

Eid releases: Dhaliwood predicts profit

ERSHAD KAMOL

AFTER a decade of slumped trade, the film industry in Bangladesh is expecting a pick-up this coming Eid. People in the mainstream film industry, otherwise known as 'Dhaliwood', are hopeful to reset cinema as one of the major sources of mass entertainment during the Eid festivity.

"After the recent massive drive taken by Film Censor Board against violent and vulgar film, most of the movies that got approval from Bangladesh Film Producers and Distributors Association (BFPDA) for the Eid are either romantic or family drama. Only a few action movies will be released," said BFPDA President Nasiruddin Dilo.

The office secretary of BFPDA, Mahbubul Islam, informed that 15 films have received approval from BFPDA for Eid release. The movies include *Moner Shathe Juddho*, *Katha Dao Shathi Hobey*, *Meye Shakkhi*, *Astrodhari Rana*, *Prem Badha*, *Priyo Shathi*, *Danob Shontan*, *Rakto Chosha*, *Osman*, *Tomar Jonyo Morley Pari*, *Maa Amar Swargo*, *Kopal*, *Bullet*, *Aha* and *Ekjon Shongey Chhilo*. The most noticeable change is the title of the movies, as compared to that of the movies of past years.

The last two movies of the above list are Impres tele-film productions. *Aha*, directed by Enamul Karim Nirjar, will be released in one theatre and *Ekjon Shongey Chhilo* will be aired on Channel-i. "Of the rest, eight or nine movies will be eventually released in over 700 theatres across the country. Others will be released later," said Mahbubul.

Directed by Ahmed Nasir, *Moner Shathe Juddho*, a romantic film, features Manna, Purnima and



Posters of films slated for Eid release

Bapparaj in the lead roles. The movie is expected to be a blockbuster and will simultaneously run in 35 theatres. Another expected Eid blockbuster is Sohanur Rahman Sohan's film, *Katha Dao Shathi Hobey*. The cast includes Shakib Khan, Opu Biswas, Ahmed Sharif and Misha Sawdagor.

Like other prominent members of Dhaliwood, a film industry worth Tk 100 crores, filmmaker Sohanur Rahman Sohan also expects profits from his film. Sohan said, "Shakib-Opu will emerge as a popular duo through my movie. I've made 35 prints of the film and getting enormous response from the theatre agents."

Sohan further claimed that right now the movie industry is going through a potential 'new

era'. "During the last few months only the decent, entertaining films with family values have done profitable business. Women are the major viewers of this genre. It indicates that women are coming back to theatre. As the women do not go alone to the movies, feature films that can attract them become blockbusters. We see a good number of films targeting the female audience on the list of potential Eid releases and we can hope for good returns," he said.

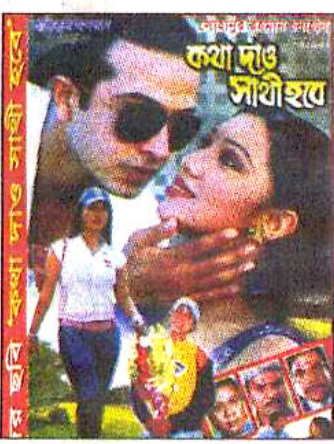
Actor Shakib Khan is in four other movies -- *Tomar Jonyo Morley Pari*, *Kopal*, *Maa Amar Swargo*, *Danob Shontan* -- which are also set to be released on or around Eid.

After many years, noted actress

Babita is playing a central role in the movie *Maa Amar Swargo*, directed by Zakir Hossain Raju. Babita plays the title role of the 'mother' in the film. Popular duo Shabnur-Riaz is the highlight of *Meye Shakkhi*, directed by Malek Biswas. Model Sadya in her debut film *Tomar Jonyo Morley Pari*, directed by Safi Iqbal, may emerge as a promising actor. In the film she is paired with Shakib. Shabnur-Shakib duo is featured in *Kopal* directed by Hasibul Islam Mizan. Uttam Akash's romantic action film *Danob Shontan* stars Shakib, Poppy and Omar Sani in the major roles.

