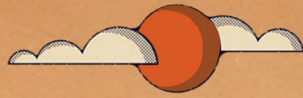


ESSAOUIRA
Gnaoua
& World Music Festival

26th EDITION
19th TO 21st
JUNE 2025
ESSAOUIRA - MOROCCO



PRESS RELEASE
CASABLANCA - MAY 6, 2025



HEADING TO ESSAOUIRA : GNAOUA 2025 UNVEILS ITS FIRST HIGHLIGHTS

From the 19th to the 21st of June, take a deep dive into the sea of fusions, emotions, and cultural innovation, for three days of creation and celebration!

For over a quarter of a century, the Gnaoua and World Music Festival in Essaouira has been much more than a musical event: it's a living cultural project, a driving force for transmission, dialogue, and innovation. This globally unique Festival celebrates the richness of Gnaoua heritage by bringing it into dialogue with music from all over the world, transforming Essaouira into an international crossroads where tradition meets modernity in the spirit of fraternity and creation.

The festival reaffirms its key role in shaping the Moroccan and African cultural landscape, by launching major transmission initiatives, such as its partnership with the prestigious Berklee College of Music, and with the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) to establish a university Chair of Cross Cultural and Globalization, based upon the Gnaoua experience as a strategic laboratory of cultural hybridizations.

This 26th edition-June 19-21, 2025-promises to be truly exceptional, and we are proud to share some of the much-anticipated highlights with you.

The tradition of fusion: unforgettable musical events

Over the years, Essaouira has been the scene of memorable encounters between the masters of Gnaoua and jazz and world music giants such as *Pat Metheny, Joe Zawinul, Marcus Miller* as well as *Oumou Sangaré, Salif Keita* and *Youssou N'Dour*. The Festival continues to build bridges between cultures and musical sensibilities, offering audiences rare moments of grace and communion.

This year, the Festival will once again invite spectators to experience unprecedented and spellbinding fusions :



Opening concert : Maâlem Hamid El Kasri, Bakalama dance company, Abir El Abed, and Kya Loum (Morocco, Senegal).

Maâlem Hamid El Kasri—emblematic master of the Gnaoua repertoire—will join forces with the rhythmic power of the Senegalese dance company **Bakalama**, a leading reference in traditional West African dance and percussion, accompanied by the singular voices of **Abir El Abed (Morocco)** and **Kya Loum (Senegal)**. Together, they will weave a vibrant musical bridge across the

Atlantic, blending Morocco's trance traditions with the complex polyrhythms of Senegalese sabars. This concert officially opens the Festival under the sign of a living Africa, spiritual fervour, and shared vital energy.



Fusion - Maâlem Houssam Gania with Marcus Gilmore (Morocco, USA).

Heir to the great Gnaoua tradition through his father, the legendary **Mahmoud Gania**, **Maâlem Houssam Gania** embodies the new generation of an ancestral music in perpetual motion. Sharing the spotlight will be **Marcus Gilmore**, American prodigy and one of the most inventive drummers in contemporary jazz, bringing rhythmic finesse and modern composition to the stage. Having worked with giants such as **Chick Corea, Esperanza**

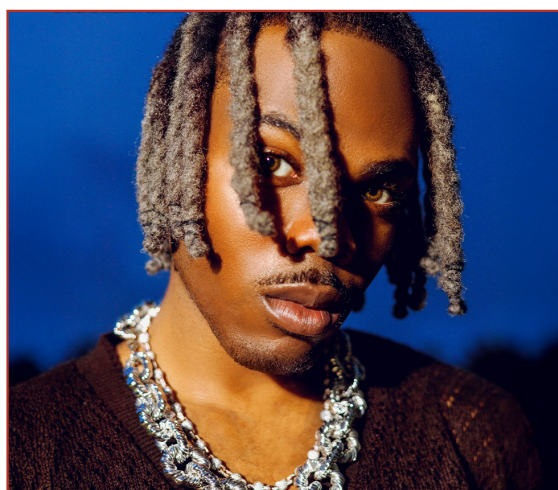
Spalding, and Steve Coleman, **Marcus Gilmore** combines technical virtuosity, bold rhythm, and stylistic openness. Their meeting promises a free and inspired conversation between the deep percussion of the guembri and the sophisticated metrics of jazz.



Fusion - Maâlem Mohamed Boumezzough with Anas Chlih, Aly Keïta, Tao Ehrlich, Martin Guerpin, Quentin Ghomari, and Hajar Alaoui (Morocco, Mali, France).

Maâlem Mohamed Boumezzough will explore new horizons, sharing the stage with young Moroccan talents and renowned international musicians. Alongside him, Aly Keïta, master of the balafon from Mali, Anas Chlih (*guitar*), Tao Ehrlich (*drums*), Martin Guerpin (*saxophone*), Quentin Ghomari (*trumpet*), and Hajar Alaoui (*vocals*) will form a daring hybrid orchestra. Together, they will reinvent the codes of Gnaoua trance, blending African beats, jazz flights, and modern grooves in a creation that's all about

celebration, musical freedom, and shared experience.



Global Afrobeats phenomenon CKay joins the adventure ! (Nigeria).

Since its inception, the Gnaoua Festival has always welcomed major pop and soul artists such as Ayo, Selah Sue, and, more recently, Saint Levant. In keeping with the spirit of openness, this year we welcome CKay, the rising star of Afrobeats. Originally from Nigeria, CKay is the author of the worldwide hit *Love Nwantiti*, which has been streamed over 6 billion times. A singer, songwriter and producer, he breathes new life into African music with a unique style known as Afro-Emo, fusing African rhythms, soul, and intimate lyrics. With his albums *Sad Romance*

and *Emotions*, CKay has established himself as a leading voice of his generation, nominated for BRIT Awards, BET Awards and double-winner at the BMI Awards. His concert in Essaouira promises to be one of the highlights of this 26th edition!

Since 1998, the **Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival** has shone through its ability to combine heritage and modernity, tradition and innovation. By investing in training, research, and creation, this Festival has played a significant role in building a genuine Moroccan and African cultural ecosystem, while offering audiences rare and unforgettable musical experiences.

A festival like no other, where every note celebrates freedom, shared experience, and the creative act. Join us in Essaouira June 19-21, 2025 for an exceptional 26th edition! And this is just the beginning...stay tuned for more highlights coming very soon!

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