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THE LEGACY OF
MAESTRO

ALI AKBAR KHAN

with

Alam Khan



A Joshua Dylan Mellars Film

PLAY LIKE A LION

ABUELA LUNA PICTURES PRESENTS "PLAY LIKE A LION: THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN"

ALI AKBAR KHAN AASHISH KHAN ALAM KHAN ZAKIR HUSSAIN SWAPAN CHAUDHURI G.S. SACHDEV

CARLOS SANTANA MICKEY HART DEREK TRUCKS JOHN HANDY NARRATED BY MARK COHEN MUSIC BY ALI AKBAR KHAN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MOJIB AIMAQ WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY JOSHUA DYLAN MELLARS

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A B U E L A L U N A P I C T U R E S
Presents

PLAY LIKE A LION

THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN

DIRECTED BY JOSHUA DYLAN MELLARS

Logline: When Ali Akbar Khan's son, Alam, journeys on the Indian roads that his father traveled before him, he struggles to preserve an old and venerable music in a new and disposable age.

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P.O. Box 29322 San Francisco CA 94129, USA • telephone: (1) 707.321.1600 • abuelaluna@mac.com

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PLAY LIKE A LION

THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN

DIRECTED BY JOSHUA DYLAN MELLARS

Short Synopsis (104 Words)

American born Alam Khan is traveling from California to India on his first concert tour without his ailing father, legendary Indian sarodist Maestro Ali Akbar Khan. Alam's father, who introduced Indian classical music to the US at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955, was “The Emperor of Melody,” a national treasure in India and the US, a Grammy nominee, and according to renowned master violinist Lord Yehudi Menuhin, “possibly the greatest musician in the world.” When Alam feels the weight of living up to his family's North Indian Classical music tradition, he remembers his father's advice: “Don't worry, Play like a Lion!”



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Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

Medium Synopsis (249 words)

When sarodist Maestro Ali Akbar Khan's American born son, Alam, travels from California to India on his first concert tour without his ailing father, he wonders: "How can I follow a legend?" He knows his father would tell him, "Don't worry, Play Like a Lion."

Ali Akbar Khan, who introduced Indian classical music to the US at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955, was "The Emperor of Melody," a national treasure in India and the US, a Grammy nominee, and according to renowned master violinist Lord Yehudi Menuhin, "possibly the greatest musician in the world." Carlos Santana said of Ali Akbar Khan that he was one of the few who like Bob Marley and Coltrane had the universal tone, a tone which shares the spirit of compassion of Desmond Tutu, Mandela, Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama.

Play Like a Lion is Ali Akbar Khan seen through his son Alam's eyes. As Alam assumes the mantle of his father's musical legacy, he is learning that his ends are in his beginnings and that he must come to terms with playing an enduring old music in a disposable new age.

Play Like a Lion illuminates the Khan legacy featuring interviews with Carlos Santana, The Grateful Dead's Mickey Hart, blues slide guitarist Derek Trucks, sarodist Ustad Aashish Khan, tabla masters Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri and Ustad Zakir Hussain. The documentary was shot in Kolkata, Mumbai, Rajasthan and the San Francisco Bay Area to a soundtrack of Ali Akbar Khan's music.



Abuela Luna Pictures

Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

Long Synopsis (620 words)

Play Like a Lion is a film about the music of sarodist Maestro Ali Akbar Khan and the music school he founded in San Rafael, California. It is an homage to a musician and his music given by his son Alam, who seeks to become the standard bearer for the family's tradition.

Ali Akbar Khan, who introduced Indian classical music to the US at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955, was honored as a national treasure in both India and the United States. The Grammy nominee, whose many awards include the MacArthur Genius Fellowship and a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, once said, "I do not play music for fame or money or even for personal satisfaction. I play the music because it is yoga for the brain, a respite for the soul, a place to connect with the best part of who you are."

As 24-year old Alam travels India on tour for the first time without his ailing father, "he looks for the best part of who he is" while confronting thoughts that soon he will play music and live life without his father's guidance and support. Alam knows time is moving on.

Alam begins to come of age meditating on the music of his father as *Play Like a Lion* travels the length and breadth of India, on dusty roads and bustling city streets, from historic Fatehpur Sikri to teeming Kolkata, from the modern sophistication of Mumbai to the old world splendor of Rajasthan's royal courts. Alam's journey travels into the heart of a great music; Alam's reverence for his father and his appreciation of his father's gift of music light the way.

Each new place Alam visits and every person he encounters on the tour help to complete the map of the family's musical legacy. When Alam takes his sarode for a tune-up at an instrument shop in Kolkata, sarode maker Sri Hemendra Sen recalls Alam's storied grandfather Acharya Baba Allauddin Khan. But the threads of the family's music go back fur-

ther, back to the 16th century, to the musician Mian Tansen in the court of the Emperor Akbar of the Moghul Dynasty.

In more recent history, Prince Dalip Singh at the Umaid Bhawan royal palace in Jodhpur recalls the era before Indian independence when the Maharajahs were the great patrons of Indian Classical music and Ali Akbar Khan was asked to become court musician to the Prince's brother, the Maharajah of Jodhpur.

Between concert dates, Alam makes a train pilgrimage to the family home and shrine in Maihar where Alam's grandfather taught Ali Akbar Khan. When Alam is met by dignitaries at the train station and is given the place of honor at the town festival, he receives the accolades graciously but wishes that his father were there to accept them. While in Maihar, Alam visits the holy and revered Maa Sharda temple high on a mountain—a temple whose steps his grandfather climbed daily during his long life time. It becomes clear that Alam has not only come to India for his own concert tour but has also come to serve as his father's emissary—to pay respects to the people and places that were formative in Ali Akbar Khan's younger years.