Osman directed by M.B. Manik, Nilu Shimul's film *Astrodhari Rana*, Niranjan Biswas' movie *Rakto Chosha* and *Bullet* directed by Ahmed Ali Mondol are the action movies set to release on the occasion of Eid, running at a few theatres in the district towns and remote areas.

Non-A lister actors like Amit Hassan, Prince, Soheli, Alek, Monika, Shakiba, Polly, Shahed, Ratna, Moumita and others play central roles in films such as

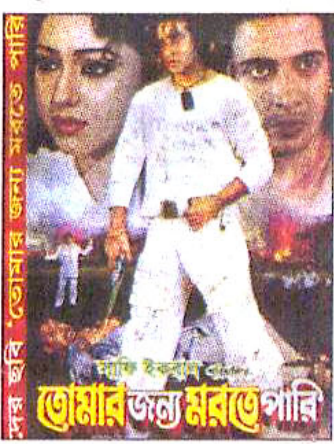


Prem Badha directed by Zafar Al Mamun and *Priyo Shathi* directed by G. Sarkar, also set to run at theatres in remote areas.

Another aspect of this year's Eid film market is the decrease in the number of new releases. Last year 19 films were approved for Eid release. Explaining the reason behind the decline in numbers, Nasiruddin Dilo said, "As FDC has stopped giving services in credit, a producer now needs more readily available cash to make a film. Only the big investors are producing films. Moreover, after Film Censor Board's strong move against vulgar, mediocre directors are not making films."

Moreover, sources related to the industry informed that this year the producers and distributors hope to do business without much hassle, as no politically backed syndicate will meddle in the Eid releases, like previous years.

Nasiruddin Dilo is hopeful that the Bangladesh film industry will see better days, provided piracy is strongly controlled and the environment of movie theatres improved.



Celebrities on Eid Chitchat with Banna Mirza

NADIA SARWAT

Eid brings in a festive air. After a month of fasting, everyone tries to make this occasion a little more special. How do celebrities celebrate the occasion? What do they think of this day? A familiar face on the small screen, Banna Mirza, shares her thoughts.

"When I was a child, Eid meant freedom to me. I grew up in a conservative family and there were lots of dos and don'ts for the children. I was never allowed to go anywhere or play around. But on Eid, there was no restriction. It was three days of unlimited fun," says Banna.

Growing up in a small town in Kushtia, Banna had the opportunity to enjoy the community-based culture. "I think, every festival attains its proper mood when it becomes universal. In this regard, I truly enjoy the Bengali New Year. On Eid, the whole community becomes one big family. That is one of the things I cherish. My childhood memories of Eid consist of fond experiences shared with others. Waking up early in the morning, putting on brand new clothes, I would go visit almost every house in our *paara* and play with the children. When the day ended, I felt like crying, thinking why must all good things end abruptly? Now living in an apartment complex, I miss those days. People in the metro areas hardly bother about their neighbours. It's frustrating," she says.

"We waited eagerly for Eid because it was only time of the years when we made new clothes. Now as my profession demands new clothes often, I don't specifically wait for Eid to shop."

A trait inherited from her family, Banna Mirza thinks a lot about the prevailing social injustice and inequality. "Eid is a time for celebration but shouldn't everyone be entitled to it? People are struggling



I think a better way to celebrate Eid would be donating some of the money, intended for buying expensive new clothes and other items, to the people who desperately need our help. Then it would be a universal celebration.

to cope with the ongoing price hike; the recent disastrous flood has left so many homeless. Is a grand celebration really the right thing to do? I think a better way to celebrate Eid would be donating some of the money, intended for buying expensive new clothes and other items, to the people who desperately need our help. Then it would be a universal celebration."

The sensitive actress also expresses her concern about the fishermen who did not come back after the recent storms in the Bay of Bengal. "What will these families do this Eid? But I know life goes on. Even a rickshaw-puller will celebrate Eid in his own way. My mother will definitely cook some special dishes and I will spend the day with my family."

