



RECORDING ACADEMY® TO HONOR MUSIC LUMINARIES WITH 2023 SPECIAL MERIT AWARDS DURING GRAMMY® WEEK

THE RECORDING ACADEMY®'S SPECIAL MERIT AWARD CEREMONY RETURNS TO THE WILSHIRE EBELL THEATRE ON SAT, FEB. 4

SANTA MONICA, CALIF. (JAN. 05, 2023) — The Recording Academy®'s Special Merit Awards Ceremony celebrating the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award, Trustees Award, Technical GRAMMY® Award, and Best Song For Social Change Award recipients will return for the first time since 2020 during GRAMMY® Week on Feb. 4, 2023, at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. **Bobby McFerrin, Nirvana, Ma Rainey, Nile Rodgers, Slick Rick "The Ruler," The Supremes,** and **Ann Wilson and Nancy Wilson** of Heart are the 2023 Recording Academy Lifetime Achievement Award recipients; **Henry Diltz, Ellis Marsalis** and **Jim Stewart** are the Trustees Award recipients; and the **Audio Engineering Society (AES)** and **Dr. Andy Hildebrand** are the Technical GRAMMY Award honorees. The Best Song For Social Change honoree will be announced at a later date.

"The Academy is proud to celebrate this diverse slate of influential music people spanning numerous genres and crafts as our 2023 Special Merit Awards honorees," said **Harvey Mason jr.**, CEO of the Recording Academy. "Each creator on this list has made an impact on our industry — from technical to creative achievements — representing the breadth of music's diverse community. We're excited to celebrate this group of legends next month that continues to inspire and shape the music world."

Lifetime Achievement Award Honorees: This Special Merit Award is presented by vote of the Recording Academy's National Trustees to performers* who, during their lifetimes, have made creative contributions of outstanding artistic significance to the field of recording. See past recipients [here](#) (*through 1972, recipients included non-performers).

- Ten-time GRAMMY Award winner **Bobby McFerrin** has blurred the distinction between pop music and fine art, exploring uncharted vocal territory and inspiring a whole new generation of a cappella singers and the beatbox movement. From his trailblazing, solo a cappella performances to his inspired collaborations with Chick Corea and Yo-Yo Ma, his iconic global No. 1 hit "Don't Worry, Be Happy" and his work conducting top-tier orchestras, McFerrin's calling has always been to connect people through the unlimited possibilities of music. McFerrin has redefined the role of the human voice with his experiments in multi-tracking, his collaborations, his improvising choir Voicestra, and his legendary solo performances.
- Formed in 1987 by Kurt Cobain* and Krist Novoselic, **Nirvana** emerged from the Pacific Northwest onto the world stage with the 1989 release of its debut album *Bleach*. Two years later Nirvana's sophomore album *Nevermind* would spark a seismic shift in global youth culture. Rising to No. 1 worldwide and featuring GRAMMY Hall of Fame® single "Smells Like Teen Spirit," *Nevermind*'s impact would transform Cobain, Novoselic and Dave Grohl into one of the most successful and influential musical

entities of all time. Nirvana's third and ultimately final studio album, *In Utero*, was released in 1993, completing an indelible run that returned rock 'n' roll integrity and passion to the top of the charts. With a 2014 induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and more than 75 million records sold, Nirvana continues to be a singular inspiration for generations of fans and musicians the world over.

- Often called the "Mother of the Blues," **Ma Rainey*** (Gertrude Pridgett Rainey) was known for her deep voice and mesmerizing stage presence that drew packed audiences in the early twentieth century. A songwriter as well as a performer, her lyrics and melodies reflected her experiences as an independent, openly bisexual African-American woman. Rainey signed a recording contract with Paramount Records in 1923, making her one of the earliest recorded blues musicians. Between 1923 and 1928, she recorded almost 100 records, many of them national hits that are now part of the American musical canon. Her 1924 recording of "See See Rider Blues" (for which she was accompanied by a young Louis Armstrong) was added to the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry in 2004.
- **Nile Rodgers** is a Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee, Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee and a multiple GRAMMY Award-winning songwriter, composer, producer, arranger, and guitarist. As the co-founder of CHIC, Rodgers pioneered a musical language that generated chart-topping hits like "Le Freak," the biggest-selling single in the history of Atlantic Records, and sparked the advent of hip-hop with "Good Times." His work in the CHIC Organization including "We Are Family" with Sister Sledge and "I'm Coming Out" with Diana Ross and his productions for artists like David Bowie ("Let's Dance"), Madonna ("Like A Virgin") and Duran Duran ("The Reflex") have sold over 500 million albums and 100 million singles worldwide while his innovative, trendsetting collaborations with Daft Punk, Daddy Yankee and Beyoncé reflect the vanguard of contemporary hits.
- Renowned as "THE most sampled hip-hop artist in history" and "Hip-hop's greatest storyteller," **Slick Rick "The Ruler"** has set the pace for rap's past, present, and future. The Ruler's catalog, which includes the anthems "La-Di-Da-Di" and "The Show," boasts over 850 samples, ranging from Snoop Dogg's "Lodi Dodi" through Beyoncé and J. Cole's "Party." Noted as "the third artist signed to Def Jam Recordings" and "the most successful British-American rapper," his multiplatinum discography encompasses *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* [1988], *The Ruler's Back* [1991], *Behind Bars* [1994], and *The Art of Storytelling* [1999]. VH1 *Hip Hop Honors* celebrated him in 2008, and The Source ranked him among the Top 3 of its "Top 50 Lyricists of All Time."
- Two-time GRAMMY Award nominees **The Supremes** were the leading act of Motown Records during the 1960s. Founded by Diana Ross, Mary Wilson* and Florence Ballard*, The Supremes were trailblazers in the history of music, transcending all genres as the first female group that defined a generation. They were leaders at a pivotal time during the American Civil Rights movement by bringing together audiences that had racial cultural differences through their style and music. Named the No. 1 female recording group of all time by *Billboard* in 2017, the group achieved an unprecedented 12 No. 1 hits and five consecutive No. 1s from 1964-1965 with "Where Did Our Love Go," "Baby Love," "Come See About Me," "Stop! In the Name of Love," and "Back in My Arms Again." The Supremes were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1988 with The Beatles, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1994, and were inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame in 1998.

