

RISING STARS

The Young People's Page

Miles : Preserving the Old Wine in a New bottle

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

There is no frenzied screaming or dancing on stage, no crazy antics to impress the crowd. Yet there is an overflow of electrifying excitement that generates as soon as a few notes of Jim Morrison's 'L.A. Woman' is played. At the recent concert held in the Engineers Institute in November the screams and shouts of appreciation from the gallery as soon as they came on-stage left no doubt as to who the stars of the show were. Miles — one of the older rock bands of Bangladesh proved once again their power to enthral with pure talent.

Even after almost 12 years Miles is still one of the leading bands of the country. So what is the secret of their enduring success even with innumerable rock groups emerging into the 'pop scene'? Says lead vocalist Hamin (otherwise known as Tokon), 'There are many new bands but few in the right direction. The philosophy has become quality replaced by quantity. Most of these bands are interested in only one thing: exposure. Fame and glamour are the only incentives to play. They are not bothered about actually learning music. We on the other hand, are very keen about learning and understanding the music whether through books or just by listening to different types of music. Another thing that has moved us up is that we have been lucky to be able to have a unique combination of talented people. In our band everybody is somebody and this has been maintained over all these years in spite of many changes — members joining or leaving the band'. Moving with the time is also an important ingredient in their popularity. Although in their late twenties to early thirties the band members have managed to grasp all age groups. In their concerts there is something for everyone, heavy metal for the young male crowd, romantic ballads for the girls and music that is meant for all — plain simple rock and roll.

The conception of Miles took place at a time when the 'hippy' culture of the late

60's and early 70's was spreading like wild fire all over the world. This included rock music as radical and rebellious as that of Grand Funk, Deep Purple and The Doors. In Bangladesh this storm produced the king of Bangla Rock Azam Khan and the first concert ever held in Bangladesh took place in 1973 with groups such as 'Abnormal Three', 'Ugly Faces' and Azam Khan's band. It was after attending this concert that the

members of Miles, then in their early teens, started to dream of forming their own band which became a reality in 1979. At present the Miles ensemble consists of Hamin (Tokon) as vocalist and bass player, Shafin also on the vocals and lead guitar, Manam on the keyboards and Milton on the drums. So far they have brought out 2 English albums (Miles '82 and a step further '86) and a new Bangla album called 'Pratisroti' Consisting of

love songs about heart break, unrequited love and relationships in general.

Music for these people comes quite naturally, possibly because most of the members come from music-oriented families. Shafin and Hamin for example, are the sons of the renowned classical singer Feroza Begum. When asked what their mother thinks of their music the reply from Shafin is, 'Well, at first she wasn't enthusiastic with all the racket we made in the house during practice, but if the music is good, she appreciates it. She has always encouraged us to follow our dreams.' Manam, son of the well-known music director Mansur Ahmed, too has grown up in a household where music has been both a passion and a means of livelihood.

But for all four members the thrill of playing for a throbbing and appreciative concert crowd is the same. With this thrill, however, is the fear of the concert being marred by violence which has become a regular feature of the concert scene in Dhaka. The result of this is that bands like Miles are finding it increasingly difficult to find venues to hold concerts. Says Shafin, 'After weeks of gruelling rehearsals, when a concert is ruined because of senseless fighting, nothing can compare to such a let down. The venues themselves are just not big enough to accommodate so many people which leaves them very frustrated and angry when they can't get in the concert hall.'

With their ability to preserve the old wine in a new bottle by keeping their original flavour and blend of talent touched with the new vogue in music, Miles still feels it has a long way to go. When asked about the future of Miles, Shafin mysteriously says, 'We have big plans', declining to elaborate on this. Rumours have it that tours to the sub-continent are on the list. But let's just say the challenge ahead for Miles is 'breaking on through to the other side!'

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Road 17, Banani
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The Miles ensemble: Hamin, Manam, Shafin and Milton

A Gift of Love

By Naheed Kamal

The lecture is on the art of 'giving' not 'getting'. Not that the thought of giving ever comes without the thought of receiving trailing along. But we shall try just the same...

Now that Christmas is upon us we can ponder upon the concept of giving (and getting). Christmas is a time of giving to others, of sharing... love, smiles and happiness. What better way to make someone smile, be happy and feel loved is there but a beautiful gift. Gifts have the extraordinary ability of making people extremely happy. It is not only at Christmas that we are faced with the dilemma of giving the appropriate gifts. Especially in a country like ours where Christmas plays a small role in the lives of most people. But the thought of giving and sharing is not unique to the Yuletide season. The idea or thought of giving is natural for us. A simple flower given to someone feeling blue and the smile that is given in return should be reward

enough, but we are after all human and the need to get a similar 'something' back is only natural: I gave her a million dollars! I of course exaggerated but our thoughts run somewhere along these lines.

