

# TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH IQBAL ASIF JEWEL

By Shamma M. Raghib

**ROCKLINK**- the first ever complete underground rock show in Bangladesh, headed by the two most prominent underground musicians- Sumon of Aurthohin and Jewel of Miles, has created quite a stir in the music scene of Bangladesh. Rising Stars had the opportunity to interview Iqbal Asif Jewel. We asked him how his music career started, when he entered into limelight and other tidbits...

Jewel had a tremendous support from his family. He said, "I got involved with music from a very early age. My family was always musically oriented. Dad was an engineer, but he used to play guitar. He and his cousin (who played the piano) was a great fan of classical music and did a few shows for BBC. My cousins were all very good guitarists- they used to play in Rockstrata and also featured in Warfaze from the 80's to mid 90's. My elder brother's influence was Jazz while my second brother was a lover of hard rock and heavy metal. However, my music was somehow stereotyped."

**It all started back then...**

"I started playing guitar since class seven. I practised for about a year or so and side-by-side my other passion for cricket grew. I was chosen a captain in Government Lab School twice. I was selected for Under 19 captain in 1991, when I was in class nine. But unfortunately I had an injury and the doctor

asked me to rest. Hence, I slowly started to concentrate on music again."

**First band...**

"In 1993, I played with Legend- my first band, when I was in class 9. We recorded our first album 'Omohubon' and fortunately the response was enormous. A funny incident occurred here. The album was sold in a 'bimela' (book fair) and the number of cassettes sold was more than the number of books sold. So the authorities put a ban to the sale of music cassettes in book fairs, and the ban is still there..."

**Enter sandman into limelight...**

"Legend played for around three to four years, but after that all the members became busy with their studies. It was hard to continue with the band especially since the keyboardist Shomi, my elder brother, they all left the band. Around 1995, before the release of 'Jibondhara' album of Warfaze, I started to get involved with that band. I officially worked fulltime with them for the album 'Oshamajik', once they saw the potential in me."

**Exit Warfaze...enter Miles...**

"In 1998, Sanjay left the band, and all of a sudden Warfaze was inactive. But, I couldn't laze around with my music and I had to do something. My activity with Miles began in 1999 December. When I joined Miles, Manam was out of the country."

There was a 31" show, and another boy was trying out for keyboards. Unfortunately, he wasn't at his best preparations so I thought why not I give it a shot? I had a keyboard and guitar sync at that time and therefore my first show with Miles was as a keyboardist although my main stance is as a guitarist."

**Jewel and Sumon, the golden duo...**

"My first exciting on stage show was with Sumon (Aurthohin). We studied in the same school- Government Laboratory. I became close to Sumon Bhai from school. Once they planned a school show (school concerts were forbidden back then). So what happened, everyone was very excited about it, and everyone kept hush-hush about the show. Even the teachers wondered what we were up to. We had to secretly put up posters about the show. They had to hide about the whole thing, and they needed a guitarist who could play well. So here I was. We practised for only one day! The next day, all the teachers were wondering why the students were not leaving the school early. Whatever the case, the teachers left the school and the fantastic show started. Sad but true, the Principal's house was just a few blocks away, and perform

only after mingling four songs, we had to leave the grounds on strict order! However, Sumon Bhai and I became quite close from then onwards. From Trimatic till now, he (Sumon) had always valued my consent and opinion!"

**Studios and many more...**

Sumon Bhai's first solo album was 'Shogno gula tomar moto'.

and Jewel recorded the whole album. He joked, "It was my first PC based recording. You can say I was the pioneer to destroy the involvement of other studios and I revolutionised in house recording!" He further says,

"So what is he up to now? Jewel says, "Basically I am shifting to the job of a producer. In Bangladesh, what some people mean by being a 'producer' is that the producer owns a company. I am actually trying to change that trite meaning of the word 'producer'. Being a 'producer' is a crucial job. I actually tell the bands whether they sound right and if not, then I make them sound precise!"

**X-Factor...**

This mind-boggling instrumental album came out last year. The sense of fusion rock surely added a different touch to the underground music scene.

