to end up on my ballot, simply because I'm more interested in how they are overall. However, while there are many people who are both excellent performers and excellent writers, do remember there is a difference between the two categories. Don't shrink from nominating people who are excellent performers, even if they mostly do other people's material. Similarly, don't shrink from nominating people who are excellent writers, even if they are weaker as performers. We want to recognize all kinds of excellence here!

Just a few thoughts on how I go about putting my nominating ballot together. I look forward to seeing what everyone else comes up with!

## Composer's Picks

So what if you've written a song that you think is Pegasus-worthy, but it hasn't managed to bubble to the top in the Brainstorming Poll? The Composer's Picks page is your chance to let us know about it.

Just drop us your list of suggested songs at <http://www.ovff.org/pegasus/2008/2008compsubmit.html> and we'll put it up there just as soon as the vagaries of life allow. We clean out the list each year – partly because the floating categories change each year, partly because you write **new** cool things that you might want on your list. So let us know what you think is your best work and we'll let everyone else know.

(Yeah, I know. Don't you feel like an egotistical monster suggesting your own songs? Me too. But who knows your material better?)

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[WingWords@ovff.org](mailto:WingWords@ovff.org)