

ESSAOUIRA Gnaoua

& World Music Festival
25th TO 27th
JUNE 2026

27th EDITION • ESSAOUIRA / MOROCCO

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PRESS RELEASE

GNAOUA 2026 : THE FESTIVAL THAT TURNS ESSAOUIRA INTO THE WORLD CAPITAL OF MUSIC

For three days, from June 25 to 27, 2026, Essaouira will host one of the world's most celebrated gatherings dedicated to cultural dialogue through music: the Gnaoua and World Music Festival. Bringing together 460 artists from Morocco and across the globe, the 27th edition will be driven by artistic excellence, cultural exchange, and a shared spirit of connection.

For nearly three decades, the Festival has cultivated a unique space where musical traditions are passed on, reinvented, and brought into conversation with contemporary forms. From Gnaoua heritage to leading African voices, from Amazigh music to electronic experimentation, from spiritual jazz to urban sounds, this year's program is united by a simple conviction: **creativity emerges through encounter.**

Carlinhos Brown: a living legend returns to the Festival

Among the highlights of this edition is the exceptional return of **Carlinhos Brown**. A virtuoso percussionist, composer, singer, and performer, the Brazilian artist stands among the most influential figures on the international music scene. Drawing on the Afro-Brazilian traditions of Bahia, he has built a rich and distinctive body of work blending samba-reggae, African rhythms, Brazilian popular music, and contemporary experimentation. His appearance in Essaouira promises to be one of the defining moments of this 27th edition.

Richard Bona and Asma Lmnawar: a reunion on stage

The Festival will also welcome **Richard Bona**, the acclaimed Cameroonian bassist, singer, and composer whose virtuosity and musical freedom have left a lasting mark on contemporary jazz and African music. In Essaouira, he will reunite on stage with Moroccan diva **Asma Lmnawar**, one of the leading voices of contemporary Arabic music. Sharing an already established artistic bond, the two artists will perform two songs together in what is expected to be one of the most memorable collaborations of the Festival.

The Harlem Spirit of Gospel by Anthony Morgan: pure energy and soul

Another highly anticipated performance comes from **The Harlem Spirit of Gospel by Anthony Morgan**, bringing to Essaouira the power, emotion, and uplifting spirit of African American gospel. Rooted in the great choral traditions of Black American churches, the ensemble delivers an electrifying collective energy, driven by powerful voices, vibrant harmonies, and a deeply communicative stage presence.

Yasmine Hamdan, 47Soul and ganavya: three worlds, one shared sense of freedom

The international lineup will also feature **Yasmine Hamdan (Lebanon)**, a leading figure of the contemporary Arab alternative scene. Blending electronics, experimental pop, and the musical memory of the Levant, she has crafted a singular artistic voice that has become one of the most influential of her generation.

Palestinian group **47Soul** will bring its explosive live energy and hybrid sound, combining electronic music, hip-hop, and the traditions of Levantine dabke. Through “**Shamstep**,” the musical movement they pioneered, the band has created a contemporary language shaped by both urban cultures and the popular heritage of the Arab world.

Born in New York and raised in southern India, **ganavya** has developed a unique vocal approach at the crossroads of South Asian devotional traditions and spiritual jazz. With *Daughter of a Temple*, a project conceived as a space for gathering and collective listening, she offers deeply resonant music rooted in transmission, improvisation, and spirituality.

The Moroccan scene: diversity, depth and modernity

Moroccan artists will once again take center stage, reflecting the richness and dynamism of the Kingdom’s musical landscape.

An iconic name in Amazigh music, **Oudaden** has carried the heritage of the Souss region since 1978 through a body of work deeply rooted in Moroccan popular culture. With more than **37 albums** and over **600 songs in Tachelhit**, the group has successfully modernized the legacy of the Rways while preserving its poetic essence. Today, it remains one of the foremost ambassadors of Amazigh culture in Morocco and beyond.

Hoba Hoba Spirit will continue in Essaouira the musical journey it began more than twenty-five years ago. Blending rock, African grooves, reggae, Gnaoua influences, and lyrics grounded in Moroccan realities, the Casablanca-based band has become one of the most influential and beloved groups of its generation.

The Festival will also present **Bob Maghrib**, a project born from a creative residency launched in 2011, offering a contemporary reinterpretation of Bob Marley’s legacy through the sounds of the Maghreb. Jamaican reggae, African rhythms, and traditional Moroccan instruments come together in original arrangements that define a distinctive musical identity.

Finally, **Bnat Louz & Raskas** will present **AZMZ (“Spirit of the Times” in Amazigh)**, a musical and visual creation developed through several years of **Tekchbila** residencies led by **AMME**. Bringing together the women’s **Ahwach troupe Bnat Louz** from Tafraout and Casablanca-based duo **Raskas**, this immersive performance combines Amazigh polyphonic singing, rhythms from the Souss region, electronic textures, post-rock influences, and contemporary visual creation in a work that is at once sensory, bold, and alive.

More than a Festival, a movement

In Essaouira, musical traditions do not simply coexist; they evolve through contact with one another. For the 27th consecutive year, the **Gnaoua and World Music Festival** reaffirms its place among the world’s leading cultural events: **a rare space where creativity comes first, boundaries dissolve, and every performance becomes a collective and unforgettable experience.**

Press Contact

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