

# KENNY SMITH

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Kenny Smith was unquestionably born into blues royalty. He grew up in the same house where Muddy Waters once lived in Chicago, the home of the blues in the North. Throughout his childhood, Kenny was surrounded by Muddy and his friends, including his own father, Willie “Big Eyes” Smith (1936-2011). These same blues icons helped mold him into the person and drummer he is today and later in life asked him to provide his famous backbeat on some of the largest and most respected stages and recordings in the world. Kenny has played thousands of live performances to date and is a true gem amongst his peers and music lovers. His father, Willie “Big Eyes” Smith, played drums for the Muddy Waters band in the early 1960’s and then again from 1968 through 1980 and was featured on all of Muddy’s Grammy-winning albums. Kenny “Beedy Eyes” Smith, one of the best known living blues drummers today, learned 99% of what he knows about drumming from his father and was also inspired by acclaimed drummers: Odie Payne, Fred Below, Earl Phillips, Ted Harvey, Louie Bellson, S.P. Leary, Francis Clay, Sam Lay, Art Blakey, Sonny Payne, Clifton James and many others who paved the way. And with those experiences, Kenny has revitalized and created new interpretations of the legendary blues drummers and modern drummers as he pushes blues drumming to new innovative and traditional styles.

## GRAMMY AWARD WINNER

Kenny “Beedy Eyes” Smith is also a world-famous, multi-award-winning blues drummer extraordinaire who in 2011 won a Grammy award for his remarkable work on *Joined at The Hip* with Pinetop Perkins and Willie “Big Eyes” Smith. Kenny had the honor and privilege of contributing to that project through songwriting and drumming. He is delighted that his accomplishments and talents were recognized by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Honored all across the globe for his exceptional achievements, Kenny won the Living Blues awards for the most outstanding musician (drums) in 2008 (shared with Willie “Big Eyes” Smith), 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2023. In 2009, an album entitled “Chicago Blues: A Living History” on which Kenny recorded was nominated for a Grammy Award. This same album won Best Blues Album in 2009 by the Academie de Jazz de France. Kenny is a 12-time nominee and a 2021, 2023 winner of the Blues Music Awards for Best Drummer by the Blues Foundation. 2023 Blues Blast Music Award winner. He performed at the Kennedy Center Honors in 2008 with Koko Taylor and B.B. King during a tribute for actor Morgan Freeman. And in 2010, Kenny toured with the Taproot group and the U.S. State Department in Africa, where the group played for ambassadors, returnee/refugee camps and taught workshops to local musicians. Kenny’s also passionate about the Blues in the Schools program. He is spreading the Blues message by providing education to students both in the United States and internationally.

Kenny “Beedy Eyes” Smith knows that his blues values go beyond just “choppin’ wood” to the backbeat. He was told by his father, Willie “Big Eyes” Smith, and many other legends (whom he considered as family members at an early age) to carry on the blues and to not just play it- he was told to “live it, learn it and breathe it” and from those experiences he would be able to keep the past and present history of the blues alive and kicking all over the world. When Kenny is not stroking a blues groove, he is an active entertainment agent, bringing all-star musicians together for a fun-filled night of blues at many events and festivals worldwide. Kenny is also a producer for many record labels/bands/ musicians in the studio, bringing out the best in their music for all of us to enjoy. Through his hard work and drumming over the years with these blues experts, Kenny has imagined and perfected several blues shuffles. Kenny’s roots with a modern traditional, inventive flavor.

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Kenny Smith has a stellar reputation for being an outstanding all-around studio musician as well as performer, has spent hundreds of hours in recording sessions working every day with an extensive range of brilliant artists, and is credited on numerous music albums with some of the top blues artists and legends in the world. Several music labels on which Kenny has been featured are impressed by his authentic and modern versatile drumming skills. He brings new and innovative ways of drumming to the forefront while keeping the blues traditions alive. Kenny is honored to know and have played with so many of these top all-time blues legends and friends: