Recipients of Inaugural Stephen Hawking Awards Unveiled

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GUIA DE ISORA, Spain – English theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking on Thursday unveiled the winners of the inaugural Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication in the categories of science, the arts and cinema.

Physicist and broadcaster Jim Al-Khalili, who has been involved in BBC documentaries such as “The Secrets of Quantum Physics,” won the science prize; “Particle Fever,” which tells of the search for the Higgs Boston and was directed by filmmaker Mark Levinson, took the film award; and composer Hans Zimmer, who was behind the score for the hit science fiction film “Interstellar,” won in the arts category.

The winners were chosen by the author of “A Brief History of Time” and will receive their honors on June 29 during the Starmus Festival in Tenerife, the largest of Spain’s Canary Islands.

The festival will run from June 27 to July 2 and pay tribute this year to Hawking, known worldwide for his astrophysics theories and for his decades-old struggle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

When Hawking – at an event in London last December – unveiled these awards, which honor individuals or feats that have communicated science to a broader audience, he said music and science were essential to him in coping with his health struggles.

Made in Russia, one side of the medal features a portrait of Hawking by retired cosmonaut Alexey Leonov, who in 1965 became the first man to walk in space.

The other side features an image of Leonov’s accomplishment during the U.S.-Soviet space race and of astrophysicist and Queen band member Brian May’s “Red Special” guitar.

Hawking said he had been invited to personally select the winners in the inaugural edition of the prize, adding that all have made outstanding contributions in promoting science across different media.