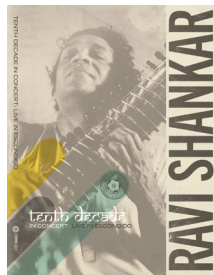


REVIEWS

DVD

RAVI SHANKAR

*Tenth Decade: Live in Escondido*

[East Meets West]

In light of Shankar's death on Dec. 11, 2012, *Tenth Decade* will likely stand as the final major release from an iconic musician who bridged East and West like no other. Filmed at the California Center for the Arts in Escondido, Calif., in October 2011, the nearly 90-minute performance finds the master sitar player—91 at the time, sporting a full gray beard and using a cane as he takes the stage—still remarkably supple and inventive. Navigating the instrument's multiple strings with the same dexterity and vitality he displayed nearly a half-century earlier at the Monterey Pop Festival, Shankar and his accompanists—a second sitarist, a flutist, two tabla players and two men working the lute-like tanpura—are in perfect sync from the opening notes of the evening's first raga, "Yaman Kalyan." The second, a slow-builder of more than 20 minutes titled "Khamaj," projects the hypnotic, enveloping, mysteriously droning splendor that first enthralled Western audiences. Whether Shankar needed a break after that workout, he gets one when the drummers take over for the display of virtuosity that is "Taal Vadya," but he returns for "Goonga Sitar," during which he mutes his instrument to give it what he describes in his introduction as a "dry" sound. For the finale, "Raga Mala," an airy and luminous piece that escalates in intensity and settles back again, the camera zooms in on Shankar's nimble fingers. There is nothing to suggest he's a man nearing the end, nor even a man who accepts aging as a reality of life. —Jeff Tamarkin

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