

Joey DeFrancesco is largely responsible for returning the electronic organ to its central role in jazz, blues and R&B. When Joey issued his debut album, *All of Me*, in 1989 at the tender age of 17, the instrument had all but vanished from contemporary music. Now it's everywhere—and many new players have been inspired by Joey's stunning virtuosity and funky groove.

HAILING FROM PHILADELPHIA, PA, DeFRANCESCO IS THE SON OF RESPECTED organist Papa John DeFrancesco, and the grandson of multi-instrumentalist Joe DeFrancesco, who worked with the Dorsey Brothers. Joey's principal instrument is the mighty Hammond B-3, but lately he's been expanding his palette with a Yamaha Motif keyboard.

When you were coming up in Philly during the '80s, did people think you were nuts for playing organ?

Definitely, the older guys that were playing thought I was out of my mind. They'd say, "What do you want to play this instrument for, boy? This is a dead instrument!" But Philadelphia is the birthplace of the jazz organ. Jimmy Smith and Jimmy McGriff are both from there, as is Charles Earland. There were still a lot of guys in town playing organ, and a lot of clubs with organs in them. So I was able to learn a lot, play a lot, and sit in with some of these guys. Then when my first album came out, it sparked a lot of interest. Even the old guys started to get work again. It brought that sound back into the public's ear.

You've collaborated with so many great jazz guitarists: John McLaughlin, Danny Gatton, Kevin Eubanks, Pat Martino, and others. What's the special relationship between jazz organ and guitar?

When you're playing the organ, your left hand's playing bass lines, and the right hand's playing lead. So when you're soloing, you need someone to comp under you, right? The solution is to put a guitar in there. Kenny Burrell, George Benson, Grant Green, Pat Martino and Wes Montgomery all played with organ players. And all those guitarists started comping like piano players. They picked up from what pianists like Red Garland and McCoy Tyner were doing, and put it on the guitar.

As a Hammond B-3 player, how do Yamaha instruments fit into your sound?

Over the years I've experimented with different instruments, and these days I'm starting to add influences from other kinds of music. I started looking around for different keyboards, and I fell in love with the Yamaha Motif. I love the way it feels, I love the sounds that come out of it—plus it fits perfectly on top of my B-3! [Laughs.] When Hammond started making B-3s again in 2002 they added MIDI, which opens up all sorts of new possibilities. I use the organ to control the Motif—I'm having a ball with it. And the people I'm playing for love it!

Which Motif sounds are you using?

Well, the Motif's acoustic piano sound is excellent. Yamaha has always been tops on that. Well, they make pianos, so I guess they know how to

sample one too! The Fender Rhodes and Wurlitzer sounds are great—and the strings, the pads and analog sounds are fantastic. And you can do so much with the rhythms and the bass sounds! I've been getting into using breath control too. With the flute sound on the Motif, there's no way you can tell it's not a real flute. There's nothing you can't do with that instrument. With the Motif MIDled up with the B-3, I'm in heaven. I'm going into the studio next month, and you better believe the Motif will be all over the next record.

What else have you been working on lately?

Earlier this year I came out with a record called *Falling in Love Again*, featuring Joe Doggs on vocals. I guess the cat's out of the bag at this point, and I can say it:

Joe Doggs is really Joe Pesci, the actor!

He sounds kind of like a young Jimmy Scott on this record. Then just yesterday I was on a session doing Henry Mancini songs, replicating the original arrangements. They're putting out a Henry Mancini postage stamp, and the CD is going to be released at the same time. It was a good time—Plas Johnson, the original tenor player from "The Pink Panther," was there. It's always great to play with those old-school guys.

Joey DeFrancesco

"I fell in love with the Yamaha Motif. I love the way it feels and the sounds that come out of it—plus it fits perfectly on top of my B-3!"

