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**MISSISSIPPI'S CELEBRATION OF ITS
GRAMMY® LEGACY:
STAR-STUDED GALA HOSTED BY
GOVERNOR BARBOUR
SET FOR BILOXI MAY 27, 2010**



Fourth Annual

**"Mississippi GRAMMY®
Legacy" Celebration**

(Biloxi, MS) May 7, 2010--The State of Mississippi celebrates its enduring connection to the GRAMMY Awards® May 27 with a gala hosted by Governor Haley Barbour and First Lady Marsha Barbour. The event, the fourth such celebration of its kind in as many years, is part of the state's ongoing campaign to reinforce awareness of its identity as "The Birthplace of America's Music." This year's edition of *Mississippi Celebrates Its GRAMMY® Legacy* moves to Biloxi's Hard Rock Live at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino; it had previously taken place in Tunica and Jackson.

The evening's performers include jazz great Cassandra Wilson, a tribute to Jim Henson led by conductor Benjamin Wright, country singer/songwriter Mac McAnally, gospel greats The Williams Brothers with the Mississippi Mass Choir, Swedish superstar Beatrice, plus a special "Bluesapalooza" performance featuring Eddie Cotton, Hubert Sumlin, Zac Harmon, King Edward and Bobby Rush. Joey Lauren Adams will, for the third time serve as mistress of ceremonies. The diversity of talent and genres is staggering, ranging from down home blues to gospel heights with classical and country thriving side by side. This underscores the fact that Mississippi has long been one of the most fertile breeding grounds for music of all kinds. This phenomenon is further reflected in the disproportionate number of winners and nominees with Mississippi roots that have been honored by The Recording Academy® over the course of the 53-year history of the GRAMMY Awards.

Proceeds from the evening will benefit the Mississippi Blues Commission's Blues Trail project that places interpretive markers at notable historical sites related to the history and growth of the blues throughout the state. Peavey Electronics Corporation, Mississippi's own much-celebrated musical innovators and the Mississippi Development Authority are, again, sponsoring the gala and associated activities.

In announcing the event, Governor Barbour noted, "Our three previous GRAMMY celebrations and this year's Mississippi Night At The GRAMMY Museum® in Los Angeles were all amazing celebrations of Mississippi music. The common theme carried throughout is the vast number of significant and very brilliant contributions by Mississippi artists, reflecting the nurturing, creative soul of our great state. As we have never fail to remind, "If it's music, it's Mississippi."

Jon Hornyak, Senior Executive Director of The Recording Academy® Memphis Chapter commented, "Mississippi's annual celebration of GRAMMY winners and nominees is a unique event that The Recording Academy is honored to support. Mississippi's incredible track record of having produced at least fifty GRAMMY Award winners shows that there is, indeed, something very special about the relationship between the state and the music. It's just undeniable."

The gala will be preceded by a reception hosted by the Governor and First Lady where the participating performing artists will receive the Peavey Award. Named for renowned music and audio innovator and Mississippi native Hartley D. Peavey, the Peavey Award honors the state's many GRAMMY winners and nominees as well as individuals who have played a significant role in developing and furthering Mississippi's musical heritage.

MORE DETAILS AND TICKET INFO: www.msgrammy.com

About the performers

Cassandra Wilson, named America's Best Jazz Singer by *Time Magazine*, is one of the most successful jazz vocalists of the modern era. The Jackson native attended Millsaps College and Jackson State University earned a degree in marketing while pursuing her musical career. Equally at home with blues repertoire as she is with the avant-garde, she's been named both *Downbeat's* Female Jazz Vocalist of the Year and its Best Jazz Singer. She's the winner of two GRAMMYs (Best Jazz Vocal Performance and Best Jazz Vocal Album) and her life and music are noted by a Mississippi Blues Trail marker on Albermarle Road in Jackson where she grew up.

Benjamin Wright's tribute to the late Jim Henson celebrates the musical legacy of the late Muppets creator whose "Sesame Street" characters include Big Bird, Oscar The Grouch, and Cookie Monster. These and other reflections of Henson's mirthful and fertile imagination including Miss Piggy have captivated and enlightened five generations of children with music and song always playing a big role in the process. Henson was born in Greenville though Leland is the home of the Jim Henson Museum Exhibition and is known as "The Birthplace of Kermit The Frog."

Also a Greenville native, Wright is a celebrated conductor/arranger has worked with literally scores of music icons including The Dells, The Temptations, Gladys Knight and The Pips, Aretha Franklin, Brandy, Destiny's Child, Dru Hill, Janet Jackson and Barry White. He wrote the string arrangements for Off The Wall, Michael Jackson's first solo album, produced by Quincy Jones. Wright co-wrote "One Hundred Ways," a GRAMMY winner for James Ingram in the Best R&B Vocal Performance category.

Mac McAnally was born in Belmont, Mississippi and has written six chart-topping country singles including last year's "Down The Road" that he recorded with Kenny Chesney. The recording was a 2010 GRAMMY nominee for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals. McAnally's songs have been recorded such artists as Jimmy Buffet, Sawyer Brown, Ricky Van Shelton, Charley Pride, Alabama and many others. His songwriting notwithstanding, McAnally's own recordings are no strangers to the charts. His latest album, *Down By The River*, was released last year by Toby Keith's Show Dog label. McAnally has twice been cited as the Country Music Association's Musician of the Year.

