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The MAX Announces Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Hall of Fame 2026-2027 Class

Influential Mississippians receive the state's highest honor in arts and entertainment

MERIDIAN, Miss. (August 5, 2026) – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) has announced new inductees for the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Hall of Fame. This year's outstanding class features five legendary artists who reinforce a truth known around the world: Mississippi is the Birthplace of America's Music.

Announcing the Inductees

- **Mississippi John Hurt:** A seminal figure in blues and the folk revival, Hurt's vocals and intricate finger picking style influenced Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia, and Taj Mahal. His performances at the Newport Folk Festival and recordings for the Library of Congress anchor him as a bridge between 19th-century folk traditions and modern American acoustic music in the 20th-century.
- **The Mississippi Mass Choir:** Founded in 1988, this world-renowned, three-time Grammy-nominated gospel choir brings together hundreds of singers from across the state, producing a wall of sound. Their historic 1988 debut album shattered industry records as #1 on the Billboard gospel charts for 45 consecutive weeks. A winner of 12 Stellar Gospel Music Awards and Billboard's Gospel Artist of the Year, "The Mass" has shared the powerful tradition of Mississippi gospel music all around the world.
- **Charley Patton:** Widely considered the "Father of the Delta Blues," Patton's raw, powerful voice and guitar playing in the early 20th century laid the foundation for both the blues and early rock and roll. His raw intensity and rhythmic innovations

directly shaped modern titans like John Fogerty, Robert Plant, and "Pops" Staples.

- **Bobby Rush:** A three-time Grammy Award winner and Blues Hall of Fame inductee, Rush has captivated global audiences with his self-defined "folk-funk"—seamlessly blending the blues with heavy soul-funk grooves for more than six decades. Boasting a massive legacy of more than 400 recordings and maintaining a relentless touring schedule of over 200 dates a year, the "King of the Chitlin' Circuit" remains a defining force in American roots music.
- **Conway Twitty:** A master storyteller and musical icon, Twitty achieved an astonishing 55 number-one singles across his career. He remains one of country music's most decorated artists, selling over 50 million records worldwide and defining the sound of the genre for a generation.

The Class of 2026-2027 will join an incredible group of Mississippians already enshrined in the Hall of Fame, which serves as the centerpiece of The MAX. As designated 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.

This year's inductees were selected through a rigorous process managed by an external committee of The MAX Board of Directors that balanced scholarly expertise and grassroots enthusiasm. Votes cast by a prestigious Panel of Electors—comprising authorities in the diverse disciplines of Mississippi's arts and cultural heritage—were weighed alongside thousands of ballots submitted by the public, with the final tally independently calculated and verified by an accounting firm.

An induction ceremony will take place on Thursday, January 28, 2027, at the historic MSU Riley Center in downtown Meridian. Following the ceremony, an elegant reception will be held just down the street at The MAX.

For more information regarding the Hall of Fame, or to view highlights from the 2025 induction ceremony, please visit msarts.org/hof.

This event is made possible by Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, Mississippi Public Broadcasting, and Visit Meridian.

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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