Back in the United States, Alam visits a wide variety of musicians whose music and lives have been touched by his father: Carlos Santana, Derek Trucks, Ustad Zakir Hussain, tabla great Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, the Grateful Dead's percussionist Mickey Hart and Alam's eldest brother Ustad Aashish Khan. The film is a tapestry of two countries, a music, a tradition, and a right of passage. Alam knows his ends are in his family's beginnings.

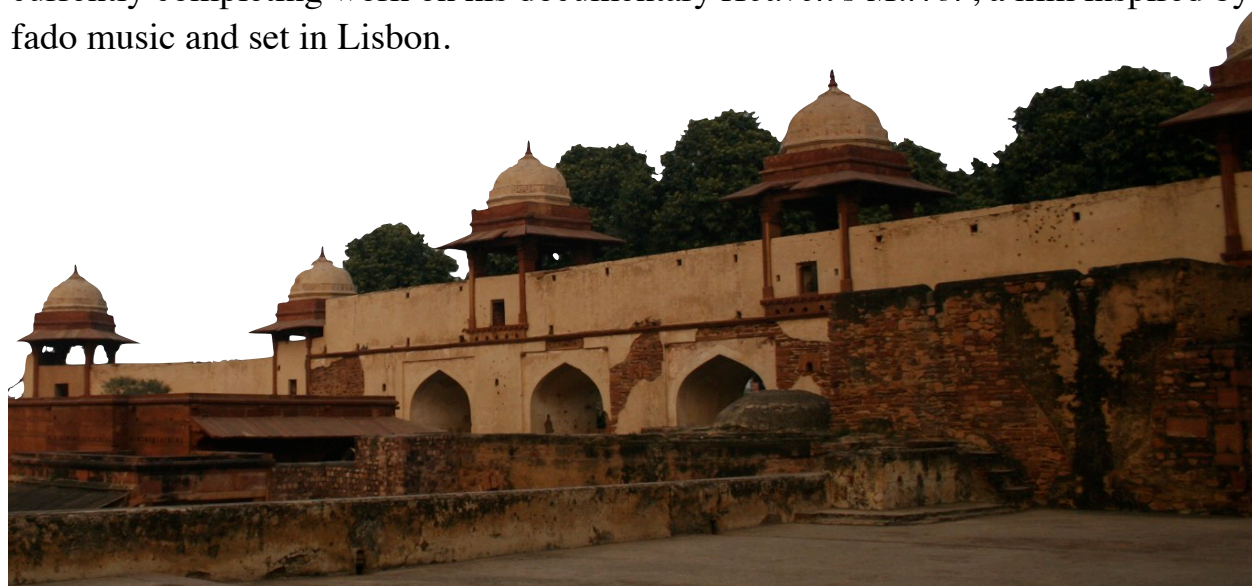


PLAY LIKE A LION

THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN

Director Bio

Joshua Dylan Mellars is the director and producer of *Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan* (2011), *Heaven's Mirror: A Portuguese Voyage* (2011), and *Tango Illusions* (2005)--a film trilogy which travels the emotional terrain of the world's richest traditional music. After graduating from Brown University, Joshua worked as a news correspondent in South America: filing stories for Bridge News, UPI, the BBC and NPR. He reported the coming to power of Hugo Chavez in Caracas, the turmoil of political and economic meltdown in Buenos Aires (his film *Tango Illusions* is a mix of Argentine tango and politics), the accession to the Brazilian presidency of left leaning Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, and the celebration of the World Cup championship in Rio de Janeiro. Concurrent to his political and oil reporting, Mellars reported classical music events in South America to Andante. After returning to the United States, Mr. Mellars began work on his film trilogy. *Tango Illusions* screened at film festivals in the US and Canada, winning the "Best Cine Latino" prize at the Napa-Sonoma Wine Country Film Festival and the "People's Choice" award at the Bay Street Film Festival in Canada. Mellars is currently completing work on his documentary *Heaven's Mirror*, a film inspired by fado music and set in Lisbon.



PLAY LIKE A LION

THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN

DIRECTED BY JOSHUA DYLAN MELLARS

Director's Statement

When I came to make a film about North Indian Classical music--the music of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan and the emergence of his son, Alam, as a sarode player--I entered through a backdoor. I was an outsider. I knew nothing about Indian Classical music, but it resonated with me on an emotional level. This became an advantage for me in making the film: it helped put me into a theater seat with the audience.

I grew up in a household filled with music. My father's record collection had one consistent note—the music was real and cut to an emotional core. My Afghani American friend Mojib would oftentimes come to my house and listen to: delta blues, flamenco music, Django Reinhardt, Bill Monroe, Howlin' Wolf, Clifton Chenier and Zydeco, the Chieftains, Norteño music, Hank Williams, and Bob Dylan. Mojib would even get involved in an occasional blues jam with my family.

