

# Hunter Editions



*Sequin Island*

*"There is a challenge and a joy in seeing something ineffably beautiful or moving and resolving to make a painting of it. The threads of the canvas, the sea, family, friends, and Maine have woven themselves inextricably into my psyche and my work. Sometimes I go looking often early in the morning before setting sail for the next harbor or toward the end of the day after we anchor and the harsh light softens. ... No matter the motivation or the circumstance, to me painting is a kind of meditation that helps me focus on the simple joy of rendering well a chosen subject.. " For more information on William B. Hoyt's artwork visit his website, [www.wmbhoyt.com](http://www.wmbhoyt.com)*

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# Little This, Little That

On July 16, **Kenny Neal** brings his 2017 Grammy-Nominated swamp blues to the Maine coast.

INTERVIEW BY COLIN W. SARGENT

**T**HE SON OF legendary harmonica player Raful Neal, **Kenny Neal** grew up playing blues, jazz, and R&B with his four brothers in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. As raves hit the waves for Kenny's new album *Bloodline*, he delivers his magic to the **North Atlantic Blues Festival** in Rockland—just when we need it.

What's the luckiest song you ever wrote, where you said, "I didn't write that song. Somebody else slipped into my body and wrote it." It's called "Let life flow." A spirit put it in my pocket.

No wonder crowds love the way you play blues guitar and harmonica. If your harmonica were a cell phone, who would you be calling? My dad, Raful Neal.

Ever lose a harmonica and had it come find you? I've lost my harmonicas many times. It always comes back to me by mail, or when I come back to a town, someone will bring it back, saying, "You left this the last time you were here!"

Crawfish vs. Lobster? I love them both. I have lobster shipped to Louisiana from Maine, and we cook them like we do crawfish.

If you were going to serve a Maine lobster dinner Louisiana-style, how would

JULY  
16

PRESS PHOTO



The North Atlantic Blues Festival in Rockland draws crowds from all over the country.

you live it up?

We make a lobster étouffée with our creole seasoning.

The Acadians traveled south and turned into the Cajuns of Louisiana. Up here in Maine, we still claim we brought the Cajun cooking to you. What kind of music are you bringing back to us this summer?

We're bringing the same as Cajun cooking—a little bit of swamp blues. Cajun blues and Delta blues music are just like Cajun cooking—a little of this, a little of that.

You're playing up here on July 16. What attracted you to the coast of Maine this year?

The North Atlantic Blues Festival is a fun place to play, because the people here love



"I've lost my harmonica many times. It always comes back to me..."

—Kenny Neal

the blues so much. It's great to see them keeping it alive, and I want to be a part of it.

We know blues, swamp blues, and zydeco spring from New Orleans. When you listen, does Maine have a signature sound?

Swamp blues came from the Baton Rouge

"Cajun blues and Delta blues music are just like Cajun cooking—a little of this, a little of that."



one of his songs that haunts you.

The name of the song is "Change My Way of Living." My dad wrote it back in the '60s, and I still do it today.

In Maine we have Andrew Wyeth and his son Jamie. Jamie told us his dad wouldn't give him advice on painting, to make sure he'd follow his own stars. With the blues as your canvas, what's the funniest thing your dad ever told you about music, or the best advice?

He told me something about music, but it wasn't funny. He told me not to play blues and try to learn the more updated music they were listening to when I was growing up, because I'd never be able to make a living at playing blues. "They take advantage of the blues players and don't give them the credit they deserve." He only told me that because of his experience.

Tell us about your first trip to Maine.

The first time I came to Maine was in the late 1980s. I played a wedding in Bangor for \$5,000. It was the first time I ever made that much money for a gig in my life.

Kenny Neal's Album *Bloodline* was nominated for **Best Contemporary Blues Album** at the 2017 Grammys.

#### Performers at the North Atlantic Blues Festival:

SATURDAY, July 15; • Kids from **MCMA Blues Camp #1**, 10:30-10:55 a.m. • **Christone Kingfish Ingram**, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. • **Sari Schorr**, 12:30-1:30 p.m. • **Anthony Gomes**, 1:45-3:00 p.m. • **Biscuit Miller & The Mix**, 3:15-4:45 p.m. • **Shemekia Copeland**, 5:00-6:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, July 16; Kids from **MCMA Blues Camp #1**, 10:30-10:55 a.m. • **Kelley Hunt**, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. • **Dwayne Dopsie & The Zydeco Hellraisers**, 12:30-1:30 p.m. • **Harmonicon: Sugar Blue, Billy Branch, Jason Ricci**, 1:45-3:00 p.m. • **Kenny Neal**, 3:15-4:30 p.m. • **Walter Trout**, 4:45-6:15 p.m.

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**EXPERIENCE**

What part did you play in the Langston Hughes play *Mule Bone*? Did being a musician help your acting?  
My Broadway show was a love triangle. Two young guys sing and dance. We were close friends until Daisy came around. She'd always cause us to break our friendship. I play the guitar player and singer, Jim Western.

At the end of *Mule Bone*, both guys get sick of Daisy and walk off. Have you ever, while playing, had something happen that made you just walk off the stage, mid-performance?  
Yes, I was performing at the New Orleans Jazz Festival, and a streak of lightning came down so hard it vibrated the stage—and we all walked off immediately. More like ran off.

Do you have a song you know you're going to play at the North Atlantic Blues Festival, just for us in Maine?  
I don't carry around a set list. I feel the people and know immediately what I should play, but I'll be doing songs from the new *Bloodline* CD that I was nominated for a Grammy for this year.

HARBOR PARK IN ROCKLAND MAINE  
**JULY 15 & 16 2017**

# North Atlantic BLUES FESTIVAL

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Was there ever a night when you said, I'm never going to play a harmonica again?  
No, never.

How about your guitar? What is your high point and low point? Does it have a name? We hear Lucille is already taken.  
Yeah, my guitar is named Bessie. My highest part when I'm performing is when I look out in the audience and everybody I see just has a great time. My lowest part is when I do songs like "You Got to Hurt Before You Heal" and I see everyone weeping. It also brings tears from my eyes.

What's the quickest way to tell a harmonica player is faking it?  
Listen for a moment.

You're not afraid to keep a song slow, and use silence as a musical instrument. Is that something you've had to learn?  
Yes, it comes with time. It's called trust the moment. ■

Kenny Neal will be performing at the North Atlantic Blues Festival in Harbor Park, Rockland, July 16.



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