It took Jewel a maximum of fifteen to seventeen days to play his part, but it took the album a year to come out since Shaju (Artcell) and Sumon (Aurthohin) had to be involved in their own tasks as well. If you listen to X-Factor, you may find some shortcomings, but those shortcomings or 'mistakes' as Jewel terms it, actually added that special raw flavor to the album! He says, "If it wasn't for the mistakes, it would have sounded too perfect. That is what happened with Bob Rock and Metallica. They had an argument about a composition that Bob thought was too perfect. Fortunately, the next day, their composition was raw and original. Bob rock told Metallica, "That is why I pissed you off!" So you see, mistakes are actually good!"

**Someone with the X-Factor...**

So when will the wedding bells ring? Jewel smiled, "Well, right now I am concentrating on building up a career. Rocklink has 27" episode coming up next week. Maybe after the 52" episode I will take a break who knows?"

One of his hit songs was 'Tara Jola ratri'. We asked Jewel, what was he thinking when he wrote that song. Jewel was in class eight back then and he used to read romantic novels. "So possibly it was 'innocent love' that made the song sway" Hmm... so no one was in mind then, not even now... let us see who rings the bell."

**About Rocklink...**

The show that created quite a stir... maybe a show that gives us a reason to watch a Bangla channel. So what about it? "Rocklink is a stage to promote new and upcoming bands," says Jewel, "it is also to promote the Bangla rock scene in general. In case of music, if the song is good, then the language is no barrier. New York and LA picked up bhanga pretty fast. Now if we do justice to ourselves and not follow an outside trend, if we stick to our rich Bangla heritage and add a bit of fusion to it, then I think we can take Bangla Rock to the next level. That is exactly what we are trying to do here."

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**I**T seems Hollywood is lacking anyone who can supply fresh ideas. It's all about remakes. Poseidon is yet another one in a long line of remakes from the 70's. This time it's a ship related disaster action movie. The original was so good that it even had a made for TV version as well as a sequel in 1979, "Beyond the Poseidon Adventure" both of which kind of bombed. So will the new remake sink in a similar manner?

The plot: The characters in the film start off on the boat in the early hours of the new year. Everything is going fine as toasts are being made and songs are sung by the deliciously hot Stacey Fergie of the Black Eyed Peas.

Among the characters who will eventually die (or won't) are Robert Ramsey (Kurt Russell) a protective dad whose daughter, Jennifer (Emmy Rossum), is on board with her boyfriend, Christian (Mike Vogel). Did I also mention Ramsey was a firefighter which provides him the requisite skills? Then there is Dylan Johns (Josh Lucas), a professional gambler who was once in the Navy.

We have to have more characters and that pretty much takes up a small chunk of the beginning. For example we see how Elena (Mia Maestro) boards the ship as a stowaway and a bit of Robert Ramsey's career in flashback. But it does not drag because the action starts pretty much at the beginning.

The ship capsizes, thanks to a "rogue wave," near the beginning of the movie. Dylan, while trying to save his own hide, ends up leading a band of rag-tag followers.

The groups includes a waiter named Valentin (Freddy Rodriguez) and Nelson (Richard Dreyfuss), an architect, whose heartbroken suicide attempt was



interrupted by that wave. You see he was dumped by his lover before he boarded and decided the watery depths to be a good respite.

There is also Molly (Jacinda Barrett) and her young son, Conor (Jimmy Bennett) who is has to be in the movie as a formulaic character. Watch it and you will know what I mean. It seems most disaster movies have to have a young annoying person in distress.

**The verdict:**

Let's face it. Any remake especially that of an action flick is generally going to be a technological showcase. That means Poseidon packs in all the tech wizardry and necessary eye candy.

One of the best aspects of the movie is that you don't sit there twiddling your thumb. It's a fast paced movie for all its 100 minutes and that is what an action flick should be like.

You sometimes wonder about which characters will make it over the burning pit and more importantly to the surface of the ship (or rather the bottom as it is now upturned). But this is where the movie falls short a little as they element of surprise is missing as you can quite easily tell who will and won't live.

One thing this movie could have definitely worked on would have been a little bit more character development. Heck, any movie (possibly excepting porn) could do well with better character development. Surprisingly the language in the movie very clean possibly due to all the water washing out their mouths. Downside of all that water is that the body count is very high as people fall, drown, get squashed, electrocuted etc.

