



Using words for weapons

Goodnight Sarajevo, screened at the Al Jazeera International Film Festival 2015, is the story of Bosnian journalist Boban Minic, who went back home after 20 years in exile



Boban visits his hometown of Sarajevo after 20 years.

By Umer Nangiana

Amid atrocities, unceasing bombardment and rising death toll, he kept wishing his countrymen “goodnight” night after night for months. *Goodnight Sarajevo* is his story. It is the story of a voice.

And the voice is Bosnian journalist Boban Minic. The story is about his romance with Radio Sarajevo during the siege of his city in the Bosnian war.

Deciding to stay behind in Sarajevo when everybody else was trying to get out of the crippling city, Minic defended his town with

‘words’ for weapon. Every night he would give his listeners hope. His radio programme would divert their attention away from the mayhem, through music and through talk of future.

But then, at one point, he too had to emigrate. Today, exiled in Spain and guided by a new mission, Minic, returns to Sarajevo after a hiatus of 20 years.

“I read his book. I was planning a trip to Bosnia and before my travel I wanted to read about the war in Bosnia and one of the books that I read was his and I loved it,” Edu Marin, the executive producer and director of the documentary, *Goodnight Sarajevo*, recently screened at Al Jazeera International Film Festival 2015, told *Community*.

“It touched my heart. I found his

number and called him. We met in his town in Spain and he told me that he was travelling to Bosnia in a month,” said Marin, adding that it was here the idea for the documentary film was born.

Goodnight Sarajevo followed Minic’s return to Sarajevo 20 years after he left the city one fateful night to join his family in exile. From the onset, Minic takes you to the place where he had come to see off his leaving family yet could not give his son a goodbye hug for the fear of snipers’ bullets.

He then takes the audience to the market, which still stands, where his young sister, along with dozens others, was killed in a mortar attack. Minic also shows the secret tunnel that was dug by Sarajevo authorities during siege to help establish the

supply route and which eventually helped Minic flee the war-ravaged city.

“I decided to make the movie because of the vision that he (Minic) had about the war and the country. The way he fought with only words and no weapons. And what I liked the most was that through his programmes he made people forget the war,” said the film director.

“He made them out of thinking about death and sufferings, and led them talk about future, music and culture. It would help people forget about the war, even if momentarily and would give them hope,” said the young documentary-maker who has taken the film to 23 film festivals including the one in Sarajevo and it has won positive reviews from everywhere.

Marin said they filmed the documentary in eight days in Sarajevo but then after the trip, the same day they finished it, he was asked to move to Egypt where he is currently based as a journalist.

Marin, originally from Madrid, Spain, is a self-starter, go-getter journalist. He lived one year in Paris, and three years in Morocco, where he was a freelance radio journalist during the Arab Spring.

Now based in Cairo as a news correspondent for EFE, the Spanish News Agency, Marin has radio running through his veins. He now faces the world of the news agencies, photography and documentary film. Passionate about people and social issues, he never gets tired of saying that he became a journalist to be a “storyteller”.



Edu Marin, the Executive Producer and film director, spoke to Community at Al Jazeera International Film Festival 2015 recently.
Photo by Umer Nangiana



Minic kept fighting with the only weapon he had, words. **Still images courtesy of the film's page**



Minic could not leave his radio even when his family left the town after his sister was killed in a shell attack on a market.



Minic returns to Sarajevo to bury his mother's ashes in his hometown he left 20 years ago.

"My posting to Cairo made the editing and the post production work take longer because my other friend (co-producer and the team) was in Madrid and I was in Cairo. We had a lot of conversations through Skype and [I made] a lot of trips to Madrid for almost a year," explained Marin.

"When we filmed it, we felt that it was a story to tell and to show to the people so one of the options was festivals, especially the festival in Sarajevo where we have been in August. And also in this region, Middle East, where we lived," he added.

Marin said he and his team are happy with the feedback. From the 23 festivals, all small and medium, they have gained rave reviews and appreciation. It was his first film and Marin intends to make more films with the same team.

"With the same team, we are planning to make more films because we are a great team together. I could not make this film without my co-director," said Marin, referring to Olivier Algora.

A dual French-Spanish historian and television director born in 1971, Algora lives surrounded by nature in

the mountains of Madrid, although he crosses the Pyrenees every time he can in order to keep the link with his beloved southern France.

With a deep social conscience, he always likes to focus on reality from a human perspective, and with this, he escapes from narrative fiction and is able to show only what his camera films.

Marin said he was surrounded by people who were into documentaries and when he came up with the idea of making a movie on Minic, they all said let's give it a go.

Minic's book helped them a lot in documenting the story. "A lot of conversations with him and the pictures he sent to us and then all the footage from the war helped us in editing and production of the film," said the film director.

The other team members who worked with Marin on the film were Davide Giorni, the executive producer and director of photography, Jorge Garcia (music), Ricardo Gallego Cambronero (editing), Vctor Gulias (production), Alavaro Ripoll (production), Usert38 (design of the posters) and Inigo Alzugaray (website).



Minic shows the tunnel made during the war, which provided safe passage and food supply route for many in sieged Sarajevo.