It was only natural when Mo invited me to his house for some kebab that he wanted to introduce me to his family's music collection—North Indian Classical music. His father, Aziz, has long been an aficionado and supporter of Indian Clas-



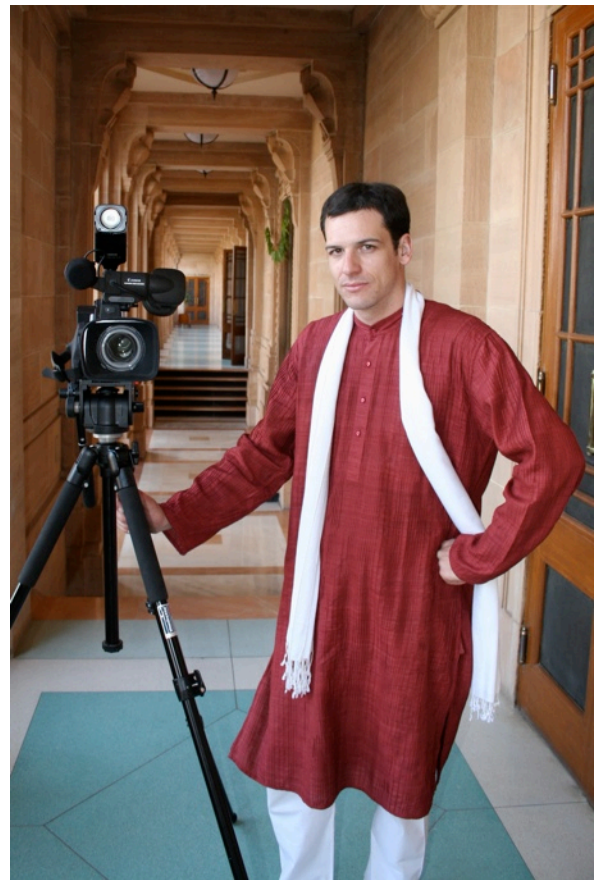
sical music and has a large collection of records, tapes, cds and concert videos of the music most of which he brought out of Afghanistan on the eve of the Soviet invasion. (Aziz came by some of his collection by recording classical musicians who performed in his living room).

The music of Ali Akbar Khan that I heard over kebab and chai personified the purity of tone and the crystal clear quality of Indian Classical music.

I found in Ali Akbar Khan's music the quality that all really good music has: it is music that goes right to the heart, it doesn't fool around or try to impress with fluff or erudition. It is music for everyone, not just a small clique, it cuts to the core of human experience: love, anger, fear, joy.

When Aziz and Mojib arranged for me to film Alam at the Ali Akbar College of Music, I knew I wanted to make a film that made this music accessible to people who had never heard the music before while at the same time creating something that those who already had a great knowledge and appreciation of the music, like Aziz, would enjoy.

Over five years I spent countless hours listening to cds, filming concerts, traveling across India, and listening carefully to what those who played and studied the music had to say about Ali Akbar Khan's music in order to bring the essence of this music to *Play Like a Lion*.



Although I am an outsider no more, I hope I have brought an “outsider's” vision to *Play Like a Lion*. For as Ali Akbar Khan himself used to say: You don't have to know anything about this music, just come and listen--let the music do its job. I invite you to do just that: come and watch and listen.

PLAY LIKE A LION

THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN

DIRECTED BY JOSHUA DYLAN MELLARS

CAST AND CREW BIOS

Sarode Maestro Ali Akbar Khan,

who died in 2009, is a national treasure in India and in the United States whose extraordinary technique and amazing abilities at melodic improvisation led Lord Yehudi Menuhin to call him “an absolute genius...possibly the greatest musician in the world.” Ali Akbar Khan was born in East Bengal in 1922 and then studied music for up to 18 hours a day for 20 years under his father Acharya Baba Allauddin Khan. His father titled him “The Emperor of Melody.” He became court musician for the Maharajah of Jodhpur, a creator of many film scores and a multiple Grammy Award nominee. But most importantly Ali Akbar Khan was an exquisite sarodist with no equal, a master composer, a repository of North Indian classical music knowledge, a beloved teacher and the founder of the Ali Akbar College of Music in Calcutta, San Rafael, California and Basel, Switzerland.



Carlos Santana has spent 40 years in the musical spotlight beginning with Afro-Cuban-Blues-Rock he played on his Gibson SG in San Francisco venues like the Fillmore West in the late 60's and his electrifying performance at Woodstock in 1969. During an over 40 year long career, Santana has released 40 albums, garnered 10 Grammy awards, 3 Latin Grammys, was named on Rolling Stone Magazine's list of 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time, sold 100 million records, entered into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1998. His musical work crosses all cultural, geographical, and musical borders. His work with his own Milagro Foundation and his new project Architects of a New Dawn are examples of his creative approaches to humanitarianism.



