



Ahsan Habib's artwork.



Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy's artwork.



Sadatuddin Ahmed's artwork.



Shishir Bhattacharjee's artwork.

Cartoons: A dive into wit and satire

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Cartoons, an art form packed with humour and wit, have been engaging audiences since centuries. They have the ability to express grave issues in light-hearted ways. However, not all cartoonists opt out for only serious messages.

"Even a straightforward message, based on a simple theme but well supported with background and environment, can communicate in effective ways," shares renowned cartoonist Ahsan Habib, the Editor and Publisher of the monthly satire magazine, *Unmad*. He also talks about the importance of maintaining subtlety while creating such pieces. "Everyone has their own freedom, and cartoonists are no different. However, when a cartoon, or any such creation, especially those that belong to the genre of lampoon satire, offends someone, then that piece loses its fun essence," he explains. "Being able to present issues in ways that do not distort the relevance or importance of the message and also manages to keep a sense of decency and mindfulness are two creative skills a good cartoonist should have."

Apart from political satire, cartoons highlight social reformation in various other forms. "There are several types of cartoons that are published by print media. We see popular political satires in editorial and opinion-oriented cartoons, but social issues are better expressed with pocket cartoons. While journalistic reports with photographs present issues in very serious tones, pocket cartoons like Rafiqun Nabi's *Tokai* put forward social issues in subtle tones," mentions renowned cartoonist Shishir Bhattacharjee.

Expression and form are very important in fine arts, and cartoons are no different. "While idea begets expression, being able to express ideas



Biplob Chakraborty's artwork.

in a humorous way is a challenge for most of us," mentions Niaz Chowdhury Tuli, Senior Cartoonist at *ProthomAlo*. "Caricatures are very popular, especially when it comes to political and social satires. However, over doing one's facial expressions, attitudes, or accessories may hurt the sentiments of the person, their peers or even the audience. Representation of characters through proper figures has been an important lesson for me over the years."

The preference and perception regarding cartoon has changed over the past few years. "In recent times, illustration based cartoons are gaining popularity," shares Biplob Chakraborty, Staff Cartoonist, *The Daily Star*. "This sort of artistic creations helps shed light on economic issues besides social constraints."

Drawing cartoons is a full-fledged job for many today. "Over the years, I have seen a progress in this profession. Artists start by creating cartoons, then move towards comics and graphic novels, and finally work towards 2D and 3D animation," adds Ahsan Habib. "They have chosen this profession and inspired others to follow in their footsteps."

Emerging artists are faced with both

opportunities and challenges in this profession. "Cartoonists of the current generation draw inspiration from older works, but speaking from my personal experience as an art teacher, I often find them accustomed to filtered forms of expression," asserts artist Sadatuddin Ahmed, a lecturer at Institute of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong. "While this helps them understand the limitations and social boundaries and keeps them from harming the sentiments of others, it also makes them less observant towards the skills and intelligence applied by the artist to present things in a subtler manner."

On the other hand, there has been



Morshed MISHU's artwork.

a remarkable growth when it comes to delivering social messages. "Previously, we had to be aware about revealing things on national mediums. However, with time, social media has become a place where people have to be constantly cautious of their activities. This change has forced a form of self-censorship into young minds. Working with such filters is definitely a challenge," says Syed Rashad

Imam Tanmoy, Founder of Cartoon People and Associate Editor of *Unmad*. "Cartoons can connect with the public and raise social and global awareness. As a result, aspiring cartoonists, who are tech savvy, can flourish in this line of work."

At times, artworks can go beyond positive changes. To that end, Assistant Editor of *Unmad* and Forbes Asia 30 under 30 nominee Morshed MISHU, feels that there is a fine line between instigation and rebellion. "Before revealing an artwork, three things should be thought about - the creation itself, the subject matter of the creation and the possible responses to the creation,"



Niaz Ahmed Tuli's artwork.

he shares. "Heinous crimes like rape demand protest. But putting forward things about a specific organisation or person repeatedly, will only instigate others against it."

Potraying wit and humour with enough subtlety is the hallmark of a great cartoonist, and is a feat that deserves more credit than it gets.

Eid-Ul-Fitr specials on television

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Concerns over the coronavirus pandemic forced television producers and directors to stop productions at once, since the nationwide shutdown began in March. As a result, a number of television projects were put on hold.



The Little Engine That Could



Baghbondi- The Mind Game

Despite such hindrances, top television channels of the country have included some exceptional shows and films in their Eid-Ul-Fitr schedules. Below is a list of programmes that will be aired on different channels throughout the festive season.

Written by Pantho Shahriar and directed by Arif Khan, the eight-episode television drama *Rekha*, featuring Aupee



Mone Mone

Karim and Afzal Hossain, will be aired from the first day of Eid-Ul Fitr on Channel i at 6:10 pm.

The telefilm, *Mone Mone*, starring Farin and Shajal in pivotal roles and directed by Chayanika Chowdhury, will be aired on the fifth day of Eid on Maasranga Television at 7:30 pm.

