

THE JOURNEY WITHIN

By Mian Adnan Ahmad



My presentation includes the screening of 'The Journey Within' - an award-winning music docu-film on the origins of Coke Studio Pakistan, which I wrote, directed and produced. A film which brings to light the rich musical history of our region by telling the story of how artists of various backgrounds and genres came together in a post 9/11 Pakistan to start a process of self-discovery and re-learning of their own musical inspirations, in helping create what is now one of the biggest music shows of South Asia. Apart from a successful festival run, the film has also made inroads in scholarly endeavors, having been sought for study by PHD candidates and recently included in the South Asian Cinema program of University of California in Davis

In some way or form we all have our identities connected through music, culture and artistic expression. Over time each coming generation can lose some of their own heritage in this relationship...by force, a lack of interest and internal chaos. In a country such as Pakistan which is challenged by all three, coupled with its people being portrayed negatively by the media and falling victim to an 'Us' vs 'Them' scenario, there is a greater need amongst the people to 'identify'. Not just from outside, but also from within. It is this searching for and embracing of the true essence of who we are, where we come from and the desire to break an unjust existing stereotype of Pakistan as a whole, that gave birth to a music show resonated with the masses. It inspired by bringing to the fore the rich musical heritage of this region and helped ignite a renewed sense of pride amongst the people; uniting all divisions and backgrounds in celebrating the inherited musical expressions that were otherwise long forgotten

We look back at this inspiring narrative, while focusing on the show's incredible music and those involved with its humble beginnings. Not only does it help dismantle stereotypes and prejudices from outside and within but also plants the seeds for an ongoing journey of discovery and self-identity that continues to this day. After numerous awards and close to 100 screenings around the world, this is a rare opportunity for me to actually present and have a talk on my film at what is considered to be the second largest conference on South Asia