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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 24, 2020

### MEDIA INQUIRIES/REVIEW COPIES:

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## **WORLD-RENOWNED BAY AREA VOCALIST KENNY WASHINGTON**

## **RELEASES HIGHLY ANTICIPATED DEBUT STUDIO ALBUM**

## ***WHAT'S THE HURRY***

## **AVAILABLE AUGUST 14, 2020 ON LOWER 9<sup>th</sup> RECORDS**

For **KENNY WASHINGTON** fans across the country and around the world, it's about time that this admired vocalist is releasing his first studio album. Aptly titled, ***WHAT'S THE HURRY*** comprises Washington's impressive renditions of standards from the Great American Songbook. The tunes are delivered with a burnished, warm voice that has garnered legions of fans for this accomplished yet humble artist, of whom Wynton Marsalis has said, "I love this man! He's a consummate professional, with impeccable intonation. He's a real improviser who brings depth to everything he does. We all love Kenny. If you love music, you've got to love Kenny!"

Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, Washington was born and raised in New Orleans, where he began singing gospel in the church where his parents were choir members. As a young saxophonist, jazz caught his interest during his senior year, when the great clarinetist Alvin Batiste performed at his high school with two precociously talented teenage brothers named Branford and Wynton Marsalis. Inspired, Washington went on to study music at Xavier University, playing saxophone and singing in a variety of styles including pop, classical, R&B and jazz, while listening closely to Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Mel Tormé.

After college, Washington joined the military and was stationed in Guam, where he played sax with the honorary U.S. Navy Band Guam. He also auditioned as a saxophonist for the U.S. 7th Fleet Band stationed in Japan, but his talents as a singer soon earned him a place as a featured vocalist with both bands. For nine years, Washington performed with the Navy bands across Asia, Russia, Australia, and the U.S., performing everything from American Top 40 hits, to jazz, classic rock, and just about everything in between.

After his service, kismet brought him to the San Francisco Bay Area, where he was discharged in 1995 at the former U.S. Naval Station on Treasure Island.

Washington settled in and quickly established himself on the local scene. His first notable success was a featured role in a high-profile Off-Broadway jazz theater production in New York City called "Fire at Keaton's Bar & Grill," by saxophonist Roy Nathanson. The stellar cast included Elvis Costello, Deborah Harry, and Nancy King. Washington went on the road with the show for several European performances, and a cast album was released in 2000.

He returned to the Bay Area after the show's run but was brought back to New York City by vibraphonist Joe Locke, who invited Washington to join him for a week-long run at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola at Jazz at Lincoln Center. This residency began an annual Dizzy's tradition. Washington is featured on Joe Locke's *For the Love of You* (2010) and has appeared internationally with The Joe Locke Group in Germany, Georgia, Scotland, and at various festivals.

Washington has also been featured on three recordings by tenor saxophonist Michael O'Neill, including *The Long and the Short of It* (2004), *Still Dancin'* (2007), and *New Beginnings* (2014). Other recordings include an eponymous album from The Pacific Mambo Orchestra, which won a 2014 Grammy and featured Washington's stand-out rendition of Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed." Washington also appears on *The Fantasy Vocal Sessions, Vol. 1* (2018) and *The Fantasy Vocal Sessions, Vol. 2* (2020), from pianist David K. Mathews, where he delivers soulful renditions of Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" and The Beatles' "Yesterday." Two live recordings present Washington under his own name, *Live at Anna's Jazz Island* (2008) and *Live at Jazzhus Montmartre: Moanin'* (2016).

Some of Washington's performance highlights include the 58th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival with the Michael O'Neill Quintet and several appearances at Jazz at Lincoln Center. In 2013, Washington performed a featured role with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra when Wynton Marsalis reprised his Pulitzer Prize-winning oratorio *Blood on the Fields*. In 2014, Washington performed *Basie & The Blues* with pianist Eric Reed, and in 2016 was the featured vocalist in Jazz at Lincoln Center's tribute to Frank Sinatra's 100th birthday. In 2017, Washington rejoined Wynton Marsalis and The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra to celebrate Ella Fitzgerald's 100th birthday, alongside vocalist Roberta Gambarini.

Although Washington still performs regularly around the Bay Area, he has also found international success as a solo performer with recent performances in Germany, Spain, Denmark, Georgia, Czech Republic, Singapore, South Korea, Mongolia, Canada, Japan, and Russia. He was also featured in the Male Vocalist category in the 67th Annual *DownBeat International Critics Poll*.

For **WHAT'S THE HURRY**, Washington enlisted talented players he has performed with for years, including Los Angeles-based pianist **JOSH NELSON**, who wrote most of the arrangements; reed player **VICTOR GOINES**, who has been a member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra since 1993; percussionist **PETER MICHAEL ESCOVEDO**, an Emmy-nominated musical director and producer; and some of the top musicians from the San Francisco Bay Area, including bass player **GARY BROWN**, drummer **LORCA HART**, guitarist **JEFF MASSANARI**, trumpeter **MIKE OLMOS**, bass player **DAN FEISZLI**, trombonist **JEFF CRESSMAN**, and percussionist **AMI MOLINELLI-HART**.

Washington opens the album with a swinging, trio-backed version of "The Best is Yet to Come," which he follows up with "S'Wonderful," accompanied by guitar. "Stars Fell on Alabama" opens with a bluesy sax and bass intro followed by Washington's sinuous vocals. Washington is backed only by guitar on "I've Got the World on a String" and gets down with a slow blues on "I Ain't Got Nothin' But the Blues." "Invitation" features hip bongo playing by Escovedo, which is followed by Washington's sensitive interpretation of "Here's to Life." Accompanied only by bass, Washington demonstrates master scatting on "Sweet Georgia Brown." Washington and the band take a high-energy, joyous turn on "No More Blues" before the closing the album with "Smile."

Kenny Washington is one of the most sensitive interpreters of jazz standards. His warm tone, fluid swing, spot-on intonation, and intimate, conversational approach to lyrics have earned him the sobriquet "the Superman of the Bay Area jazz scene" by the San Francisco Chronicle. Washington is an oversized talent, and though it has been a long time coming, **WHAT'S THE HURRY** is a recording that his many, many fans will rush to hear.

###

**WHAT'S THE HURRY** will be available August 14, 2020 online everywhere.

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