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**MSU Riley Center & Mississippi's Arts + Entertainment Experience Celebrate
Jimmie Rodgers with Premiere Party for PBS' "Country Music"**

MERIDIAN, MS – The hometown of Jimmie Rodgers, the Father of Country Music, will have a special opportunity to view the opening night of the new Ken Burns miniseries "Country Music" on Sunday, September 15, at the MSU Riley Center.

The free presentation will begin at 6 p.m. in the Riley Center's intimate Studio Theater. A celebration of Rodgers' life and musical contributions will start at 6:30. The screening of the premiere episode of the eight-part, 16-hour PBS series will follow from 7 to 9.

Rodgers called Meridian home during most of his career as a railroad worker and traveling entertainer. In 1928, his song "Blue Yodel" made him a national superstar. Tuberculosis tragically took his life in 1933, two days after his last recording session. He was just 35 years old.

Meridian's deep connections to country music through Rodgers and other great singers and musicians inspired the Riley Center and The MAX (Mississippi's Arts + Entertainment Experience) to host the premiere party. Refreshments will be available.

"Thanks to Jimmie Rodgers, Meridian holds a special place in the history of this very American art form," said Dr. Daniel Barnard, DMA, executive director of the Riley Center. "We're excited to see and hear how Ken Burns will tell the story. We'd love to have everyone in the community stop by and join us."

"Great communities are built on partnerships. This premiere event is a result of a desire by leadership at the Riley Center and The MAX to celebrate our great city and Mississippi as the birthplace of American music," said Mark A. Tullos, Jr., president and CEO of Mississippi's Arts + Entertainment Experience. "Meridian is about to be in the spotlight through this incredible documentary series by Ken Burns. Visitors from around the country will be seeking out Jimmie Rodgers' hometown after this airs."

Burns has created some of the most acclaimed and most watched documentary films in American history, including "The Civil War," "Baseball," "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," "The Vietnam War" and "Jazz." Their presentations on PBS have been must-see television events.

The filmmaker spent eight years making "Country Music," which he directed and produced. The miniseries will include never-before-seen footage and photographs as well as interviews with more than 80 country music artists. Prominently featured will be Marty Stuart of Philadelphia, Mississippi, a multiple Grammy Award-winning country singer and songwriter.

For more information about the miniseries, see www.pbs.org/kenburns/country-music.

“From its deep and tangled roots in ballads, blues and hymns performed in small settings, to its worldwide popularity,” the website says, “learn how country music evolved over the course of the 20th century, as it eventually emerged to become America’s music.”

The website includes a number of video previews and clips from the film.

For more information about the Riley Center, msurileycenter.com, the MAX, msarts.org, and Meridian visitmeridian.com.

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