

# Top brass natural for Bregovic

He was a Balkan rock star, now bringing Gypsy music to the world is his passion, writes Ara Jansen

If European superstar Goran Bregovic has a mission, it's to remind the world Gypsy culture is an important asset and his music might be his "tiny" contribution to a more open attitude towards it.

The 65-year-old from Sarajevo has had a long, varied career, selling millions of albums with his first rock band Bijelo Dugme (White Button) in the 70s through to composing for film, writing for Iggy Pop and the late Cape Verdean Barefoot Diva Cesaria Evora and collaborating with a German DJ.

He's considered to have an acute and uncanny capacity to understand and assimilate vastly varied musical cultures which he incorporates into his music, which can range from traditional Corsican, Georgian or Bulgarian chants through to elements of techno and electro music.

These days, Bregovic conducts a motley musical group that varies in size from nine to 19 depending on the occasion. For almost 20 years Wedding and Funeral Orchestra has roamed the world on an unending tour, totalling more than 1500 shows.

Most of Bregovic's songs are now in Roma (the Gypsy language), so not many people understand them. However, he knows that good music is felt with the part of our being that doesn't need words. That's the part he hopes to touch when he performs a lively set at the Chevron Festival Gardens tomorrow night.

The authentic horns and brass are key to Bregovic's band. They blow out a sound which can often be out of tune but somehow incredibly charming, energetic and festive. Their use in Gypsy bands of the Balkan region stem from army brass bands.

"Armies seem to be the only



Military tradition: Goran Bregovic says Gypsy bands of the Balkan region stem from army brass bands.

authentic tradition around here. In the whole history of the Balkans we've never lived for more than 50 years without a war," Bregovic explains.

"Since there were no music academies, they simply bought trumpets and gave them to the Gypsies because they quickly pick up playing any instrument.

"They acquired military music without having to build music academies. Of course, the minute they got the instruments, Gypsies started using them to play music they've played their whole life: same occasions, same music — weddings and funerals to

the sound of shiny trumpets.

"Brass bands stemming from this military tradition took root. You can now count them by the hundreds between Istanbul and Bucharest. And even today they play on the same old tattered military trumpets, instruments that are very difficult to tune.

"Which is another reason why I like to work with these bands; I still find something of that human, out-of-tune playing in my Gypsy brass band."

Bregovic's fans range widely in age and, at some concerts, casting an eye out into the hall reveals an audience which looks

like one for any chart-topping pop star.

He says the attraction is because it's difficult not to be impressed by the Gypsies. Their symbolic level is like that of the American cowboy and just as many have dreamt of having the freedom of a cowboy at least once, many have dreamt of being a Gypsy, if just for a moment.

"I also believe the fact that DJs have started to take interest in Balkan and Gypsy music helped a lot to attract a younger audience."

The singer and writer uses old melodies and songs as a base for

some of his work, saying even the most famous composers of our time and yesteryear drew from folklore and tradition.

"Would one say that Picasso's rendering of Velazquez' Las Meninas is his own painting — I think yes — we call it a Picasso? Or would one argue that Andy Warhol's prints of Mona Lisa are not his own work? Mixing is in the nature of things — you cannot name one important composer — from Stravinsky to Bartok from Bizet to Lennon — who did not borrow from traditional lore. That was always the most natural method because tradition is like a solid bank from which you borrow in faith that you will return the loan with interest."

It's no surprise that the Gypsies are Bregovic's biggest influence. When he looks back, he has always been involved with them in one way or another.

Bregovic's father was a colonel and an amateur musician and always wanted his son to be a musician. He enrolled him early in a Sarajevo school to learn violin. At 15 Bregovic junior discovered the electric guitar and its sexual allure, quitting school to play popular music in bars.

Musically Bregovic brings the old traditions into the modern world but seems to naturally meld the two into something which touches and engages listeners who will never understand a word.

Bregovic is not defined by a predetermined image of himself, allowing him the freedom to write as naturally as he eats and breathes. While neither of these things is difficult and keep us alive, music provides Bregovic with that same life-giving force.

■ Goran Bregovic plays Chevron Festival Gardens tomorrow night.

## Seductive exploration flirts with dark side

PIAF: VISUAL ARTS  
Dani Marti — Black Sun  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
REVIEW LAETITIA WILSON

Sometimes art has the ability to suck you in, spit you out and leave you feeling a little uncouth. This is exactly the note that Dani Marti hits in his solo show of sculpture and video art, Black Sun.

As the title suggests, there is darkness here, but also glowing intensity from the Spanish-born Australian artist. A new work created for this, Marti's first solo show in WA, embodies this. Prelude 1 is a large, dense circle of customised corner cube reflectors and glass beads, tightly clustered together. It is both beautiful and disgusting as a writhing mass of dark matter.

Generally, Marti's works are both seductively enchanting and deeply repulsive. He embraces such dualities by making art that is unashamedly visceral, highly tactile and grounded

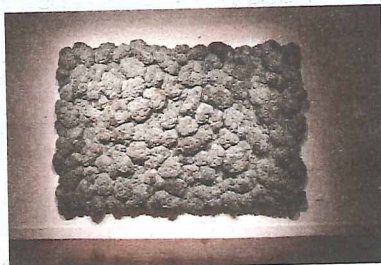
in themes of intimacy, the search for the self, sexuality and human relationships.

Referred to as baroque minimalism, the works have all the audaciousness, opulence and tension of the baroque, contained within the tight frame of minimal abstraction.

They also make use of the repetition of materials to generate a sense of not only layered density and darkness but also movement and dynamism. Works are made up of masses of beads, clusters of scourers, mounds of reflectors and tightly braided hose, polyester, nylon and leather.

As part of this material reverie, a series of abstract portraits in the main gallery are dense fields of beaded necklaces. This is a veritable costume-jewellery treasure-trove. These works hold presence in both their sheer physicality and psychological resonance.

They are part of the Mother series, an ode to the artist's mother, a



Layered density: Time, 2013.



Ode: Mother, 2014-2015.

portrait of her, yet also portraits of all women, by being made up of the very personal, intimate item adorning the neck. As Marti weaves the necklaces into contemporary art minimalism, he wonders about the personal narratives inherent to each individual necklace, who they belonged to and what they meant to the given women.

The many layers, density and darkness that pervade these works offer an insight into the greater



Reflection: Golden Years, 2014.



Intimate: Notes for Bob.

meanings attached to other works. Other woven pieces all come back to personal human emotions, relations and intimacy. The video pieces then, are more literally physically confronting.

In the video Golden Years, a man, Michael, is filmed at extreme close range as he looks at himself in a handheld mirror. The scene is a personal fetish of the man pictured; engaged in an intimate encounter

with his own image. For the viewer the reflection is mostly dark, so it is like he is falling into the darkness and solitude of his own narcissism.

While seemingly distinct from the abstract works, this piece is not so far removed. It presents another form of abstraction; we only ever see the man's face in fragments, his neck, his tongue, and are given little sense of his identity.

Marti is interested in such idiosyncrasies and the perversities of human fetishes. He appears keen to expose them in such a way as to make the viewer feel as if they are right there and claustrophobic.

There is sensitivity in the way he handles his subjects, an awareness of power dynamics, while at the same time he skates at the edges of ethics. It is as though the label of art gives the licence and sanctity to transgress and initiate projects with various individuals that might otherwise be wildly problematic. This aside, both sculpture and video, are incredibly enticing and remarkably well-crafted pieces and experiencing such existentially layered creations is well worth the disconcerting aftertaste.

■ Dani Marti — Black Sun runs until March 28.