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The MAX Welcomes William “Bill” Ferris for a Conversation + Book Signing
The Early Films of William Ferris are now playing through November 15

MERIDIAN, Miss. (October 9, 2025) – On Saturday, October 25, 2025, at 10 am, come to the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) for an unforgettable morning in conversation with William “Bill” Ferris.

Ferris, a Vicksburg native and one of the newest members of The MAX Hall of Fame, will share insights into his pioneering work as a folklorist and discuss the importance of Mississippi Black oral traditions of music, stories, and art as an enduring part of American culture. Stay afterward to meet the legend and buy copies of his photography books, which capture Mississippi like no one else. Attendees also get the chance to meet *New York Times* bestselling graphic novelist John Jennings, whose work will be featured at The MAX in 2026.

The founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi and co-editor of the Pulitzer Prize-nominee *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Ferris is also a former chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, nominated by President Bill Clinton for the post. In 2019, Ferris received a Grammy Award for Best Historical Album for the boxed set *Voices of Mississippi: Artists and Musicians Documented by William Ferris*.

Joining Ferris in conversation is Thabi Moyo, a Jackson, Mississippi-based producer, event organizer, and entrepreneur who thrives at the intersection of film, arts, culture, and community. She is the founder of Magnolia Sunset Markets, the Local Festival Manager for the National Folk Festival’s three-year residency in Jackson, and serves as Operations Director & Producer at Red Squared. With more than 15 years of film industry experience—including her work on *Prom Night in Mississippi* and her tenure at

the Mississippi Film Office—Moyo has also partnered with the Jackson Redevelopment Authority to launch Union Market Jackson. Recognized as a 2025 Visit Jackson Hometown Hero, she continues to create spaces that spark creativity, commerce, and community pride.

In celebration of Ferris's addition to The MAX Hall of Fame, as well as the 100th anniversary of B.B. King's birth, *The Early Films of William Ferris* are currently playing upstairs at The MAX, on loop through November 15, in conjunction with the National Folk Festival.

Shot in the 1970s while teaching African American Studies at Yale University, the three 20-minute documentaries feature raw accounts of B.B. King, preachers, inmates, quiltmakers, and gospel singers describing their lives, capturing worlds 50 years ago central to our understanding of Mississippi and the human experience—then and now.

About The MAX:

The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) is an arts and cultural center in the heart of downtown Meridian that celebrates Mississippi's creative legacy through interactive exhibits, workshops, and live performances. The multipurpose facility contains a two-story Hall of Fame celebrating the state's groundbreaking artists like Walter Anderson, William Faulkner, Morgan Freeman, Jim Henson, B.B. King, Elvis Presley, and Leontyne Price to name a few, along with over 20,000 square feet of interactive exhibits, art studios, a recording studio, and performance spaces. Every visit to The MAX is a unique experience that leaves visitors feeling inspired and in awe of Mississippi's global impact on music, literature, art, and entertainment. Visit www.msarts.org to learn more.

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