HD Feature Documentary, 1x79
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Think of a ukulele and you probably imagine grass skirts, slide guitar and kitchy lyrics, but far from being just a Hawaiian novelty instrument, the uke has a rich history and has profoundly affected music around the world.

Originally brought to Hawaii by Portuguese immigrants, the tiny instrument first captured the musical imaginations of the Hawaiian royal court in the 1880's. With the dawn of the radio broadcasting age, ukulele music owned the airwaves. Broadway produced ukulele musicals. Hollywood produced ukulele movie stars. The little instrument was so inexpensive and easy to play that by the early twenties the uke was the most popular instrument in the American home and the first musical voice for millions of children. Over the next thirty years the uke was number one, and then, with the rise of rock and roll guitar, faded into nerdy obscurity. Until now.

In the internet age, the ukulele is making a comeback. Clubs and ensembles are sprouting up around the world, and a new generation is pulling their grandparents' ukes out of the closet, challenging our images of the humble, twangy ukulele. Ukes top the charts in Japan, Swedish punks thrash uke angst, California popsters serve it to ya ukulele style, classical composers carefully pluck out musicbox sonatas, and all of them meet together at the myriad ukulele festivals from New York to London and Tokyo.

This is not a toy!

MIGHTY UKE travels the world to discover why so many people of different nations, cultures, ages and musical tastes are turning to the ukulele to express themselves, connect with the past, and with each other. From the Redwoods of California through the gritty streets of Paris, from swinging London through Tokyo's highrise canyons to Hawaii, ukers tell the story of the people's instrument: The Mighty Uke.

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