Album review

"Panjabiwala": Habib goes back to basics

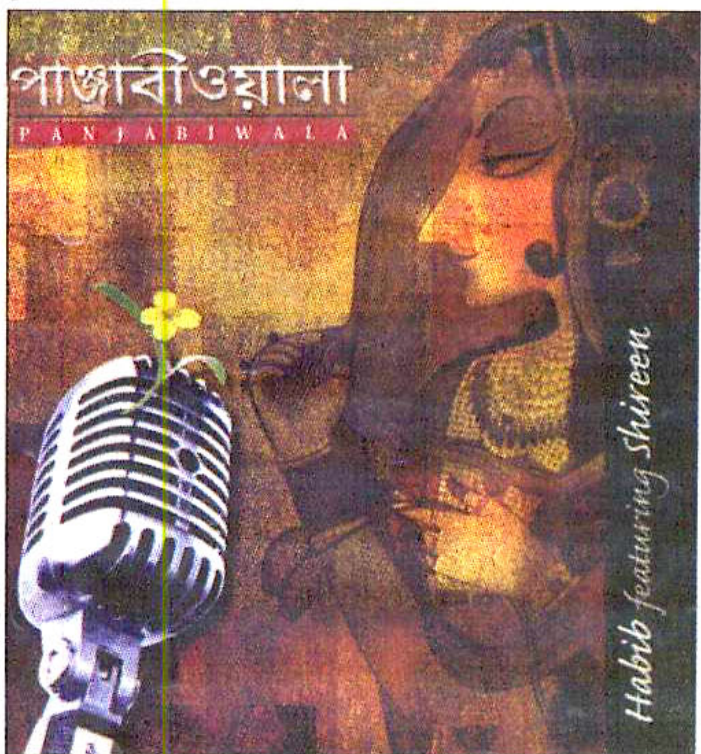
KARIM WAHEED

With Eid-ul-Fitr just around the corner, the music market is abuzz with new releases. One of the major releases -- Habib's *Panjabiwala*.

After last year's *Shono!*, a mediocre collection of mostly TV commercial jingle-like *ad-hunik* songs, Habib has gone back to basics in his new album. *Panjabiwala*, a Laser Vision presentation, highlights the genre Habib popularised with his initial albums -- *Krishna* and *Maya*. Sylheti folk songs rearranged by Habib became a craze and catapulted the talented musician to fame. The new album also features three songs that can be considered 'Sufistic' and an *ad-hunik* song written by S.A. Haque Alek and composed by Habib.

This album is also a launch pad for upcoming artiste Shireen. The artiste has mentioned Shafai Ghosh as her muse and her devotion to the 'queen of regional songs' becomes apparent throughout the album.

The title song *Panjabiwala* (written and composed by Abdul Gafur Ali) perhaps captures that unadulterated, raw folk appeal that defined Ghosh's style. As Shireen sings *Roshik telkajwala, oi laal kurawala*...one is reminded of the



Cover of the album

je ne sais quo that made *Sampawala* work. It's a feel good song and has all the potential to be a chart-topper.

Moner-o baganey (written and composed by Abdul Gafur Ali) is more of a ballad. If the first song is a celebration of naive infatuation,

this song delineates the yearning to be loved.

Shikhaiya piriti (written and composed by Bari Amir-Uddin) delves deep into that feel stirred by the first two songs. Shireen switches to a huskier, melancholy mode and conveys the consequences of falling for someone unattainable.

Shah Jalal Shah Poran (written and composed by Nurul Alam) is a homage to the legendary Sylheti saints, rendered in the *qawwali* style, engrossed in the true sense of Sufism.

Na jency bhul bujho na (written and composed by Firoz) is perhaps the high point of the album. It's a sultry, hip-hop number that instantly catches on -- potential club music material. Shireen owns the song and makes it sound like it was made for her; Habib proves his skills creating the seamless nuance.

The album wraps up with the duet *Boleto diyechhi hrday-er kotha*, rendered by Habib and Nancy. It's a quintessential, mushy *ad-hunik* song; nothing worth writing home about.

On the whole, the album is a commendable effort by Habib. The album is likely to be one of the Eid bestsellers.

TV play "Ghorot Ferot" on ATN Bangla tonight

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Written by Sirajul Karim and directed by Naim Imtiaz Naimul, single-episode TV play *Ghorot Ferot* will be aired tonight on ATN Bangla at 8:00 pm.