The Williams Brothers have been a force in gospel music since the late Leon "Pop" Williams founded the group in Smithdale, Mississippi in 1960. Now celebrating the group's 50th anniversary, today's Williams Brothers -- Melvin, Henry and Doug, Leon's progeny -- carry on the tradition having broken through nationally in the early 1970's with "Jesus Will Fix It." In 1991, they founded Blackberry Records, the first black-owned and operated record label in Mississippi. This group has received numerous GRAMMY nominations, including one this year for *The Journey Continues...* in the Best Traditional Gospel Album category.

The Mississippi Mass Choir, the Jackson-based gospel group of monumental stature and a past GRAMMY winner will support the Williams Brothers in Biloxi. From their earliest recordings more than 20

years ago, the choir has been a chart phenomenon with such recordings as *Live, God Gets The Glory* and *It Remains To Be Seen* all hitting No.1 on *Billboard's* Gospel Chart.

In recognition of the genre that is synonymous with Mississippi, a unique "Bluesapalooza" segment featuring multiple generations of Mississippi blues greats is certain to be one of the program's highlights. The most veteran of those participating is the legendary Hubert Sumlin who was born in Greenwood and went on to work with many Mississippi-born Chicago blues greats including Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf and was recently a GRAMMY nominee.

Zac Harmon, born and raised in Jackson and a notable product of the capitol city's Farish Street is also a featured Bluesapalooza player. He is a past winner of the Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge and, more recently, was voted Best New Blues Artist by XM Radio listeners. Harmon produced several tracks for Black Uhuru's GRAMMY-nominated *Mystical Truth* album.

King Edward, a highly regarded Jackson-based bluesman whose sobriquet is "Blues Picking King" is another participant and has been the regular guitarist at the city's famed Subway Club. He recorded for Ace Records and was a featured performer at the 2009 Chicago Blues Festival.

The youngest bluesman in the segment is Eddie Cotton who was born the son of a preacher in Jackson and began playing guitar at the age of four. He attended Jackson State University where he majored in music and began playing professionally at local clubs. In 1995, he left college to pursue his musical ambitions, leading to the creation of a band called The Mississippi Cotton Club. Cotton's impassioned, soulful vocals and fluid, biting guitar combined with his powerful stage presence left no doubt that he is one of the best guitar players and performers to rise from the Mississippi Delta in many years.

Lastly, Bobby Rush completes the trans-generational Bluesapalooza picture. A GRAMMY nominee, Rush is also based in Jackson and has been much in demand on the festival circuit. He was inducted into the Blues Foundation's Blues Hall of Fame and was featured in the Martin Scorsese-directed "Blues" series on PBS. A tireless promoter of the blues, he will represent the United States this September at the Shanghai World Expo and was honored earlier this year with a citation issued by both the House and Senate of the State of Tennessee for his role as a "living example of black history, as an artist, as a man, as a mentor and as a champion of the people." He was also honored by the posting of a Blues Trail Marker in Jackson.

Reflecting the international influence of Mississippi and its musical legacy is Swedish pop diva Beatrice whose music offers a unique blend of folk, rock, country, and genres that all have deep Mississippi roots.

Joey Lauren Adams, a resident of Oxford, Mississippi, is the evening's emcee again this year. The talented actress has appeared in more than 30 films, which include roles in *Dazed And Confused*, *Chasing Amy*, *Mallrats*, *Big Daddy* and *The Breakup*. She is writer/director of the feature film *Come Early Morning*, starring Ashley Judd, a Sundance Festival selection.

About the sponsors

Event co-sponsor Peavey Electronics was founded in 1965 by Hartley Peavey who, the year prior to the first GRAMMY Awards, built his first amplifier in the basement of his family's home in Meridian, Mississippi. As Peavey celebrates its 45th anniversary in 2010, the company is still based in Meridian but does business in 136 countries through 33 facilities -- most of which are in Mississippi -- and leads the industry in patents and innovations. Just as Mississippi bluesmen and early rock and rollers inspired Hartley Peavey to pursue his dreams, so, too, do his musical instruments and sound equipment continue to inspire musicians around the world. It is safe to suggest that virtually every GRAMMY nominee and winner has used Peavey products on stages and in studios during the company's history. www.peavey.com



The Mississippi Development Authority is the State of Mississippi's lead economic and community development agency. More than 250 employees are engaged in providing services to businesses, communities and workers in the state. The MDA's Economic Development Group focuses its efforts in traditional business recruitment and retention, community development, tourism development and export development while it's Asset Development Group pursues innovative ways to develop unique Mississippi assets such as cultural heritage, natural resources and small town life styles. www.mississippi.org www.visitmississippi.org



Established in 1957, The Recording Academy is an organization of musicians, producers, engineers and recording professionals that is dedicated to improving the cultural condition and quality of life for music and its makers. Internationally known for the GRAMMY Awards - the preeminent peer-recognized award for musical excellence and the most credible brand in music - The Recording Academy is responsible for groundbreaking professional development, cultural enrichment, advocacy, education and human services programs. The Academy continues to focus on its mission of recognizing musical excellence, advocating for the well-being of music makers and ensuring music remains an indelible part of our culture. For more information about The Academy, please visit www.grammy.com

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