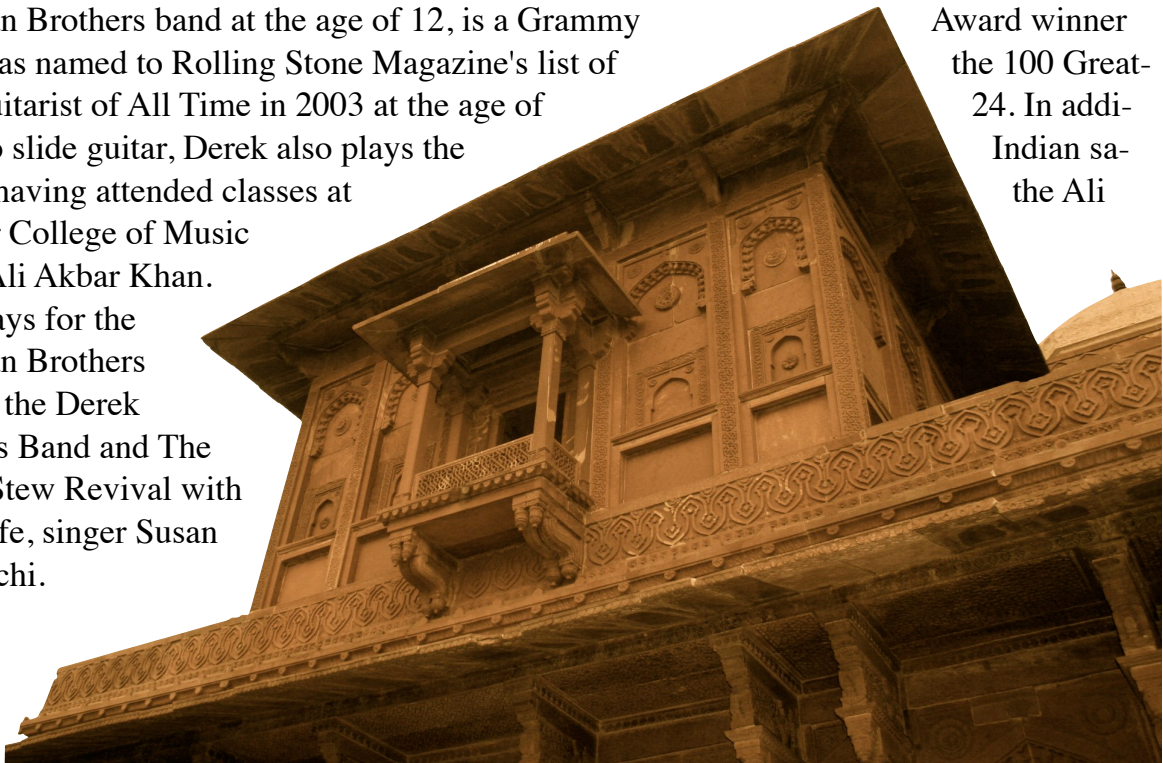
Mickey Hart was for three decades a drummer and percussionist for the Grateful Dead, one of the Dead's Rhythm Devils. Hart has composed numerous scores, soundtracks and themes for films and for television and has also written four books about the history and the mythology of music. He received a Grammy Award for best World Music for *Planet Drum* and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994 with the Grateful Dead. While continuing to perform with The

Dead and play percussion throughout the

world with the best percussion masters, Mr. Hart also finds time to lend his ethnomusicology skills as a board member of the Trustees of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and is on the board of directors of the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function.

Derek Trucks is a slide guitarist, songwriter and record producer with roots in the delta blues whose influences range from Elmore James and Duane Allman to Miles Davis, Coltrane, Howlin Wolf and Django Reinhardt. Derek, who began touring with the Allman Brothers band at the age of 12, is a Grammy Award winner and was named to Rolling Stone Magazine's list of the 100 Greatest Guitarist of All Time in 2003 at the age of 24. In addition to slide guitar, Derek also plays the Indian sarangi, having attended classes at the Ali Akbar College of Music with Ali Akbar Khan.

He plays for the Allman Brothers Band, the Derek Trucks Band and The Soul Stew Revival with his wife, singer Susan Tedeschi.



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Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

Zakir Hussain is known the world over for his tabla artistry which combines great knowledge of Indian classical music, immense technical skills and wonderful improvisational talents. An Indian national treasure and a recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship in the United States, the multitalented Hussain has divided his time between Indian classical music and collaborations with a wide variety of musicians from Mickey Hart to John McLaughlin, from Yo Yo Ma to George Harrison. His Moment Record company features contemporary world music and also live recordings of Indian classical masters. In 2006, the Moment release *Golden Strings of the Sarode* with Aashish Khan and Zakir Hussain was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Traditional World Music Album. Zakir Hussain's contribution to world music was honored in April 2009 at Carnegie Hall's Artist Perspective Series.

Swapan Chaudhuri is a master tabla player, a musician's musician and an exquisitely sympathetic accompanist. Swapan collaborated with Ali Akbar Khan and Asha Bhosle on two Grammy nominated albums: *Legacy* in 1997 and *Passing on the Tradition* in 1998. He has accompanied Ali Akbar Khan and Pandit Ravi Shankar among a host of other maestros on world tours throughout his long career, has been nominated to the Percussive Arts Societies Hall of Fame and is the recipient of the Government of India's Sangeet Natak Academy Award for excellence in the performing arts. He is director of percussion at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael California and Basil Switzerland and chairs the World Music Department at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles. Swapan has performed and recorded throughout the world with a wide variety of musicians including John Handy, Stevie Wonder, Larry Coryell and African drum master Malenga.



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Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

John Handy is a master jazz saxophonist and composer whose music is multi cultural and multi dimensional. The Dallas born saxophonist's music has taken him around the world many times to the premier concert halls including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Tanglewood and Wolf Trap and to the best jazz music festivals: Monterey, Newport, Playboy and Montreaux. His composition "Concerto for Jazz Soloist and Orchestra" premiered with the Parnassus Symphony Orchestra; "Spanish Lady" and "If Only We Knew" have received Grammy nominations. The list of the world's great musicians who have recognized Mr. Handy's excellence include Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Gunther Schuller, Ali Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar. In addition to his prolific and diverse recording career, John Handy has shown a great interest in teaching and disseminating jazz knowledge, teaching variously at Stanford University, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



Aashish Khan, Ali Akbar Khan's first born son, is a world renowned master of the sarode, composer, conductor, teacher, a 2006 Grammy nominee for Best World Music album and a recipient of India's highest award in the performing arts. Born in Maihar, India, he debuted with his legendary grandfather Baba Allaiddin Khan at the age of 13 on All India Radio. In addition to a long career as an Indian Classical sarode virtuoso, Aashish founded the Indo American musical group Shanti with Zakir Hussain, has collaborated with a diverse group of western musicians from George Harrison to John Handy, Alice Coltrane to the Philadelphia String Quartet, worked as a background artist for film and stage—notably with Maurice Jarre for David Lean's *Passage to India*--has served as composer conductor of the National Orchestra of All India Radio and is adjunct professor of Indian classical music at both the California Institute of the Arts and the University of California at Santa Cruz.

