

# Prince Mahmud's 'Alo' sheds light on the frailty of life

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

*Chole jabo rekhe jabo gaan, pichutan ki kore charbo  
Chhele take buke joraye, gaal bhore chumu ki khete parbo?*  
Trans. (Rough)

*When I leave, I'll leave my music -- how do I leave the affection  
Will I be able to pamper my son, give him my fatherly protection?*

Not many musicians today can claim to have 50 albums under their belt, and still come out with songs that resonate with every listener who is willing to actually 'listen'.

For over three decades, Prince Mahmud has written and composed masterpieces with legendary names like Azam Khan, Ayub Bachchu, James and Hasan – while elevating the careers of younger musicians like Minar, Mahadi, Elita and Kona.

After the outbreak of Covid-19, the virtuoso had been contemplating the frailty of life. "Even though I have motivated people to stay strong during these trying times, it is only natural that the fear of death would creep in," said Prince Mahmud over the phone. "Alo was born out of such insecurities, and I think everyone shares the same vulnerability."

Alo, voiced by Avash frontman Tanzir Tuhin, is an upcoming song by Prince Mahmud that has already etched its place in the listeners' hearts. "I had a good feeling about the song, and just posted the demo on a whim", said the composer. "Even though it's far from being complete, I am overwhelmed by the warmth that I have received from the fans."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The song, complete with instruments like the drums, guitar and sarod, will drop sometime next week.

"Whenever I compose a song for an artist, I aim to surpass the previous work that they did – that is a philosophy I follow," adds Prince Mahmud, who is known for composing the tune before writing the lyrics himself.

When asked about further plans with music, the composer let us know that he has no plans for any more albums. "Honestly, releasing nine or ten tracks together is just not feasible anymore in this industry," he said. "Even in the last album that I did, the songs were released separately over a time period."

Perhaps it is a deep understanding of the music industry that helped the veteran stay relevant to this day, or perhaps it is his unadulterated passion. "Composers are emotional creatures," says Prince Mahmud. "I feel like every musician should try to love their craft, and harness those emotions."

As a message to his legions of fans – ranging from teenagers to old-timers, the legend has one request. "Listen to good music, appreciate it."



Babita and Farooque in 'Lathial'.



'Sareng Bou' is considered to be Farooque's most popular film.

# FAROOQUE'S golden career on the silver screen

SHAH ALAM SHAZI

*National Film Award-winning actor and Member of Parliament Farooque has shaped an illustrious legacy with his brilliance on the silver screen. We look back on his cinematic career of nearly 50 years.*



Babita and Farooque in 'Noyonmoni'.

Based on the novel by Shahidullah Kaiser, "Sareng Bou," directed by Abdullah Al Mamun, is considered to be Farooque's most popular film. Released in 1978, the film revolved around the character of Kodom and



PHOTO: STAR

portrayed the struggles of the people in coastal regions. With iconic songs such as "Orey Nil Doriya," and "Hiramati Hiramati," voiced by Abdur Jabbar, it is one of the most critically acclaimed films in the history of Bangladeshi cinema.

Directed by Amjad Hossain and based on the novel, "Nirokkhor Shorgo," the acclaimed film, "Noyonmoni," marked an important milestone in Farooque's career. Starring Babita and Farooque, it was screened for six months to one year at several theatres.

In 1975, "Shujon Shokhi," directed by Khan Ataur Rahman, was released.

Based on social realism, the romance film, featuring Farooque and Babita, gifted the audience with the timeless song, "Shob Shokhire Par Koritey Nebo Ana Ana."

"Golapi Ekhon Train E", directed by Amjad Hossain, was another major turning point in Farooque's career. The internationally acclaimed film travelled to several film festivals abroad, including the Moscow Film Festival. The super hit film produced classic songs such as "Hayre Kopal Mondo Chokh Thakitey Ondho," and "Achen Amar Moktar, Achen Amar Barrister."

Farooque was known as 'Mia Bhai'

among his fans for several years, after the release of the Chashi Nazrul Islam film of the same title.

Furthermore, the National Film Award-winning movie, "Lathial", directed by Narayan Ghosh Mita, featured Farooque in the memorable role of Dukhu Mia. Most popularly, he portrayed the role of the protagonist in several films based in rural Bangladesh.

