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# WHO THE NSI DER

# S PICKED

*Our list began by sending ballots to hundreds of experts. Here's a sample of what we got back.*

April 27, 2026

*Tap to jump to a ballot:*

**Aimee Mann · Berry Gordy · Billy Bragg · Bonnie Raitt · Corin Tucker · David Byrne · Desmond Child · Darryl 'DMC' McDaniels · Dua Lipa · Easy A.D. · Finneas · George Clinton · Iggy Pop · Jeff Parker · Jeff Tweedy · Jermaine Dupri · John Jeremiah Sullivan · Justin Peck · Justin Tranter · Justin Vernon · Lin-Manuel Miranda · Lori McKenna · Mariah Carey · Marty Stuart · Matt Berninger · Meshell Ndegeocello · Michael Uzowuru · Miranda Lambert · Natalie Merchant · Phil Elverum · Phonte Coleman · Richard Russell · Rickie Lee Jones · Stephin Merritt · David 'Styles P' Styles · 'Weird Al' Yankovic ·**

Brian Wilson and D'Angelo — are indicated with an asterisk.)

## **AIMEE MANN**

*Singer-songwriter*

Michael Penn, Ted Leo, Phoebe Bridgers, Liz Phair, Jimmy  
Webb, Jason Isbell

## **BERRY GORDY**

*Founder of the Motown Record Label*

Smokey Robinson, Brian & Eddie Holland, Stevie Wonder,  
Lionel Richie, Valerie Simpson, Kenny Gamble & Leon Huff,  
Mike Stoller, Bob Dylan, Carole King, Diane Warren, Jimmy  
Webb, L.A. Reid & Babyface, Dolly Parton

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**BACK TO MENU**



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**Their Instruments • Quiz**

## **BILLY BRAGG**

*Singer-songwriter*

Jackson Browne, Neko Case, Rosanne Cash, Tracy Chapman, Ry Cooder, Bob Dylan, Steve Earle, Joe Henry, Brian & Eddie Holland, Carole King, Willie Nelson, Joanna Newsom, Dolly Parton, Dan Penn, Jonathan Richman, Smokey Robinson, Paul Simon, Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, James Taylor, Taylor Swift, Justin Vernon, Jimmy Webb, Tom Waits

## **BONNIE RAITT**

*Singer-songwriter*

Randy Newman, Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, Jackson Browne, Valerie Simpson, Lucinda Williams, Brandi Carlile, Madeleine Peyroux, Rosanne Cash, James Taylor, Dolly Parton, Bruce Hornsby, Beyoncé, Joe Henry, David Byrne,

Michael McDonald, Sheryl Crow, Don Henley

## **CORIN TUCKER**

*Sleater-Kinney*

Dolly Parton, Patti Smith, Kathleen Hanna, Black Belt Eagle Scout, Brittany Howard, Lucinda Williams, Kendrick Lamar, Sharon Van Etten, Frank Ocean, Stevie Wonder, Lauryn Hill, Chrissie Hynde, Missy Elliott, Gillian Welch, Jean Grae, Stevie Nicks, Adrianne Lenker, Sufjan Stevens, Fiona Apple, Tyler the Creator, Mitski, Michael Trotter Jr. & Tanya Trotter (the War and Treaty)

## **DAVID BYRNE**

*Talking Heads*

Randy Newman, Lucinda Williams, David Porter, Paul Simon, Gamble & Huff, Brian & Eddie Holland, Stevie Wonder, Olivia Rodrigo

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## **DESMOND CHILD**

*Songwriter and producer*

Carole King, Diane Warren, Antonina Armato, Dolly Parton,  
Joan Jett, Cyndi Lauper, Stevie Nicks, Mariah Carey,  
Madonna, Lady Gaga, Stephen Schwartz, Jimmy Webb,  
Stevie Wonder, Paul Stanley, Draco Rosa, Alan Bergman\*,  
Adam Guettel, Billie Eilish & Finneas, Billy Steinberg\* &  
Tom Kelly, Steven Tyler & Joe Perry, Jon Bon Jovi & Richie  
Sambora, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Benj Pasek & Justin  
Paul

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Songwriters playlist:*

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**DARRYL 'DMC' MCDANIELS**

*Run-DMC*

Beck, Billy Joel, Bob Dylan, Bonnie Raitt, Brian Wilson\*,  
Bruce Springsteen, Carole King, Chuck D, Iggy Pop, Joan  
Osborne, John Fogerty, Lauryn Hill, Linda Perry, Patti Smith,  
Paul Simon, Slick Rick, Stevie Wonder, Tom Waits

**DUALIPA**

*Singer and songwriter*

Patti Smith

**EASY A.D.***Cold Crush Brothers*

Stevie Wonder, Babyface, Lionel Richie, Bruce Springsteen,  
Willie Nelson, Smokey Robinson, Dolly Parton, Paul Simon,  
Daryl Hall & John Oates, Neil Diamond, Carole King, Taylor  
Swift, John Legend, Steven Tyler, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Missy  
Elliott, DMC (Run-DMC), Garth Brooks, Jimmy Jam & Terry  
Lewis

