

Joey's "Authorized Bootleg" Captures the *REAL* Sound

By Skoot Larson

Photos by Michelle Mobley

Back in April of 2006, Joey DeFrancesco's very vouty organ trio played a weeklong gig at Yoshi's in Oakland, California with special guest George Coleman on tenor. Fortunately for us all, the staff at Yoshi's had a tape machine running throughout the engagement. When invited to listen to the playbacks, Joey was so knocked out, he immediately called his agent, Mike Florio.

"George is on fire," he told Florio, "This is my next album!"

Joey is, at least in my opinion, the greatest Hammond B-3 player alive today, just ahead of Rhoda Scott, a ex-pat to France who rarely makes appearances in America anymore.

But more than that, Joey is one of the world's *finest* entertainers and showmen. He's warm and personable, shares his great sense of humor, sings, and knows how to stir excitement in an audience. Studio recordings capture his remarkable abilities on the keyboard and the B-3's bass pedals, and



sometimes display his humor and other talents, but the best way to really know Joey DeFrancesco is to see him live and on stage!

I've had the pleasure of watching Joey work in small auditoriums and clubs as well as large outdoor venues like the Plaza at Hollywood and Highland, Hollywood, California. In every instance, Joey's love of the music and his contagious enthusiasm has quickly drawn the audience into his creative spell.

Joey's recent engagement, at the Los Angeles area **Jazz Bakery**, exactly one year after the "bootleg" sessions at Yoshi's, provided a grand example. Joey's trio opened with "Autumn Leaves," Joey doing the first two choruses single-o, then joined by guitarist Jake Langley. When Jake begins his solo, Joey's left foot is tripping in a rapid dance over the organ's bass keyboard. Any musician watching Joey's left foot could easily read the chord progression for the song!

Adding to the show's intriguing mix, Joey performed "Got My Mojo Workin'" ala his former mentor Jimmy Smith, but with Joey's own sparkle of showmanship added, along with some general clowning by the entire group: Jake's guitar throwing in some funky wah-wah and growling pedal effects.

"Mojo" progressed into an frantic "call-and-response" chorus with Joey's keyboard layin' down the word, and the audience giving voice to its repetition.



And no Joey concert would be complete without an appearance by the organist's attractive and sweet-voiced wife, Colleen McNabb. Colleen is a serious jazz vocalist, although she is also drawn into her husband's clowning at times, making each performance more like a casual evening in the DeFrancesco's living room than just another night in a club.

On Joey's new CD, "The Authorized Bootleg," you can get a true feel for the fervor with which this band cooks as it feeds on audience adoration. Over eleven minutes of "Autumn Leaves" is here, Coleman setting the pace that's quickly picked up and carried by Joey, Jake and drummer Byron Landrum. Colleen puts her unique styling to "I'm In The Mood For Love," and trio and its guest stretch out for a gorgeous version of Lee Morgan's "Ceora."

But the jewel in the crown of this recording is Ray Noble's "Cherokee," performed by Joey and George Coleman with remarkable speed, grace and creativity. Every member of the quartet has something real to say on this jazz standard, and say it they do!

To further experience the true live "Joey," this writer would recommend "Vibrant Tones," a live CD and DVD recording on which Joey fronts the City Rhythm Orchestra in a Camden,



New Jersey concert, and Joey's disc with saxophonist Steve Wilkerson, "It's a Blues Sorta Thing." While I believe much of the Steve Wilkerson Meets Joey CD is done "in studio," the last two cuts really *sound* like one of his live club dates: Joey's intro to the last song, and that song, a remake of the old rock monster "Tequila" performed by Steve and Joey as "Panini." Panini being the name of a popular Italian sandwich. Joey can be heard over a catchy organ fade-riff encouraging his audience to "order up," before all the paninis are gone, then calling off the varieties of sandwich as they sell to hungry customers.

If you are a Joey fan, or just a fan of the jazz organ, "Joey DeFrancesco Live: The Authorized Bootleg" belongs in your collection. From the early days, when Joey was still playing trumpet along with his keyboard, this cat has never made a album that was less than spectacular. In concert, Joey DeFrancesco is consistently superior as an entertainer. If you are not yet a Joey fan, "The Authorized Bootleg" might just send you into his camp forever.