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**Joey DeFrancesco & The People Make
Mack Avenue Records Debut with First Ever Quartet Album, *Project Freedom* – Available March 10, 2017**

**Peerless Organist Reflects on Travels to Explore
Differing Viewpoints and Search for Peace
From a Global Perspective**



"At 45, he has dominated the instrument and the field as no one of his generation has." – **Chicago Tribune**

"To me, this record sits at a new intersection of jazz and blues without losing the integrity of the classic songs..." – **Quincy Jones**

"Mr. DeFrancesco is a deeply authoritative musician, a master of rhythmic pocket, and of the custom of stomping bass lines beneath chords and riffs." – **The New York Times**

When jazz aficionados think of **Joey DeFrancesco**—and they often do—they ponder his matchless talents as a modern-day avatar of the Hammond B3 organ and the Philadelphia history he shares with his principle instrument. Organ-based blues and jazz started in Philly and DeFrancesco is the first to tell you so.

DeFrancesco is adored for his buoyant, moody sense of swing and balladry as a composer and as a player. That's a bluesy, blustery sensibility shared with the men in his family: saxophonist/grandfather Joseph DeFrancesco, and his father – organist “Papa” John DeFrancesco. Jazz lovers also dig DeFrancesco's second instrument, the trumpet, and the inspiration gleaned from his first big boss, Miles Davis – with whom DeFrancesco gigged when the organist was in his late teens.

“All that – that's what's been expected of me, all of which makes me proud, but there's so much more,” says DeFrancesco on the day he flew back to Philadelphia from his current home base of Phoenix. DeFrancesco stopped by the City of Brotherly Love to receive a star on the Philadelphia Music Walk of Fame alongside local giants such as Coltrane, Dizzy and Nina Simone.

So for Joey DeFrancesco's upcoming album, ***Project Freedom***—his debut for the Mack Avenue Records label—DeFrancesco adds several feathers to his cap including those of world traveling storyteller, quartet leader, freedom fighter, peace maker, spiritual healer and genre-busting composer and cover artist. “All of my albums mean a lot to me,” he says. “***Project Freedom*** though – this one means just a little bit more.”

Quick to mention the influence of Philadelphia in every note that he plays—“that's where all my initial inspiration comes from,” he explains—DeFrancesco looks beyond worshipping at the altar of Hammond B3 priests such as Jimmy Smith and Jimmy McGriff on ***Project Freedom***. “It was never JUST organ and it was never JUST jazz for me,” says DeFrancesco of a personal past that figures into new songs, such as the space-funk of the title track or what he calls the “free soul” of Sam Cooke's emotional “A Change Is Gonna Come.”

Stylistically, DeFrancesco has long believed that his approach to playing and composing comes from the saxophone. “It's that sense of breathing that affects everything,” explains DeFrancesco.

An homage to John Lennon opens ***Project Freedom*** with a gorgeous snippet of “Imagine” (Prelude) with a soaring tribute to J. Rosamond Johnson's uplifting composition, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” rounding out the purifying package. Mostly though, it's DeFrancesco's existence as a spiritual being—walking in the footsteps of humanity's inherent goodness—that is at the heart of ***Project Freedom***. “There are notes and rhythms, sure, but it is how you live your life that is most crucial,” he says. “It's how you play AND present yourself.”

Being a frequent flyer with a globe-hopping world touring schedule has given DeFrancesco insight into differing—but not opposing—viewpoints that he longed to espouse through music. “I always thought that as touring musicians, we were spreading peace. No matter what happens in the world, we keep playing. In a lot of the so-called forbidden places too. When we're there, through war and conflict, problems melt away through music. We're playing for these people, hanging out with them, and we all come together and we're grooving with each other because of the music. That is true freedom. Music is true freedom.”



With 41 years as a professional musician behind him and organ being his mainstay, DeFrancesco has been longing to change up the game: “I’ve exhausted the instrument—it’s like breathing to me—I’ve wanted more from what I’ve already done musically. I find myself asking, how do I expand?” The swirling soul of “The Unifier” gives listeners an idea as to how to make the organ purr anew with just the addition of a wah-wah pedal. “It makes the organ sound like a Moog and gives it this rich, weird vibrato,” DeFrancesco says.

Then there is his expansion of his work on the trumpet. The organist was toying with the horn throughout his start in the '80s when he hooked-up with Miles Davis (“who hated his music being labeled, he believed in the same genre-jumping idea that I do,” he explains).

