

# The song of the rocks



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A few of the remaining rocks of Hyderabad | Photo Credit: serish naniseti

## The rocks of the Deccan come alive through rap, hip-hop and qawwali

Filmmaker Uma Magal's *Other Kohinoors: The Rocks of Hyderabad*, a documentary on the rocks, heritage and culture of Hyderabad is ready for release. Having been in the making for the last ten years, the 45-minute long film attempts to highlight and reconnect with various aspects of culture. She reasons that when rocks are a crucial part of place names in Hyderabad, how can one not know about them?



Hyderabad is losing its rockscape to rapid urbanisation | Photo Credit: serish naniseti

"With rocks disappearing from the landscape, I thought there is a need to bring them back in focus. Our movie is a labour of love driven by a passion for the majestic rocks that are a part of the heritage of Hyderabad. The documentary with a straightforward narration and animation acquires a unique identity with the music."

## Music connect

Uma felt they needed to connect the current generation to the rocks with something current, something trending. “The choice was mostly music. The big question was, what kind? We brainstormed and decided it has to be rap,” elaborates Uma.

She adds, “The lyrics are a celebration of what the rocks mean to Hyderabad. A positive spirit, registering the remarkable ways in which the cultural imagination of the city embraces the rocky landscape, propels the beautiful, foot tapping energy of the song and lyrics.”

When they were a little clueless about how to go about it, one of Uma’s friends pulled in Murthovic or DJ Murthy as the music director. “After Murthy came in, our film got an extra element of ‘hep’ to it,” says Uma.

The music is produced by Uma Magal, Mahnoor Yar Khan, Zak Alladin and Murthovic. The lyrics in Telugu, English and Dakhani have been penned by Usha Raman and Uma Magal.

An excited Murthy says the work he did for the movie adds a new dimension to his body of work. He says, “As a music creator, I do electronic club music and also direct music for video games. So when the project came to me and I heard some of the lyrics, I didn’t think twice about it. I have lived for more than two decades in the city and was a part of the change, working with different age groups and multi-generations. So when I heard the ethos of the documentary, I wanted to be a part of it. Frankly, I was clueless in the beginning.”

With the rhythmic and phonetic lyrics from the team, he got an idea about what to make. “I focused on music that the current generation is consuming and makes them happy.”

### The team of musicians

Some of the musicians in this project, like Jaywant Naidu, Keith D’Rozario, George Hull, K Krishna Sravan, Khyati and Kshiteish of the Heytherabadi Rockstars and the Arabi Daff Troupe recorded a range of instruments with enthusiasm and shared love for the project, the rocks and the city.

Murthovic was supported by his team at Nadabramha Records, Gopika Jairam and Abi Jacob.

Anuj Gurwara renders the male vocals in style, using not just his voice but also his acting talents. Gopika Jairam brings talent, classical training and a young cool vibe to her rendition of the female vocals.

He specifies the music and the work. “The film is a visual essay that will entertain and educate. Action footage is stylistically weaved in with animation, minimal narration and music. The music for the film’s soundtrack is a mix of Telugu and Hindi rap, Urdu shayari narrated to music and original background music composed for the film.”

More than anything, Murthovic says if the film and the music are able to catch the attention of the young people and make them possessive about the (remaining) rocks of Hyderabad, the team will be thrilled.