Gifts don't necessarily have to be given during Christmas or birthdays or anniversaries. The best gifts are those given 'just because'... They are a show of love, not a show of how much you are prepared to spend or how rich you are. But of course if you have got it you show it, but don't flaunt it (that can be totally tasteless). Gifts don't have to be material... it can be a long drive on a moonlit night, a picnic for two (or more), a card to say you care. Its the thought that counts, the thought that you care. You don't necessarily have to give something to show that you care, you have to 'show' that you care. To show you care doesn't mean you have to be pretentious about it, be ever so subtle and that's how you top

the list. A gift doesn't have to be big either after all good things come in small packages. I could go on forever on the virtues of giving and sharing and loving and so on so forth, but I am no saint. I am a sinner, just as much as the next person.

I too want to get back in return for all that I give (depending on whether it was a thump on the head or a string of pearls)

In the end it is all a matter

of taste. Your taste differs from mine and mine from his and his from her's, so on so forth. But what does it matter what you give because you spend months racking your brains trying to think up the perfect gift and then end up giving something that someone else gives or something that the receiver already has. So all you have to do is just go out there and buy the first thing you see and watch the magical effects of that gift from the heart.

The Rising Stars wish you a Merry Christmas



LAUGH

Four clergymen were one day taking a short breather from their tight schedules and sat chatting on a park bench. 'You know,' said one, 'since we're all such good friends this might be a good time to discuss the problems that are disturbing us.' They all nodded in agreement. 'Well, I would like to share with you the fact that I drink to excess,' said one. 'There was gasp from the other three. Then another spoke up. 'Since you were so honest, I'd like to say that my big problem is gambling. It's terrible, I know, but I can't

quit! I've even been tempted to take money from the collection plate. Another gasp was heard, and the third clergyman spoke. 'I'm really troubled, brothers, for I am growing fond of woman in my church a married woman!' More gasps. But the fourth man remained silent. After a few minutes the others coaxed him to open up. 'The fact is,' he said, 'I just don't know how to tell you about my problem.' 'It's all right, brother. Your secret is safe with us.' 'Well, it's this way,' he said. 'You see, I'm an incurable gossip.'

Life After School

by Judith G DeCosta

Long before I had even sat for my O'level examinations, I had planned what I was going to do immediately after them: take the rest of the following year off! The pressure of cramming a three year syllabus into my brain in six months was the cause of such unreasonable thinking. Soon I realized I'd be too bored sitting around all that time; anyone can get tired of doing nothing after a certain period of time. So what can I do to fill the empty, lonely hours? Finishing school was a well and good thing to do, but what next? A 'levels'? Of course. But the question was where? I could count on the fingers of one hand places where I would be taught something worth learning. A levels is not the (said) 'piece of cake', we take the O'levels to be, so the question of private coaching at the Advanced level does not arise. Anyway, with the restricted choice, choosing my new school (or college, which I should call it) was not much of a problem.

It was easy enough for me to solve my post-school problems. Compared to others, I probably didn't even have one. But what of those who don't have the right connections, who have to miss a whole academic year because they don't know what to do after class-X? A lot of students, nowadays, do their metric and then of O'levels. I know quite a few, but you'll just have to take my word for it without any name. The reason for this prolonged high school education is not because they want the best of both worlds; not all. One girl with whom I am acquainted finished her metric at the age of seventeen. Then she applied to girl's college somewhere around Dhaka but was refused without any explanation from the authorities. So, without any hope of continuing her education by means of the 'Bangla medium' system, she began studying for a few O'level subjects. To thoroughly prepare herself for the exams took nothing short of one and a half years. She was lucky to get good grades in them. Our friend had not given up hope on the colleges so she tried the same college once more. Much to dismay she failed the entrance exam; drastic changes had taken place in the syllabus since the last time she had used it. So, she decided to put her O'levels to use and applied to the wrong institute for the right purpose. After a 'rush, rush; hurry, hurry' course, our friend sat for her levels for result that showed she had just wasted her time. Yes, it was very bad, but I am not going to tell you how bad; use your mind.

I've given you just one example, but you all are probably aware of many more similar situations where student spend ages going around in academic circles. If I were to be severely critical, I would say that the future for school leavers is so dark that they need floodlights. Well, not literally, but if

the right authorities were to shed some light on the problem and provide some educational facilities for school-leavers, therefore creating a kind of 'no-man's land' where even if they don't learn much out of texts, they can practise enhancing the built-in aptitude each and every person is inspired with. There are many aspiring artists within every one of us, many of whom can some day be the pride of the nation. But with the lack of facilities at home many seek a workshop abroad, some patriotic enough to return, others never looking back. One is never too old to learn, we hear so often. But one is never too young either. Life is a lesson to learn with your head out of a textbook. It is never too early to start that education. You will have less to regret, the earlier you start.