Featuring Asaduzzaman Noor, Ali Zaker, Shahiduzzaman Selim and

Mehezabien among others, the seven-episode television drama, *Baghbondi: The Mind Game*, directed by Redoan Rony, will be aired from the first day of Eid on Desh TV at 9 pm.

Ghorbondi Shomoyer Golpo, produced by Shahriar Shakil, features seven made-at-home short films. These are: Gias Uddin Selim's *Quarantine*, Nurul Alam Atique's *Coronar Phul*, Animesh Aich's *Eka*, Shihab Shaheen's *Lockdown*, Shafayet Mansoor Rana's *Moddho Nayok*, Sumon Anwar's *Kagojer Pakhi* and Gautam Koiri's *Khola Janala*. They will be aired on Deepto TV at 9:30 pm, starting from the first day of Eid.

Duronto TV will broadcast five movies, dubbed in Bangla, for kids. These are: *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet Frankenstein* (Eid Day, 10 pm), *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet the Wolfman* (Day 2, 10 pm), *Antz* (Day 3, 10 pm), *Chicken Run* (Day 4, 10 pm) and *The Little Engine That Could* (Day 5, 10 pm).



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

these critical times, the government has no proper plan for the creative industry," Nipun stresses.

The overall consumption of internet and media has increased, as people have more free time on their hands. From playing games online to streaming music to participating in live talk shows on social media, people are spending more time with virtual screens. Under such circumstances, it will be difficult for the film industry to bring audiences back to cinema theatres, even after this ordeal ends, as single-screen theatres are already running out of fashion. Compared to other visual media, it is likely that the film industry will suffer the most.

The chronicles of quarantined recording

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Expensive gear, intricate DAWs and state-of-the-art noise cancelling – is what a top-tier musician is used to while recording. Due to the unfortunate events after the Covid-19 outbreak, however, these luxuries have been unattainable for many, barring the most fortunate of musicians. Home recordings are the new norm for artistes, as they come to terms with the limitations, and innovate to overcome them.

"From the fourth day that I started self-isolating, I was swarmed with work," says



Kona

me," she says. "Since phone recordings have undesirable noises, he told me to lock my room and go under my blanket to give my voice takes. It works like a charm!"

Kona recorded over 25 projects – including voiceovers and entire songs – during self-isolation. "I eventually bought a microphone and a selfie-stand for videos, since I know that this will go on for a while. I do miss the times in the studio," she adds.

"It can, at times, be a painful experience to edit and mix some of the voice samples that are sent from home," says singer-composer Khaiyam Sanu Sandhi. "The results are varying, since everyone has a different phone, and a different way of singing." Sandhi has solved the problem by asking singers to sing a few words at a time, as opposed to entire lines. "Even though I know that the artiste has the capability of doing the entire song or voiceover in one take, I ask them to do two to

three words at a time and send them to me. It is easier for me to edit that way."

Chirkutt's fiery vocalist, Sharmin Sultana Sumi considers herself lucky in that regard. "All of our band members are very technologically savvy," she says. "Thanks to the isolation period, I have learned a lot more about apps on smartphones that can make audio and video recordings easier. Moreover, since we all live in the same area, we visit our studio from time to time – with necessary precautions, of course."

Chirkutt's newest project, *Aalor Gaan*, invites singers to record videos of themselves,

our exposure to it."

Nemesis frontman Zohad Reza Chowdhury asserts that home recordings are yet to reach the level of a proper professional studio's intricacy. "I own a home recording setup, and we can get by with it. However, I cannot be fully satisfied with the sound, as we are used to the rollicking of live drums and pitch-perfect guitar tones," he explains. The singer is taking the time to record songs from outside his comfort zone. "I have collaborated for an electronic track, which will be out very soon," adds Zohad. However, he looks forward to getting back on the stage

par quality sounds, so all it takes is an extra twenty to thirty minutes for me to mix those samples," he explains.

The AvoidRafa frontman and successful composer feels like technology will slowly allow people to have the flexibility to record properly from homes. "I have done entire recordings in my iPad with apps like Garageband, and recently shot a music video with an app named Triller," he adds. "There is no reason to back down without direct access to a studio. Your work can be mixed and mastered in one with better equipment, but that, too, can be done remotely."



Khaiyam Sanu Sandhi

Kona. "Since I can't directly go to the studio anymore, I had to resort to recording on my phone." Even though the artiste was uncomfortable with the limitations at first, she soon got the hang of it. "Sound designer Ripon Nath suggested a valuable trick to



Raef Al Hasan Rafa

singing on their balconies and rooftops, and submit the videos to Chirkutt's page. "Since we are indoors, we tend to be deprived from light. This is why we are featuring young artistes, to motivate them during this time, and highlight the importance of 'Aalo' and



Sharmin Sultana Sumi

with Nemesis. "Billie Eilish won Grammys with home recordings," says Raef Al Hasan Rafa, who thinks that 'socially distanced' recordings will be more commonplace even after the pandemic ends. "I am used to handling sub-



Zohad Reza Chowdhury

There is no doubt that the local studio landscape has changed drastically over the years – however, the Covid-19 pandemic has worked as a catalyst in artistes trying to perfect the art of recording at home.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED