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**Five Legends Named to The MAX Hall of Fame**

**Tammy Wynette, Bo Diddley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Margaret Walker Alexander and  
John Lee Hooker**

MERIDIAN, Miss. (May 30, 2019) – Five iconic Mississippians have been named to the Hall of Fame at The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) in Meridian. The new Hall of Fame honorees are country music artist **Tammy Wynette**, singer/songwriters **Bo Diddley** and **Jerry Lee Lewis**, poet and writer **Margaret Walker (Alexander)** and bluesman **John Lee Hooker**.

The new designees join 23 existing Hall of Fame members and will be featured in the spectacular Hall of Fame rotunda at The MAX. The state-sanctioned Hall of Fame recognizes influential men and women who have had an extraordinary and lasting impact as musicians, actors, media personalities, visual artists, culinary artists, authors and other talented artists and entertainers who trace their roots to Mississippi.

“These five individuals have enriched our culture through their talents as performers and writers, and we are proud to honor them in this way,” said Mark Tullos, Executive Director of The MAX. “They join a very distinguished group as Hall of Fame members of The MAX.”

**Tammy Wynette** (Tremont, MS) was a country singer and songwriter. Called the “First Lady of Country Music,” she is among country music’s best-known and best-selling female singer-songwriters. Her iconic hit “Stand By Your Man” is one of the best-selling singles in the history of country music. She was named by CMT as one of the three Greatest Women of Country Music (with Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn). For nearly two decades, Wynette held the record for winning consecutive awards from the Country Music Association (CMA). She was the first female country artist to sell a million albums and is in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

**Bo Diddley** (McComb, MS) was a singer, songwriter, guitarist and producer who played a key role in the transition from the blues to rock and roll. His signature rhythms became the cornerstone of modern hip-hop, rock and pop music. Many artists have named him as a musical inspiration including Elvis Presley, Beatles and the Rolling Stones. He is a Grammy winner, member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Rockabilly Hall of Fame and the Blues Hall of Fame. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Rhythm and Blues Foundation. One of Diddley’s musical inspirations was John Lee Hooker, also a 2019 honoree.

**Jerry Lee Lewis** (Nesbit, MS) is a singer-songwriter, musician and pianist and known as a pioneer of Rock and Roll and Rockabilly music. He developed his signature musical style during his

younger years in Mississippi as part of the new and emerging rock and roll movement. His most iconic hits include “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” and “Great Balls of Fire.” Lewis began his career at Sun Records (Memphis) and became one of Rolling Stone Magazine’s “100 Greatest Artists of All Time.” He is a Grammy winner, recipient of the Recording Academy’s Lifetime Achievement Award, and has been honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He is a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Rockabilly Hall of Fame, and Memphis Music Hall of Fame.

**Margaret Walker Alexander** (Jackson, MS) was a poet and author. She is best known for her 1966 novel Jubilee and her award-winning poem “For My People,” written as part of her involvement in the Chicago Black Renaissance, an African American literary movement. For 30 years, she served as a literature professor at Jackson State University where she founded the Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People (now the Margaret Walker Center) and served as the institute’s director. She is also the namesake for the Hinds County system’s Margaret Walker Alexander Library. Her works are considered among the most influential and important in African-American literature. She received a Candace Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women in 1989.

**John Lee Hooker** (Clarksdale, MS) was a blues singer, songwriter and guitarist. The son of a Delta sharecropper, Hooker developed a unique style of guitar playing prominently featured in some of his best-known songs such as “One Bourbon, One Scotch and One Beer” and “Boom Boom.” Hooker is a five-time Grammy Award winner and an inductee in both the Blues Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2000.

The 2019 Hall of Fame inductees were nominated by a statewide committee comprised of arts and entertainment experts representing various genres and art forms. Nominees are selected to represent music, writing, cultural arts, performing arts and visual arts. To be considered, candidates must have a connection to the State of Mississippi, either by birthright, moving to the state at an early age, or living in Mississippi for a significant portion of his/ her career. Nominees are then voted on by a panel of electors (18) appointed by The MAX Board of Directors and fans who cast votes as part of a nationwide election.

Since its opening, two previous Hall of Fame classes (2017 and 2018) have been designated.

The five new inductees join current Hall of Fame members Jimmy Buffett, Willie Morris, Charley Pride, William Eggleston, Howlin’ Wolf, Walter Anderson, William Faulkner, Morgan Freeman, John Grisham, Jim Henson, Robert Johnson, James Earl Jones, B.B. King, George Ohr, Elvis Presley, Leontyne Price, Jimmie Rodgers, Sela Ward, Muddy Waters, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Oprah Winfrey, and Richard Wright.

**Link:** <https://www.msarts.org/explore/hall-of-fame/hall-of-fame-honorees/>

## **About The MAX**

The MAX showcases Mississippi’s arts and entertainment experience in one immersive destination. Here, visitors of all ages explore the global impact of Mississippians on music, books, art, entertainment, and cuisine. The MAX honors our state’s creative legacy and inspires the next generation of creators

through a unique experience of interactive exhibits. Come discover the Mississippi roots of some of the world's greatest arts and entertainment icons — like Elvis Presley, Oprah Winfrey, B.B. King, Faith Hill, Sela Ward, and Kermit the Frog, just to name a few.

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