



By Naomi Richard
VILLAGER

(VILLAGER) - The Recording Academy's Special Merit Awards Ceremony celebrates the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award, Technical GRAMMY Award, Trustees Award and the Best Song For Social Change Award recipients will return during GRAMMY Week on February 4, 2023, at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. These Special Merit Awards are presented by vote of the Recording Academy's National Trustees to performers* who during their lifetimes, made creative contributions of outstanding artistic significance to the field of recording. See the **2023 Lifetime Achievement Award Honorees below:**

Ten-time GRAMMY Award winner **Bobby McFerrin** walked on uncharted vocal territory and inspiring a whole new generation of a cappella singers leading to the beatbox movement. From his trailblazing, solo a cappella performances to his inspired collaborations with Chick Corea and Yo-Yo Ma, his 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.

The "Mother of the Blues" **Ma Rainey*** (Gertrude Pridgett Rainey) known for her deep voice and mesmerizing stage presence that drew packed audiences in the early twentieth century. 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 nearly 100 songs! 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.

Master Musician **Nile Rodgers** is a Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee, Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee and a multiple GRAMMY Award-winning songwriter, arranger, composer, producer, and guitarist. Rodgers was the co-founder of CHIC, 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



Gertrude Pridgett Rainey

ence Ballard*, they became trailblazers in the history of music, transcending all genres as the first female group that defined a generation. They were critical leaders during the American Civil Rights movement by bringing together audiences that had racial and cultural differences through their style and music.

Ann Wilson and Nancy Wilson are being recognized as Lifetime Achievement Award honorees for their 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



Diana Ross of The Supremes. Photo by Naomi Richard.

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!

Slick Rick "The Ruler" famous as "the most sampled hip-hop artist in history" and as "hip-hop's greatest storyteller." He set the pace for rap's past, present and

future. 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 Record-

ings" and "the most successful British-American rapper."

Two-time GRAMMY Award nominees **The Supremes** were the leading act of Motown Records during the 1960s. Founded by Diana Ross, Mary Wilson* and Flo-

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."

*Denotes posthumous honoree.

Austin 911 is still strained by understaffing. Call takers brace for SXSW.

By Maya Fawaz | KUT 90.5

(AUSTIN, TX) - Austin's 911 call center had about 200 calls on hold for hours on end New Year's Eve and into the next morning.

People waiting for emergency assistance were unable to get help. Those who hung up were bumped to the back of the line.

"Nobody has ever seen that happen at our call center," said Casey Callahan, who spent more than seven years as a police dispatcher before becoming a communications supervisor. "At least in the last 10 years that I've been there, we've never seen our queue like that."

911 calls started accumulating around 10 p.m. and by 1 a.m., the average wait time was 25 minutes.

Under national standards, 90% of 911 calls should be answered within 15 seconds. According to Callahan, the percentage of calls answered in a timely way between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. plummeted to 1%.

The operators were trying to keep up with calls all night, getting through them as fast as they could.

But Callahan said that can be dangerous, too.

"If they're just trying to rush through the call, they might miss something," she said. "There's no time for mistakes in a major emergency."

Out of 104 operator positions, 48 are vacant. Call takers are burning out, Callahan said, as the department has been understaffed for months.

Lt. Kenneth Murphy, director of APD Emergency communications, said the department has received a lot of applications for call takers and dispatchers, but more than half of applicants don't follow up to continue the hiring process.

"You have to have a calling to want to help people and to want to do this type of work," he said. "Because it certainly isn't easy."

Murphy said the hiring and training timeline has been cut down and made more efficient, but it still takes roughly two and half months for a new hire to get up to speed.

Callahan said there may be a batch of new hires

going through training soon, but she's worried the department won't be fully staffed in time for South by Southwest in March.

"We have this looming thing coming on the horizon," she said. "That's always a really, really busy time for us."

Callahan said she hopes things will improve soon so the department can investigate why it has been struggling for months.

After this story was published, the City of Austin sent KUT a statement saying APD was seeing more applicants following "compensation adjustments," but that it knows "there is more to do."

"Three dispatchers were hired last month with five dispatchers and four 911 call takers anticipated to join APD and start training by the end of this month," a city spokesperson said in an email.

Anyone interested in applying for an open position can visit the city's hiring page at AustinTexas.gov.