

Sports, Entertainment, Arts & Media News

MISSISSIPPI

Gouverneur's

ARTS AWARDS

ALVIN SHELBY

DOY D. GORTON

DUWANE PENDARVIS

SQUARE BOOKS

WRIGHT THOMPSON

2027

Recipients

JACKSON, MS – The Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC), in partnership with the Governor’s Office, announces the recipients of the 2027 Governor’s Arts Awards.

The 2027 recipients and awards are as follows:

- Alvin Shelby, Lifetime Achievement
- Doy D. Gorton, Excellence in Photography
- Duwane Pendarvis, Excellence in Dance
- Square Books, Arts in Community
- Wright Thompson, Excellence in Literature

"Our recipients this year showcase the wide range of excellence in our artists and arts community in Mississippi, and

we are privileged to honor them by sharing their stories," said Lewis. "Their work has taken them from Mississippi to the world and back, extending to the top of ESPN, on tour with Sesame Street Live, to the White House, into the classroom, and through the pages of many books. We are eager to begin sharing their stories with you as we celebrate their contributions to the cultural landscape of our great state and our nation." The Governor’s Arts Awards are the highest award a living artist can receive in Mississippi. The awards recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding work in their artistic disciplines, arts-based community development, and/or arts patronage. This year, the awards celebrate 39 years of honoring artistic excellence in the state. MAC part-

ners annually with the Governor’s Office to host the Governor’s Arts Award. The collaboration cultivates the important partnership between the arts and government. The 2027 recipients will be recognized at the award ceremony on Thursday, February 11, 2027, at The Westin Jackson. A public reception will take place at 4:30 p.m., followed by the ceremony at 6 p.m., at The Westin Jackson. A one-hour program featuring all five recipients will air in Spring of 2027 on Mississippi Public Broadcasting.

About the Recipients

Alvin Shelby – Lifetime Achievement. Natchez, MS
Alvin Shelby is a music educator, music director, and performer with more than 40 years of ex-

perience, 35 of which he spent teaching at Cathedral Catholic School in Natchez, MS. Shelby has inspired numerous students who have gone on to pursue musical careers. He specializes in traditional inspirational music, but also enjoys writing and performing music for children, film, and jazz. He has worked with many great talents, including Lemmie Battles of the Chicago Mass Choir, Dr. Margaret Douroux of Los Angeles, CA, Dr. Princella Lee of Chicago, Elton John, Benjamin Cone, Tricia Walker, David Curry, the Mississippi Mass Choir, and many others. He has performed around the world, and his work has appeared in numerous television and film productions. He has also been band leader and musical director for many recording sessions, including Holy Family

Gospel Choir in Natchez, MS, the award-winning program Southern Road to Freedom, and many others.

Doy D. Gorton – Excellence in Photography
Greenville, MS (currently residing in Carbondale, IL)

Doy D. Gorton is a photojournalist who worked as Chief Photographer of the Philadelphia Inquirer and Washington Photographer for the New York Times, covering the White House and Capitol Hill. Gorton attended the University of Mississippi, where he became engaged with the Southern Civil Rights Movement through Fannie Lou Hamer and John Lewis. He was the only white Mississippian on the staff of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Com-

mittee (SNCC). During his time in SNCC, he decided to become a photographer. In addition to his journalistic work, Gorton shot the image used on the 1990 Fleetwood Mac album cover for “Behind the Mask” and was the photographer for “A River Runs Through It,” among other Hollywood and commercial projects.

Duwane Pendarvis – Excellence in Dance
Jackson, MS
Born in Jackson, Mississippi, Duwane Pendarvis is an accomplished dancer and educator whose career spans 50-plus years with performance experience in Concert Dance, European Tours, Festivals, Musical Theatre, and Television. Pendarvis embraced professional dance after earning a four-year music scholarship at

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Downtown Commission announces lineup for 1st Memphis Jazz Festival from sports-Ent. 5

Jazz season finale at Court Square Park, featuring performances from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Throughout the weekend, restaurants throughout Downtown Memphis will join the celebration with jazz brunches, live music, festival-inspired menus, and special offerings throughout the weekend.

The Memphis Jazz Festival grew from the success of the Sunset Jazz series, which has brought live jazz to Downtown Memphis for the past seven years. The series is produced by Deborah Swiney in collaboration with the Downtown Memphis Commission. Building on that success, DMC Chief Marketing Officer Milton Howery III and Swiney began discussing how the experience could grow into a larger festival celebrating Memphis’ jazz community and music legacy.

“I started Sunset Jazz and always wanted to do something Downtown at Court Square Park, and then I had the vision of expanding it. Memphis has a huge history in jazz, with so many legendary musicians coming right out of Memphis. I hope this festival opens another avenue to showcase the great jazz musicians Memphis has to offer. People already come from around the world to experience Memphis music, and this festival gives them another reason to do that.” — **Deborah Swiney, Founder, Sunset Jazz**

The festival was developed by a committee of Memphis musicians, music professionals, community partners and jazz enthusiasts, including Deborah Swiney; Milton Howery III, Chief Marketing Officer, Downtown Memphis Commission; Stephen Lee and Michael Scott, Memphis Jazz Workshop; DeMarcus Suggs, City of Memphis; McKenzii Webster, Founder, The Web MGMT; and Alicia Dixon and Marquis White, Dixon-White Restaurant Group, LLC.

“At DMC, we’re extremely ex-

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cited about this festival and the opportunity it creates to bring more people Downtown. One of our goals at the DMC is to create new reasons for people to visit Downtown, but it goes beyond simply getting them here. We want to create experiences that encourage people to stay longer, explore Downtown, and support our businesses. Our vision is to grow the Memphis Jazz Festival into a true demand generator for visitors to our Downtown. To build a thriving Downtown, we have to continuously create experiences that locals want, while also celebrating and exchanging cultural experiences that make people from around the world want to experience Downtown Memphis.” — Milton Howery III, Chief Marketing Officer, Downtown Memphis Commission

The Memphis Jazz Festival represents DMC’s continued effort to create new experiences and demand generators that increase Downtown visitation, extend visitor dwell time, support Downtown businesses, and celebrate the culture that makes Downtown Memphis distinctive.

Additional festival details, including the full performance schedule and experience information, will be announced ahead of the festival.

