

RELEASED: Thursday, May 5, 2016

Foreign Correspondent: Persian Jam

Airs Tuesday, May 10 at 9.30pm on ABC & iview

Hairy hipsters, beautiful girls, funky cafes, pulsing live music. This isn't inner city Aussie cool. This is Iran, where young artists and musicians are testing the tolerance of the Islamic regime, as Matt Brown reports

Think of Iran - think of austere Islamic clerics, anti-American sloganeering and disquieting nuclear ambitions.

It's true, but not the whole truth. A shift is under way inside Iran as international sanctions start to ease following the historic, tortuous deal over its nuclear program.

Optimism is in the air.

"It's the golden years of Iran - the new history I think!" – impresario Ehsan Rasoulof

As Middle East Correspondent Matt Brown discovers, Iran's young musicians and artists are finding voice, bit by bit, in the flourishing café culture of the capital Tehran. And they're pulling crowds from a young population whose entire lives have been lived under the rule of Islamic clerics.

Bomrani used to be an underground band, only getting to play their raucous brand of gypsy punk at hit-and-run gigs. Now they've cut a CD and been ticked to perform by the cultural enforcer, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

"We want to reach more people so they listen to our music. It's what drives us to get better." – Mani, Bomrani's trombonist

"There's been an artistic blossoming here. Things have become more relaxed. People can come and see how we live - and see that we're human!" – singer Reza Koolaghani

Iran may be loosening but it's still a conservative state, so artists need a keen sense of what they can get away with. Otherwise they face jail.

"You can't just sing anything – there are red lines." – trombonist Mani

Members of 25 Band know only too well the consequences of overstepping. A video they made a few years ago – tame by western standards, raunchy by Iran's – ruffled the censors and sent some of the group to jail. They now live abroad, putting on occasional performances in neighbouring Turkey - with their Iranian fans in tow.

"The fact that they travel from Iran to support us, show us they love us, means so much... it makes it all worthwhile." – Tamin, 25 Band vocalist

"Persian Jam" – Matt Brown's report on the latest twist in Iran's rich history of music, art and poetry – airs on *Foreign Correspondent* 9.30pm Tuesday May 10 and

10.30am Thursday May 12 on ABC & iview; and 6.30pm Saturday May 14 on ABC News 24. Also on [iview](#).

You can view previous episodes on **ABC iview** and online at: **abc.net.au/foreign**

Join the conversation: **#ForeignCorrespondent**

Follow Foreign Correspondent on Twitter: **@ForeignOfficial**

Facebook: **ABCForeignCorrespondent**

For further information contact:

Chris Chamberlin, News Publicist, ABC TV Publicity

02 83333 2154 | 0404 075 749 | chamberlin.chris@abc.net.au

@popculturechris