

= U2 concert in Sarajevo =

On 23 September 1997 , the Irish rock band U2 held a concert at Koševski Stadium in Sarajevo , Bosnia and Herzegovina , as part of the group 's PopMart Tour . They were the first major artist to hold a concert in the city after the end of the Bosnian War . Approximately 45 @, @ 000 fans attended the show .

The band first became involved with Sarajevo in 1993 on their Zoo TV Tour ; approached by aid worker Bill Carter about bringing attention to the Siege of Sarajevo , the band conducted nightly satellite transmissions with Bosnians during their shows . These link @-@ ups were the subject of criticism from journalists for mixing entertainment with human tragedy . Although the war made it impractical for U2 to visit Sarajevo at the time , they vowed to eventually play a concert in the city . After the conflict ended in November 1995 , they made arrangements to visit Sarajevo , and with help from United Nations ambassadors and peacekeeping troops , they scheduled and played the concert in 1997 .

The band offered to hold a benefit concert or small show in Sarajevo , but it was requested that they stage a full PopMart concert . The performance consequently featured the tour 's extravagant stage , and the band played a set list typical of the tour . The show brought together people of different ethnicities who had previously clashed during the war , and train service was temporarily resumed to allow concertgoers to attend . Among the songs played was " Miss Sarajevo " , written by U2 and Brian Eno about a beauty pageant held during the war . Although the band were displeased with their performance and lead vocalist Bono had vocal difficulties , the concert was well received and was credited with improving morale among Bosnians . The members of U2 consider the show to be among their proudest moments . The concert was lauded by Bosnians .

= = Background = =

= = = War in Sarajevo = = =

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was composed of six constituent republics : Bosnia @-@ Herzegovina , Croatia , Macedonia , Montenegro , Serbia , and Slovenia . In 1991 , Croatia , and Slovenia seceded from Yugoslavia . Bosnia @-@ Herzegovina ? a republic with a mixed population consisting of Bosniaks , Serbs , and Croats ? followed suit in March 1992 in a highly controversial referendum , creating tension in the ethnic communities . Bosnian Serb militias , whose strategic goal was to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina and unite with Serbia , encircled Sarajevo with a siege force of 18 @, @ 000 stationed in the surrounding hills , from which they assaulted the city with weapons that included artillery , mortars , tanks , anti @-@ aircraft guns , heavy machine @-@ guns , rocket launchers , and aircraft bombs . From 2 May 1992 until the end of the war in 1996 , the city was blockaded . The Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina , numbering roughly 40 @, @ 000 inside the besieged city , was poorly equipped and unable to break the siege . Meanwhile , throughout the country , thousands of predominantly Bosniak civilians were driven from their homes in a process of ethnic cleansing . In Sarajevo , women and children attempting to buy food were frequently terrorized by Bosnian Serb sniper fire .

= = = U2 's reaction = = =

In 1993 , U2 were in Europe for the " Zooropa " leg of their Zoo TV Tour . Before their 3 July show in Verona , Italy , the band received a fax from Radio Televizija Bosne I Hercegovina asking for an interview regarding the situation in Bosnia . The band agreed and met with an American aid worker named Bill Carter , who acted as the station 's foreign associate , due to Serbian travel restrictions . Carter described his experiences in Sarajevo helping Bosnians while surviving the dangerous living conditions . Lead vocalist Bono was unnerved to hear that those living in makeshift bomb shelters in the city played music , including U2 's , at loud volumes to drown out the sound of explosions . While

in Sarajevo , Carter had seen a television interview on MTV in which Bono mentioned the theme of the Zooropa tour leg was a unified Europe . Feeling that such an aim was empty if ignoring the Bosnians ' plight , Carter sought Bono 's help . He requested that U2 go to Sarajevo to bring attention to the war and break the " media fatigue " that had occurred from covering the conflict .

