

## STRONGER THAN BULLETS

### SYNOPSIS:

1985. In a brutal show of power, Libyan dictator Moammar Gaddafi outlaws music instruments, and orders them hurled into bonfires. Those were the years the music died...

Yet in 2011, when the people rise, the music reawakens, and the streets of Benghazi resound with a melodic fury. Libyan youth come out in droves to rock the very foundations of the regime with crunching guitars and furious beats.

But when the tyrant falls, victory soon descends into chaos, and a new tyranny emerges. The streets of Benghazi once again go silent. Yet the flame of hope cannot be dimmed, as the musicians once again prepare to challenge oppression...

and strike a chord for freedom.

### FULL SYNOPSIS

the unlikely story of Guangzhou-born, American artist **Tyrus Wong**, who overcame a life of poverty and racism to become a celebrated painter (who once exhibited with Picasso and Matisse), Hollywood sketch artist, and 'Disney Legend' for his groundbreaking work on the classic animated film *Bambi*. Filmmaker Pamela Tom's tour-de-force film makes meticulous use of Tyrus Wong's exquisite art, archival footage, illuminating interviews and commentary from Wong himself to document how his unique style -- melding Chinese calligraphic and landscape influences with contemporary Western art -- is found in everything from Disney animation and live-action Hollywood studio films (*Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Wild Bunch*, *April in Paris*) to Christmas cards, hand-painted California dinnerware, Depression-era WPA paintings, kites, and fine art. The film corrects a historical wrong by spotlighting this seminal, but heretofore under-credited figure who passed away in 2016 at the age of 106. 78 minutes

Libya, 2011...Amidst the bloody revolution to overthrow the tyrant Muammar Gaddafi, a music scene emerges from the dust of war, and becomes the talisman of resistance. Filmed through the months of the uprising and its chaotic aftermath, **STRONGER THAN BULLETS (STB)** captures the spirit of this counterculture that exploded out of the shackles of Gaddafi's iron-fisted rule. After 42 years of silence, Benghazi resounds with a melodic fury that manifests in a staggering variety of musical genres. STB transcends the standard war documentary, instead shining a unique light on the Arab Spring. It is a rock & roll odyssey of people finding their voices for the first time in generations.

The story begins in the midst of Gaddafi's cruel reign. Fearful of the threat that freedom of expression poses, the regime comes down like a hammer on the perceived threat from the arts with giant bonfires of thousands of music instruments. As the spreading Arab Spring lights the fuse in Benghazi, a vibrant music scene blossoms overnight as the shining sym-bol of freedom.

The film introduces the musicians who emerge, and follows them as they stand shoulder-to-shoulder, guitar to rifle, alongside rebel fighters. DADO, a soft-spoken, pony-tailed musician and Bosnian war refugee, becomes the focal point as Libyan musicians gravitate toward his natural leadership. RAMI, a kind-faced virtuoso, writes what will become the anthem of the rebellion, but is killed only hours after completing it. The defiant MC SWAT rises as the voice of the streets with his searing brand of hip-hop. MALIK L, a Libyan-American, returns home after a lifetime of exile, and inspires the youth rap culture with biting, insightful rhymes belted out in his smooth-as-silk voice. Wild-haired MASOUD rushes headlong to the front with a Kalashnikov in one hand and a beat-up guitar in the other, and binds these two symbols into rousing revolutionary songs. Fearful of this artistic bloom, the Gaddafi regime deploys its 5th Column to brutally silence the artists.

In response, the singers raise their voices...and the scene continues to grow.

After months of brutal war, Gaddafi's death paves the way for the musicians to celebrate their victory with a triumphant music festival. Yet when the tyrant falls, he shatters into a thousand pieces, as shadowy elements emerge to halt the festival. Libya, once filled with hope for the future, descends into chaos. Rebels who fought side-by-side only months before now turn their guns on one other, and anyone who stands in their way. And as before, our heroes are forced to play in hiding to avoid the wrath of the new oppressors.

Refusing to be beaten, the musicians persevere even as Libya races toward the abyss of civil war. An epic song that tells their story emerges, and resounds beyond the crumbling basement walls and across the Great Desert, carrying these defiant words:

In the chaos and confusion

Of a new age still in its youth

Can't tell what's real from what's illusion

Music is the only truth...