

Kenna Biography

The first rule of understanding Kenna is to *really* believe him when he says his name means “to get what you want.” A couple years after completing his debut record—the interim hallmarked by his own fittingly monumental climb to Mount Kilimanjaro to “find himself”—Kenna is here again to take back his name.

Kenna Zemedkun, 29, was born in Addis Ababa. His family migrated to Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he first fell deep in love with American music, specifically U2’s *Joshua Tree*, an album that would forever shape his sonic aesthetic. For many years he struggled to find himself, working odd jobs and attending college. Until in his late teens he returned to his first love: music. With high school classmate “Chase” Chad Hugo—one half of production powerhouse The Neptunes—engineering and co writing the material, the demo got to Flawless Records where he was signed without so much as a face-to-face meeting. *New Sacred Cow* came out humbly in 2003 on Columbia Records to substantial critical acclaim, a loyal underground fan base, and millions of online downloads and file sharing. Two videos (of singles “Freetime” and “Hell Bent”) enjoyed heavy rotation on MTV2, leading to two MTV video noms for Breakthrough Video. A few years ago, the entertainment industry, much less commercial radio, may well not have been ready for Kenna to bust out with an essentially New Wave record, particularly one that was embedded with influences so eclectic it spanned everything from synth pop to punk rock to hip hop to electronica.

Ask production impresario Pharrell Williams what his old friend and colleague Kenna evokes for him and you’ll get “the world will be singing songs of honesty along with audiences in cellphone-lit stadiums...”

Indeed *Make Sure They See My Face (FACE)* is the long-awaited follow-up experiment, co produced by Hugo and this time featuring select tracks from the other Neptune, Williams. Then there’s the album itself—fresher than ever, cultivating a stream of truly *future sonics* with ample homage to past ripples in rock and soul, the Kenna sound feels grown into, comfortable, *true*. The sophomore effort is Kenna’s most celebratory confessional, irony-free, homage-less, simply the testament of a man who can’t help but possess the essence of a new era and the sound of an irreplaceable place. “[FACE] is a story from start to finish. A search for identity. A willingness to go to extremes to find the truth and balance. Stretching. Attempting. Failing. Attempting again. Getting back up and hoping for the best. All the while, finding yourself growing and becoming more aware and comfortable with imperfection. That’s [FACE], from ‘Daylight’ to ‘Wide Awake.’”