G.S. Sachdev is a world renowned master of the Indian bansuri, bamboo flute. The New York Times described his performance as, "...haunting...the sound of his flute rings with indescribable purity." In 1970, he was asked by Maestro Ali Akbar Khan to teach bansuri at the Ali Akbar College of Music in California where he taught until 1976 when he opened his Bansuri School of Music in Berkeley, California. He has now toured the world over in a career spanning fifty years while releasing over twenty recordings of his performances. In 1992, he received Billboard's critics award for his album *Flights of Improvisation* and in 1993, he was recipient of a Billboard music award in the world music category for his performance on *Global Meditation*. Mr. Sachdev was awarded Shriromani Sangeetkar of 2008 by the Government of Punjab, India for his artistic, educational and cultural contributions.



American born **Alam Khan** is the sarodist son and student of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan. He accompanied his father at the Jodhpur Palace and at the Dover Lane Music Festival in Calcutta in 1999. He subsequently toured Europe and India with his father in 2001. In 2006, Alam traveled to India for the first time without his father performing solo concerts in Kolkata and Mumbai. In 2009, Alam gave a solo performance at the prestigious Dover Lane Music Festival. Alam continues to teach at the Ali Akbar College of Music in between his solo concerts. Like his father and grandfather before him, Alam's fondest desire is to keep the river of North Indian Classical Music flowing.



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Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

PRODUCER Mojib Aimaq comes from a long line of patrons and connoisseurs of North Indian Classical Music; he grew up listening to Ali Akbar Khan's music. When Mojib and his family were forced to flee their native Afghanistan on the eve of the Soviet invasion, his father brought the family's entire Indian Classical record collection with them. As an American with roots in the East, Mojib wanted to produce a film that would pay homage to the legacy of the great Maestro who first introduced this North Indian music to the West.



ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Issac Pazho, A native of Kabul, Afghanistan, the associate producer currently heads a successful real estate development company in Northern California. Forced to flee Afghanistan with his parents during the Soviet invasion, Issac spent three years in Lajpat Nagar, India, south of Delhi, where he learned Hindi and studied tabla. A passion for Indian music runs deep in his family: Issac's grandfather was a successful merchant and patron of Indian Classical music whose house was often the venue for private recitals by India's best classical musicians.



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Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

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PLAY LIKE A LION

THE LEGACY OF MAESTRO ALI AKBAR KHAN

DIRECTED BY JOSHUA DYLAN MELLARS

Production Notes

The idea to make *Play Like a Lion* began with Abuela Luna Pictures producer Mo Aimaq whose Afghani father has long been an Indian Classical music aficionado. When Mo learned that director Joshua Dylan Mellars had finished his film *Tango Illusions* and was just beginning a film on Portuguese fado music, he was determined to convince the filmmaker to do a documentary about Indian Classical music.

One evening in September 2005, Mo treated Joshua to dinner at his favorite steakhouse in the North Bay; his goal was to make his pitch for a film on the Indian music. The two, along with associate producer Issac Pazho, were to head south to LA the next morning to talk to a fado expert about Abuela Luna Pictures' plans to film in Portugal. After Mellars prepped Aimaq for the fado meeting, Mo edged into the subject of Indian Classical music. He told the filmmaker the story of his family's emigration from Afghanistan on the eve of the Soviet invasion. Aimaq told Mellars the story of the family packing their belongings for the journey across Afghanistan into Pakistan and recalled the choices that the family had had to make: what to take with them and what to leave behind. Mo's father was willing to leave



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other items but his Indian Classical record collection had to go with him--Mo remembers his father carefully boxing the records and tapes for transport to Pakistan.

And so the Aimaq family traveled across Afghanistan to Peshawar, Pakistan with a few carefully selected belongings and an Indian Classical music collection--"that's how important this music is to my father," Mo said. Mo then told Joshua that his dad was a friend of sarodist Maestro Ali Akbar Khan and many of the other maestros of the genre and asked Mellars, "Why not do a film on North Indian Classical music?"

Mellars recalls, "I couldn't help but be impressed by his father's love of this music, but I told Mo that I didn't know whether the subject matter would transfer to film and I didn't see how I could do justice to the music. But his idea stuck in my brain; I had become moderately acquainted with the music while attending Brown University and I had even used it in some of my student films."

When Mo took Joshua to watch Ali Akbar Khan, his son Alam, Ustad Aashish Khan, and Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri perform at the Spirit of Sarode concert on October 29, 2005 at the Marin Veteran's Auditorium, in what was to be Khansahib's (Ali Akbar Khan) penultimate concert, it was Mellars' first experience hearing the music live. He went away from the concert even more intrigued with the music. Said Mellars, "I had introduced Mo to American blues, rock n' roll and even the Chieftains, which he came to love, now I felt he was returning the favor."

Aimaq asked Mellars to film Alam's concert on December 10, 2005 at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, California. "Mo suggested it might be a good opportunity to check out the new cameras we had bought to film fadista Ana Moura in January," said Director Joshua Dylan Mellars.

