

## Beachfront Jazz 2025 raises the bar in Tobago!

For lovers of good music – especially jazz in all its layers, drawing from African rhythms to blues, swing, funk, calypso and soul – Beachfront Jazz 2025 was a masterclass in musical storytelling. Held on Saturday 21st June at the Magdalena Grand Beach & Golf Resort in Tobago, the event was hosted by Black 2 Sugars and brought together a dynamic cross-section of local, regional and international talent.

Kicking off the show was Tobagonian vocalist Stephanie Joseph, whose set was a captivating fusion of genres. Her powerful renditions of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *All Night Long*, reggae classics, with a nod to Carl Jacobs' *Jumbie Beat*, showcased her vocal agility and range, setting the tone for what was to come.

Prolific saxophonist and UTT lecturer, Tony Paul brought soulful energy with selections like, *Don't Look Any Further* and *Leave The Door Open*. His collaboration with vocalist Cherysh La Touche created a sultry, R&B-tinged atmosphere that had the audience swooning. Together they performed a medley of timeless hits and jazz-infused Soca, including, *Tempted to Touch* and *Too Own Way*.



A standout moment was the appearance of veteran pannist, Dr Ray Holman, who led the crowd down memory lane with signature compositions like *Bazodee*, *Sweet Island Memories* – a nostalgic calypso – and *You're So Sweet*.



One of the many highlights of the evening was acclaimed Barbadian saxophonist, Elan Trotman, who hit the stage like a storm with his high-energy version of *Master Blaster (Jammin')*. Backed by the exceptional EFX The Band – led by Musical Director Andre Jack (bass), with Jeremy Mc Intosh (electric guitar), Anton Charles (keys) and Kristian “Mighty” Dick (drums) – Trotman lit up the venue. From his Billboard chart-topper *Runnin' Hot to Island Gal*, *Brighter Days Ahead*, *Tradewinds* and the genre-blending *Funkalyso*, his set was a showdown of musicality.



Freetown Collective (Muhammad Muwakil, Lou Lyons and DJ Rawkus) brought the ‘love’, shifting the tone to a more soulful and spiritual set. They blessed the stage with opening lines, “*May your heart find peace anywhere you come from, coulda up you coulda down, blessings on my nation...*” as fans sang along to favourites like *Can You Feel the Love*, *Mas*, *Born Soldier* and *Red Eye*. Their trailblazing single, *Take Me Home*, had the audience chanting the chorus: “*Take me home, take me home, take me to a place where meh heart doh*

*feel no pain...*” – a mantra that echoed across the beachfront.

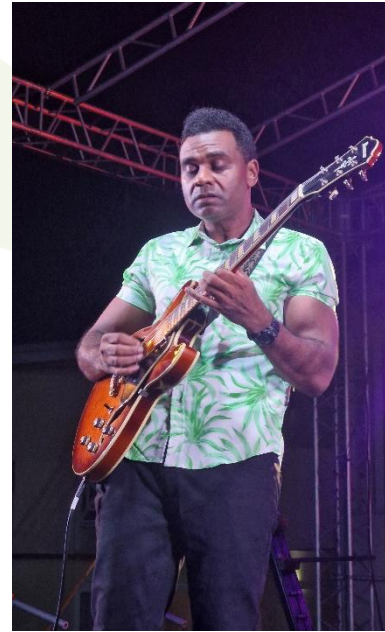
As dusk gave way to night, Bob Baldwin, Grammy-nominated contemporary jazz pianist, 5x SESAC Music Awardee and artist charting eight Billboard Smooth Jazz Top 10 hit records, made his Tobago debut with a strong performance backed by an all-star trio – Tres Gilbert on bass (Musical Director for Capital Jazz Cruise), Tony Lewis on





drums and Nigerian percussionist Café (Edison Silva). Baldwin's set included *I Wanna Be Where You Are* (a tribute to Michael Jackson), *It's a New Day*, and *Funkin' for Jamaica* (Tobago edition) featuring vocals by Stephanie Joseph. His encore – a sharp rendition of Herbie Hancock's *Chameleon* – showcased both skill and showmanship.

Closing the night, guitarist Clifford Charles took the stage with EFX The Band, delivering a mix of smooth jazz and familiar melodies. From Beyoncé's *Love on Top* and Michael McDonald's *I*



*Keep Forgettin'* to *Cocoa Tea* and *Bacchanalist*, Charles and the band wrapped up the evening with a relaxed yet captivating set, leaving the audience swaying and satisfied.

It was the perfect wind-down – rhythmic and rich in Caribbean soul.

As the final notes echoed into the night, it was clear – Beachfront Jazz 2025 wasn't just a concert, it was a cultural movement. The festival affirmed its place as a beacon of world-class musical excellence in the Caribbean. Patrons came for the music but left with something greater: a renewed love for live performance, for jazz in all its forms and for Tobago, the perfect destination for premier festivals.

Beachfront Jazz has set a new standard – and it's only just begun.

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