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### **BET Raised Us Brings Red Carpet Experience to The MAX on October 3**

MERIDIAN, Miss. (August 18, 2026) – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) is rolling out the red carpet on Saturday, October 3, for BET Raised Us: From Mississippi to the World, a high-energy, after-hours dance party celebrating Mississippi's enduring influence on Black entertainment and culture. Tickets are on sale now at [msarts.org](https://msarts.org) and at The MAX.

Inspired by the energy and glamour of The BET Awards, the event will be hosted by award-winning comedians Rita Brent (Comedy Central, *Late Night with Rita Brent*) and Merc B. Williams (Kevin Hart's *Hart of the City*, Born Funny Comedy Tour), who will interview eventgoers as they make red-carpet arrivals before introducing live performances by Ariel J. and DJ Sirato in the Citizens National Bank Courtyard.

BET Raised Us will begin at 5 p.m. with an add-on VIP dinner experience in the Structural Steel Services, Inc. Hall of Fame, featuring a menu prepared by Chef Enrika Williams of Fauna Foodworks. At 6:30 p.m., the red carpet will open to all ticket holders, with Ariel J. taking the stage at 8 p.m. and DJ Sirato at 9 p.m. Throughout the evening, eventgoers can meet best-selling, award-winning graphic novelist John Jennings and explore his immersive exhibition, *John Jennings: Build Your World*, now on view at The MAX.

A tribute to the Mississippi artists, innovators, and cultural trailblazers who are shaping culture around the globe, BET Raised Us honors Black Entertainment Television founder Robert L. Johnson. Born in Hickory, Mississippi, Johnson made history in 1980 with the launch of BET—the first cable television network by, for, and about Black Americans. BET transformed Black entertainment and storytelling, helped launch the careers of numerous hip-hop and R&B artists through the groundbreaking series *106 &*

*Park*, and became part of the first Black-controlled company listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

"Mississippi has long been a driving force in American music and culture, and BET helped amplify many of those voices for audiences around the world," said Christina McField, Curator of Changing Exhibits + Programs. "This tribute is more than honoring Robert Johnson's extraordinary legacy as the founder of BET. It's about recognizing the profound impact Mississippi has had on Black creativity, storytelling, and entertainment. BET Raised Us: Mississippi to the World celebrates the artists, visionaries, and cultural pioneers whose influence extends far beyond our state's borders, while reminding us that some of the world's greatest stories began right here in Mississippi."

Tickets for BET Raised Us: From Mississippi to the World can be purchased at [msarts.org](https://msarts.org) and at The MAX. To see all upcoming events, please visit [www.msarts.org/events](https://www.msarts.org/events).

### **About Rita Brent:**

Rita Brent is an award-winning comedian, musician, writer, military veteran, and talk show host from Jackson, Mississippi. A former sergeant and drummer in the 41st Army Band, she is now a weekly contributor on *The Rickey Smiley Morning Show* and hosts *Late Night with Rita Brent*, which debuted on FOX40 in 2025 and earned a Southeast Emmy Award nomination in 2026.

### **About Merc B.:**

Merc B. Williams is a media personality, comedian, and co-host of *The Vibe Controllers Podcast*. A Comedy Central alum, his work has been featured on Comedy Central, Tubi, and LOL Network Radio. Known for his engaging personality, sharp sense of humor, and ability to connect with people from all walks of life, Merc brings authenticity, energy, and professionalism to every stage and microphone.

### **About Ariel J.:**

Ariel J. is a Mississippi-born singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist whose music blends poetic storytelling, soulful melodies, and innovative production. Rooted in R&B while crossing genres, Ariel J.'s music explores resilience, human connection, and hope.

### **About DJ Sirato:**

DJ Sirato is a seasoned DJ who blends Hip-Hop, R&B, Southern Soul, classics, and party favorites, creating seamless transitions and unforgettable experiences for audiences.

**About Chef Enrika Williams:**

Enrika Williams is a chef and owner of Fauna Foodworks in Jackson, Mississippi, a culinary food lab that produces thoughtful, ingredient-driven, bohemian-chic cuisine.

**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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