

Doppelganger: a son of the Yugoslav wars that is putting Italy and the Balkans on the map

By Henri Nanushi

The wars that tore apart Yugoslavia in the 1990's are some of the darkest pages of Europe's history, the conflict resulted in more than 140.000 victims, unspeakable war crimes and millions of refugees forced to leave their countries for a better future. The scars that the wars left on the Balkan peninsula and its people are indelible, tensions between neighbouring countries are still high and racial hate is sadly still latent. In this context of constant tension, peaceful coexistence seems like a hardly achievable dream, but hard doesn't always mean impossible and sometimes odds are unexpectedly beaten.

It's often said that the future is in the hands of the youth, and that the younger generation is the only one that has the power to fix the mistakes made by the previous ones.

Doppelganger a 23-year-old rapper from Rome decided to fight the narrative that sees Balkan people constantly hating and fighting each other by embracing stereotypes, tearing down cultural walls and mixing different cultures into a musical style that resonates with a various and diverse audience that comprehends listeners from Italy, the Balkans and the rest of the world.

Doppelganger whose real name is Alen Dokic was born in Rome in 2000, his family left its home country and fled to Italy because of the war in Bosnia: "my destiny was "forged" because of the war. What I saw in the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia...) scarred me, from destroyed houses to the graveyards full of white tombstones, certain things that can never be forgotten."

Doppelganger grew up in the eternal city, growing up as an immigrant he described himself as : "having the luck/misfortune of living between two extremely different cultures", this led his musical style to be influenced by artists from different countries and genres: "if I have to say names, I'll say: Ghali, Tedua, Gemitaiz, Noyz Narcos, Jala Brat, Frenkie, Buba Corelli, Klinac, Eminem, 50 cent, Dr.Dre, Xzibit, Snoop Dogg and many others".

Alen started making music during the pandemic: "I understood that I had to bring out my thoughts and nightmares and that there was no other way in which I could do that. Also, for bringing out a part of me that I kept hidden inside, the happiest, angriest, hungry. Alen hid Doppelganger inside way before making music". He first started dropping songs in Bosnian and later switched to Italian, achieving international fame because of his saga of singles BLKN BLD, that went viral on Tik Tok, consecrating him as one of the most exciting prospects in the European rap scene and leading him to be noticed by the Kosovan-Albanian singer Dafina Zeqiri.

Doppelganger now counts almost 900.000 followers on Tik Tok, 380.000 overall listeners on Spotify and over 770.000 views on You Tube, songs like Hookah, the whole BLKN BLD saga, BIH and Balkan Wave have all in common the heavy presence of Balkan terms in the lyrics, the more introspective tracks like "Alen" and the upcoming "Storia di un soldato qualunque" instead deal with themes related to immigration and war, proving that the strength of this artist is the relatability and connection that he establishes with his audience, an audience often mistreated, forgotten and never really represented properly on big stages, an audience made of sons of immigrants and war refugees like Alen himself : " what drives me is Hunger. Hunger intended as my will to represent, not only Italy and Bosnia but every kid like me, Albanians, Bosnians, ecc... Those that know what it feels like to be nothing and everything".

Doppelganger aims to reach the stars and with an album containing international features on the way and his social media numbers rising day by day, is safe to say that he's certainly on the good way to realise his dreams. As for the last personal message that he wanted to deliver to his followers he said: "it's important to make them understand that they are not alone, I will be always there for them and that there always gonna be someone that is going to understand them, no matter what".



Shot from *Doppelganger-BLKN BLD*