Mellars, Aimaq and associate producer Issac Pazho packed cameras, tripods and mics into Aimaq's car and headed south on Highway 101 to Marin County. They entered the college located on San Rafael's West End and, after adding their shoes to a growing pile of footwear, climbed a flight of stairs to the school's concert space. When the filmmakers ascended those stairs, they began a six year odyssey which would take them across India twice, and to a lot of other places, in order to chronicle the musical legacy of Ali Akbar Khan.

After filming Alam's concert, Joshua and Mo told the young musician about their idea to do a documentary about the Khan family's North Indian Classical music heritage. Alam expressed an interest but said that he would have to run it by his father and get his blessing.

"Early on, the film was to be about Alam's quest alone, but slowly the scope expanded allowing us to truly bring alive the story of Khansahib's journey with this music from India to California, as seen through Alam's eyes," Mo recalls. "At heart, this is a story about a father passing on a tradition to his son. We were there at just the right time to capture Alam's coming of age as he embraced that tradition and began to carry forward his family's musical legacy."

A few weeks later as they sat around the Khan kitchen table, Alam's mother, Mary Khan, told Mo and Joshua that Ali Akbar Khan had given his blessing. The film was a go.

The filmmakers knew that they would have to be both creative and resourceful doing this film and that the budget was crucial, as most of the film would be self funded. When they began making the film, they had no idea what access to materials or personalities they would have:

"Our goals were clear regarding the theme, the look, the subject matter and our approach; what was not so clear were the resources that would be available to us. Our early experience on the documentary was akin to traveling an unknown road with a



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good map and itinerary but caught in a thick, Northern California, morning fog. You are only able to see a yard or two in front of your bumper, so that's the territory you concern yourself with, while trying to make intelligent guesses about which way the road will curve ahead of you."

Joshua interviewed Alam on camera for the first time in January of 2006. This interview did not survive the final cut; but it is memorable in that it was the first time Alam used the expression 'Play Like a Lion.' Soon after the interview, Alam left on a tour of India doing his first solo concert there; his father, Ali Akbar Khan, traveled with him. This journey was Ali Akbar Khan's last time in India.

The filmmakers spent 2006 filming domestically and researching the subject matter.

Explained director Mellars, "I wanted to find a way to make a film that made this music accessible to people like myself who did not have an expert's knowledge of this venerable tradition. I wanted to make a film where the visuals and the music would tell the story."

In February 2006, the filmmakers did their second interview with Alam at the Ali Akbar College of Music.

Mellars was then invited to film Khansahib teaching instrumental and vocal classes at the college. Joshua filmed Alam at the college doing a morning raga and again playing sarode in a concert with an oud player, Yair Dalal, at the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center in Marin County.

When the filmmakers heard that Alam had plans to again tour India, this time without his father, Mo and Joshua proposed filming the tour and had a meeting with Mary and Alam again at the Khan kitchen table. The Khans wanted the documentary to proceed, but at the same time they worried about the filming process drawing too much attention to Alam. Alam told the filmmakers that he didn't want to appear to be traveling with an entourage. Joshua explained that his was not a big TV crew, it would be Mo and Joshua and one camera, and that the filming would be fairly inconspicuous. Joshua emphasized, however, that he felt it important to film Alam in India in order to tell this story.

At the 3rd Fairfax Indian Festival in July, Khansahib talked with the filmmakers on camera for the first time. Mary Khan, seeing the cameras rolling, smiled at Mo and Joshua and gave them the thumbs up. Khansahib talked of where Indian music was going, of Maihar and of his father, the legendary Indian Classical musician Acharya Baba Allauddin Khan who had the stature of a saint in India. He told a story about his father's funeral, recounting that when the pallbearers carried his father's body through the streets, it started raining, but recalled that neither his father's body, the pallbearers nor the funeral procession got wet until Allauddin Khan lay buried.

In September of 2006, despite his previous reservations, Alam called Joshua, after booking his own ticket, and encouraged the filmmakers to book tickets to travel with him in India.

At the end of September, immediately before leaving for Portugal to film his documentary *Heaven's Mirror*, Joshua was invited to film Khansahib teaching Alam and Manik, Alam's younger brother, in the Khan residence. After filming, Joshua and Khansahib talked alone over cashews and Scotch about the film and other things till the early hours of the morning. Khansahib reminisced about his home town in Maihar, India, lamenting that it was no longer the peaceful quiet town of his youth. He also talked of the maharajahs and of his days playing in the court, recalling the change that came over India with Gandhi.



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In early December, the filmmakers flew into Kolkata (Calcutta) to commence shooting in India and headquartered at the Rama Krishna Mission in Gol Park. When Mellars and Khan arrived in Kolkata, Alam's sarode did not appear at the luggage carousel; it had mistakenly been sent to Germany. The young sarodist spent several days waiting for his sarode. When the sarode safely arrived at the Rama Krishna Mission, it required a minor tune up and so the filmmakers and Alam headed to the shop of instrument maker Sri Hemendra Sen.

A long time friend and sarode maker to the Khan family, Sen told the filmmaker stories of his close relationship with the Khans and of improvements to the sarode's design made by Alam's grandfather, Acharya Baba Allauddin Khan.

Mellars then filmed Alam's concert at the ITC Sangeet Research Academy and continued to try to get permission to film at the Umaid Bhawan Royal Palace in Jodhpur, Rajasthan: Mellars thought that Khansahib's tenure as court musician to the Maharajah in Jodhpur an indispensable part of the film's story. Early on a Monday morning, Alam received a phone call from his mother, Mary, with a message from Khansahib. Joshua and Mo were told that, if they wanted to film at the palace, they should speak with the Maharajah's secretary.