The story follows Jobed Ali. Despite being a well-off person, Jobed Ali is cunning and deceitful. His domestic help, Lal, and his family depend on a meagre income but are often left to

starve, as Jobed Ali does not pay his wages regularly. In response to Lal's repeated requests to be paid, Jobed comments that the poor are always hungry. A furious and desperate Lal plans to teach Jobed a lesson. One day, he locks up Jobed Ali in a room, forcing him to experience the pangs of hunger.

Mamunur-Rashid, Fazlur Rahman Babu and Tanima Hamid play the lead roles in the play.



Fazlur Rahman Babu in the TV play

Sisimpur Band in BTV's "Eid Anandamela"



Sara Zaker and Sharmin Lucky with the moppets of Sisimpur

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The 'Sisimpur Band' will feature in this year's *Anandamela*, a special programme on Eid-ul-Fitr on BTV.

'Sisimpur Band' has Halum as the vocalist; Ikri plays the drums while Shiku plays the flute. The band started off from the second season of the popular children's television series *Sisimpur*. The target is to achieve educational goals with merriment, often using popular folk tunes. In this year's *Anandamela* the band will perform a parody of the popular folk song *Shader lau*.

To top it all, actor-director Sara Zaker and model Sharmin Lucky

will sing along with the band. An enthusiastic Sara Zaker said, "Nothing can be compared to doing something that can delight the children. But TV programmes more or less tend to ignore entertainment for children. For ages, *Anandamela* has been one of the main attractions for TV viewers during Eid. Our participation in the programme is an achievement in the sense that we could take the children's issues to the mainstream."

Presented by Shamima Akhter Baby and Momtaz Mahmud, the programme is produced by Rafiquddin Ahmed and will be aired after the 10pm English news on Eid day.

Buzz

"Brick Lane" scares off the Prince!

Prince Charles, who chickened out of a royal premiere of the controversial film *Brick Lane* last week, may not know what he missed. But over 300 journalists and trade representatives who watched the film at the Toronto International Film Festival stayed glued till the end.

Journalists (other than those who are reviewing the films) at the film festivals are notorious for walking out of a film in about 20 minutes after it has started if they find it less than compulsively watchable. But that was not the case here. Some were astonished at the high level of performances in the film, especially by Satish Kaushik who plays a Bangladeshi cuckolded husband of a much

younger wife.

Sony Pictures Classics which will be distributing the film in America early next year could change the release schedule if it makes a splash in its British release and begin rolling out the film late this year in select American cities.

The film which will soon be shown at the London Film Festival this month, was bought by Sony over two months ago unseen, solely based on the reputation of Monica Ali's novel of the same name. Sony also had watched how Mira Nair's *The Namesake* slowly but steadily built a reputation across North America grossing about \$14 million. In the United Kingdom, though, it grossed just about \$1 million, a decent but far from spectacular performance.

Hollywood insiders believe that Sony would not have gone anywhere near *Brick Lane* had *The Namesake* failed to ignite the art-house box-office in America and Canada. The latter film, distributed in North America by Fox Searchlight, grossed \$1 million more than Sony's Oscar-winning German import *The Lives of Others*.

But will *Brick Lane*, set in London, do good business in the United Kingdom? The book was a bestseller there, selling half a million copies and a modest success in America. Its publishers have restocked bookshops across North

America and Canada with the sticker, "Now a Major Motion Picture".

"British audiences are notoriously resistant to films that reflect their multicultural world," the influential trade publication *Screen International* which gave the film quite a glowing review wrote recently after its screening at the Toronto fest.

The reputation of Ali's novel is the film's biggest commercial asset, the review asserted. It added: "Stressing a story of impossible love and the charismatic performance of Tannishtha Chatterjee could provide the ingredients that will translate into a modest special-release."

But followed by a number of controversies including the sudden refusal by the Prince to have a royal premiere for the film could push the British distributor to give it a strong release, perhaps taking it to over 60 screens in a month.

The Royal Film Performance of the film was scheduled for October 29. But the impending protests by Bangladeshis in London angry with the story must have scared the Prince.

When the shooting started in London more than a year ago, several angry Bangladeshis had driven the production company from *Brick Lane* to another location. They complained that the



Scenes from Brick Lane

book had shown their community in poor light, and they were afraid the movie could show them in a worse light. The same people were apparently getting ready to protest the royal showing.

