



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Guitar Center Honors PRS Guitars Founder Paul Reed Smith with Rockwalk Induction During Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival 2026

Legendary guitar builder and innovator joins more than 150 artists and industry pioneers recognized by Guitar Center's famed Rockwalk for their lasting contributions to music

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif., Sept. 27, 2026 — Guitar Center honored Paul Reed Smith, founder and managing general partner of PRS Guitars, with an induction into the famed Guitar Center Rockwalk on Saturday, September 26, during Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival 2026 in Austin, Texas. The honor recognizes Smith's five decades of craftsmanship and innovation as a guitar maker, from his early work building instruments for artists including Carlos Santana and Peter Dinklage to founding PRS Guitars in 1985 and building it into one of the world's leading guitar manufacturers.

Founded in 1985, PRS Guitars has grown from Smith's one-man pursuit into the third-largest electric guitar manufacturer in the United States, establishing a modern guitar company with its own unmistakable identity, design philosophy and following. Along the way, PRS instruments have become part of the musical identities of influential players across generations and genres, including **Carlos Santana, John Mayer** and **Mark Tremonti**. Smith remains actively involved in designing and developing instruments today, continuing to experiment and challenge assumptions about what a guitar can be.

Smith's journey embodies what Guitar Center's Rockwalk was created to celebrate: musicians, innovators and industry pioneers whose talent, ingenuity and contributions have changed the trajectory of music and made a lasting impact on music culture.

"Paul is obsessive about building the perfect guitar—and I mean that as the highest compliment. He has spent his life questioning every assumption about how a guitar should sound, feel and perform, and then doing the hard work to make it better. That obsession has materially moved the electric guitar forward and raised the bar for the entire industry," said Gabe Dalporto, CEO of Guitar Center. "Paul is a living legend whose influence spans generations of musicians and instrument makers, and we're proud to honor him with a place in Guitar Center's Rockwalk."

The induction took place at the Dell West Plaza on the Rockwalk Stage during Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival 2026, beginning with a live performance by Isaac Holmes. Guitar Center CEO Gabe Dalporto opened the ceremony before John Mayer introduced Smith for his induction. Smith then addressed the audience and commemorated the honor by placing his hands in cement as part of Guitar Center's traditional Rockwalk ceremony. Smith's handprints



will travel back to Hollywood, where they will be permanently installed in Guitar Center's Rockwalk outside its flagship store on Sunset Boulevard.

Holding the induction during Crossroads celebrated the full ecosystem of guitar culture, bringing together builders, players and fans around a shared appreciation for the guitar and the people shaping its future. Smith's career has been deeply connected to working musicians, from Carlos Santana's early support of PRS to his longstanding collaboration with John Mayer and other influential players. Mayer's role in the induction reflected that relationship and Smith's approach to guitar making: listening closely to musicians and working with them to rethink what an instrument can be.

"This is a truly special day. I am thankful to Gabe and the entire team at Guitar Center for presenting this. The Rockwalk is an iconic part of our industry, and to be part of that history is an honor," said Paul Reed Smith. "There are many hands that have been involved in the journey. I'd like to thank everyone at PRS Guitars, past and present, along with the extraordinary musicians that continue to inspire and drive us every day. To have our longtime collaborator John (Mayer) give such a moving speech just made it all the more exceptional."

Smith's induction continues Rockwalk's tradition of honoring not only performers, but pioneering builders and innovators including Les Paul, Jim Marshall and Robert Moog, whose innovations gave musicians new ways to create, alongside legendary artists such as Eric Clapton, John Lennon, Stevie Wonder, Aerosmith, Jimi Hendrix and Johnny Cash.

Founded in 1985, Guitar Center's Rockwalk is dedicated to honoring the musicians and industry pioneers whose exceptional talent, innovation and creative ingenuity have shaped the evolution of music. Located at Guitar Center's flagship Hollywood store, Rockwalk has recognized more than 150 legendary artists and innovators.

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Media Assets

Event Photos:

High-resolution photos: [HERE](#)

Video Content:

Sizzle reel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnP-W2zCA_o

About Guitar Center:

Guitar Center is the leading retailer of musical instruments, lessons, repairs and rentals in the U.S. With more than 300 stores nationwide and one of the top direct sales websites in the industry, Guitar Center has helped people make music for more than 60 years. Guitar Center provides a range of musician-based services, including Guitar Center Lessons for players of all ages and skill levels, GC Repairs, an on-site maintenance and repair service, and GC Rentals, offering easy access to instruments and gear. Guitar Center's family of brands includes Music &



Arts, which operates more than 250 stores specializing in band and orchestral instruments for sale and rental, serving teachers, band directors, college professors, parents and students, and Musician's Friend, a leading direct marketer of musical instruments in the United States. Guitar Center Business Solutions is the company's commercial division, delivering professional audio, video, lighting and integrated technology solutions for businesses, institutions and creators nationwide through a portfolio of brands including AVDG (Audio Visual Design Group), GC Pro and Custom House at Guitar Center. The Guitar Center Music Foundation is a national nonprofit that expands access to music through instrument donations and support for communities in need.

About PRS Guitars:

PRS Guitars is a leading manufacturer of high-quality instruments in Stevensville, Maryland and has provided some of the world's most renowned musicians with instruments since 1985. The PRS team of highly skilled craftspeople design and build a wide variety of musical instruments and gear for worldwide distribution, including electric and acoustic guitars as well as boutique-style guitar amplifiers and effects pedals. The PRS SE Series complements the Maryland-made PRS line by offering highly approachable and more affordable electric and acoustic guitars. David Grissom, Jimmy Herring, Mark Holcomb, Myles Kennedy, Mark Lettieri, John Mayer, Orianthi, Carlos Santana, Ed Sheeran, Rhonda Smith, Mark Tremonti and Keith Urban are among the artists currently playing PRS instruments and/or amplifiers.

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