

# NASA Mars rovers win Popular Mechanics 'Breakthrough' award

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Artist concept of Mars Exploration Rover. Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

(PhysOrg.com) -- More than seven years after completing their three-month prime missions on opposite sides of Mars, NASA rovers Spirit and Opportunity have been selected for lifetime achievement award honors as part of the Breakthrough Awards presented by Popular Mechanics magazine.

The magazine today announced recipients of awards to be presented Oct. 10 in New York.

The announcement cites the [Mars](#) rovers' engineers, as well as the robots themselves, "for overcoming great challenges in their dogged pursuit of new discoveries on the Red Planet."

Both rovers continued for years of bonus, extended missions after completing their prime missions in 2004. Both made important discoveries about wet environments on [ancient Mars](#) that may have been favorable for supporting microbial life. Spirit, which drove 4.8 miles (7.7 kilometers), ceased communications in 2010. Opportunity is still active, has driven more than 20.8 miles (33.5 kilometers), and is currently examining the rim of 14-mile-diameter (22-kilometer-diameter) Endeavour crater.

The Breakthrough Mechanical Lifetime Achievement Award from Popular Mechanics names [Mars Exploration Rover](#) mission leaders Steven Squyres, principal investigator from Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.; John Callas, current project manager at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif.; and Peter Theisinger and Richard Cook, former project managers at JPL. The award states that the rovers and their team "turned a 90-day mission into one of space exploration's longest-lasting adventures, making stunning discoveries about the Red Planet along the way."

Provided by JPL/NASA

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