

Extrait du Sounds Mag'

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The sounds of Istanbul - Crossing the Bridge

- English - Cinema -



Date de mise en ligne : Sunday 30 September 2007

Sounds Mag'

When Alexander Hacke, a German bass player, reaches the thriving city of Istanbul to find musicians who will help him to compose the music of *Head On*, he encounters the neo-psychedelic band Baba Zula. He is asked if he will play the bass for them when their own bassist leaves the band. Filmed by Fatih Akin, this documentary is about Hacke and his personal attempts at grasping the full richness of Istanbul's musical scene.

The beauty of Istanbul is renowned. Thousands of years of history have forged one of the most impressive cities of our world, with mosques, churches, temples... The sounds of Istanbul are a witness to its diversity. People arguing in the street in Turkish, English, Kurdish or French. The sounds of buses and cars. The call to prayer five times a day. Istanbul is a thriving city and this is particularly evident in the musical scene of this huge city.

Even someone born and raised in the city will be surprised by the rich variety of musical styles present in Fatih Akin's documentary film. From the outset, we are introduced to incredible personalities, to people with more or less of a message. In a country which is regularly torn by politics, religion and the societal problems of some of its inhabitants, music is a powerful force.

The voice-overs are those of Alexander Hacke, who once was the bassist for the German experimental band Einstürzende Neubauten. However, what speaks the most for Akin is the musical sounds or indeed, the voices of those musicians who do the playing. From the crazy youngish members of Baba Zula and their self-titled 'oriental dub' to the hyper-famous Sezen Aksu, all are present here. From the high middle-class Replikas to the more working-class Nur Ceylan... From Istanbul's rock music scene with the amazing Duman, to Ceza's rapping and the more classical Selim Sesler, the musical diversity of the city is explored in amazing depth.

A particularly amazing moment is when the Kurdish singer Aynur Do an gives a private performance to the film maker in a Turkish bath. Do an's song is entitled 'Ehmedo' and, sung in Kurdish, it is amazingly heart-wrenching when it is understood that until not too long ago, it was forbidden for ethnic minorities and Kurds to sing in their own language. Sezen Aksu's ode to Istanbul in '0stanbul Hat1ras1' is a magnificent musical moment. Aksu's voice is, as always, capable of extraordinary emotional power.

The most interesting aspect of this film for me is the fact that Fatih Akin, director of *Gegen Die Wand (Head On)* in 2004, is visiting Istanbul as an expatriate. Being German-Turkish himself, it becomes clear that Istanbul and Turkey are places which he feels the need to constantly (re)discover. In this masterpiece of a documentary he takes his audience through a journey of sound while, visually, the shaky camera reflects the mental state of someone who is deeply touched by what he sees.

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