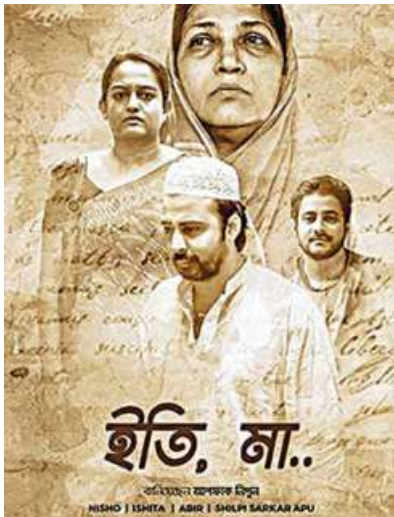
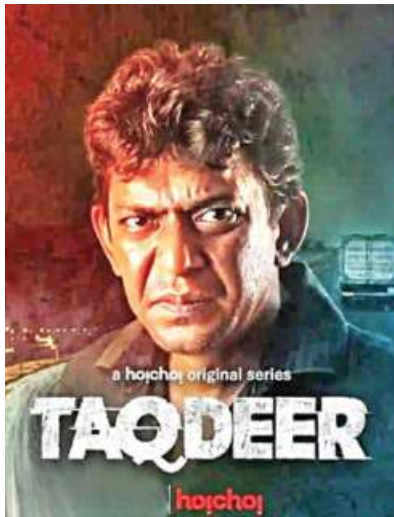




Looking back at 2020’s memorable TV and web projects

SHARMIN JOYA

The pandemic-riddled year was a challenging one for the entertainment industry. Since March, all activities had come to a halt, with television and web projects incurring huge losses.

Shoots gradually resumed over the year, maintaining health guidelines as per the government’s instructions.

Compared to other years, the number of tele-fictions made were minuscule, with important festivals like Pohela Boishakh, Eid-Ul-Fitr witnessing very few productions.

However, many of the ones that were released stirred excitement among the audience, and gathered accolades for production and storytelling.

In Valentines’ season, telefilms that resonated the most with the audience were Ashfaque Nipun’s “Mukh O Mukhoshor Golpo”,

Shafayet Mansoor Rana’s “Poripuruk” and Sanjoy Samaddar’s “Shift”.

One of the highlights of this year’s television industry was the seven-day series titled “Ghor Bondi Shomoyer Golpo”, aired on Eid Ul Fitr. The series brought a completely new experience for both artistes and the audience.

Renowned directors Nurul Alam Atique, Giasuddin Selim, Animesh Aich, Sumon Anwar, Shihab Shaheen, Shafayet Mansoor Rana and Goutam Koiri worked on the series, each portraying different stories addressing life during the pandemic.

Jonab Tanvir Ahmed’s “Extra Artiste” featuring Fazlur Rahman Babu and Allen Shubhro was a critically acclaimed project.

Vicky Zahed’s “Jonmodaag” featured the popular pairing of Afran Nisho and Mehazabien Chowdhury. On the other hand, Ashrafuzzaman’s fiction “Hamleter Phirey Asha”,



featuring Mosharrar Karim and Rownak Hasan, was a memorable flick.

Eid-ul-Adha saw an impressive number of hits. Shafayat Mansoor Rana’s short film on the pandemic, “The Last Order” was astoundingly good, while Ashfaque Nipun’s

“Victim” was the talk of the town for a good while. The director’s “Eti Ma”, starring Afran Nisho and Rumana Rashid Ishita, was especially lauded because of Ishita’s memorable performance.

Other notable projects include

Sanjoy Samaddar’s “Je Shohore Taka Ore”, Rafat Mozumder Rinku’s “Bodh”, Mohidul Mohim’s “Photo Frame”, Mizanur Rahman Aryan’s “Shohor Chhere Poranpur”, Vicky Zahed’s “Nirbashon” and Mahmudur Rahman Hime’s “Keno”.

Although web content is considered to be mandatory consumption all over the world, the Bangladeshi audience had to wait for a long time to experience local web content that is up to the mark. The pandemic somewhat enabled web projects to flourish, and prove that it is possible to create content on par with international projects.

“August 14”, based on true events, was exemplary. Shihab Shaheen was highly appreciated along with Tasnuva Tisha for her flawless and bold appearance on screen. “Hares” on Robi TV Plus, directed by Wasim Sitar, featured Iftekhar Ahmed Fahmi and Nazia Haque Orsha.

The flick gained praise for its gritty storytelling.

Abrar Athar’s web original for ZEE 5, “Mainkar Chipay”, kept the audience on the edge of their seats. It was undoubtedly one of the best works of this year. Afran Nisho, Shariful Razz and Shamol Mawla were in this project that earned great response from audiences from both home and abroad.

Syed Ahmed Shawki directorial “Taqdeer” on Hoichoi was the showstopper for 2020, setting a new bar for web series in the country. Chanchal Chowdhury, Manoj Pramanik, Sanjida Preeti and Sohel Mondal gave it their all to make it one of the most memorable projects for years to come.