Bono agreed to Carter 's request without asking the rest of the band , and when informed of the idea , the other members gave only tacit approval . They briefly considered playing an impromptu concert in the city , with Bono suggesting that they perform in the bunker where Carter and his friends hid during the siege . He said , " even if all we get is some extra attention for Bosnia on MTV , that 's something " . The idea fell through when it was pointed out that the logistics of transporting their equipment into the city were impossible , as the only way into Sarajevo was on a United Nations plane . Manager Paul McGuinness realized that even if the band managed to organize a concert , it would endanger their lives and those of the audience and the Zoo TV crew . As he explained , " U2 's effort to discuss any humanitarian issue have sometimes been accompanied by a false instinct that U2 is also obliged to resolve that issue . Going to Sarajevo seems to me to fall into that category . I think it would endanger the people we go with , endanger the tour , and endanger the band . " Drummer Larry Mullen , Jr. feared that the move would look like a publicity stunt .

Instead , the group agreed to use the tour 's satellite dish to conduct live video transmissions from their concerts to Carter in Sarajevo . Carter returned to the city and assembled a video unit . The band purchased a satellite dish to be sent to Sarajevo and paid a £ 100 @, @ 000 fee to join the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) . Once set up , the band began satellite link @-@ ups to Sarajevo on nearly a nightly basis , the first of which aired on 17 July 1993 in Bologna , Italy . To connect with the EBU satellite , Carter and two co @-@ workers were forced to visit the Sarajevo television station at night and to film with as little light as possible to avoid the attention of snipers and bombers . To reach the building , they had to traverse an area known as " Sniper Alley " . This was done a total of 12 times over the course of a month . During the broadcasts , Carter discussed the deteriorating situation in the city , and Bosnians often spoke to U2 and their audience . These grim interviews starkly contrasted with the rest of the show ; concerts on the Zoo TV Tour were elaborately staged multimedia events that satirised television and the audience 's over @-@ stimulation . Most of the shows were scripted , but the link @-@ ups to Sarajevo were not , leaving the group unsure who would speak or what they would say . U2 stopped the broadcasts in August 1993 after learning that the Siege of Sarajevo was being reported on the front of many British newspapers . Though this trend had begun before the band 's first Sarajevo transmission , Nathan Jackson suggested that U2 's actions had brought awareness of the situation to their fans and to the British public indirectly .

Reactions to the transmissions were mixed . Many fans felt the transmissions disrupted the flow of the concerts . Most of the British press was highly critical . One writer for NME wrote , " The Bosnian linkup was beyond bad taste . It was insulting . " Bono thought that they were bringing the public 's attention to an important event , though he admitted that the link @-@ ups were the most difficult thing the band had done in their career . Guitarist The Edge said , " We don 't normally see that kind of cold hard news . We get a very sanitized , editorialized take on everything ... When you watch the television news , you are getting something palatable , whereas this was really quite unpalatable most of the time . And for that reason I think it affected people very much , including us . " Mullen worried that the band were exploiting the Bosnians ' suffering for entertainment . During a transmission from the band 's concert at Wembley Stadium , three women in Sarajevo asked what the band intended to do to help before telling Bono , " We know you 're not going to do anything for us . You 're going to go back to a rock show . You 're going to forget that we even exist . And we 're all going to die . " During a transmission to a Glasgow concert , a Bosnian woman told the concert audience , " We would like to hear the music , too , but we hear only the screams of wounded and tortured people and raped women . " Some people were upset by the circumstances of Sarajevo and were motivated to join the War Child charity project , including U2 producer Brian Eno . Despite U2 's obligation to the tour and their inability to perform in Sarajevo during the war , they vowed to play the city someday .

The band contributed to Bosnian relief efforts to enhance humanitarian and public awareness of the

issue , and Bono and Carter subsequently collaborated on the documentary Miss Sarajevo , which showcased the war @-@ torn city during Carter 's six months living there . In 1995 , U2 and Eno wrote the song " Miss Sarajevo " as a response to " the surreal acts of defiance that had taken place during the siege of Sarajevo " . One such act was a beauty pageant organized by Bosnian women who planned to fight the war with their " lipstick and heels " . During the pageant , all of the participants walked onto the stage carrying a banner that said , " Don 't let them kill us " . The winner of the pageant , 17 @-@ year @-@ old Inela Nogi? , later said the pageant " was a crazy thing to do during a war . But we tried to live a normal life . It was some kind of a defence mechanism we all had . " Years later , Bono said , " It was pure Dada and it deserved to be celebrated in song . " Of the song 's meaning , he said , " Everywhere people had heard their call for help ? but help never came . That was the feeling . I had tried to tackle subjects like this head @-@ on , but I 'd learnt a lesson . You have to try and make the same points , in a different , less direct , more surrealist way . " " Miss Sarajevo " was recorded with Luciano Pavarotti and released as the first single from U2 's side @-@ project with Eno entitled Original Soundtracks 1 ; the record was released under the pseudonym " Passengers " .

