

Review

Pakistani jazz group beats odds

Hassan Khan and his grandfather Saleem Khan in the music documentary "Song of Lahore." (Asad Faruqi / Broad Green Pictures)

Michael Rechtshaffen

The unifying power of music is rewardingly demonstrated in "Song of Lahore," a classy portrait of Pakistan's Sachal Jazz Ensemble, which despite considerable odds gained worldwide recognition with a little Internet assist.

Once the musical hub of its country's thriving film-scoring industry, the ancient city of Lahore had been effectively silenced since the late '70s by the Islamic regime of Gen. Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, relegating its once-revered musicians to the shunned lower caste.

With the oppressive climate beginning to loosen up in the 1990s, businessman Izzat Majeed gathered a group of master musicians in a soundproof studio and came up with the idea of fusing their traditional Eastern sound to Western jazz, specifically [Dave Brubeck](#)'s seminal "Take Five."

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That mesmerizing performance became a YouTube sensation (it has more than 1 million views), leading to an invitation by jazz great Wynton Marsalis to appear with his orchestra at Lincoln Center in New York.

The technical and cultural challenges related to those two 2013 evenings of musical fusion have been chronicled with evident artistry on the other side of the camera by co-directors Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Andy Schocken, as well as cinematographer Asad Faruqi's gorgeous, intimate lens work.

Music aside, this Pakistani "Buena Vista Social Club" is a testament to the enduring potency of creative expression.

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-mini-song-lahore-review-20160516-snap-story.html>