

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: Vilona Michael  
Vilona Michal Marketing, LLC  
405.308.7170  
[vilona@vilonamarketing.com](mailto:vilona@vilonamarketing.com)

### **Justin Echols to Receive Lee Allan Smith Oklahoma Legacy Award**

OKLAHOMA CITY, December 14 – The Oklahoma Hall of Fame will present the 2021 Lee Allan Smith Oklahoma Legacy Award to internationally renowned jazz musician Justin Echols at the Oklahoma Hall of Fame on Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 2 PM. The Lee Allan Smith Oklahoma Legacy Award honors an individual who has ambitiously demonstrated exceptional community volunteer activity and has created a legacy of pride for future generations.

Justin Echols is a respected jazz musician with a mind-blowing story that has gained him local and international recognition. After an injury from a car accident during Operation Iraqi Freedom/Noble Eagle left him discharged from the U.S. Army Reserves, Echols returned home to the Oklahoma City Police Department with many health issues. During this time, Echols discovered a hidden talent for playing the piano and singing. Just three years after he started playing piano, he started working with jazz mogul Wynton Marsalis and next with Julliard professor, Antonio Ciacca. Echols traveled to Italy for more serious training and toured Europe, performing in Germany, Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Istanbul, and many more locations.

Locally, Echols took on the Artist in Residence work at Hefner Grill, transforming it from a restaurant into one of the most prestigious venues for live jazz in Oklahoma City. In 2012, Echols became the youngest inductee into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, landed the cover story of Making Music Magazine, recorded his first CD with Twins Music, and was featured on [Forbes.com](http://Forbes.com) as a must-see jazz artist. Remarkably, all of these successes were achieved while Echols maintained his full-time job as an Oklahoma City police officer.

In 2018, Echols's story was nominated for a local Emmy for a special segment on PBS called "Meant To Be". In January 2020, he received the prestigious Native Son Award from the South OKC Chamber, making him one of the most distinguished artists in the State of Oklahoma. Currently, Echols spends much of his time with Antonio Ciacca and Wynton Marsalis in New York City, arranging, composing and studying music.

Lee Allan Smith will present the award to Echols in the presence of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame Board, family, and friends. Oklahoma Hall of Fame President & CEO, Shannon L. Rich, will open the event with remarks on Echols' life and the continued impact his career has had.

Created by friends and colleagues of Lee Allan Smith, this award recognizes those that are ambitiously demonstrating volunteer and civic efforts that grow pride in the community; are well known for engaging the community in their efforts; and have created a legacy of pride for future generations. One individual receives the awards annually by the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Past award recipients include J. Blake Wade, Meg Salyer, Edie Roodman, Chip Fudge, Jan Peery, Debby Hampton, Kari Watkins, Tricia Everest, Paul Massad, Bill Thrash, and Bob Burke.

**About the Oklahoma Hall of Fame:** Founded in 1927, the Oklahoma Hall of Fame preserves Oklahoma's unique history while promoting pride in our great state. Through each of its programs and the Gaylord-Pickens Museum, the Oklahoma Hall of Fame honors our state's rich tradition by telling Oklahoma's story through its people.

For more information about the Lee Allan Smith Oklahoma Legacy Award, the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and the Gaylord-Pickens Museum, please contact Gini Campbell at 405.523.3202, [gmc@oklahomahof.com](mailto:gmc@oklahomahof.com), or visit [OklahomaHoF.com](http://OklahomaHoF.com).

###