= = Scheduling and preparations = =

As the Bosnian War ended in 1995 and the Siege of Sarajevo in 1996 , the stability of the region began to improve . Realizing this , U2 began to plan a concert for Sarajevo that would take place on their 1997 PopMart Tour . Although they were the first major musical artist to perform in the city following the war , China Drum had played a concert in July 1996 . Music journalist Andrew Mueller described China Drum 's experience in a single van as a " logistical and administrative nightmare " . Muhamed Sacirbey , the Bosnian Ambassador to the United Nations , helped U2 make arrangements , playing an informal role as promoter and organizer . McGuinness said , " We thought it was going to be quite difficult . But it 's been quite straightforward . People have just wanted to help . We 've blagged a lot of equipment , forklifts and so on , from the military , and the local crew have been incredibly supportive . "

Scheduling the concert meant a financial loss of £ 500 @,@ 000 for the band , despite sponsorship from Coca @-@ Cola and GSM . Ticket prices were set at just DM 8 (£ 8 , US \$ 18) , because of the 50 percent unemployment rate in the city . Bono offered for the group to perform a benefit concert or small show in Sarajevo , but the city requested they hold the full PopMart show . Bono said , " We offered to do a charity gig here , just turn up and do a scratch gig , but they wanted the whole fucking thing . They wanted the lemon ! " McGuinness added , " we felt it was important that we treat this as another city on the tour , to pay them that respect . To come here and not do the whole show would have been rude . " According to news releases following the concert , the total net income for the show was US \$ 13 @,@ 500 ; however , tour promoter John Giddings noted that price did not include the costs of the production or transportation .

As late as July 1997 , U2 were pressured to accept an offer of approximately \$ 4 million to perform in Basel , Switzerland on the date scheduled for the Sarajevo show . At the time , rumours about the region 's instability persisted . To ensure the Sarajevo show was not canceled , Sacirbey appeared at many of the band 's preceding shows to lobby on behalf of the city . For the stage to reach Sarajevo , the road crew had to drive the equipment and stage through war @-@ torn Bosnia . Although the trip was without incident , they had to pass through towns such as Mostar , which had been " obliterated " during the war . Stage and lighting designer Willie Williams commented that " when the truck drivers arrived you could see that they were changed men " . The only trouble in transporting the stage came when a border control agent prevented them from crossing the border for hours . The trucks reached Sarajevo two days prior to the concert , arriving to the cheers and applause of the city 's residents ; their arrival was the first concrete evidence that the band were keeping their promise to play there . McGuinness explained , " This is a city that 's been disappointed so many times there were a lot of people who weren 't prepared to believe the gig was going to take place until they saw the stage going up . " Until then , tickets had sold very slowly , but within 24 hours of the trucks ' arrival , another 8 @,@ 000 tickets were sold . Despite this , a day

before the concert , 15 @, @ 000 tickets remained unsold . Three @-@ hundred local residents were employed to help assemble the stage and promote the show .

Several hundred members of the international " Stabilisation Force " (SFOR) were tasked with upholding the Dayton Agreement for the concert . The band were overwhelmed by the sights they saw when arriving . During the war , Ko?evo Stadium was used as a morgue , and graveyards were present on either sides . Although the venue had escaped the worst of the shelling , the nearby Olympic Hall Zetra had been badly damaged during the war . Despite its condition , U2 used the building for their dressing rooms and offices . Following the concert , it was used to provide lodging for 3 @, @ 000 fans . The band 's hotel , a nearby Holiday Inn , had been shelled during the siege , and part of the building had been destroyed as a result . The walls in Mullen 's room were punctured with mortar shrapnel , and sections of the floor were also missing . Prior to the show , Sacirbey took Mullen on a tour of the city , showing him the Sarajevo Roses embedded in the streets .

