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Singer LEE Mi Ja Became the First Pop Musician to Receive the Highest Order of Cultural Merit

**- The “2023 Korea Popular Culture and Arts Awards” ceremony held on Oct 21,
with livestreaming**

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (Minister YU In Chon, MCST), in partnership with the Korea Creative Content Agency (CEO JO Hyun Rae, KOCCA) hosted the “2023 Korea Popular Culture and Arts Awards”—the highest government accolade in the popular culture and arts sector—on October 21 (Sat) at the Haeoreum Grand Theater of the National Theater of Korea. The ceremony included celebratory performances and was livestreamed through KOCCA and the “THE K-POP” YouTube channel.

The “Korea Popular Culture and Arts Awards” was founded to elevate social status and foster creative aspirations among artists while also honoring those who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the popular culture and arts industry. This year marks the 14th awards ceremony since its inception in 2010.

This year, the selection of nominees followed a process that combined public nominations and expert recommendations. The nominees were subject to comprehensive evaluations, accounting for their career trajectory, accomplishments on both domestic and international levels, contributions to the respective industries and the society. A total of 31 individuals or teams were recognized, with six recipients of the Order of Cultural Merit, seven for the Presidential Commendation, eight for the Prime Minister’s Commendation, and 10 for the MCST Minister’s Commendation.

*Singer LEE Mi Ja Became the First Korean Pop Musician to Receive the 1st Class Order of
Cultural Merit*

Singer LEE Mi Ja has been acknowledged for her significant contributions to the development of Korean popular culture and arts, making her the first musician to be honored with the highest Class (Geumgwan) Order of Cultural Merit. The Order of Cultural Merit is conferred upon individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of culture and arts, and “Geumgwan” represents the highest rank within this order.

The 2nd Class (Eungwan) Order of Cultural Merit was awarded to voice actor LEE Geun Wook, renowned for his versatile voice acting roles in films, animations, and foreign TV series since 1970, and actress JUNG Hye Sun, acclaimed for her captivating performances since her debut in 1961.

The 3rd Class (Bogwan) Order of Cultural Merit was awarded to three distinguished individuals: singer KIM Soo Chul, known for his numerous popular songs, including “Unbloomed Flower” and “Young You,” and for pioneering the fusion of gugak and rock since his debut in 1979; screenwriter LEE Hwan Kyung, celebrated for his contributions to highly popular historical dramas, such as “Rustic Period,” “Emperor Wang Gun,” and “Tears of the Dragon”; and the representative lyricist YANG In Ja, renowned for composing over 3,000 songs with poetic lyrics alongside top singers of the era, including “Leopard of Mt. Kilimanjaro” and “Labyrinth of Love.”

*Recognition for Singers, Actors/Actresses, Comedians, Voice Actors/Actresses, Choreographers, etc.,
for their Contributions across Various Fields of Popular Culture and Arts*

The seven Presidential Commendations were awarded to actor HWANG Jung Min, comedians CHOI Yang Rak and SHIN Dong Yeop, director YOO In Sik, writer JUNG Seo Kyung, musician (band) CHOI Yi Chul, and the band Crying Nut.

The eight recipients of the Prime Minister’s Commendation are actor NAMGOONG Min, actress PARK Eun Bin, K-pop bands 10CM and Stray Kids, comedian KIM Tae Kyun, voice actor JANG Kwang, sound director KO Hyun Jung, and art director KIM Bo Ram.

Finally, the ten MCST Minister’s Commendations were awarded to actor YIM Si Wan; actress JOO Hyun Young; comedian HWANG Je Seong; K-pop bands IVE, THE BOYZ, MeloMance, and NewJeans; singer LEE Chan Won; musician 250 (LEE Ho Hyeong); and choreographer Monica.

Further information about the awards ceremony can be found on the Facebook and Instagram pages of the Korea Popular Culture and Arts Awards.

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