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**‘America at the Crossroads: The GUITAR and a Changing Nation’  
Exhibition Opens February 10 at The MAX**

*A Variety of Free and Ticketed Events Will Accompany the Nationally Traveling Exhibit*

MERIDIAN, Miss. (January 23, 2024) – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) on February 10 will open “America at the Crossroads: The GUITAR and a Changing Nation.” The traveling exhibition traces the evolution and powerful influence of the guitar, with notable connections to Mississippi. The exhibit and other special events at the museum are expected to attract strong interest among guitarists and other music enthusiasts across the region.

The exhibit, developed by the New York-based National GUITAR Museum, will run through May 11 at The MAX, a one-of-a-kind museum devoted to telling the story of Mississippi’s creative legacy while inspiring future creatives. The MAX is located in historic downtown Meridian. Visit Meridian, Threefoot Hotel, DC Guitar, Dixie Roofing and Buck and Barbara Thomas are among the exhibit sponsors.

“America at the Crossroads” will feature 40 instruments, along with wall banners and videos, recalling the guitar’s role at important points in American history. Modern guitars and a Spanish vihuela from the 1500s, an early stringed instrument linked to the evolution of the guitar, are part of the collection.

The visiting exhibit “traces the evolution of an easily transported and adaptable string instrument central to the Mississippi music story, especially to the development of the Delta blues,” said Phillip Bolin, the museum’s exhibits registrar. “The ‘crossroads’ reference in the exhibit’s title allows us to give fresh attention to a popular legend – reaching back nearly a century – that brings the supernatural into play in accounts of one musician’s quest for greatness.”

As the story goes, a young Robert Johnson, frustrated with his limited skills as a musician, met the devil at night at a Mississippi Delta road junction and traded his soul for blues mastery.

Johnson penned “Cross Road Blues” in 1932, his performance reflecting the Mississippi Delta blues style. Another Mississippi blues artist, Elmore James, paid tribute to Johnson when he recorded “Standing at the Crossroads” in 1954. Johnson, like B.B. King and Elvis Presley, is featured in The MAX’s Hall of Fame, which features dozens of legends from various arts disciplines.

The MAX is also partnering with Peavey Electronics to display unique guitars from their private collection, including a Peavey Wolfgang created with Eddie Van Halen and the original trade show display of the Peavey T-60 guitar. Created in the mid-1970s, the Peavey T-60 was the first musical instrument made using computer numerical controlled (CNC) machinery, an innovation that single-handedly brought instrument-making into the modern era and revolutionized the guitar industry.

A variety special events, including live performances, demonstrations, and illustrated talks – many of them free – are scheduled to coincide with the exhibit:

Friday, February 9: Members' Opening Reception

Saturday, February 10: The Art of Blues and Rock & Roll Guitar workshop with Adam McPhail

Saturday, February 10: CEU (Continuing Education Unit) Workshop for Teachers and Educators' Night Out

Thursday, February 15: Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint Miniature Reveal and Illustrated Talk by artist Lee Harper and blues photographer Bill Steber

Saturday, February 17: Classical Cocktails with the Meridian Symphony Association

Thursday, February 22: Live at The MAX: concert by Steve Azar with heavy hors d'oeuvres by Chef David Crews

Saturday, March 2: Make + Take: Cereal Box Guitar workshop for kids with Jimmie Rodgers Museum

Friday, March 8: Blues Concert by Benstrings and Par from Ferfect

Friday, March 15: 20-time Grammy-winning guitarist Pat Metheny performs at the MSU Riley Center

Saturday, April 20: Guitar Build Demo by Timothy Litchfield

Friday, April 26: Family Escape Room: The Case of the Missing Guitar

Friday, May 10: Blues Concert by Super Chikan

Saturday, May 11: Guitar Demo by Super Chikan

Visit [www.msarts.org/guitar](http://www.msarts.org/guitar) for more details about the exhibit and programming.

"The connection to Mississippi's rich musical heritage made this traveling exhibit an obvious fit for The MAX," said Penny Kemp, The MAX's new President and CEO. "It recalls the strong regional appeal of the 2019 'Imagination Unlimited' special exhibit celebrating Mississippi native and Muppet creator Jim Henson. It will also bring fresh attention to signature features of our museum, such as the Juke Joint gallery and guitar-playing legends ranging from B.B. King to Elvis, not to mention our collection of famous and noteworthy guitars connected to King as well as Bo Diddley, Charley Pride, Jimmy Buffett, John Lee Hooker, and Muddy Waters."

#### **About The MAX**

The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience explores the state's creative legacies in one immersive attraction. Here, visitors of all ages explore the global impact of Mississippians on music, literature, acting, painting, cuisine, and other arts. The MAX honors our state's extraordinary contributions and inspires the next generation through a unique blend of interactive exhibits. Come discover the Mississippi roots of some of the world's arts and entertainment icons – Elvis Presley, Oprah Winfrey, B.B. King, Faith Hill, Sela Ward, Eudora Welty, and Jim Henson, to name just a few.

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