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Ed Harris, Kenny Rogers and Toby Keith Among Inductees at 65th Annual Western Heritage Awards

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum will continue the tradition of honoring the men and women who contribute to the history and culture of the American West.

OKLAHOMA CITY (Feb. 3, 2026) — The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum is proud to name Academy Award-nominated actor Ed Harris and Country Music Hall of Famers Kenny Rogers and Toby Keith among the distinguished inductees and recipients to be honored during the 65th annual Western Heritage Awards on April 11, 2026, at the Museum in Oklahoma City.

The Western Heritage Awards serve as the induction ceremony for the Museum's Hall of Great Western Performers and Hall of Great Westerners, as well as the presentation ceremony for special awards such as the Chester A. Reynolds Award (named after the Museum's founder), Special Directors' Award and Western Visionary Award.

“We are thrilled to announce the exceptional inductees and award winners for this year’s Western Heritage Awards,” said Pat Fitzgerald, president and CEO of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. “Each has helped carry forward the stories, values and traditions of the American West in meaningful and enduring ways. Their work — whether on screen, in song, in leadership or through lifelong service — ensures that the spirit of the West continues to inspire future generations.”

Every year, the Western Heritage Awards also recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to Western heritage through creative works in literature, music, television and film. Additional announcements next month will highlight the recipients being honored for their creative achievements from 2025.

That announcement will include ticketing information for seminars and events that will be open to the public during the Western Heritage Awards weekend celebration.

Both inductees and award recipients receive a Wrangler, a bronze sculpture of a cowboy on horseback created by the late Oklahoma artist and 2017 Hall of Great Westerners inductee Harold T. Holden.

For event details, visit nationalcowboymuseum.org/western-heritage-awards/. For media resources, contact Kerrie Booher at kbooher@nationalcowboymuseum.org.

Hall of Great Western Performers

Ed Harris

Ed Harris' acclaimed career spans more than five decades and includes some of the most enduring Western and frontier-themed performances in film and television. A four-time Academy Award nominee and two-time Golden Globe winner, Harris is widely respected for his powerful portrayals in films such as "The Hours," "The Truman Show," "Apollo 13" and "Pollock," his feature film directing debut. In addition to directing "Pollock," his second film as director, screenwriter and actor was "Appaloosa," co-starring Viggo Mortensen.

Harris is also well known to Western audiences for his work in "Westworld" and "Riders of the Purple Sage," and he continues to contribute to the genre through upcoming projects including "The Dutton Ranch," a "Yellowstone" spinoff. Across stage, screen and direction, Harris' work reflects the grit, independence and ethical tension that define the American West.

Kenny Rogers

Kenny Rogers was one of the most influential and recognizable voices in American music, with a career that bridged country, folk and popular storytelling traditions closely tied to the Western experience. A three-time Grammy Award winner and member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, Rogers recorded more than 120 hit singles and sold over 100 million records worldwide.

Songs such as "The Gambler" and "Coward of the County" became modern Western parables, exploring themes of risk, redemption, honor and personal responsibility. Beyond music, Rogers also starred in television films and miniseries that expanded Western storytelling to new audiences, leaving a lasting legacy as both a performer and cultural icon.

Hall of Great Westerners

Arthur Nicholas

Arthur Edward Nicholas grew up on a cattle ranch in Nebraska, an experience that grounded his lifelong connection to the land, livestock and Western values. After serving in the U.S. Navy, he earned a bachelor's degree in finance from San Diego State University and built a distinguished investment career spanning more than 40 years. He co-founded Nicholas-Applegate Capital Management and served as its chairman and chief executive officer, following earlier work as a portfolio and bank manager.

In 1999, Nicholas and his wife, Catherine, acquired Wagonhound Land & Livestock, a 300,000-acre working ranch located south of Douglas, Wyoming, along Wagonhound Creek. The ranch raises Red Angus cattle and Quarter Horses and operates farming, outfitting and guest programs, carrying forward a territorial-era brand — the quarter circle, bar, quarter circle.

