

Dameer opens up about ‘Sun’ and future plans

Dameer Khan has carved an identity as a promising indie musician in the international arena. The McGill University student is a talented singer, instrumentalist and producer, making an impression with his latest music video, ‘Sun’. The Daily Star talks to the young artiste for more.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEHD

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Tell us about Sun. What is the song originally about?

Sun was inspired by a poem by Charles Bukowski called *Man Mowing the Lawn*. In it, he talks about having knives stuck into you as a symbol for the pain we carry with us throughout our lives. The song is about growing up, both as an adolescent and as an adult. We are all shaped by our childhood; a lot of us carry baggage from our youth well into our adult life. The song is about freeing yourself from your past, about letting yourself be open and vulnerable to the world. To let go of all that weight and fly.

Majestic Casual records has a very strong following. How much have they helped in promoting you internationally?

It is a dream come true, being at Majestic. They offer me certain avenues that I could not even dream of if I was still based solely in Dhaka. They give me the opportunity to represent Bangladesh at the world stage, and to show my work to a massive, international audience. I now consider Berlin as somewhat of a second home, a spiritual home.

How has the pandemic affected your music, if at all?

If it were not for the pandemic, I would be in Montreal by now starting my life in university. However, staying in Kuala Lumpur, I got to work with incredible Malaysian artists like Nelson Chong, Mandy Gioh, Najmi Arifin, Adam Sinclair and others. It can feel really taxing on the bad days, but I am grateful for what I was able to do.

Do you plan to release songs in your native language, Bangla?

Definitely. I can't wait to show you guys what I've been working on. I want to score Bangla movies, advertisements, and collaborate with other Bangladeshi artistes. I keep little pieces of home close to me, so I never forget where I came from. If you ever hear me play something of my own in Bangla, trust me when I say it comes from a place of deep longing and romanticism. I really miss home.

PROTECTING THE ARTISTE'S RIGHTS

Establishing a music board

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The ongoing pandemic has changed the course of our lives in every possible way. The artistes of the music industry have suffered the brunt of the pandemic as well. In pursuit of protecting and claiming their rights — singers, composers and lyricists are now looking for ways to get their fair share from their music. Meanwhile, many of them are currently getting regular remittance. To maintain a transparent and positive environment in the musical arena by tackling corruption, the need to form organisations and associations are of utmost importance to protect the rights of the artistes. One such organisation that has recently come to light is the upcoming music board.

According to lyricist Asif Iqbal, the establishment of a music board is very much needed to bring disciplined, clear and collaborative direction to music practitioners of Bangladesh. “The board may consist of the copyright registrar, representatives of lyricists association of Bangladesh, MCSB and SAB, copyright specialist lawyer and the CMO (BLCPS),” he says. Iqbal also adds that the main aims of the board would be to develop policy, strategy and implementation guideline for copyright laws. “This can be achieved by building a desired music ecosystem, international association and alignment based on WIPO's barn convention, capacity building by bringing knowledge and a know-how from friend countries, structure, guideline and determination of revenue share percentages.”

Bangladesh is a country of music, culture and thinkers. Artistes, musicians, singers, writers — are spread all over the country, expressing themselves through their art. It is important to make them aware of their rights. Formal certification can be a key to ensure proper recognition and realisation of rights. According to the Bangladesh Copyright Office, till 2017, the annual average registration was a little more than five hundred. However, in 2018 the number increased to 1,795 and last year, it was 3,205. This year in August, the number went down



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEHD

to 1,711.

“Frankly speaking, I am still not specifically aware of what the music board aims to do,” says Zafar Raza Chowdhury, the registrar of the Bangladesh Copyright Office. “But of course, like all other associations and organisations, the board will hopefully work towards uniting artistes, protecting the rights of the copyright holders and also making them aware of their rights. While BLCPS, the CMO for lyricists, composers and performers, aims to work towards royalty collection from different sources for lyricists, composers and performers, the Music Board can work towards identifying artistes from all over the country, making them aware of their rights through workshops and other sorts of engagements. This partnership would indeed be a positive indication for all artistes who are otherwise left in the oblivion.”

According to Hamin Ahmed of the famous band Miles, who is also the current president of BAMBA and the CEO of BLCPS, this is indeed a positive step, especially where establishing the unity of the artistes is concerned. “It's difficult to make a comment on the music board without knowing what their supposed scope of work is,” he says. “If it is for the overall good of the music fraternity like housing, music theater,

medical facilities etc — this would be good for all. BAMBA could also play an effective role in the organisation with its 33 Years of experience in independently working on various welfares, charities and awareness building programmes. However, I would hope that the music board would not play any controlling role over the music industry as a whole or in any IPR related matters as there is a licensed CMO and a Copyright Board that look after these matters. So yes, for the overall socio-economical betterment of creators and performers, the music board could be a solution.”

