

JAZZ IS ABOUT 'SHARING', SAYS MUSIC ICON HERBIE HANCOCK

By [AFP](#)

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US pianist and composer Herbie Hancock speaks to AFP on the sidelines of International Jazz Day in Tangiers



Jazz icon Herbie Hancock performed this week in Tangiers at the end of a four-day jazz festival he launched more than a decade ago, telling AFP the genre is all about unity and diversity.

"It's all about teamwork and making joy and sharing that with the people who are listening," Hancock said in an interview in the Moroccan city on Tuesday.

Tangiers hosted the latest edition of UNESCO's International Jazz Day for four days from Saturday, 12 years after the inaugural concert held in Paris, New Orleans and New York.

Hancock recalled that he introduced the idea for International Jazz Day at a time when he was a goodwill ambassador for the UN's cultural agency.

Back in 2011, he said, "I was thinking about how jazz is played all over the world."

Jazz, said the musician, composer and bandleader, is "a story of your own life".

"And when you have a band, that's several people's lives, that they're expressing. And bringing it into a unit. You know, so that collective experience, kind of oneness, is built into the fabric of jazz," said Hancock.

Fans of jazz fill auditoriums "because they want to feel that experience", said the 84-year-old who over the years has amassed 14 Grammy awards for his work.

On Tuesday night in Tangiers, Hancock performed during the "All-Star Global Concert" which concluded the festival's latest edition.

It featured other top artists including bassist Marcus Miller and singer Dee Dee Bridgewater.

The 'magic' of gnawa –



Tangiers has a long history as a haven of inspiration for American jazz greats such as Randy Weston, Idrees Sulieman and Max Roach who crossed the Atlantic to play and record music in the North African port city, perched on the edge of the Strait of Gibraltar.

This year musicians from as far as Brazil and Japan travelled to Tangiers for the festivities which included talks and open-air performances.

Abdellah El Gourd performs the ancient rhythms of gnawa at International Jazz Day in Tangiers

Tuesday's concert was launched by musician and healer Abdellah El Gourd, 77, a master of Morocco's centuries-old gnawa practice rooted in African rituals and Sufi traditions.

The ancient gnawa art form, which includes ancient religious hymns and dance, can be traced back to the descendants of slaves and was inscribed in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019. American jazz pianist and composer Randy Weston had joined forces with El Gourd to promote gnawa and fuse it with jazz during a prolonged stay in Tangier.

Weston, who lived in Tangiers for five years from 1967 after touring a number of African countries, was among artists who turned the spotlight on the Moroccan city, turning it into a jazz haven.

In 1973, years before he died, Weston dedicated his album "Tanjah" to Tangiers.

"Randy was an exceptional, kind, and respectful man. He gave a lot to the city and its musicians," said El Gourd said of his friend and collaborator.

Hancock added to AFP that Weston brought home to the United States from Tangiers and other Moroccan cities an array of musical "flavours", including gnawa.

Hancock said the rhythm of gnawa "brought tears" to his eyes.

"It has like a magical influence on your being," added the jazz master.

When asked to elaborate on the meaning of jazz, he said: "It absolutely does function as so people can recognise and promote diversity."