The Nicholases are dedicated stewards of Western heritage, maintaining an extensive Western art and book collection and supporting the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association. Arthur Nicholas serves as director emeritus on the board of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum and on the investment committee of the American Quarter Horse Association, while Catherine serves on the boards of the American Quarter Horse Foundation and the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.

Luster Bayless

Luster Bayless' distinguished career as a costume designer and costumer spanned decades and continents, bringing authenticity and visual storytelling to some of the most iconic Western films ever produced. Working on location across the United States, Europe, Mexico and Asia, Bayless collaborated with legendary directors including John Ford, Henry Hathaway, Howard Hawks, Don Siegel and Francis Ford Coppola. His meticulous attention to historical detail helped define the look and realism of Western cinema during its golden

Chester A. Reynolds Award

In 1990, the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum established the Chester A. Reynolds Award, named in honor of the founder of the Museum. It is given to a living honoree or group that has notably perpetuated the legacy of the American West.

Richard Oliver

Richard Oliver is a fourth-generation saddle maker and a respected steward of Western craftsmanship whose family's tradition of handcrafting quality saddles and tack has served working cowboys for more than a century.

Based in Amarillo, Texas, Oliver Saddle Shop traces its roots to 1917, when his grandfather, C.W. Oliver, opened the original shop in Vernon. Richard joined his father in the business

after college, and today he works alongside his sons, Zeb and Bryan, continuing the family legacy of custom-made saddles for ranching, roping, cutting and show disciplines. The Oliver family's dedication to quality and functionality has made the shop one of the oldest and most enduring Western saddle makers in the nation.

Under Richard's leadership, Oliver Saddle Shop has remained deeply connected to the working cowboy lifestyle, building equipment designed for long days on the range rather than assembly-line production, and maintaining personal ties with customers who often return generation after generation.

The business also reflects Oliver's commitment to community, including support for the Working Ranch Cowboys Association and its mission to preserve Western traditions and provide assistance to ranch families in need. His lifelong work embodies the values of craftsmanship, heritage and service that resonate across the American West.

Special Directors' Award

Toby Keith

Toby Keith was a trailblazing country music artist whose unapologetic style and deep Oklahoma roots made him one of the most recognizable voices in modern Western and country music. A singer, songwriter, producer and entrepreneur, Keith released numerous multi-platinum albums and wrote enduring anthems that celebrated independence, patriotism and the rural American experience.

Beyond music, Keith was a passionate supporter of U.S. service members and veterans, performing hundreds of USO shows worldwide. His work consistently reflected the grit, humor and pride of the contemporary American West, earning him widespread respect as both an artist and cultural ambassador.

Western Visionary Award

The Western Visionary Award is a rare honor bestowed on an individual that has made significant contributions and had a national impact on preserving Western heritage and Western ideals. The award has only been presented three times – to Mr. Phillip Anschutz, Mr. Foster Friess and Mr. Pete Coors.

Rex Tillerson

Rex W. Tillerson served as the nation's 69th U.S. secretary of state and spent more than four decades in the energy industry, retiring as chairman and CEO of Exxon Mobil Corp. in 2016. A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in civil engineering, Tillerson rose through leadership roles across domestic and international assignments.

Deeply rooted in Western values of service and leadership, Tillerson has maintained a lifelong commitment to Scouting America, earning the rank of Eagle Scout and later receiving the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award, Silver Beaver and Silver Buffalo honors. He currently serves on the boards of the National Medal of Honor Museum and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, reflecting his ongoing dedication to civic leadership and national heritage.

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About the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is America's premier institution of Western history, art and culture. Founded in 1955, the Museum collects, preserves and exhibits an internationally renowned collection of Western art and artifacts while sponsoring dynamic educational programs to stimulate interest in the enduring legacy of the American West. For more information, visit nationalcowboymuseum.org.