Overall, even amidst the limitations, directors, actors and entire filming crews are to be lauded for their efforts to keep bringing entertainment to our screens.

A musically dormant 2020

ZAHID AKBAR & SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The Covid-19 pandemic rendered the music industry into disarray for the first few months, one which it tried hard to fight back. Even though the year is musical activities were largely limited to online releases and ‘live’ concerts on social media, we did see a number of notable releases from artistes.

The announcement of renewed activities from Bangladesh Lyricist, Composers and Performers Society (BLCPS) to ensure artistes’ intellectual property rights was a welcome one.

An initiative was taken by the government to preserve 272 songs by legendary musician and LRB frontman Ayub Bachchu.

Eminent singer Sabina Yasmin expanded on her illustrious career by debuting a music director in the film “Ei Tumi Shei Tumi”.

Minar Rahman’s “Keu Kotha Rakheni”, released in January, has received 1.5 crore views, and is one of the highlights of the year. “Tui Ki Amar Hobi Re”, a duet by Imran Mahmudul and Kona from the film “Bishwo Shundori”, is also a highlight of the year, with more than 3 crore views.

One of the fastest rising stars in the industry, Pritom Hasan went from strength to strength with his music. “Bhenge Porona Ebhabe” was an unexpected and heart-wrenching ballad that won over the audience with its beautiful presentation. It was unlike anything that the usually flamboyant Pritom had done before.

Tanjib Sarowar crossed the 10-million mark with his hit single, “Dube Dube”, while “Sa Re Ga Ma Pa” famed star Mainul Ahsan Noble impressed thoroughly in the latter half of the year with the release of “Ovinoy”.



Eminent lyricist-composer Prince Mahmud gifted the fans “Alo”.

Near the end of the year, eminent music composer Prince Mahmud collaborated with Tanjir Tuhin to release “Alo”, a chilling and beautiful song about the uncertainty of life in this pandemic.

Up and coming musicians made their presence felt throughout the year. Shonar Bangla Circus released their album “Hyena Express” earlier this year, earning a cult-hit status among the fans. Farooque Bhai Project released his EP, “Cin Bhoot Tonic”, further solidifying his spot as one of the most sought-after indie musicians. Conclusion’s “Auroop:Nirakar” was also released to much fanfare.

Amidst a comparatively quiet for the band music industry, established bands

like Nemesis, Shironamhin, and Meghdol released “Cafeteria Periyé”, “Tumi, Ami o Bhor” and “Tobu Mon”. Towards the end of the year, shows started to pop up sporadically around the country. Notably, Nemesis hosted one for an early peek at the “Gonojowar” music video this month, with astounding success. Small venues like Jatra Biroti, Bookworm and L’espresso also opened their doors, albeit with precautions, to regular shows.

A musical controversy that was the most discussed this year was the release of Chanchal Chowdhury and Meher Afroz Shaon’s rendition of “Shorbotto Mongol Radhe”, composed by Partha Barua. The song had to be taken down from YouTube, as band Sorolpur claimed copyright to it. Debate is still going on based on the merits of the copyright.

2020 was also the year of losses, as we had to bid adieu to some of our most beloved musicians. In May, singer, composer and music director Azad Rahman passed away. He was known for his masterpieces including “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo”, “Bhalobashar Mullo Koto”, “Moner Ronge Rangabo”, among many others.



Pritom Hasan’s “BhengePoronaEbhabe” was one of the best songs of the year.

Legendary singer Andrew Kishore lost his battle to cancer in July. He will forever be remembered for his playback, with songs like, “Daak Diyachen Doyal Amare”, “Bhalobeshe Gelam Shudhu”, “Amar Shara Deho Kheyo Go Mati”, “Amar Buker Moddhekhane”, “Hayre Manush Rongin Fanush”, “Bhengeche Pinjor Meleche Dana”, among hundreds of other memorable tracks/

Alauddin Ali passed away in August. The incomparable music director scored over 300 films throughout his illustrious career. The 8-time National Award Winner’s greatest work is considered to be for films “Golapi Ekhon Train E”, “Koshai”, “Shundori” and “Jogajog”, among others, for which he won the National Award for Best Music Director, as well as Best Lyricist.

Salim Khan, proprietor of one of the country’s leading audio production company, passed away this month. In the 80’s and 90’s, Sangeeta was responsible for the flourishing music industry, with “Produced by Salim Khan” being a hallmark on cassettes of that era.

Even though 2020 is considered to be a year of loss and uncertainty, the music industry’s efforts to adapt and improvise is heartening. Heading into a fresh start, musicians are eagerly waiting to make the most of 2021.



272 of legendary rockstarAyubBachchu’s songs were preserved by the government.

The highs and lows of the film industry in 2020



Unoponchaash Batash

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Cinema halls across Bangladesh, much like most countries of the world, had their lights out for most of 2020, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. Only 11 new, Bangladeshi films were released this year. All cinema halls were closed down from March 18.

