

“Will Kimbrough” has been a familiar name here in Mobile for the last 30 years, but the name is now just as familiar in the Nashville music world. He traces the beginning of his rich and varied career back to his twelfth birthday, in 1976. That year his parents bought him a \$20 electric guitar and amp and a ticket to see Bruce Springsteen’s “Born To Run” tour at the Saenger Theater.

While music has been his primary focus, he participated in many activities while at Murphy. Will ran indoor and cross country track, wrote a column for the Hi-Times, was a member of the Four Arts and German Clubs, a member and officer in the Key club, and participated in the Olympics of the Mind, Panther Spirit Night, and the Interclub fundraiser. Will was also elected junior class favorite.

Will’s professional career began with the formation of local cover band Ground Zero. They quickly added some original tunes to the line-up and were the opening act for REM at the Saenger Theatre. A few years later, Will and the Bushmen emerged on the college circuit and the group was signed to a contract with SBK records and moved to Nashville. They recorded several albums for that label, had a video on MTV, and songs played on various TV shows, but big-time success eluded the band and it dissolved. Will remained in Nashville and joined on with several groups, including one fronted by Todd Snider, who would serve as a connection between Will and another well-known musician with local ties: Jimmy Buffett. Buffett would later contact Will and ask him to collaborate with him on his album License to Chill; he also included Will in his band for the live concert from Gulf Shores following the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Currently, Will has been touring with country music star Emmy Lou Harris as part of her back-up band, the Red Dirt Boys; and also playing shows with Willie Sugar Capps, an Americana music powerhouse group formed at a performance at local venue The Frog Pond; and with his long-time collaborator Tommy Womack with whom he performs as Daddy. In addition to all this, he has also recorded 6 solo albums and a recent collaboration called Mockingbird Soul

Will’s talents have been recognized multiple times by the Americana Music Association. In 2004, Will was named Instrumentalist of the Year, and he was nominated for that award again in 2010 and 2011. In 2013, the album Willie Sugar Capps was named the Best Americana Album, and in 2017 the song “Paradise Right Here” was the #1 song added on Americana Radio.

An often itinerant musician has limited opportunities in his schedule to contribute to his community but Will has given what time he has to his daughters’ PTO, fundraising performances for multiple causes such as schools and medical benefits for fellows artists, Leadership Music and Songwriting with Soldiers, which pairs veterans and active duty service members with professional songwriters to craft songs about their military experiences. With a focus on collaboration and building trust, this innovative program offers a unique path to helping soldiers, their families, communities and our nation cope with the aftermath of combat duty and the challenges in returning home.

Will’s contributions make Murphy proud to call him our own and we are pleased to induct him into our MAA Hall of Fame.