



JAZZ SAXOPHONIST KENNEY POLSON

Biography

“Kenney Polson displays a mastery of many reeds”

George W. Harris, Jazz Weekly

“The epitome of elegant jazz”

Susan Frances, Jazz2Love

West Coast jazz saxophonist Kenney Polson is a world traveler whose been to over 50 countries, spreading the gospel of jazz and collaborating with many musicians. He was fortunate to complete successful tours in France and Hawaii before 2020 pandemic travel restrictions set in, then turned his attention to completing a new album; *Colors of Brazil* was released in early 2021 on Rosetta records.

Polson’s high charting 2019 album *For Lovers Only* merged smooth jazz and R&B, and, as Jeff Becker writes for *Jazz Sensibilities*, he is clearly “an accomplished crossover artist.” While adept at mixing genres and eagerly absorbing aspects of other cultures, Polson has a strong foundation in American jazz; he earned a master’s degree in jazz composition and arranging from Howard University in 1997. In *Colors of Brazil*, he allows his love of Brazilian music to permeate his smooth jazz sound.

Some of Polson’s happiest and most formative years were spent in Rio de Janeiro. He lived in the Ipanema neighborhood for five years and had the opportunity to perform and record with some of the city’s finest musicians. Marinho Boffa, trumpeter Paulinho Trompette, and the late composer/bassist Nico Assumpção were among them. Polson brought jazz and funk to the project. His Brazilian colleagues contributed intoxicating styles such as samba, partido/alto, samba/funk and afoxé. Four tracks were recorded in Brazil and six in the U.S.

Back in U.S., he enlisted Rio born percussionist Alejandro Lucini (Washington, D.C.) and bassist/arranger Leonardo Lucini (NYC), friends from his days at Howard University. While wholeheartedly embracing a Brazilian theme, Polson introduced new sounds and textures: guitar and African nGoni by Leni Stern, harp from Mariea Antoinette and Japanese koto played by Dr. Osamu Kitajima and Mitsuki Dazai. The intriguing result reflects Polson's life journey and quest for new sounds. Writing in the album liner notes, jazz journalist Raul da Gama says, "The imprint of flawless, superlative artistry is all over Polson's 2021 album...a recording on par with the finest Brazilian recordings by titans of the saxophone."

Polson's high-charting 2019 album *For Lovers Only*, blended smooth jazz with rhythm and blues and included leading players such as guitarist Bruce Conte and keyboardist Roger Smith (Tower of Power), trumpeter Larry Gittens (Kool & The Gang), guitarist Phil Upchurch (Donny Hathaway and George Benson), and smooth jazz pioneer – pianist Tom Grant. Trombonist Fred Wesley (Parliament Funkadelic) and bassist/vocalist Michael Henderson (Miles Davis, Stevie Wonder) were also featured. His 2016 album, *Paradise, Volume One*, featured smooth jazz originals. Both albums were released on Prodigee Records.

Kenney Polson was born in Kansas City, Missouri to a musical family. His grandfather, "Chubby Wayne" Harshaw (Count Basie, Cab Calloway), was a major musical influence, along with his Uncle Charles, who sang with the Coasters.

Polson has appeared on television with Kenny Burrell, Jimmy Heath, Phil Woods, David Sanborn and Wynton Marsalis. He has shared the stage with the likes of Joe Williams, Gil Scott-Heron, Michael Henderson, Norman Connors, Bettye Swan and Lee Garrett.

He is known in Pacific Northwest jazz haunts such as The Jazz Station in Eugene, Jack London Jazz Club in Portland, The Royal Esquire in Seattle and the 1905 Jazz Club in Portland. In addition to his international performances, he toured extensively with Rick James' Original Stone City Band playing major festivals on both U.S. coasts. He performs widely with the Kenney Polson group and other ensembles,

Also a gifted educator and band director, Polson holds an Education Specialist Degree in education administration from Lewis & Clark College in Portland. Over the years he has taught college and university, high school and elementary school levels.