Though Clarence House (the office of Charles) says that the special performance was dropped because of a scheduling conflict, the London newspapers and the trade publication *Variety* think the performance was cancelled for political reasons.

"The cancellation of the Royal Film Performance is a real shame," said first-time director Sarah Gavron in a statement. Though Monica Ali hasn't spoken out as

yet, she had said earlier that the film, like the book, is not sensational and exploitative, and the husband (played brilliantly by Satish Kaushik) goes through a kind of redemption in the end.

Gavron added: "The clear message from audiences once they have seen the film is that it is absolutely not disrespectful or controversial in any way. None of those elements cited by the minority of protestors during the production period appear in the film."

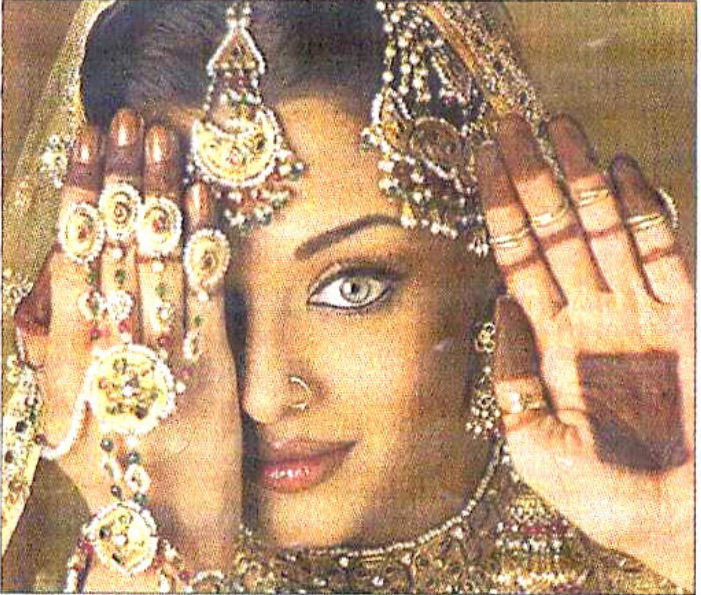
Meanwhile, Charles is being criticised royally, even by Parminder Vir, an advisor on the film who collected an OBE from Prince Charles in 2002 (for her services to broadcasting and film).

"It is very sad that the film was announced, and then withdrawn, just a few days later because someone at Clarence House, or wherever, had seen the film and fears that it will damage the Royal Family in some way," Vir told the *Sunday Telegraph*.

She added: "This plays into the hands of people who want us to live in fear of immigration and Islam. Showing this film would not damage anyone. It is not a film about race but about one woman's struggle in a new country. She just happens to be a Muslim from Bangladesh."

Source: Internet

Aishwarya Rai to act in a film on Taj mahal



Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai is set to star in a major film about the Taj Mahal, India's immortal monument to love.

Rai, 33, will play the role of Mumtaz Mahal, the favourite wife of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan who built the stunning monument for her.

Oscar-winner Sir Ben Kingsley, who will also be producing the \$30 million film, will play Shah Jahan.

Rai, a former Miss World, is one

of Bollywood's top stars and is hugely popular in her native India.

The as yet untitled film is scheduled to be shot in India in 2008, Rai's foreign agent Simone Sheffield told the BBC News website.

The director of the film has not yet been chosen and the script has yet to be completed, Sheffield said.

Another Bollywood actress and former model, Bipasha Basu, will

be playing the role of Shah Jahan's daughter, Jahanara.

Sheffield said Sir Kingsley had met Basu while co-hosting the Seven New Wonders of the World event in Lisbon in July, where they had discussed the role.

Rai, 33, is presently shooting for *Pink Panther 2*, starring Steve Martin, Andy Garcia, Jean Reno and John Cleese, in Boston.

She has worked in international projects with mixed results. In 2005, she appeared in the British romantic comedy *Bride and Prejudice*; and she also starred in *Provoked*, a film based on the autobiography of a victim of domestic abuse, who was convicted of the murder of her husband.

Source: BBC News

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