- **Ann Wilson and Nancy Wilson** are being recognized as Lifetime Achievement Award honorees for their creative work with the rock band Heart. Heart was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, sold over 35 million records, garnered four GRAMMY Award nominations, landed 10 Top 10 albums, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, had several No. 1 hits, and achieved "the longest span of top 10 albums on the *Billboard* charts by a female-led band." Heart's influence can be palpably felt everywhere from rock and heavy metal to hip-hop and pop. As a result, their music resonates in nearly every corner of pop culture.

Trustees Award Honorees: This Special Merit Award is presented by vote of the Recording Academy's National Trustees to individuals who, during their careers in music, have made significant contributions, other than performance*, to the field of recording. See past recipients [here](#) (*through 1983, recipients included performers).

- Music photographer **Henry Diltz** photographed more than 250 album covers and thousands of publicity shots in the 1960s and 1970s, including the iconic *Morrison Hotel* cover for the Doors. Other artists, whose fly-on-the-wall style portraits he's known for, include musical legends such as the Eagles, Neil Young, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Jackson Browne, America, Steppenwolf, James Taylor, Jimi Hendrix, The Monkees, Joni Mitchell, Linda Ronstadt, and David Cassidy. He was the official photographer at the Woodstock festival in August 1969. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *LIFE*, *People*, *Rolling Stone*, *High Times*, and *Billboard*.
- Jazz pianist and music educator **Ellis Marsalis*** was regarded by many as the premier modern jazz pianist in New Orleans. He began formal music studies at the Xavier University Junior School of Music at age 11 and graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in music education from Dillard University in 1955. In 1986, Marsalis accepted the position of commonwealth professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va., where he spent two of the three years as coordinator of jazz studies before returning to New Orleans to become the University of New Orleans' first occupant of the Coca-Cola-endowed chair of jazz studies. In 2008 he was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame, and in 2011, he was honored with the NEA Jazz Masters Award, along with his sons Branford, Wynton, Delfeayo, and Jason, given to the Marsalis family.
- Stax Records founder **Jim Stewart*** produced some of the greatest rhythm and blues (R&B) records of the 1960s. He was instrumental in launching the careers of Otis Redding, the Bar-Kays, Isaac Hayes, Eddie Floyd, Booker T. & the M.G.s, the Staple Singers, Johnnie Taylor, Albert King, Rufus and Carla Thomas, and hundreds of others. With Stewart at the helm, Stax moved some 800 singles and 300 albums, placing more than 167 hit songs in the Top 100 on the pop charts, and a staggering 243 hits in the Top 100 R&B charts. Stewart was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2002 by Steve Cropper of Booker T. & the M.G.'s, and Sam Moore of Sam & Dave. In 2012, he was also among the first class of inductees to the Memphis Music Hall of Fame.

Technical GRAMMY Award Honorees: This Special Merit Award is presented by vote of the Producers & Engineers Wing® Advisory Council and Chapter Committees and ratification by the Recording Academy's National Trustees to individuals and/or companies/organizations/institutions who have made contributions of outstanding technical significance to the recording field. See past recipients [here](#).



- The **Audio Engineering Society (AES)** is the only professional society devoted exclusively to advancing audio technology. Founded in 1948 with the key goals of collecting, collating and disseminating knowledge of audio science and its application, AES facilitates communication and collaboration that unites audio engineers, creative artists, scientists, and students, with hundreds of local sections worldwide. 75 years on, AES's members continue to set precedents and standards wherever sound and technology meet, from recording and entertainment to scientific research in emerging fields such as Spatial and Game Audio, Networking and Streaming, and Audio for Virtual and Augmented Reality.
- **Dr. Andy Hildebrand** graduated with a Ph.D. EE from the University of Illinois in 1976, specializing in stochastic processes and estimation theory. After studying music composition at Rice's Shepard School of Music, Hildebrand developed an interest in audio data processing and founded Antares Audio Technology in 1990. At Antares, Hildebrand created the groundbreaking Auto-Tune software program, which was first released in 1997. In 2011, Hildebrand was inducted into the TEC Foundation's "Technology Hall of Fame" for the invention of Auto-Tune.

*Denotes posthumous honoree.

ABOUT THE RECORDING ACADEMY

The Recording Academy represents the voices of performers, songwriters, producers, engineers, and all music professionals. Dedicated to ensuring the recording arts remain a thriving part of our shared cultural heritage, the Academy honors music's history while investing in its future through the GRAMMY Museum[®], advocates on behalf of music creators, supports music people in times of need through MusiCares[®], and celebrates artistic excellence through the GRAMMY Awards — music's only peer-recognized accolade and highest achievement. As the world's leading society of music professionals, we work year-round to foster a more inspiring world for creators.

For more information about the Academy, please visit www.grammy.com. For breaking news and exclusive content, follow @RecordingAcad on [Twitter](#), "like" Recording Academy on [Facebook](#), and join the Recording Academy's social communities on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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CONTACTS

Andie Cox / Chrissy Dudash

Recording Academy

andie.cox@recordingacademy.com / chrissy.dudash@recordingacademy.com

Joe Schneider

Rogers & Cowan-PMK

joe.schneider@rogersandcowanpmk.com