DeFrancesco is not surprised that songs such as the slow, twinkly “One” and the uptown-funky “So Near, So Far” (the latter penned by trombonist Benny Green, from Davis’ *Seven Steps To Heaven*) carry on in the Miles tradition. “The sound that comes out of me is something that surely Miles inspired. But it’s natural for me; no longer a second instrument, but as much an extension of me as the organ.”

DeFrancesco’s new **Project Freedom** band, The People—a unit he’ll bring out on his next world tour starting in 2017—helps him to see and feel things in a radically different manner than the past.

There’s in-the-pocket drummer **Jason Brown** who nearly got pigeonholed playing “straight Philly Joe Jones style; nothing wrong with that,” until DeFrancesco helped set him free. There’s guitarist **Dan Wilson** who has that “George Benson-Wes Montgomery-Grant Green thing down cold, and he comes out of the church, so that’s part of his thing too.” DeFrancesco wanted to add a good solid saxophonist to the band for some time, and he found one in **Troy Roberts**, the man behind the tenor and soprano saxophones on tunes such as the alluringly intuitive “Better Than Yesterday.” DeFrancesco sought out a “chameleon who could go from the walk-the-bar-blues to free flying” and got one in Roberts.

From self-penned titles such as “Karma” and “Peace Bridge,” DeFrancesco is telling a story of love, humanity and positivity at a time of overwhelming negativity, to spread goodness when the news runs rampant with stories of brutality, violence and prejudice. One song that’s become a centerpiece within the ideology of **Project Freedom** is the quartet’s lustrous cover of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” a song DeFrancesco began improvising as an encore for his 2003 appearance at the Detroit Jazz Festival. “The crowd was perfect, the weather was perfect, the song just came out of me and the next thing you know the crowd is swaying, men took their hats off and women began to cry. Me too. It was a truly sanctified experience where we all became one, transcending music and

melody. I wanted to relive that story, that feeling, on ***Project Freedom***.”

DeFrancesco is also pleased to be able to tell such a rich, spiritual story through his new label, Mack Avenue Records. “I have had a history with Mack Avenue as I’ve been a guest artist on some of their records, and with this label, the proof is in the pudding. They’re not only getting jazz out there – they’re very aggressive and proactive about being heard. I like that.”

Being aggressive and proactive about hearing **Joey DeFrancesco’s** new story, ***Project Freedom***, makes sense. It’s a tale of love and peace worth hearing again and again.

About Joey DeFrancesco

Joey DeFrancesco’s emergence in the 1980s marked the onset of a musical renaissance. Organ jazz had all but gone into hibernation from the mid-’70s to the mid-’80s until DeFrancesco reignited the flame with his vintage Hammond organ and Leslie speaker cabinet. The son of “Papa” John DeFrancesco, an organist himself, the younger DeFrancesco remembers playing as early as four-years-old. Soon after, his father began bringing him to gigs in Philadelphia, where he was proudly born and raised, with legendary players like Hank Mobley and Philly Joe Jones, who quickly recognized his talent and enthusiasm. With a natural gift for music, DeFrancesco also swiftly picked up on the trumpet after a touring stint with Miles Davis as one of the two youngest players ever recruited for any of Davis’ ensembles.

DeFrancesco has recorded and/or toured with his own groups as well as numerous renowned artists that include Ray Charles, Diana Krall, Nancy Wilson, George Benson, James Moody, John Scofield, Bobby Hutcherson, Jimmy Cobb, John McLaughlin, Larry Coryell, David Sanborn and many more. The three time Grammy® Award-nominee, with more than 30 recordings as a leader under his belt, has received countless Jazz Journalist Association awards and other accolades worldwide, including being inducted into the inaugural Hammond Organ Hall of Fame in 2014, the Philadelphia Music Walk of Fame in 2016 as well as topping the Critics Polls in *DownBeat Magazine* eleven times over the past fifteen years and the Readers Polls every year since 2005. DeFrancesco also hosts a weekly program on SiriusXM Radio’s Real Jazz channel titled “Organized.”

Upcoming Joey DeFrancesco & The People U.S. Performances:

January 12 | Scullers | Boston, MA January

13 – 14 | Chris’ Jazz Cafe | Philadelphia, PA

January 17 – 21 | Birdland | New York City, NY

March 17 – 18 | Catalina’s Jazz Cafe | Los Angeles, CA

March 19 | The Nash | Phoenix, AZ

March 21 – 22 | Dazzle Jazz Club | Denver, CO

March 29 | Savannah Music Festival | Savannah, GA

March 30 – 31 | The Velvet Note | Atlanta, GA

April 1 | The Tin Pan | Richmond, VA

Joey DeFrancesco & The People · *Project Freedom*

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For more information on **Joey DeFrancesco**, please visit JoeyDeFrancesco.com

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