

Kenny Neal Biography

One of the strongest modern proponents of Baton Rouge swamp blues, **Kenny Neal** is a second-generation southern Louisiana bluesman who is cognizant of the region's venerable blues tradition and imaginative enough to steer it in fresh directions.

Neal was born on October 14, 1957 in New Orleans. His dad, harpist **Raful Neal**, was a Baton Rouge blues mainstay whose pals included **Buddy Guy** and **Slim Harpo** (the latter gave three-year-old Kenny his first harmonica). At age 13, Neal was playing in his father's band, and at 17, landed a job playing bass for Buddy Guy.

The guitarist recruited some of his talented siblings to form the **Neal Brothers Blues Band** up in Toronto (brother Noel later played bass behind **James Cotton**; five other Neal brothers also play in various bands) before returning stateside. In 1987, Kenny Neal cut his debut LP for Florida producer Bob Greenlee, an updated swamp feast initially released by **Kingsnake Records** as ***Bio on the Bayou***. The following year, **Alligator Records** signed Neal and reissued the debut under the title ***Big News from Baton Rouge***!! Young Neal was on his way.

Neal's sizzling guitar work, sturdy harp, and gravelly, aged-beyond-his-years vocals served him well, and he cut four albums for Alligator Records between 1989 and 1994. An acclaimed 1991 stint on Broadway in a production of Mule Bone found him performing acoustic versions of **Langston Hughes'** poetry set to music by **Taj Mahal**.

In 1998, Neal moved from Alligator to the blues division of the jazz-based **Telarc Records**, releasing three albums for the label: ***Blues Fallin' Down Like Rain*** (1998), ***What You Got*** (2000), and ***One Step Closer*** (2001). In the new millennium, Neal recorded sets for a variety of independent labels, including ***Easy Meeting*** (a 2003 collaboration with **Billy Branch**), ***Double Take*** (2004, a one-shot return to Alligator), and ***A Tribute to Slim Harpo and Raful Neal*** (released in 2005 for True Life Entertainment). Three years later, Neal hooked up with **Blind Pig Records** and released ***Let Life Flow*** in 2008, once again incorporating his gritty Louisiana roots with a sophisticated Chicago/Memphis soul approach. A second Blind Pig release, ***Hooked on Your Love***, appeared two years later in 2010. In 2015, Neal released his first holiday-themed album, ***I'll Be Home for Christmas***. It was his first album for **Cleopatra Records**, which also issued his latest critically acclaimed release, ***Bloodline*** in 2016.

Kenny's 2016 release, **Bloodline**, was nominated for a 2017 Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album and also won two 2017 BMAs (Blues Music Awards); one for Best Contemporary Blues Album and the other for Best Contemporary Male Blues Artist. Kenny Neal, a true living blues Legend is THE REAL DEAL and more poised than ever to deliver the blues like no one else can!