

PAT METHENY SIDE-EYE w/ James Francies & Joe Dyson

Band Bios

James Francies (Keyboards, Piano)

Plenty of young musicians show promise, but very few enjoy the sort of meteoric rise that pianist, keyboardist and composer **James Francies** is currently experiencing. At only 24, he's played with jazz headliners like Pat Metheny, Chris Potter, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Stefon Harris, Eric Harland, and Terrace Martin, and racked up equally impressive credits in hip-hop and R&B: from shows with Ms. Lauryn Hill, José James, Common, and NAS, to studio time for Chance the Rapper's Grammy-winning hit "No Problem", Mark Ronson, Childish Gambino, YEBBA, and Kodak Black, to appearances with The Roots on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* alongside his mentor and friend Questlove.

Now comes *Flight*, the extraordinary debut album that welcomes Francies into the storied Blue Note Records family and finds him melding his jazz mastery and pop experience on 11 searching, engaging tracks. But as bold and new as this moment might seem for Francies, it's also a homecoming, in more ways than one. Francies, like his Blue Note predecessors Robert Glasper, Jason Moran, Chris Dave and Kendrick Scott, is a proud Houstonite and a graduate of that city's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA), one of the nation's most reliable incubators for era-defining jazz talent. "Just to follow in their footsteps, let alone in the footsteps of Herbie Hancock, Bud Powell and all of these other artists who recorded for the label, it's an honor," Francies says. "And there's a responsibility that comes with it too."

Called "a pianist with liquid dynamism in his touch" by the *New York Times*, Francies started on piano around age 4, with classical training and an education in the music of the church. Blessed with perfect pitch and synesthesia (or the ability to hear in colors), he attended his first jazz concert, by Houston-born piano legend Joe Sample, at age 6, and began studying jazz in junior high. Many deep influences followed, some of them surprising. Along with pianists like Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Mulgrew Miller, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum and Taylor Eigsti, a longtime friend, Francies points to guitarists Allan Holdsworth and Mike Moreno and such trumpet masters as Nicholas Payton, Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan. A highly decorated tenure at HSPVA—including spots in the Monterey Jazz Festival's Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, the Thelonious Monk Institute All-Star Jazz Sextet and the GRAMMY Jazz Session Combo—earned Francies a full scholarship to Manhattan's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music.

While he was earning his degree, Francies was also rapidly ascending the jazz ranks and building a professional career. Early bandstand time with Jeff “Tain” Watts helped him cut his teeth and raise his profile, as did his first international tour, with Chris Dave and the Drumhedz. Chris Potter tapped him for his trio along with drummer Eric Harland, and Pat Metheny assembled a trio with Francies and drummer Joe Dyson. Francies’ own group, Kinetic, has garnered buzz at events like Newport Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, NYC Winterfest, and BRIC JazzFest. He met Questlove and Roots keyboardist James Poyser a few years ago, and since then has become a go-to resource for Quest and company—subbing for Poyser on Roots concerts and *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*; participating in the Roots-produced *Hamilton* cast recording, in addition to other film and TV score work organized by Quest; and, currently, collaborating with The Roots emcee Black Thought on a Broadway show.

Francies says that his experiences outside of jazz have helped him with concepts like “assembling sounds, consistency, delivery and the ability to support,” and it certainly isn’t difficult to hear these lessons throughout *Flight*. An embodiment of the Blue Note ethos at this thriving moment in the label’s history, it’s a dynamic, ultramodern jazz record, infused with pop, hip-hop and R&B, that remains entertaining from start to finish.

James Francies is a Blue Note Recording Artist, endorsed by Yamaha Pianos, Korg Keyboards, and is an IWC Brand Ambassador.

Joe Dyson (Drums)

New Orleans native **Joe Dyson** has certainly been one to watch. He started playing music in his family's church at just two years old. After being noticed for his peculiar talent, Joe was placed in the Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong Summer Jazz Camp where he was shadowed by the late, great clarinetist Alvin Batiste, and his longtime bandleader and mentor, alto saxophonist Donald Harrison. He went on to graduate from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), and earned a Presidential Scholarship to his alma mater Berklee College of Music.

Joe has shared the stage with Dr. Lonnie Smith, Ellis Marsalis, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Jon Batiste, Leo Nocentelli, Sullivan Fortner, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Paquito D’Rivera, Grammy Award winners Nicholas Payton & Esperanza Spalding, among others.

As a musician, Joe has traveled across the globe extensively. Having touched almost every continent, he has performed throughout North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. He has appeared on over 30 albums, including recent releases by Dr. Lonnie Smith *ALL IN MY MIND*, (Blue Note Universal Records), Sullivan Fortner's *ARIA* (Impulse Universal Records) and Christian aTunde Adjuah's Grammy Nominated *EMANCIPATION PROCRASTINATION* (Ropeadope Records).

In addition to touring and recording, Joe has made appearances on the HBO hit series TREME, and can be seen performing in the documentary titled *Been In The Storm Too Long*, hosted by Tavis Smiley. He can also be heard on the movie soundtrack *Rachel Getting Married*, by the late, Oscar-winning director Jonathan Demme.

In 2015, Joe became an adjunct professor at Tulane University. For the past four years, Joe still finds the time to give back to his community through a benefit concert he created entitled "Christmas in Treme." The proceeds help fund Holy Faith Temple B.C.'s outreach programs, including Food and Pantry, Computer Literacy and Vacation Bible School.

After releasing music with longtime friends The Bridge Trio, Joe is currently working on his debut album.