That philosophy should not be mistaken for a deterrent from finishing your academic life. Notice, sometime that there is a thick margin drawn between the academic optimism and the pessimist. The former will have a clear-cut perspective about which road to follow, unlike our unfortunate friend mentioned earlier. Whatever system we are to have in our country, let's hope every one is well provided for. Metric exams should be followed by intermediate exams, not O'levels. From there the students should go to a university where the students are enthusiastic about a higher education, rather than trigger-happy fighters. It's easy enough for those studying their A'levels to go off to Europe of the States to university but it is not a privilege everyone will have. As a result of not knowing the next step you see many young people around town comfortably employed in travel agencies or schools or newspapers (just like this one!) hardly a month or a year out of school. It's more comforting earning a fast buck than spending hard-earned money on college. It shouldn't have to be so, though. Why not do both earn and learn? Sure! Why not have your cake and eat it too? Try it; you won't be sorry. I'm not!

A Look at the Bible

From 'Your Bible and you' In the wonderful book of Daniel, besides the great prophecy concerning the next world empire, you will find several prophecies.

One of the most impressive, having all manner of fascinating aspects for everyone alive today, is that which reads: 'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased' (Daniel 12:4).

And here a great light shines upon this precious passage of Scripture, for it is an indisputable fact that the past hundred years have witnessed greater progress in education than any other period in the history of the world.

Every country today boasts of its universities, colleges, and schools. Many have compulsory education for the young, a thing unheard of at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Everywhere, too, a tide of literature, in hundreds of languages, is pouring from innumerable printing presses and being welcomed by millions in tribes and nations that have become literate only within the past twenty or thirty years.

Furthermore, scientists of all nations are searching out more and more of the secrets of nature, specialists in electricity, electronics, and aerodynamics are bringing to light resources hidden for centuries. Archaeologists are digging with renewed avidity among the remains of buried civilizations, producing new evidence to prove the accuracy of Bible history. Astronomers, with their great new telescopes, are peering farther and farther into the mysteries of the universe, revealing ever more clearly the power and majesty of the Creator.

But the increase of knowledge has not been merely theoretical. It has burst forth in innumerable inventions, which have transformed man's manner of living to a degree never seen before. In a few brief years a veritable avalanche of new ideas has swept us from the Steam Age to the Electric Age, to the Atomic Age and the Space Age.

We live in an era of unprecedented material progress and wonders innumerable.

It is hard to believe that such extraordinary developments have taken place so swiftly; and harder still to realize what a different world it was a hundred years or so ago. In the 1850's there were no airplanes, no cars, nor any machines operated by an internal combustion engine. There were no trucks, tractors, or tanks. There were no electric lights, nor any electrical appliances. Anyone with a humble gas jet in his home was regarded as a plutocrat. Railroads were just beginning to be popular, though many people were still afraid of them. The sailing ship was still sovereign of the seas, with a few primitive steamships making their appearance amid much public excitement. Some newspapers existed, but no telephone or telegraph systems. Antiseptics and anesthetics were unknown and a visit to a hospital was a nightmare. Modern surgery, dentistry, and ophthalmology were in their infancy. Nobody had ever heard of antitoxins, insulin, sulfanilamide, or penicillin, or even a clinical thermometer!

The fact is that a century ago the world was just beginning to emerge from the mental torpor in which it had languished for ages. It was like a butterfly issuing from a chrysalis in which it had been mysteriously imprisoned from time immemorial. Prior to 1800, most people were still living in much the same way their forefathers had lived for thousands of years. How far and fast have we come since then! Imagine what Abraham Lincoln and William Gladstone would say if they should come to life today and be introduced to a television or radio program or be taken to see the explosion of a hydrogen bomb, or be given a report of the voyage of the Nautilus under the polar icecap. Most probably they would say, 'We don't believe it! And you couldn't blame them. Some of these developments are so amazing as to be almost beyond explanation even by those who have grown up with them.'

Yet all this does not give a complete picture of the wonders of this marvelous age in which we find ourselves. Concurrent with the increase of knowledge and invention there has come about a movement of people without preced-

ent in history. Millions are constantly rushing hither and you by plane, train, ship, and car, all the while calling for more and more speed so that they may travel ever farther and faster in a limited amount of time.

Jet-propelled planes are carrying passengers faster than the speed of sound. Man has even ventured into the heavens.

All this has been accompanied by a complete exploration of the globe. A century ago much of it was enveloped in mystery. Only the most daring spirits set sail for lands afar. How different is the situation now! As Jules Verne once wrote: 'There are no more impassable deserts, no more unfathomable seas, no more inaccessible mountains.' The poles have been visited so often that an expedition to the Arctic or Antarctic arouses little

public interest. Amazon jungles, once considered impenetrable, have been explored on a scale no one would have dreamed possible in years gone by. The primeval forests of Africa echo to the hum of giant planes that fly above them and to the roar of cars that hurtle through them on major highways.

What does it all mean? Read the prophecy again: 'But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.'

Surely this day — our day — is the one the prophet had in mind. It was to the twentieth century that the angel bade him look. And as we behold the fulfillment of these prophetic words on such a lavish, global scale we cannot but admit that we are living in the time of the end, amid the crisis at history's close.



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