On the day of the concert , trains ran into Sarajevo for the first time since the start of the war . Two lines were opened , one from Mostar to Sarajevo and the other from Maglaj to Sarajevo . Although the railways had been functional for the duration of the war , Muslim and Croat politicians could not decide who would operate them . As a result , the trains were only run on the date of the concert to bring fans to the city , and the day after to take them home again . Visa requirements were temporarily suspended . An effort was made to include all of the country 's ethnic groups at the concert . Approximately 500 fans crossed the ethnic boundary lines between Bosnia 's Serb Republic and the Moslem @-@ Croat Federation . People from several of the other Yugoslavian republics went to Sarajevo for the concert , with buses carrying fans from Zagreb , Croatia and Ljubljana , Slovenia . Security around the event was strict . SFOR soldiers searched for bombs with sniffer dogs , and the buildings around the stadium were lined with Irish troops and sharpshooters in case violence broke out .

= = Concert overview = =

The concert was held on 23 September 1997 , and approximately 45 @, @ 000 people attended . It was broadcast in Bosnia by local television networks , as well as globally by BBC . During the event , 10 @, @ 000 soldiers stood on the left side of the stadium to ensure no conflicts broke out . At showtime , a decision was made to open the stadium gates to all , allowing approximately 10 @, @ 000 more fans who could not afford the concert or who had not purchased tickets in time to attend . In addition to the local and foreign fans , 6 @, @ 000 off @-@ duty SFOR soldiers attended the event in uniform . Inela Nogi? attended the concert and arrived in a limo with the band . The concert was broadcast live internationally on radio , and all proceeds from the radio sales were donated to the War Child project .

Three opening acts played before U2 , beginning with the Gazi Huzrev @-@ Beg choir , an Islamic choir from a local high school . Their performance was followed by two local bands , Protest and Sikter , one of which was chosen personally by Sacirbey , and the other which was selected through a radio contest . Following the opening acts , musician Howie B performed a DJ set before U2 took the stage .

The band 's set list was similar to that of most shows on the PopMart Tour , but with " Sunday Bloody Sunday " in place of The Edge 's karaoke segment and the addition of " Miss Sarajevo " in the second encore . The night was a celebration of the end of the war , with Bono setting the tone by shouting out " Viva Sarajevo ! Fuck the past , kiss the future ! " at the beginning of " Even Better Than the Real Thing " . Bono had struggled with his voice throughout the tour , and the morning of the concert he woke up " without a voice " . There was no intent to cancel , and the show went ahead as planned . Though Bono had few difficulties through the opening quartet of " Mofo " , " I Will Follow " , " Gone " , and " Even Better Than the Real Thing " , his voice gave out during " Last Night on Earth " . In 2006 , The Edge suggested that Bono 's vocal troubles had been caused by laryngitis or by the stress of the previous few months of touring , though he later remarked that " it didn 't really matter that our lead singer was under the weather because every member of the audience seemed to join in on every song . There was a mass chorus for the whole concert . "

At various points during " Until the End of the World " and " New Year 's Day " , Bono gestured for the audience to help him with the vocals , and by the eighth song of the night , " Pride (In the Name of Love) " , he was reduced to speaking the lyrics instead of singing them . The band continued with their standard set list by playing " I Still Haven 't Found What I 'm Looking For " , " Stand By Me " , " All I Want Is You " , and " Staring at the Sun " . U2 considered playing " Desire " after " All I Want Is You " , but they chose not to perform the song . The Edge then performed a solo version of " Sunday Bloody Sunday " . The rendition was slower and quieter than the studio version . During the song , Bono went backstage for cortisone injections , which helped to improve his voice for a short time . Brian Eno was prepared to go on stage to replace Bono if he could not continue , or to sing alongside him . Bono ultimately returned to the stage alone for the next song , " Bullet the Blue Sky " , and the band continued with renditions of " Please " and " Where the Streets Have No Name " , which concluded the main set .

