

Gary Crosby (left) and Steve Williamson (right) - Photo by Patricia Pascal

BOOKMARK

Review / Live

Gary Crosby brings Africa Space Programme to Village Underground

29 April 2025 1 min read

Kevin Le Gendre

The iconic bassist premiered his new project as part of the 2025 Brick Lane Jazz Festival

Playing just three songs in a 45 minute set, **Gary Crosby**'s new project **Africa Space Programme** is very much a lock in and listen hard affair. The exemplary **Winston Clifford**'s drums form a superb axis with the leader's double bass while the two tenor front line features UK saxophone legends, **Steve Williamson** and **Denys Baptiste**, who came of age in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. A mixed generation full house appears to appreciate the status and gravitas of those assembled on stage.

Epic opener 'Slow And Steady' confirms as much. An ambling, well-spaced bass line and a clatteringly insistent drumbeat create a solid but mobile springboard for the two horns to launch into lengthy solos after the short, jagged theme. As with all significant groups with two players on the same instrument it is the contrast in approach of the incumbents that catches the ear. Williamson has a bulky, broad tone, some of the notes so full and round they edge towards baritone range, yet the phrasing is as slyly agile as ever, moving from bluesy economy to longer athletic phrases, while Baptiste has a lighter, steelier timbre and busy attack that spirals into the upper register at pace.

Pleasingly different from one another each man is able to hold the interest on eventful improvisations while the rhythmic stabs and short contrapuntal themes created by whoever is not soloing are also effective. If there is an historic reference to be heard it is the classic mid 1960s Holy Trinity of Trane-Pharoah-Ayler, in so far as there is an avant-garde heaviness in the sound and ambience, perhaps with a hint of Sun Ra's mysticism and Archie Shepp's bluesy languor, though the aptly titled 'Games' has a more pronounced, playful swing and impactful solos from both Crosby and Clifford.

Yet the showstopper moment comes when Clifford claps out a clavé beat and bids the audience to follow suit before tap dancer **Annette Walker** arrives to spin her way into the charming Latin rumble 'Y Todavia La Quiero', which has a hint of 'The Creator Has A Masterplan' in its chords. It's a fitting climax to the maiden voyage of what is a real British jazz super group, which has, hopefully, more cosmic journeys to come.

Recommended Reviews



RYMDEN: Today May Be Tomorrow



Enrico Rava Fearless Five with Joe Lovano: Corners

Related Reviews



RYMDEN: Today May Be Tomorrow

Rymden has provided a forum for Bugge Wesseltoft (former nu-jazz architect), Dan Berglund, and Magnus Öström (both formerly of e.s.t.) where they can continu...



Enrico Rava Fearless Five with Joe Lovano: Corners

In recent years, Rava has trod a fine line between formally composed material and much freer fare.

Related News & Features



Guitarist Nigel Price hits the road with jazz legend Lorne Lofsky this November

The two guitar virtuosos team up for a thrilling run of UK dates backed by a top rhythm section



Jim Snidero draws on the warmth of Coltrane's spirit on 'Hearth Felt' from new album House of Trane

The New York saxophonist pays heartfelt tribute to the legacy of John Coltrane in the iconic musician's centenary year

Mark Allen © Copyright 2026 Mark Allen Group. All rights are reserved, including those for text and data mining, AI training, and similar technologies.