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## **65th Annual Western Heritage Awards Announces Emcee and Event Lineup**

**OKLAHOMA CITY, March 18, 2026** – The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is pleased to announce that Rex Linn, who has appeared in more than 50 feature films and 45 television shows, will once again emcee the Western Heritage Awards ceremony on Saturday, April 11, 2026.

Beyond his on-screen achievements, Texas-born, Oklahoma-raised actor Linn is a passionate advocate for preserving and celebrating Western culture. He has proven to be a delightful addition to the premier event honoring individuals who have made remarkable contributions to Western heritage through their creative endeavors in literature, music, television and film.

“It’s an absolute pleasure to welcome Rex back to The Cowboy,” said National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum Chief Marketing Officer Seth Spillman. “He has a very special connection to Oklahoma, the Museum, and, most importantly, the West, which makes him the perfect choice again for this year’s awards.”

The Western Heritage Awards also 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), the Special Directors’ Award and the Western Visionary Award.

As announced previously, acclaimed actor Ed Harris will be inducted into the Hall of Great Western Performers, as will Country Music Hall of Famer Kenny Rogers, who is being inducted posthumously.

Country Music Hall of Famer Toby Keith will posthumously receive the Special Directors’ Award, a rare honor bestowed at the discretion of the Museum’s Board of Directors, awarded to recipients who embody a profound commitment to preserving, interpreting and elevating the spirit of the American West.

Art Nicholas and Luster Bayless will be inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners. Richard Oliver will receive The Chester A. Reynolds Award, and Rex Tillerson will receive the Western Visionary Award.

Presenters scheduled to appear at the awards include Barry Corbin, veteran film and television actor known for “Northern Exposure,” “Yellowstone” and many Westerns; Bruce Boxleitner, film and television actor known for “Tron” and “Babylon 5”; Patrick Wayne, film actor and son of Western icon John Wayne; Red Steagall, cowboy singer, poet and longtime Western heritage ambassador; and Mo Brings Plenty, Native American actor and cultural consultant on “Yellowstone.”

In addition to the Saturday night awards ceremony, the Museum will host several events over the weekend tied to the Western Heritage Awards.

### ***Evening Events***

#### **Western Heritage Awards Ceremony and dinner**

Saturday, April 11, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

- \$250 General Admission
- Tickets can be purchased here: [Western Heritage Awards Ceremony](#)

#### **Western Heritage Awards Kickoff Party with complimentary cocktails and live entertainment**

Friday, April 10, 5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

- \$70 Museum Members, \$85 General Admission
- Tickets can be purchased here: [Western Heritage Awards Kickoff Party](#)

### ***Additional Programs***

**Western Heritage Awards Workshop, "Voices of the West: Exploring Cowboy Poetry."** Join Western Heritage Award honorees Anna Citrino and Nancy Bo Flood in a lively conversation about the tradition of cowboy poetry and the enduring stories of the American West. Anna Citrino is author of the award-winning “Stories We Didn’t Tell.” Nancy Bo Flood is author of the award-winning “Badger Clark: Poetry Wrangler.”

- Friday, April 10, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Free with Museum Admission

## **Q&A with Ed Harris, moderated by Rex Linn**

- Saturday, April 11, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Free with Museum Admission

For more information, visit [nationalcowboymuseum.org/western-heritage-awards](https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/western-heritage-awards).

### ***About Rex Linn***

Rex Linn was born and raised in Spearman, Texas, and moved to Oklahoma City at age 12. A graduate of Oklahoma State University with a bachelor's degree in radio, television and film, he didn't arrive in Los Angeles until age 34 — after careers in banking, the oil industry and as a hunting guide. His unconventional road to Hollywood informs the grounded authenticity and lived-in authority he brings to every role.

Once in Los Angeles, Linn steadily built a substantial career as one of the industry's most reliable and respected character actors. His feature credits include “Cliffhanger,” “Tin Cup,” “Wyatt Earp,” “Rush Hour,” “Django Unchained,” “Clear and Present Danger” and “Appaloosa,” working alongside Kevin Costner, Harrison Ford, Jackie Chan, Jamie Foxx, John Lithgow, Ed Harris, Kurt Russell, Rhea Seehorn and Benicio Del Toro, among many others.

On television, Linn is best known for his 10-season run as Sgt. Frank Tripp on the CBS series “CSI: Miami.” Equally adept in drama and comedy, he went on to portray Mesa Verde CEO Kevin Wachtell on “Better Call Saul” and Principal Tom Peterson on “Young Sheldon.” He currently stars opposite his real-life partner, Reba McEntire, in NBC's “Happy's Place.”

With close to four decades of consistent work across film and television, Linn brings gravitas, credibility and a craftsman's discipline to every project — the kind of actor whose presence instantly grounds a scene and elevates the ensemble around him.

### ***Western Heritage Awards Creative Achievement Winners***

#### **FILM & TELEVISION HONOREES**

##### **Western Lifestyle Program**

“Break-a-Wave: A Cal Poly Rodeo Documentary,” produced by MakeLine Productions

##### **Theatrical Motion Picture**

“Broke,” starring Wyatt Russell, written and directed by Carlyle Eubank

##### **Documentary**

“The Return of the Sacred Red Rock,” directed by Jeremy Charles, produced by Benjamin Arrendondo

##### **Fictional Drama**

“T’áá Álts’íísigo (Just A Small Piece),” from “Dark Winds,” directed by Steven Paul Judd, executive produced by John Wirth.

### **Docudrama**

“Elkhorn: A Fine Welcome,” directed by Michael Ojeda, produced by Morningstar Entertainment

## **LITERATURE HONOREES**

### **Nonfiction Book**

“The Undiscovered Country: Triumph, Tragedy, and the Shaping of the American West,” by Paul Hutton, published by Penguin Random House

### **Poetry Book**

“Stories We Didn't Tell,” by Anna Citrino, published by Shanti Arts

### **Juvenile Book**

“Badger Clark: Poetry Wrangler,” by Nancy Bo Flood, published by South Dakota Historical Society Press

### **Magazine Article**

“Boley Rides Again: Can the Rodeo Save a Historic Black Town?” by Caleb Gayle, published by The Atlantic

### **Western Novel**

“Narrow the Road,” by James Wade, published by Blackstone Publishing

## **MUSIC HONOREES**

### **Original Western Composition**

“Burnin’ Vein,” recording artist Michael Martin Murphey, composed by Karla K. Morton, Alian Brikelbach and Michael Martin Murphey.

### **Traditional Western Album**

“The West That Money Couldn't Buy,” recording artist Brenn Hill

## ***Western Heritage Awards Inductees and Honorees***

### **Hall of Great Western Performers**

Ed Harris

Kenny Rogers

### **Hall of Great Westerners**

Arthur Nicholas  
Luster Bayless

**Chester A. Reynolds Award**  
Richard Oliver

**Special Directors' Award**  
Toby Keith

**Western Visionary Award**  
Rex Tillerson

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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](http://nationalcowboymuseum.org).