In the interlude before the first encore , U2 had a worried discussion over the introduction to " Miss Sarajevo " . The song had only been played once prior ? at a benefit concert in 1995 with Bono , The Edge , Eno , and Pavarotti . They returned to the stage and played " Discothèque " , " If You Wear That Velvet Dress " , " With or Without You " , and a rough version of " Miss Sarajevo " . Pavarotti was not at the concert to sing his part and so an antique gramophone was brought onto the stage in his place . Eno came on stage to sing backing vocals , and Bono invited Nogi? on stage during the chorus . During the song , the video screen showed images from Carter 's Miss Sarajevo documentary , including footage of the girls taking part in the beauty contest and the banner reading " Please don 't let them kill us " . Bono apologized for the rocky performance at the end of the song , saying " Sarajevo , this song was written for you . I hope you like it , because we can 't fucking play it . " The concert concluded with a second encore of " Hold Me , Thrill Me , Kiss Me , Kill Me " , " Mysterious Ways " , " One " , and an abbreviated cover of " Unchained Melody " .

After the band had walked offstage , in a move described by NME as the most meaningful of the concert , the audience faced the troops in the stadium and broke into a spontaneous round of applause , which quickly turned into an ovation ? an act which the soldiers mimicked in turn .

= = Reaction = =

The day after the concert in Sarajevo , a local newspaper carried an editorial which was headlined , " Today was the day the siege of Sarajevo ended " . In reaction to the event , a Bosnian student told members of the international press , " I felt excluded from the world for so long . It 's not only about U2 . It 's the feeling of being part of the world . " A local resident said that the concert was " proof that we have peace here , that everything is OK " . Fans from outside the former Yugoslavia described Sarajevo as " an oasis of light " in the midst of destroyed and fire @-@ damaged buildings , and deserted villages . Despite the subpar performance , the Associated Press said , " For two magical hours , the rock band U2 achieved what warriors , politicians and diplomats could not : They united Bosnia . " Andrew Mueller of The Independent wrote , " For the first time since the start of the war in 1992 , people more accustomed to seeing each other through the sights of a rifle were converging on the capital to listen to music together . It was a reminder of prewar Sarajevo , home to some of old Yugoslavia 's best rock bands . " Sacirbey stated that he was satisfied that the concert " was held to promote a sense of normalcy , peace and reconciliation in Sarajevo and not to raise money . " He also expressed thanks on behalf of President Alija Izetbegovi? , who described the concert as a " landmark event " .

Mullen and The Edge both agreed that playing the Sarajevo concert had been the highlight of their careers ; Mullen said , " [t] here 's no doubt that that is an experience I will never forget for the rest of my life . And if I had to spend 20 years in the band just to play that show , [...] I think it would have been worthwhile . " Bono described it as " one of the toughest and one of the sweetest nights of my life " , saying of the audience , " I think they wanted , more than anything , a return to normalcy . That 's what these people want , it 's what they deserve . " He also speculated that the loss of his voice had " allowed room for Sarajevo to take the gig away from us . They could see that things could go horribly wrong , they 'd gone to a lot of trouble to come here , and they were just going to

make it happen . And they did . " After the completion of the PopMart Tour , he said , " it was amazing and confounding to discover that on our most ' pop ' of tours some of the best shows were in political hotspots like Santiago , Sarajevo , Tel Aviv [...] anywhere music meant more than entertainment " . Following the concert , President Izetbegović presented Bono with an honorary Bosnian passport , in recognition of his humanitarian efforts during the war .

= = Legacy = =

The peaceful nature of the U2 concert was fleeting , as violence flared up in the region the following year with the Kosovo War . NATO troops remained in Sarajevo until 2004 , while European Union peace @-@ keeping troops remain in the city .

Following the Sarajevo concert , The Edge 's solo performance of " Sunday Bloody Sunday " was performed at the majority of shows for the remainder of the tour , and a recording of the song from the Sarajevo concert was released on the CD single for " If God Will Send His Angels " on 8 December 1997 ; The Edge later stated the band had " rediscovered " the song in Sarajevo after his solo performance . A short documentary about the concert , Missing Sarajevo , was included on the DVD release of U2 's 2002 video compilation , The Best of 1990 @-@ 2000 .

After U2 first performed " Miss Sarajevo " at the Sarajevo concert , it was not performed again until the second leg of the Vertigo Tour in 2005 . U2 did not return to perform in any country in the former Yugoslavia until August 2009 , when they performed two shows in Zagreb during the U2 360 ° Tour . During the Zagreb shows , Bono stated that his honorary Bosnian passport was one of his " most treasured possessions " , which prompted the country 's Council of Ministers to announce that his passport was to be revoked , citing how country 's laws do not allow honorary citizenships to be conferred .