"I knew I wanted an interview with the Maharajah and, at the very minimum, I wanted to film in the palace where Ali Akbar Khan once filled the post of court musician, but I wasn't even sure if I would be permitted to film on the premises let alone get the interview that I wanted. All these doubts notwithstanding, an hour later, I booked a flight for Jaipur," Mellars recalled.

One week later, the filmmakers flew to Jaipur and then traveled a long day on the road, arriving in Jodhpur late at night. In a stroke of luck, when the filmmakers explained to the hotel clerk that they had come to film at the palace as part of a documentary on Ali Akbar Khan, they learned that the proprietor's father was the Maharajah's secretary at the Umaid Bhawan Royal Palace. The hotel then called the Maharajah's secretary to announce the filmmakers' arrival.

At the palace on the very next day, Mellars and Aimaq were ushered beyond the public area to a hallway which separated a huge courtyard from a closed hall where a religious convocation was taking place. Food and drink was being brought into the courtyard; it was the Maharajah's birthday, men in colorful turbans began to fill

the courtyard. At this time, the Maharajah came out of the religious ceremony and his secretary motioned the filmmakers to the head of a reception line where he introduced them. The Maharajah of Jodhpur greeted the Americans with the salutation, "Welcome to Jodhpur, you've come at a good time!"



After the Maharajah signed and presented a book about Ali Akbar Khan to Aimaq, Mellars began filming the birthday party as Aimaq was engaged in a conversation with Prince Dalip Singh. Mo learned that Singh is the uncle of the Maharajah and the brother of the former Maharajah of Jodhpur--the same Maharajah who had engaged Ali Akbar Khan as court musician many years ago. Singh related many stories of his brother and Ali Akbar Khan in the court. Mellars hoping to interview the prince, continued to film the party and waited for an audience with the prince.

On the next day, just when it looked as if the interview wasn't going to happen, the filmmakers received word from the prince that he would see them at his residence. They had but an hour before their flight out, but they were determined to get the interview. They had no time for sound checks or even a tripod but the filmmakers got a thirty minute interview: the prince told a most illuminating story about Ali

Akbar Khan and his brother, the former Maharajah. The filmmakers then ran for their plane. As the palace receded in their rear view mirror, Mo told Joshua, "I forgot to wish the Maharajah a happy birthday!" Mellars observed later on that, "Sometimes, when your heart is right, good things happen!"

Joshua and Mo returned to California buoyed by the 25 hours of beautiful images they had captured in India. Joshua met with Alam at the Aroma Cafe next to the Rafael Theater in San Rafael to review the progress on the documentary. Alam proposed that the filmmakers place more emphasis on his father and his father's legacy in the documentary: he felt his role should be ancillary to the legacy he was receiving from his father. He also wanted the filmmakers to include some celebrities in the film; he and his family would help facilitate those interviews. Joshua was happy with the suggestions and delighted to have more access to Khansahib; it was something that Mo and Joshua had been keen about from the film's inception. Joshua had likewise been interested in interviewing celebrity Western musicians influenced by Khan from the outset, but had felt this territory off limits. The plans for the documentary had not changed, but the Khans seemed more comfortable with the direction in which it was heading.

On April 15, 2007, Joshua and Mo filmed Khansahib's 85th birthday party. Jazz saxophonist John Handy, who had collaborated with Ali Akbar Khan in the 70's, was there and Joshua filmed this most congenial of raconteurs: the footage became



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one of the opening shots of the finished documentary. Joshua continued domestic shooting during 2007: Zakir Hussain in May and Derek Trucks in June.

Throughout the filmmaking process, Mellars was relentless in his willingness to film long hours to get that one small golden kernel of footage. Illustrative of his patience was a shoot he made at an Ali Akbar Khan book launch held in a dimly lit hall. Lasting over three hours, the shoot resulted in but one shot that made the final cut--Khan signing his distinctive autograph. The filmmaker commented that filming at times resembles "some kind of crazy Zen exercise" in which a good proportion of his shooting time leads him into a deeper immersion into the subject matter.

On August 28, 2008, Mellars, Aimaq and Alam Khan interviewed Carlos Santana at his San Rafael offices. Early in 2009, when Alam had still another concert tour in India, Mellars again accompanied him on tour. Flying into Kolkata, the filmmaker again headquartered at the Rama Krishna Mission. While in Kolkata, Mellars filmed Alam performing concerts at the Rama Krishna Mission, All Bengal Music Conference, and the Sangeet Ashram then struck out on his own to film historical sites closely connected with the Khan musical legacy.

The filmmaker flew to Delhi, accompanied by Erik Franden, a sarode student at the Ali Akbar College of Music, on a morning flight. Early the next morning, the filmmaker and Franden left by car for Agra, site of the Taj Mahal. While driving from Delhi to Agra, Mellars saw a road sign for Gwalior, and quickly calculated the possibility of a day trip from Agra to the site of the tomb of 16th musician Mian Tansen from whom the Khans trace their musical heritage. He then negotiated a deal with the owner of the hired car to facilitate the trip. The filmmaker had the driver continue on to Fatehpur Sikri, palace of the Mogul Emperor Akbar where the great musician Mian Tansen is said to have performed. On the next day Mellars pushed on to Gwalior and the site of Mian Tansen's tomb. He then filmed at and around the Taj Mahal before returning to Delhi.

