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### **Public Voting Opens for the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Hall of Fame**

MERIDIAN, Miss. (April 2, 2026) – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) invites the public to cast their vote for the next class of the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Hall of Fame beginning Thursday, April 2 and running through Thursday, April 30 at [www.msarts.org/vote](http://www.msarts.org/vote).

Collectively, the latest nominees come from every corner of the state and span every artistic discipline, including literature, fashion, dance, music, architecture, and visual art. The nominees have broken barriers and records—with more than 20 Grammy Awards, two National Book Awards, and a MacArthur “genius” among them.

The nominees for the 2027 class of the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Hall of Fame are:

- R.L. Burnside
- Jerry Butler
- Maude Schuyler Clay
- Jerry Clower
- William Dunlap
- Ruby Elzy
- Sam Gilliam
- Theora Hamblett
- Faith Hill
- Mississippi John Hurt
- Patrick Kelly
- Thalia Mara
- Mississippi Mass Choir
- Sam Mockbee

- Ethel Wright Mohamed
- Charley Patton
- Joe Willie “Pinetop” Perkins
- David Ruffin
- Bobby Rush
- William Grant Still
- Conway Twitty
- Jesmyn Ward
- Cassandra Wilson

Nominees were selected through a rigorous process involving a committee of experts from across the state. Beginning earlier this year, the public was invited to recommend people for consideration through a form on The MAX’s website.

Between April 2 and April 30, the public and the Hall of Fame Panel of Electors will select their top five candidates from the pool of 23 nominees, with each person allowed one vote. The Panel of Electors will use the following criteria: the degree to which a nominee is a recognized icon in arts and entertainment; how their cultural impact serves to inspire future creatives; ways their work reflects or innovates on Mississippi culture; the enduring nature of their impact—and their connection to the state.

Results will be tabulated by a CPA firm and announced later this summer. An induction ceremony is scheduled to be held on Thursday, January 28, 2027, at the MSU Riley Center, a historic grand opera house in downtown Meridian, with a reception to follow at The MAX.

The 2027 inductees will join an incredible group of Mississippians already enshrined in the Hall of Fame, which serves as the centerpiece of The MAX. As sanctioned by the state legislature, the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Hall of Fame recognizes icons of arts and entertainment with significant ties to the state. Past inductees include William Faulkner, Morgan Freeman, B.B. King, Elvis Presley, Leontyne Price, and Oprah Winfrey.

The MAX’s President and CEO, Penny Kemp said, “As we celebrate America 250, it’s an ideal time to consider how Mississippi has contributed to American culture. Mississippi artists fundamentally shaped the global cultural landscape, reminding us that Mississippi is not just a place, but a primary source of the world’s imagination.”

Voting opens Thursday, April 2 at 8 am at [www.msarts.org/vote](http://www.msarts.org/vote) and ends on Thursday, April 30 at 5 pm.

## **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](http://www.msarts.org) to learn more.

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