National Award-winning singer Kumar Bishwajit feels that a board like this has been long overdue in our country. “I am happy that this initiative is being taken, since all the different music organisations can present a united front for a good cause under the music board,” he says. “As a singer, I cannot single-handedly change anything by speaking up in a newspaper interview, but an organisation filled with renowned names will carry a different weight altogether.” The legendary singer also mentioned that in order to make the board and its activities unquestionably legitimate, worthy candidates should be elected to run it.

“We do have talented musicians, lyricists and singers amidst us, however, not many

Returning to the sets and releasing movies - Filmmakers weigh in

SHABABA IQBAL

The coronavirus outbreak left numerous Bangladeshi films in an indeterminate state, as film shoots and cinema theatres were forced to shut down for months. However, theatres are set to reopen from October 16, 2020. The BFDC is slowly being reintroduced to considerable activity, as artistes are finally returning to work, albeit maintaining caution against the pandemic. While some filmmakers are looking to resume shooting with stringent precautions on the sets, others went into post-production. More importantly, they are waiting for a safe and good time to release their films.

Production of Dipankar Dipon's *Operation Sundarban*, starring Nusraat Faria and Siam Ahmed in the lead roles, was shut down on March 8, with just six days of shooting left. The team is set to resume filming from October 10, with a limited number of people.

All members will be tested for COVID-19, before shooting resumes. When they come back to work, they will be prepared with masks, gloves, aprons and disinfectant sprays. The food on the sets will be served on disposable plates, and everyone will be accommodated with their individual beds, during the shoot.

The director will be observing how things go in the following months, since fears related to the coronavirus are still very much present. He hopes to release *Operation Sundarban* in March or April next year.

“We have shot in beautiful locations around the Sundarbans, which will be a visual treat for the audience. This film deserves to be seen on the big screen,” he says. Dipankar Dipon's *Dhaka 2040*, is also one of the most anticipated films of recent years.



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

On the other hand, the team of *Punch*, renowned television director Kaushik Shankar Das's debut feature film, just shot for eight days in March, before production was closed down. The movie, starring Niloy Alamgir and Meghla Mukta in the lead roles, revolves around Kabir, a boxing champion, who gets involved in the malpractices of his industry.

“We have recorded the music and we are having weekly brainstorming sessions about the projection of the scenes, among other things,” says Kaushik.

One of the reasons Kaushik hasn't resumed shooting yet is because a central aspect of *Punch* is a boxing match, which requires a large audience. The film also has team members from India and Thailand. If all goes well, Kaushik plans to restart

filming in January 2021, with precautions. “We will be shooting on a set, instead of real locations. Before resuming the shoot, every team member will be tested for COVID-19,” says the director.

Abu Raihan Jewel's government grant-winning film, *Adventure of Sundarban*, based on Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal's novel, *Ratuler Raat*, *Ratuler Din*, went into production in March. The movie stars Siam Ahmed and Pori Moni in the lead roles.

Luckily, the team was able to wrap up filming amid the pandemic, following health guidelines. They had two appointed doctors on the sets at all times. The cast and crew members went to Khulna for the shoot, and were stuck there in a cruise, because of travel restrictions. They eventually returned to Dhaka after a week.

of them have the know-how to live and survive in the real world,” says famous lyricist Shahid Mahmud Jangi. “The music board could play a very significant role in guiding these young musicians and writers through workshops and other sessions to help them learn and understand. For instance, how to manage your money, developing soft skills, brushing up on communication strategies etc - this could be extremely helpful for the artistes who are otherwise usually left to fend for themselves with great difficulty.”

“We're in the process of forming a new society for music composers — ‘MUSIC COMPOSERS SOCIETY BANGLADESH’ (MCSB). Similar kind of organisations comprised of lyricists and singers are also in the offing,” says composer and singer Naquib Khan of the band Renaissance. “At this point in time, it's too early to comment on forming a music board in Bangladesh. However, this is a good concept, but first we need the three organisations to grow and function smoothly — composers, lyricists and singers. Most importantly, the music fraternity needs reinvigorating ‘future looking’ mindsets with mutual trust and respect to devote themselves towards development of music.”

Previously, there have been various irregularities in preserving the rights and royalties of the musicians. However, along with the artistes, the initiatives taken by the Copyright Office are also creating a positive impact recently. The music industry is going through changes at present and with a positive mindset, the path to recognise and protect the rights of the artistes can be attained.