After flying back to Kolkata to film Alam's concert at the prestigious Dover Lane Music Conference, the filmmaker boarded a night train for Maihar, the town where Ali Akbar Khan grew up in central India. There Mellars filmed a town festival where Alam was an honored guest, viewed the tomb of Alam's grandfather, Acharya Baba Allauddin Khan and filmed in the most holy Maa Sharda temple, making an offering at the temple, absorbing the vibrations and energy in Maihar, and expe-

riencing the spirituality of both Muslims and Hindus. At night the Muslim call to prayer mixed in the filmmaker's head with his dreams, the side effects of malaria pills, the noises that he'd heard in the Maa Sharda temple, the heat of India and his travel exhaustion to create what seemed like an altered state of reality.

Back home again in Northern California in 2009, the filmmakers interviewed Mickey Hart in March and then busied themselves with domestic filming, beginning film editing and final script editing in preparation for the voice over. On June 18, Maestro Ali Akbar Khan died. Alam called Joshua to invite him to the funeral and asked him to bring his camera. Joshua wore the same white kurta that he had worn at the shrine of Baba Allauddin Khan in Maihar. It was a sad and emotional occasion; it marked the end of an era.

Mellars interviewed Alam again three weeks after his father's death, then filmed the young sarodist in concert in the Bay Area one last time. In September, Joshua and Alam interviewed Indian Classical flute Maestro G. S. Sachdev in San Rafael.

At the end of 2009, after months of searching for the right voice for the film, Mellars called his old college drama professor who now taught at Boston University; Professor Mark Cohen had spent 15 years as a professional actor in New York. When the actor accepted the job, Mellars was delighted, saying later that, "Mark Cohen knew just how to go about what was needed. His nuanced voice became a true gift to the film: it both complemented and completed Play Like a Lion."



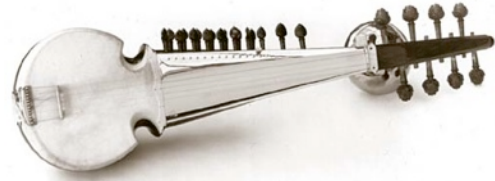
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Play Like a Lion: The Legacy of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

Indian Classical Music: A Brief History

Hindustani or North Indian Classical Music traces its origins to Vedic times. The music was very tied to religious practices, a way of chanting or reciting hymns. Sound itself was thought to be connected to the deities--

Saraswati, Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, Shiva the Destroyer. The music slowly developed technique and protocol or rules of how the words would be delivered or performed. The music was influenced by and in turn influenced invaders and cultures which came into what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan. First the Persians and much later the Moghul Empire exerted great influences.



The musicians were then patronized in the courts; subsequently some musicians acquired land and holdings sustaining them for a few generations. Mian Tansen, an extraordinarily gifted musician in the court of the Moghul Emperor Akbar, was a major touchstone to later music and musicians reaching down to the British hegemony and the present. The lineage of Tansen can be traced to Ustad Wazir Khan and from him to his disciple, Acharya Baba Allauddin Khan, Alam Khan's grandfather. Maestro Ali Akbar Khan, Alam's father, was taught by Baba Allauddin Khan and in turn taught Alam. For most of its history, the music was closely guarded, handed down from guru to disciple, but with the waning of princely power came a diminishment of patronage at the same time that modern recording technology, radio and greater access to travel by the musicians freed them and the music and made for its wider dissemination to a bigger variety of students and a much wider audience.



And so this music is much venerated in the Khan family for its beauty and its longevity and its connection to the ineffable, the true and the pure. The family has a history of both preserving the best of the music and spreading it widely. With the death of his father, Alam now feels the responsibility to carry the torch of the music and continue to spread it in its undiluted form.

***Play Like a Lion* Film Credits and Details**

Cast: Ali Akbar Khan, Carlos Santana, Mickey Hart, Zakir Hussain, Derek Trucks, John Handy, Swapan Chaudhuri, G.S. Sachdev, Aashish Khan, Alam Khan

Narrator: Mark Cohen

Soundtrack: Ali Akbar Khan

World Premiere: 7th Globians World and Documentary Film Festival--Berlin

World Premiere Date/Location: August 14, 2011--Kino Toni Cinema, Berlin

Genre: Documentary (Music, History, Biography)

Running Time: 72 minutes

Aspect Ratio: 1.78 (16:9)

Country of Production: USA

Countries of Filming: USA, India

Filming Locations: San Francisco Bay Area, Kolkata, Mumbai, Rajasthan, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Gwalior, Maihar

Year of Completion: 2011

Original Language: English

Print Details: Color, Stereo

Executive Producer: Mojib Aimaq

Writer, Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor: Joshua Dylan Mellars

Associate Producer: Issac Pazho

Production Company: Abuela Luna Pictures

Production Grant: Pacific Pioneer Fund

Fiscal Sponsor: San Francisco Film Society

Web Links

Official *Play Like a Lion* Website: www.playlikealion.com

Production Company Website: www.abuelaluna.com



Director's Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/joshua.dylan.mellars

Play Like a Lion Facebook Film Page: www.facebook.com/PlayLikeaLion



Director's Twitter Page: <http://twitter.com/JoshuaMellars>



Play Like a Lion iMDB Page: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1827491>

Director's iMDB Page: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3562895>



Teaser Trailer YouTube Link: <http://youtu.be/HixL4KOuzVo>

Abuela Luna Pictures Channel: www.youtube.com/AbuelaLunaPictures



Play Like a Lion Teaser Trailer Vimeo Link:

www.vimeo.com/joshuadylanmellars/playlikealionteaser

Director's Vimeo Page: www.vimeo.com/joshuadylanmellars