Single-screen theatres have seen a drastic decline in numbers over the last two decades, and the 70-odd in the country that were in operation, have missed out on the three big occasions, where mainstream movies make business – Pahela Baishakh, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha – as people were confined to their homes to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

After over six months of inactivity, cinema halls across the country were permitted to reopen from October 16. However, most movie theatres, including Modhumita Cinema Hall, are still not ready to open. Meanwhile, Jashore’s Monihar, one of the most popular movie theatres of the country, celebrated its 37th anniversary this year.

Before movie theatres were closed down, noted director Kazi Hayat’s “Bir” was released on February 14, and Shamim Ahamed Roni’s “Shahenshah” was released on March 6. These two films feature Shakib Khan in the lead role.

Despite resuming operations, cinema halls remained heavily reliant on reruns of old films, as no producers were willing to take risks with new, big-budget movies.

Masud Hasan Ujjal’s first film, “Unoponchash Batash,” was set to release in March, but it was delayed indefinitely due to the pandemic. After seven months, “Unoponchash Batash,” produced by Red October Films, hit theatres on October 23. Noted television director Chayanika Chowdhury’s debut film, “Bishwoshundori” and Ekushey Padak winner Tanvir Mokammel’s seventh feature film, “Rupsha Nodir Baanke” (Quiet Flows the River Rupsha), were released on December 11. Anonno Mamun’s “Nabab LLB”, starring Shakib Khan, was released on the online platform, iTheatre, on December 16. The Gazi Rakayet directorial “The Grave” was released on December 25, the last Friday of the year.

On the other hand, the third and fourth floors of the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC)



Bishwo Shundori

were demolished to make way for a new, fifteen-storeyed building. The new building will consist of an auditorium, a residential hotel, shooting spots, a cinema theatre, a bank and a food court. It will also have offices for insurance organisations, film producers and television channels, along with a three-storeyed parking lot in the basement.

Due to various allegations, Bangladesh Cholochitro Shilpi Samity President Misha Sawdagar and General Secretary Zayed Khan were boycotted by 18 organisations. The organisations held a meeting, where they came to a decision to send a written application to BFDC’s



Rupsha Nodir Baanke

MD -- to strengthen the ban on Misha Sawdagar and bar Zayed Khan from entering its premises altogether. The actions were on the basis of Misha Sawdagor’s irresponsibility, going to the USA before clearing previous allegations, and Zayed Khan’s anti-interest activities against artistes that could result in confrontation if he enters the BFDC premises.

Moreover, this year, elections for the new committee of the Bangladesh Film Directors Association were cancelled due to the pandemic, and shifted to next year.

At the end of the year, the activities of the present committee of the Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association were suspended by an order of the Ministry of Commerce, which has been upheld by the High Court.

Many artistes, including Shakib Khan, Sadika Parvin Popy, Mosharrar Karim, Nurat Imrose Tisha, Mahiya Mahi, and Bappy Chowdhury, steadily returned to shooting during the pandemic, and started adapting to the ‘new normal’.

The actors, production team and crew members followed strict safety and hygiene rules on the sets and at home. Dighi, who has worked as a child artiste before, is set to play the lead role in the film, “Tungipara Mia Bhai”, opposite Shanto Khan. Directed by Shamim Ahamed Roni, the film was shot at BFDC and several other locations.

Mosharrar Karim and Tarin are preparing for their first ever Bangladesh-India joint production, “Dictionary”,



The Grave

directed by Bratya Basu. After a long hiatus, celebrated actor Riaz is set to return to films with Dipankar Dipon’s “Operation Sundarban”.

The governments of Bangladesh and India are jointly producing a feature film based on the life and works of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Arifin Shuvoo has been cast to play Bangabandhu. The movie, directed by acclaimed filmmaker Shyam Benegal, went on the floors this year.

Jaya Ahsan won the award for Best Lead Actress in a Foreign Language Film, for “Robibaar” at the Madrid International Film Festival. Popular actor Pori Moni was the only Bangladeshi included in Forbes Asia magazine’s ‘100 Digital Stars’ list. The Lifetime Achievement Awards at the National Film Awards 2019 will be given to renowned actors Masud Parvez (Sohel Rana) and Kohinoor Akhter Suchanda for their incredible contribution to the Bangladeshi film fraternity.

On the other hand, noted actor Salma Begum Sujata was hospitalised after she suffered from a severe heart attack. Popular film actor and ruling



Nabab LLB

Awami League lawmaker for Dhaka-17 constituency Farooque tested positive for Covid-19. Earlier, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Six members of Nayakraj Razzak’s family, including his sons Bapparaj and Samrat who are both actors, their wives and children, tested positive for Covid-19 too.

Siam Ahmed, Pori Moni and Bidya Sinha Mim were the busiest actors of the year, despite the challenges faced by the film industry.

Translated by Shababa Iqbal