Directed by Abdus Samad Khokon, "Jhinuk Mala", another commercially successful film starring the actor, features popular songs such as "Chokher Jole Ami Bheshe Cholechi," "Bhober Ei Khela Ghore," and "Tumi Amar Moner Majhi."

Films based on the Liberation War, including "Alor Michil," directed by Naryan Ghosh Mita and "Abar Tora Manush Ho," directed by Ataur Rahman Khan, further strengthened Farooque's place in the industry, as a versatile actor.

The film, "Din Jay Kotha Thake," directed by Pramod Kor, also made a prominent mark in Farooque's career, with popular songs such as "Mon Majhi Tor Boitha Ne Re," "Mayer Moto Apon Keho Nai," and "Din Jay Kotha Thakey". The actor, who was recently diagnosed with tuberculosis, is currently undergoing treatment in Singapore. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Translated by Rasheek Tabassum Mondira

# Are we ready to go back to the movies?

MADIHA ATHAR KHAN

Movie theatres across the country are starting to open their doors to the public. The idea of sitting in a cramped, closed space for around two hours, elbow-to-elbow with strangers seems like a nauseatingly concerning prospect amidst a pandemic. Many fear that an alleged second wave of Covid-19 is underway with situations expected to worsen in the winter months. However, since the government enforced shutdown has eased in the past few months, the country's economy has returned to business as usual. As a result, it was the only reasonable next step for cinema halls across Bangladesh.

Social media saw a heavy outpour of emotions surrounding Star Cineplex at Bashundhara City's decision to close its doors permanently to the public.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Evidently, the people of Dhaka felt deeply about their relationship with the movie halls which showcased their favourite stories, actors and characters. For many of the young generation, it held the memories of their first experience of watching a film at a movie theatre. A city that is starved for viable avenues of entertainment, that place had become the obvious choice to celebrate birthdays or go for movies with close friends and large groups. Personally, I don't think I would have become a movie buff if I did not have countless memories of watching the latest releases there with my big family. Needless to say, I am pleased that Star Cineplex took note of their customers' devotion and decided to stay at Bashundhara City.

Across the globe, the film industry has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. However, just like many sectors of the economy have survived



Illustration: Oishik Jawad

due to innovations with the help of technology, the film industry of different countries, too, has adjusted. Many films which were set to release in movie theatres have instead been moved to streaming websites. On the other hand, release dates of some movies like the new "James Bond" film have been pushed back. Christopher Nolan's "Tenet" is one of the only films released during this pandemic in a handful of theatres.

Sadly, in Bangladesh, major occasions like Pohela Boishakh, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, in which the industry generally eyes big profit margins in the calendar year, have generated no income because of the Covid-19 crisis.

With the increase of Netflix and Amazon Prime subscribers, we saw a rise in the quality of and the investment behind TV shows across countless networks. Internationally acclaimed actors no longer restrict themselves to the world of the silver screen alone. However, arguably the place held by movie theatres in the film industry still contained great value. Although everyone likes to watch the latest release as and when their free time permits from the comfort of their beds and couches, any cinephile would assert that

the experience of watching a film in the movie theatre remains unparalleled.

Everyone impacted by the pandemic has found coping mechanisms of their own. Most of us have turned to TV shows and movies to cope with the difficult times. Whether it was for old classics and feel-good movies or catching up with a show that all our friends have been raving about, streaming sites have been a blessing, to say the least. The film industry has leaned on streaming platforms like a crutch, but once there are fewer life threatening risks floating around, the movie theatre will be one of the most looked-forward-to places to visit for countless people.

As important as it is to maintain isolation amidst a pandemic, it is also vital for people's mental health that they interact with the outside world and socialise with adequate safety precautions. In a city like Dhaka, this can often feel like an impossible task when we step out of our house and see countless people without masks. This city is already starved for entertainment options, with the most popular being eating at an airconditioned restaurant or cafe. An ideal environment would be any outdoor space in which one can maintain the six-foot distance rule. As a movie buff, I hope that the movie theatre administration manages the seating plan with enough gaps between groups of customers to minimise risks.

For an introvert like me, going to the movie theatres is what I have missed the most throughout these months of isolation. There were many movies that were set to come out this year that I had been waiting for. "Black Widow" was set to release this year: I have been craving to watch a standalone movie of this character ever since I first saw her in "Iron Man 2" in 2010. If you do decide to go to the movie hall, all other rules remain the same - hand sanitiser at the ready, masks on and please don't touch anything, especially your face. While I am much too cautious to return to the theatres anytime soon, I patiently await the days when it is once again safe to watch my favourite storytellers' work on the big screen.