As Shakib Chowdhury of Cryptic Fate says, artistes are emotional in nature and it is now time to protect their rights and make them aware. “Artistes are generally emotional and prefer to focus more on their creations rather than the business side of the music and the numbers involved,” he says. “I am all for the music board if it means there will be more power for the artists, especially where their rights are concerned.”

“Even with the health risks, our cast and crew members got the job done, and I am grateful to them for their commitment and cooperation,” says Jewel. “As far as I know, no one from our team showed any signs of severe infection after the shoot. Currently, we are editing the film and we will take around three months to complete all the post-production work.” He further adds that the film caters to the young audience.

Meanwhile, the filming of *Hawa*, helmed by Mejbaur Rahman Sumon, wrapped up in November last year. During the shoot, the entire unit stayed in Saint Martin for over a month. Sumon describes *Hawa* as a ‘modern fairytale’ about fishermen whose lives are intertwined with the sea.

The film stars Chanchal Chowdhury, Nazifa Tushi and Sariful Razz in major roles, among others. The editing and dubbing of the film are also done. “We planned to release *Hawa* in October or November this year, but that is not feasible now. I need to travel to India for some more post-production work, like audio mastering and colour grading,” adds Sumon.

The much-anticipated Arifin Shuvoo starrer *Mission Extreme*, a police action-thriller co-directed by Sunny Sanwar and Faisal Ahmed, was supposed to hit theatres during Eid-ul-Fitr this year. However, the movie's release was pushed back. Alongside Shuvoo, Jannatul Ferdous Oishae, Taskeen Rahman and Sadia Nabila star in the film in major roles.

Sanwar, a senior member of the special police force, is also the scriptwriter of the film. “Although cinema halls are reopening, we highly doubt that a large audience will turn up in the theatres, at least in the initial days. We still have to finish some post-production work. We will wait for the right time to release the film,” he concludes.



Trainwreck



Pentagon



Poraho



Conclusion



Owned

PHOTOS: STAR & COLLECTED

Musicians hopeful for a structured future with BLCPS

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

With the advent of renewed activities from BLCPS (Bangladesh Lyricists, Composers and Performers Society), things are looking upward for the music industry. As World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC) now certify the CMO, the organisation has promised to obtain proper royalty collection and disbursement for all signed artistes down the line. We talked to some musicians from the band industry for their perspective on these activities.

“While I am extremely happy that initiatives are being taken to ensure artistes' rights, we

have to manage our expectations,” says Sufi, the vocalist of rock band Arbovirus. “Nothing will change overnight, and we have to not only work hard to establish a structure, but also change the mentality of listeners and musicians.” The energetic vocalist went on to highlight the socio-economic factors that might hinder this prowess, stating that the people should be made aware that music is also a commodity that has to be paid for, much like any other product they buy. “As musicians, we heavily rely on shows to get by. At these times, if the members of Arbovirus did not have other jobs, we would starve. It is harsh, but it is the truth.” Sufi went on to mention that alongside Arbovirus enlisting with BLCPS, he personally joined Singers' Association of Bangladesh.

Trainwreck and Poraho were among the first wave of bands to join BLCPS. “I remember the time when we used to perform on the radio, and they would tell us that our song is ‘trending’ on their station,” says A K Rahul, a member of both the popular bands. “Now that we have matured, we have come to realise that it is not only ethically wrong, but illegal that they played our music without our knowledge. I have full faith in BLCPS, and the fact that we will eventually be able to collect royalty from all places playing our music.” The multi-instrumentalist added that if payment methods were made easier for the audiences, people would be more likely to pay for music. “Buying a song for BDT 10 is nothing in this day and age, it's just that the process is complicated.

Think about apps like Uber and Pathao, do you think twice before using them? Probably not, because you can pay in a variety of ways. This is what streaming sites have to do, besides actually paying us for streaming our music (laughs).”

A K Ratul, the vocalist and bassist of Owned, is cautiously hopeful for the future. “I just hope that these goals can be implemented,” he says. “I remember being promised a lot by streaming sites in particular, and not seeing any actual money, even after years. We would be ecstatic if these situations are rectified under a CMO.”

Even though Conclusion is a popular band among listeners of rock music, it has yet to see a steady income from the industry. “To

be honest, I did not know about BLCPS until just now. It would be a game-changer if we could actually get our due revenue from all the songs that we have out,” says Atif Intiaz, Conclusion's vocalist.

Alif Alauddin, besides being a renowned anchor and solo artiste, is also known for being one of the vocalist of the band Pentagon. “My father, Alauddin Ali, worked very hard until the very end to make BLCPS an organisation that gets artistes their due,” she says. “Even when he was very sick with cancer, he worked for the organisation. I have faith in BLCPS, and I know that they would ensure a more structured industry for us in the future - one where artistes will get steady revenue from,” she concludes.