Ultimately it is good and enjoyable but forgettable which is a good thing cause then you can watch it all over again.

**A** Quick glance at the wall clock shows the time as 5:30pm. Outside, the summer Sun has sunk low and casts cool shadows all over the place. The sky is a bluish-purple and the clouds are still white and fluffy; the chance of rainfall is quite slim. Ah, perfect

'ultra cool' for me. And even if all the plot pouting lost me, there was still some very awesome fighting as the consolation prize. Watching the Veritech jet fighters pirouette through barrages of gunfire to emerge unscathed from the smoke and then slickly transforming into the Guardian mode and unleashing

## Bangladesh and Anime The 90s' Connection

By Le Chupacabra

conditions.

It's time to prepare yourself then. Call your cousin (or heck, cousins) over and ring up your friends...

... Robotech is about to begin on Star Plus.

What, you were expecting, cricket or something? Well, not for me.

During the mid-1990's, my (and certainly many others') evenings were characterised by half-an-hour of blistering fast fighter jets that miraculously (I was six) transformed into sleek robots armed with all manner of laser rifles, mounted machine guns and of course, an infinite stock of missiles with wonderfully ceaseless smoke trails. Robotech was its name and despite being a pretty old anime series already, it was rather brilliant. Granted, most of the story and characterisations zoomed over my head, but what bits I caught could be deemed

their own salvo of heat-seeking missiles - the warhead count numbering in quadruple figures, it seemed - that was entertainment like no other. Back then, the now-ancient artwork was considered incredible and how could one not like it with all those superb robot designs? I'd wager that even now Robotech could hold its own - heck, if Victory Gundam can do it, why not? But best of all was the music; call it outdated, call it pointless... but the music was (and still is, in my opinion) the very definition of memorable. A decade on from the ending, and I still recall some of the tunes. A particularly unforgettable moment for me was when the story arc made the huge leap over to the bit with the Cyclotrons and the alien Invid. I simply didn't understand how or why back then, and I was so disappointed that the Veritech fighter parts were over that I decided never to watch Robotech



the language (Small Wonder, we will never forget) but later they were completely replaced with the forerunners of today's never-ending serials beginning with the letter 'K'. Anime, it seemed, was being snubbed rather badly. Even early morning showings of Sabre Rider and the Star Sheriffs slowly vanished. However, it was replaced by G.I. Joe which was much better, so no big loss. However, waking up that early made it a bit tasteless. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles ran for a while during the afternoons, but that didn't last too long either. Pity, because that was my favourite cartoon when I was younger. (Okay, so both of those weren't anime, but you know... I'm kinda being washed over with nostalgia while writing this - work with me here!)

Salvation came after three years and two house shifts in the form of a little channel called AXN aka Action TV.

was a fantastically tense clash of two great swordsmen and the battle choreography was superb; I was hooked within minutes! After that, I caught every episode of Samurai X (aka Rurouni Kenshin) and I absolutely loved it! The final fight with Shishio was breathtaking but no other scene stayed with me like that one with Aoshi - after all, that was the one that got me interested in Samurai X in the first place! The later episodes spiralled rapidly away from a coherent storyline but back then, it didn't matter; those episodes were entertaining at the very least. The ending song during the Shishio saga (Heart of Sword, FYI) still stands as an all-time favourite. And in 2004, I bought the DVD boxed set of the entire Rurouni Kenshin series - one of the very few anime I have in original DVD form.

Another anime that was shown alongside Samurai X was Flame of



At first, I didn't pay much heed to it - after all, they still showed too many reality TV shows on it. It wasn't until I was really bored that I flicked on to the channel while at my grandmother's house. What a fight scene it was... Himura Kenshin versus Aoshi Shinomori! It

Recca. I don't remember too much about it (they are showing it on Animax, so yeah I'm watching it again), but it was a great example of those tournament based anime that keep throwing an endless barrage of increasingly powerful

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again. Fortunately, curiosity got the better of me and the good times rolled again - the last arc of Robotech was still brilliant.

Within the next few years, Star Plus started degenerating into yet another pointless Hindi channel. At first, the shows were dubbed in