**FINNEAS***Singer-songwriter, producer*

Ben Folds, Phoebe Bridgers, Jack White, Pharrell Williams,  
Carole King

**GEORGE CLINTON***Parliament/Funkadelic*

Sly Stone\*, Smokey Robinson, Brian & Eddie Holland, Carole  
King, Muni Long, Babyface, R. Kelly, Valerie Simpson,

Eminem, Stevie Wonder, Bob Dylan, Pharrell Williams,  
Garth Brooks, Teddy Riley, Willie Nelson, Rakim, Kendrick  
Lamar

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**IGGY POP**  
*The Stooges*

Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, John Fogerty,  
Carole King, Jackson Browne, Anton Newcombe, Aimee  
Mann, Angel Bat Dawid, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Axl Rose,  
Slash, Corey Taylor, Run-DMC, Eric B & Rakim, Afrika  
Bambaataa\*, Sly Stone\*, James Hetfield, Billie Joe Armstrong,  
War, Dolly Parton, Phoebe Bridgers, Patti Smith

## **JEFF PARKER**

*Solo artist, Tortoise*

Jimmy Webb, Stevie Wonder, Frank Ocean, GZA (Gary Grice), Ronald Isley (the Isley Brothers), Randy Newman, Kendrick Lamar, Michael McDonald, Kenny Loggins, Bill Callahan (Smog), Jay-Z, Erykah Badu, Alicia Keys, Dolly Parton, Solange Knowles, Raphael Saadiq, Carole King, Iggy Pop, Bobbie Gentry, Donald Fagen, George Clinton, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel

## **JEFF TWEEDY**

*Wilco*

Bob Dylan, Kendrick Lamar, Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sly Stone\*, Carole King, Randy Newman, Bill Callahan, Adrianne Lenker, Paul Simon, Lana Del Rey, Billie Eilish & Finneas, John Fogerty, Smokey Robinson, Missy Elliott, Jeff Tweedy

## **JERMAINE DUPRI**

*Producer, Songwriter, Founder of So So Def Recordings*

Babyface, Diane Warren, R. Kelly, Jermaine Dupri, Mariah  
Carey, Missy Elliott

## **JOHN JEREMIAH SULLIVAN**

*Author*

Joanna Newsom, Brian Wilson\*, Al Green, Lucinda Williams,  
Liz Phair, Bob Dylan, Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, Jimmy Webb,  
Stevie Wonder, Laura Veirs, Tracy Chapman, Q-Tip, Paul  
Simon, Randy Newman, Gillian Welch, André 3000, Jeff  
Tweedy, David Byrne, Bruce Springsteen, Carole King,  
R.E.M. (Berry/Buck/Mills/Stipe), Tom Waits, Jonathan  
Richman, Mariee Siou

## **JUSTIN PECK**

*Choreographer*

Sufjan Stevens, Fiona Apple, Dave Malloy, Billy Joel,  
Chappell Roan, Elvis Perkins, John Darnielle (the Mountain  
Goats), Conor Oberst, Beck, Vixtrot, Chance the Rapper,  
Jack White, Bob Dylan

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**JUSTIN TRANTER***Songwriter*

Taylor Swift, Ethel Cain, Patty Griffin, Patty Larkin, Tori  
Amos, Sheryl Crow, Julia Michaels, Ester Dean, Courtney  
Love, Diane Warren, SZA, Diana Gordon, Justin Tranter, Ani  
DiFranco

**JUSTIN VERNON***Bon Iver*

Gillian Welch, David Rawlings, Q-Tip, D'Angelo\*, Amy Ray &  
Emily Saliers, Dijon, Mk.gee, Christian Lee Hutson, Anaïs  
Mitchell, Taylor Swift, Tom Waits, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis,

Joe Walsh, Willie Nelson, Billy Joel, Jackson Browne, Bob Dylan, Danielle Haim, Erykah Badu, MC Taylor (Hiss Golden Messenger), Paul Westerberg, Larry Goldings, Charley Crockett

## **LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA**

*Composer, librettist*

John Kander, Nas, Dolly Parton

## **LORI MCKENNA**

*Singer-songwriter*

Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Bruce Springsteen, Jason Isbell, Carole King, James Taylor, Jackson Browne, Mary Gauthier, Sheryl Crow, Brandy Clark, Liz Rose, Hillary Lindsey, Kacey Musgraves, Taylor Swift, Greg Brown, Paul Simon, Stevie Nicks, Jimmy Webb, Lucinda Williams, Randy Newman, Conor Oberst, Phoebe Bridgers, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings

## **MARIAH CAREY**

*Singer-songwriter*

Stevie Wonder, Carole King, Billy Joel, Smokey Robinson, Sly  
Stone\*, Stevie Nicks, Al Green

