



KENNY G - HEART AND SOUL BIO

In a recording career that spans almost three decades and 23 albums, Grammy Award-winning saxophonist Kenny G has grafted elements of R&B, pop and Latin to a jazz foundation solidifying his reputation as the premiere artist in contemporary jazz. Since the early '80s, his combination of unparalleled instrumental chops and indelible melodies has resulted in sales of more than 75 million records worldwide (45 million in the U.S. alone) and more than a dozen climbs to the top of Billboard's contemporary jazz chart.

Given these and other commercial and critical achievements, one might think Kenny is an artist with nothing to prove but he once again reaffirms his enduring place in popular music with the June 29, 2010, release of *Heart and Soul* on Concord Records.

Following up on the success of *Rhythm and Romance*, his first Latin jazz album and his Concord debut in 2008, *Heart and Soul* captures the spirit and the vibe of the classic R&B that Kenny grew up listening to in his native Seattle. "If I were to go back and start all over again, recording my first CD, I think this would be it," he says. "It's true to my roots, it has soul, and it has the kind of R&B that influenced me in the first place. Making this record was a heartfelt experience. It took a year and a half to finish, because we paid a lot of attention to every song, every melody, every note."

Kenny's longtime songwriting partner and producer, Walter Afanasieff, once again serves as a creative foil in the making of this record. In addition, guest vocalists Robin Thicke and Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds each take a turn at the mic. "I really tried to play without any restraints when we were recording, so I just let things take their natural course in the studio," says Kenny. "This album is a snapshot of Walter and me in the laboratory – tweaking things here and there, using the synthesizers and the samples, coming up with something that was truly *our* sound. We tried to look at the project as an absolutely blank canvas, and just write whatever we felt like writing and see where it would take us."

In many respects, where it took him was back to the beginning – the R&B of the early and mid 1970s that Kenny soaked up during his teen years at an inner-city Seattle high school where he mixed with a culturally diverse student body at a young age. Inspired by the likes of Earth, Wind & Fire and Grover Washington, Jr., he was only 17 when he landed a gig with Barry White and his Love Unlimited Orchestra at the Paramount Northwest Theater (now the Paramount Theater) in 1973.

After high school, the gigs with R&B and contemporary jazz artists like White and Jeff Lorber kept coming. In 1982, he landed a record deal with Arista and launched a solo career with three critically acclaimed jazz albums – *Kenny G* (1982), *G-Force* (1983) and *Gravity* (1985). By the '90s, he was a multi-platinum seller and a frequent collaborator with some of the most iconic figures in American popular music, including Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, Natalie Cole and Frank Sinatra.

His subsequent studio albums, *Silhouette* (1988) and *Breathless* (1992), were hugely successful, the latter selling more than 12 million records in the U.S. alone and spawning the Grammy-winning single, "Forever in Love."

Other career highlights include *Miracles*, a 1994 holiday album that took him to the top of the *Billboard* chart for the first time and has since become the best-selling holiday album of all time. His

two holiday albums since then – *Faith* in 1999 and *Wishes* in 2002 – have been similarly successful. *At Last...The Duets Album*, released in 2004, featured performances by Barbara Streisand, Burt Bacharach and LeAnn Rimes, along with a remake of Outkast’s “The Way You Move” with Earth, Wind and Fire.

He joined Concord in 2008 with the release of *Rhythm and Romance*, an album that united him with an all-star lineup of Latin musicians, including guitarist Ramon Stagnaro; percussionists Michito Sanchez, Paulino Da Costa and Ron Powell; and legendary Weather Report drummer Alex Acuña.

In many respects, *Heart and Soul* is a culmination of everything that has come before it – a confident statement from an instrumentalist and songwriter who remains true to his own voice after nearly three decades of artistically satisfying and commercially compelling recordings.

The sense of conviction is evident from the very first notes of title track, which Kenny considers his favorite piece on the entire record. “There’s a melody to this song that you think you’ve heard a million times, which to me is always the ingredient of a great song,” he says. “There’s something magical about hearing a melody that sounds so familiar, but knowing at the same time that it isn’t.”

The smoldering “Fall Again” features Thicke on emotionally charged lead vocals that shift effortlessly between tenor and falsetto. “The harmonies are a little darker than usual, and it’s very heartfelt,” says Kenny. “There’s a degree of subtlety to this track that makes it something much more than a pop song.”

Fueled by a subtle but persistent groove, “No Place Like Home” is slightly more upbeat, thanks in large part to lead vocals by “Babyface” Edmonds, who is also the author of the track. “Babyface and I have been friends for twenty years,” says Kenny. “His music is right up my alley. His lyrics, his melodies, the way he puts his grooves together all work really well for me.”

Further into the set “G-Walkin’” adheres to a steady, uptempo rhythm and makes room for Kenny to open up and lay down some enthusiastic sax lines, while “One Breath” is equally expressive within a slower and more melodic groove.

The closer, “After Hours,” is just what the title suggests – a tune for the late-night hours when the world slows down. Yet somewhere in the gently churning rhythm and smoky melody is the suggestion of activity that continues long after dark.

On this second outing with Concord, Kenny is enjoying an unprecedented sense of creative freedom that has enabled him to make one of the best records of his career – one that’s true to his roots and true to his creative vision. “Usually, when artists are left to do what they do best, the results are better than what happens when they’re told what to do,” he says. “That doesn’t mean there can’t or shouldn’t be some sense of collaboration with producers and A&R people, but in the end, the choices and the decisions should be mine. It’s the artist’s job to be true to the integrity of his art. If he is, then things always work out well. *Heart and Soul* is an example of that kind of clarity and integrity, and it’s a record I’m very proud of.”

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