

Pianist to trace Fred Astaire's footsteps

Pianist Brian Kellock appears at the Playtime jazz sessions in the Outhouse Bar in Broughton Street Lane on Thursday 4 May 2017.

Featuring songs associated with Fred Astaire the concert will mark the first of two significant anniversaries that Kellock is honouring during May.



The Astaire-themed gig comes in the run-up to the thirtieth anniversary of the Omaha-born dancer, singer, actor, choreographer and television presenter's death in June.

Edinburgh-born Kellock has celebrated the work of Astaire before. Best known for his onscreen chemistry with Ginger Rogers in films including Flying Down to Rio, Swing Time and the Barkleys of Broadway, Astaire introduced many of the songs that are now championed as the Great American Songbook in his 1930s films.

Astaire went on to record these classics by Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, George & Ira Gershwin and others with the jazz piano virtuoso Oscar Peterson during the 1950s. Forty years on, Kellock followed suit, giving his trio's 1996 album, Something's Got to Give, the subtitle Portraits of Fred Astaire.

"It's hard not to think of Fred Astaire when you play songs like I Concentrate on You, The Way You Look Tonight and They Can't Take That Away from Me," says Kellock, who has worked with jazz luminaries including Stanley Turrentine, Sheila Jordan, Art Farmer and Herb Geller and is one half of an internationally acclaimed duo with Scottish saxophonist

Tommy Smith.

“Other singers have sung these songs, of course,” he says. “And singers who are coming up will continue to sing them because they’re so perfectly written. But I often have an image of Astaire in my mind, moving across the screen with such style, when I play them and that’s a real inspiration.”

Following the Playtime gig, Kellock will turn his attention to another iconic American performer, jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, whose centenary falls this year. Starting in Greenock on Wednesday, May 10, Kellock and the English singer Tina May, who is widely regarded as one the top jazz singers in Europe, undertake a five-date Scottish tour celebrating Fitzgerald’s revered 1970s recordings with Oscar Peterson.

“There’s no Edinburgh date on this tour with Tina, unfortunately,” says Kellock. “But there’s talk of doing some more of these Celebrating Ella & Oscar shows later in the year, so I’m hoping we might be able to bring it here then.”