**MARTY STUART**

*Singer-songwriter*

Bob Dylan, Jimmy Webb, Willie Nelson, Paul Simon, Carole  
King

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**MATT BERNINGER***The National*

Tom Waits, Kendrick Lamar, Stephen Malkmus, Billie Eilish,  
Patti Smith, Eric Bachmann, Kim Deal, Phoebe Bridgers,  
Bruce Springsteen, Michael Stipe, Adrianne Lenker, Iggy  
Pop, Sufjan Stevens, Willie Nelson, Taylor Swift

**MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO***Singer-songwriter*

Benji Hughes, Chocolate Genius, Tom Waits, Bill Callahan,  
Lana Del Rey, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Emily King, Joan as  
Police Woman, Luke Temple

## **MICHAEL UZOWURU**

*Producer, songwriter*

SZA, Frank Ocean, Kara Jackson, Kendrick Lamar, Future,  
Sheryl Crow, André 3000, Dolly Parton, Lil Wayne, Alex G,  
Lauryn Hill

## **MIRANDA LAMBERT**

*Singer-songwriter*

Chris Stapleton, Aaron Raitiere, Natalie Hemby, Carole King,  
John Fogerty, Willie Nelson

## **NATALIE MERCHANT**

*Singer-songwriter, 10,000 Maniacs*

Stevie Wonder, Al Green, Sly Stone\*, Smokey Robinson, Bob  
Dylan, Paul Simon, Carole King, Brian Wilson\*, Neil  
Diamond, Bruce Springsteen, Carly Simon, Jimmy Webb,  
James Taylor, Tom Waits, Willis Alan Ramsey, Ray  
LaMontagne, Sam Beam (Iron & Wine), Beck, Lin-Manuel

Miranda, Tracy Chapman, Lucinda Williams, Neko Case,  
Anais Mitchell, Brandi Carlile, Regina Spektor, Sufjan  
Stevens, David Byrne, Jeff Tweedy, Gillian Welch, Chan  
Marshall (Cat Power), Josh Ritter, Alynda Segarra (Hurray for  
the Riff Raff), Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, Jimmie Dale Gilmore,  
Bob Telson, Conor Oberst, Andrew Bird

## **PHIL ELVERUM**

*Microphones, Mount Eerie*

Katy Davidson (Dear Nora), Will Oldham (Bonnie "Prince"  
Billy), Adrienne Lenker (Big Thief), Adrian Orange  
(Thanksgiving), Emily A. Sprague (Florist), Bob Dylan

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## **PHONTE COLEMAN**

*Little Brother, The Foreign Exchange*

Babyface, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, the Neptunes (Pharrell  
Williams and Chad Hugo), Stevie Wonder, George Clinton,  
Carole King, Smokey Robinson, Brenda Russell, Raphael  
Saadiq, Bob Dylan, Missy Elliott, James Taylor, Lionel Richie,  
LL Cool J, Ice Cube, Valerie Simpson, Billy Joel, Gamble &  
Huff, Brian & Eddie Holland, Leon Sylvers III, Donald

Fagen, Kendrick Lamar, Diane Warren, Twinkie Clark,  
Bruno Mars

## **RICHARD RUSSELL**

*Owner, XL Recordings*

Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Brian & Eddie Holland, Bill Callahan, Jay-Z, Kendrick Lamar, André 3000, Kanye West, Ezra Koenig, Frank Ocean, Tyler the Creator, Sufjan Stevens, Smokey Robinson, Valerie Simpson, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, Brian Wilson\*, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, Tom Waits, Jack White, Lauryn Hill, Jay Electronica

## **RICKIE LEE JONES**

*Singer-songwriter*

Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Rickie Lee Jones, Paul Simon, Randy Newman, Tom Waits, Taj Mahal, Carole King, Neil Diamond, Dolly Parton, Sly Stone\*, Justin Vernon, Stephen Stills, Jimmy Webb, Donald Fagen, Stevie Wonder, James Taylor, Cyndi Lauper, Tracy Chapman, Felix Cavaliere, Willie Nelson, Valerie Simpson

## **STEPHIN MERRITT**

*Magnetic Fields*

Tom Lehrer\*, Bob Dylan, Randy Newman, Dolly Parton, Tom  
Waits, David Byrne

## **DAVID 'STYLES P' STYLES**

*The Lox*

Mary J. Blige, Brittany Howard, Usher, H.E.R., Alicia Keys,  
Frank Ocean, Caleb Followill, John Mayer, SZA, Chris  
Brown, Madonna, Stevie Nicks, Anita Baker, Faith Evans,  
Maxwell, Miguel, Justin Timberlake, John Legend, Jagged  
Edge, Mariah Carey

## **'WEIRD AL' YANKOVIC**

*Musician, parodist*

Tom Lehrer\*, Randy Newman, Paul Simon, Brian Wilson\*,  
David Byrne, Ron Mael

### **CAST YOUR VOTE**

**Who do you think are the greatest  
living American songwriters?  
Nominate up to 10 names here.**

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