



PIERCE FREELON PRESENTS *BLACK TO THE FUTURE* A MUSICAL BLEND OF ART, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY INTRODUCING AFROFUTURISM TO ALL-AGES SOPHOMORE FAMILY ALBUM- OUT APRIL 30

Black to the Future, the second family focused release from **Pierce Freelon**, is an album inspired by Afrofuturism, featuring the voices of four generations of his magnificently creative family.

After releasing his widely successful debut family album ***D.a.D.*** in 2020, Freelon excitedly returned to the studio to expand on his unique musical vision for today's families. Inspired by Afrofuturist musicians of the Extraterrestrial South¹, like Janelle Monae, Sun Ra, Ella Jenkins, The Neptunes and Andre 3000, he brings a cosmic sound and vision to the world of family music. Pierce breaks away from tradition to introduce a blend of imagination, arts, science and technology through a Black lens. He also provides himself the platform to tackle powerful subjects for youth like smashing gender binaries, and encouraging vulnerable masculinity and emotional intelligence.

"These 15 songs reflect my past and show how I was raised in love, and project a bold future for all children. I want to leave the universe better than I found it by raising the vibration and expanding the complexion of children's music." says Freelon.

Having come of age in an incredibly creative household, Pierce was raised by a village of artists and activists, ***Black to the Future*** is the result of that. Almost every track included in the collection is accompanied by an audio-artifact, excavated from Freelon's vault of family archives. Pierce ripped audio from old VHS tapes, smartphones and recorded intimate conversations with children and elders on topics ranging from imagining the future to celebrating natural hairstyles. The journey of the album is told through the intergenerational voices of Freelon's eclectic family including Queen Mother Frances (his grandmother), his siblings, his children Justice and Stella and his parents, jazz legend Nnenna and the late Phil Freelon, architect of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Freelon adds, *"My Dad's legacy, through the Blacksonian, was to protect Black history. Our job is to protect Black futures. This album speaks to that."*

The album starts off with Nnenna singing a charming jazz ballad "No One Exactly Like You", a 30 year old song she wrote about celebrating your uniqueness, recently rediscovered by her son on a dusty old VHS tape. The jazz-and-soul infused love song "Braid My Hair" featuring Pierce's daughter Stella, offers an intimate glimpse into a daughter and dad relationship with hair braiding, an ancient African social art form that Pierce first learned from spending time at his Grandmother's beauty salon as a child. "First Day of School" is an electronic head-bopper that offers an instruction manual on how to keep it cool on the first day of school and "Cootie Shot" shows up as a Miami-bass dance song about building up the courage to get vaccinated, featuring vocalist and bassist Divinity Roxx. Pierce hopes to help move the needle on this racial disparity in healthcare by encouraging families to go dancing to the doctor's office.

A chat with the one and only "Miss Ella Jenkins" sets up "ZOMBI", another track specific to what kids are dealing with in this moment as Stella sings about social distancing and spooky times. "Attitude of Gratitude", inspired by a proverb Pierce heard often from his grandmother, combines lyrics about gratefulness with electro-soul Hip Hop and features fellow Durham-native emcee Kelly Kale. "No is a

¹ "Extraterrestrial South" is a concept first introduced to Freelon by Afro-Southern folklorist Michelle Lanier
[#CiteBlackWomen](#)

Love Word” is a tribute to another favorite saying from Queen Mother Frances, featuring cellist and new Children’s artist Shana Tucker.

On “Levar Burton” Freelon pays homage to his childhood hero, a cultural icon in Children’s education and literacy, science fiction and Black history. Electro-pop rules on “Solar Skate” where listeners will want to lace-up their skates to spin throughout the cosmos along to the family jam and on “Alpine”, a delicate love song. Count Kiswahili teaches kids how to count from one to ten in the language of the people of the African Great Lakes. Addressing important conversations happening in homes and schools, Freelon joins his own son Justice to tackle toxic masculinity by encouraging Black boys to embrace their feelings on “Vulnerable”. He also calls out how words can hurt through the emotional pulse of “Heart”. Closing the album is a powerful Black jazz, Hip Hop and rock song encouraging kids to feel comfortable in their own skin on “Black to the Future”, followed by a lo-fi reprise of the album opener, “You Are Exactly Like No One,” produced by Durham-based Oscar and GRAMMY award nominee, Solomon Fox.

Black to the Future was written, recorded and produced by Pierce Freelon and was mastered by Gold and Platinum record mastering engineer Donald "XL" Robertson of XLP Mastering, LLC.

Black to the Future will be available April 30 streaming on Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music and anywhere families are searching for great music. Visit piercefrelon.com for music, videos and more.

ABOUT PIERCE FREELON

Durham City Council Member Pierce Freelon is an accomplished Hip Hop/soul/electronic musician and Emmy-award winning producer, director and professor from Durham, NC whose work has been featured on the TODAY Show and at NPR, Parents Magazine and more. For over 16 years Pierce has traveled the world teaching Hip Hop and music production to youth in community centers. He is the co-founder of Beat Making Lab- an Emmy Award winning PBS web-series, has taught in the departments of music and African American Studies at the University of NC at Chapel Hill and is the writer, composer and co-director of an animated series called *History of White People in America*, an official selection of the Tribeca Film Festival. Pierce is also the founder of Blackspace, a digital maker space where he has mentored dozens of youth, teaching digital storytelling through music and film. For over a decade, he has been the frontman of critically acclaimed Jazz/Hip Hop quartet The Beast and has toured internationally and released a series of albums, EPs, and mixtapes. In 2022 Little, Brown will release his debut children’s book, *Daddy Daughter Day*. He is the son of famed Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon, and the late preeminent architect of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Phil Freelon. Pierce lives in Durham with his wife and their two young children. More at piercefrelon.com

Black to the Future Album track list:

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| 1. No One Exactly Like You feat. Nnenna Freelon | 10. Alpine |
| 2. Wonderful Long Braids (Interlude) | 11. Levar Burton |
| 3. Braid My Hair feat. Stella Freelon | 12. Solar Skate |
| 4. First Day of School | 13. Count Kiswahili |
| 5. Cootie Shot feat. Divinity Roxx | 14. Who Messed It Up? (Interlude) |
| 6. Miss Ella Jenkins (Interlude) | 15. Heart |
| 7. ZOMBI feat. Stella Freelon | 16. Vulnerable |
| 8. Attitude of Gratitude feat. Kelly Kale | 17. Black To The Future |
| 9. No Is A Love Word feat. Shana Tucker | 18. You Are Exactly Like No One |

For more information, contact Stephanie Mayers at Mayers Consulting (347)735-0736, mayersconsulting@gmail.com