

## JOE ZAWINUL TRIBUTE WITH BBC BIG BAND

The London Jazz Festival's presentation of Joe Zawinul leading the BBC Big Band through his unforgettable music was to have been a key event in this year's programme and a hotly anticipated date in the UK jazz calendar. But, with the sad news of Zawinul's death in September, the focus of the event has, naturally, changed – now becoming an opportunity to pay tribute to a crucial figure who has made a unique and timeless contribution to jazz.

Austrian-born keyboard guru, Zawinul was “one of a handful of people who changed the way music sounds” (*The Guardian*). Arriving in the US in 1959, he became a key member of Cannonball Adderley's band in 1961, a position he held for over nine years – providing powerful, funky piano and glorious compositions such as the classic ‘Mercy, Mercy, Mercy.’ Leaving Adderley, Zawinul turned down a chance to join Miles Davis – with whom he had recorded the seminal jazz-rock album *Bitches Brew* in 1969 – and instead, with saxophonist Wayne Shorter, co-founded the quintessential fusion supergroup, Weather Report. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the band was a phenomenal critical and commercial success – winning the Down Beat poll's Best Band award fifteen years in a row – and provided Zawinul with the perfect musical laboratory for his groundbreaking synthesizer experiments, as he toiled like a sonic alchemist, wringing strange, futuristic sounds from early analogue equipment. Two years after the break-up of Weather Report in 1985, Zawinul formed his celebrated Syndicate, a supremely funky electric jazz unit that incorporated sounds and rhythms from every continent and confirmed Zawinul as the epitome of world-jazz years before the term was even invented. Right up to his death, Zawinul continued to tour and record, pushing boundaries and driving forward until the very end.

This evening's show features a host of talents paying tribute to this towering figure, playing – as Zawinul himself had intended – the repertoire featured on his 2006 live album *Brown Street*. This dazzling retrospective of Zawinul's long career features big-band arrangements of some of his best known and funkier tunes, performed with such irresistible, groove-heavy verve that “if you're not tapping your foot, popping your fingers or dancing... it's time to call in the men in the white coats (*Observer*).

Tonight, these breathtaking arrangements are energised by the hugely acclaimed BBC Big Band – quite simply one of the best big bands in the world, which has worked with a galaxy of stars including Joe Lovano, Ray Charles, Tony Bennett and many more. Boasting some of the most exciting young players on the UK scene, and conducted for this special performance by the prodigiously talented young conductor Jules Buckley of the Heritage Orchestra, the BBC Big Band is the perfect choice to bring this sizzling repertoire to life.

At the heart of the project is British pianist Django Bates – who has agreed to step in as musical director following the sad loss of Zawinul. Best known for his work with seminal 80s British jazz outfit Loose Tubes and for his own groundbreaking bands Human Chain and Delightful Precipice, Bates remains one of the UK's most innovative and distinctive composers. His performance tonight is an affectionate tribute to one of the world's greatest keyboard players, from one of this country's finest soloists.

We're also thrilled to confirm that tonight's performance will feature one of the greats of the bass guitar, Victor Bailey. As a past member of both Weather Report and the Zawinul Syndicate, Bailey provides a direct link and an intimate familiarity with the music of Joe Zawinul, and will tonight recreate his pivotal role as bassist on the *Brown Street* CD. The dynamic rhythm section is completed by Brazilian percussionist Bosco d'Oliveira and drummer Martin France, a long-time associate of Django Bates since their early collaborations in Loose Tubes.

This show is the latest event in the London Jazz Festival's prestigious Celebrating the Legacy series. This hugely successful project has scored glittering festival triumphs in previous years, teaming the BBC Big Band with major composers and performers including Randy Weston and Gerald Wilson. By turning to the works of the late Joe Zawinul, tonight's presentation promises to be not just another milestone in the series, but a fitting tribute to one of the greatest names in jazz history.