# Music, academics and more: Heart-to-heart with Emon Shaha

SHARMIN JOYA

Prolific music composer Emon Shaha began his career in the film industry in 1998 with the Gazi Mazharul Anwar directorial "Poradhin". Till date, he has composed songs and background scores for more than 400 films.

Son of legendary music director Satya Saha, Emon is a seven-time National Film Award winner.

He is trained in Hindustani Classical Sangeet by Guru Satindra Nath Halder.

Emon completed a two-year diploma course from K M Music Conservatory, now known as K M College of Music and Technology, in Chennai. Founded by renowned musician A R Rahman, it is one of the most prestigious music institutions in the world. Emon described the experience of studying there as life-changing.

"The college has had a profound impact on my musicality, thoughts, philosophies and way of life. I owe them a lot," smiles the composer.

Currently, Emon lives in Orlando, where he recently completed his Bachelor of Science in Music Production from Full Sail University in Florida, with distinction.

"I am grateful for everything. The journey was tough, but enjoyable," he adds. He received the Advanced Achievement Award from the institute.

Emon is immensely passionate about music and wants to pursue his higher studies in Music Therapy.

"In western countries, music therapy is a popular form of treatment for those who are combatting depression," explains the composer.

He also wants to study background scoring more extensively. His background score in the film "Agni", was an eye-opener for the film fraternity. "Original background scores play a vital role in films and any other projects," he says. "There was a time when only stock music was used." However, Emon is glad that things are gradually changing in the industry.

Some of Emon's most notable projects include "Shoshurbari Zindabad", "Khairun Sundori" and "Kokhono Megh Kokhono Brishi".

"These films were the turning points of my career. There was no looking back for me after they were released," he states. "From 2002 to 2008, I was recording almost every day, and I worked on 30 to 40 films every year."

He also added that "Molla Barir Bou" "Ghetuputro Komola", "Gohin Baluchor" and the track "Ohey Shyam" from "Poramon 2" were some of his most successful projects.

In various joint venture films, noted singers like Kumar Sanu, Kavita Krishnamurti, Udit Narayan, Anuradha Paudwal, Vinod Rathod, Sadhna Sargam, Sonu Nigam, Sunidhi Chauhan, and Shaan sang his compositions.

Emon belongs to a family of National Film Award winners. His father, Satya Saha, has multiple National Film Awards to his credit,

while his mother Ramala Saha, a film producer, won the National Film Award for "Puroshkar" (1983).

His brother Sumon Saha worked in "Oshikkhito" and "Chhutir Ghonta" as a child artiste. He won the National Film Award for his role in "Oshikkhito" (1978).

"Being a part of such a prestigious family is a blessing," he shares. "However, I know that people have high expectations from me and facing comparisons gets frustrating at times. My father is one of my biggest inspirations. I have definitely learnt a lot from him and other veteran musicians in the industry, but I have always tried to create my own identity and be honest in my work."

Some of his upcoming projects are "Tungi Parar Mia Bhai", "August 1975", "Rohingya", "Chironjib Mujib, Agami", "Unmad",



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

"Shyamakalpo", "Chhayabrikkho", "Bishwo Shundori", "Shoshurbari Zindabad 2", "Ashirbad" "MR-9" and a single track for Kona's album, written by Gazi Mazharul Anwar. Emon plans to work in Hollywood as well.

For the last four years, he has been spending Durga Puja in the USA, although he visits Bangladesh quite frequently every year. "During Durga Puja I love spending time with my family," he shares. "My elder brother Sumon bought a house in Miami, and we will be visiting him."

He shares his early memories of Puja in Chattogram, Fatehabad, Hathazari. "We have a century-old tradition of celebrating Durga Puja at our hometown," he asserts.

"We were involved in everything from building the idol to all the programmes throughout the festival. We lived in a big joint family, and from the first till the last day of Puja, we enjoyed to the fullest."

He also said that they had the *Bisarjan* near their house, and the celebrations continued till the next day.

"We would catch fish from our pond and share with everyone on *Dashami*. We also had *Rong Khela*, where we played with colours," he adds. Emon plans to visit Bangladesh in December.