

BREAD & BEYOND: A COZY WINTER TREAT

SAMIHA ZAMAN

Nestled amidst a number of concrete towers and overlooking Sat Masjid Road, Bread & Beyond is a café selling an expansive collection of pastries and sweets.

Since it opened last year, Bread & Beyond knows just a modest crowd, and given its great food and atmosphere, deserves plenty more. It also offers caffeinated beverages from North End, which need no introduction. There are two branches: one in Banani (UAE Market, Kemal Ataturk Road) and another in Dhanmondi (House 56, Road 3/A), the latter being my number one destination since Dhaka has seen a drop in temperature.

Bread & Beyond is not your average café, though this will not seem obvious at first sight. The sign itself is not conspicuous, making it an easy miss as it sits shyly peeking on to the main road. I had my doubts about this place at first, but took a chance and was very pleased with what I discovered.

The interior is softly illuminated with the glow of yellowish orange lighting, the decor matched in the like. The usual veil of anonymity found so often at other coffee shops is substituted with a cosier, more inviting ambience, making it an ideal spot for a small group of friends. Also, since Bread & Beyond opens in the early hours (around 8am), it is a great place to unwind after a jog or a bike ride.

For Bread & Beyond, what is behind the glass display is what is being offered, eliminating the need to cruise through a menu. Out of all the items they have on offer, my favourite is the choco nut brittle. Rich, luscious, and with just enough nut in every bite, these little pieces of heaven will leave you wanting more. One cup contains four generous pieces of brittle, and given that it costs only Tk 69. Move over chocolate bars, and make way for this cocoa goodness! For dark chocolate lovers out



there, wash this treat down with a bitter espresso dupio (at Tk 155) from North End, and you're set for your day ahead.

Another treasure is their delectable chocolate mousse. Light and airy, this mousse puts ones sold at higher end coffee shops to shame. I remember being hooked after my first spoonful, and my willpower was put to the test – surely I shouldn't finish their entire batch! For those of you preferring less chocolate and more fruit, they also offer a delicious strawberry mousse counterpart – both these items are priced at Tk 92.

If sickeningly sweet is not your cup of tea (or coffee), try the cheesecake cup. A variation of your traditional cheesecake, the cream cheese sits upon a soft biscuit base. A small dollop of blueberry jam perches on top.

But there are items that aren't so great, such as the vegetable quiche. Their chicken and cheese sandwich is satisfactory, at a reasonable price. They also sell picnic sandwiches, tarts, cupcakes and a large variety of scrumptious cakes available on display.

Finally, we come to the staff. As a testament of their friendliness, their owner had once overheard my friend giving positive reviews about their Banani outlet. Moments later, my friend was gifted a gorgeous vanilla cake on the house! While I'm not saying all of you should expect free goodies, I am saying that their amiable staff definitely adds to Bread & Beyond's many virtues.

The only problem I can recall is that it's not suitable for lone coffee shop frequenters or large crowds, since their interior is far too small to accommodate many people or allow one to soak in solitude.

Pleasant atmosphere: check. Good coffee: check. Delicious sweets: check. What are you waiting for? Give Bread & Beyond a go.



Is Your Body READY?

Getting started

Want to work out but just can't seem to get started? Upload a picture on Facebook of you flexing your aesthetically displeasing fat/skinny body and brag about how you started working out. There's no going back now. There is no shame in starting small. You can use light weights or just do freehand workouts. Be regular and every week try and set a new personal record (PR). It doesn't have to be as big as it sounds – do maybe one extra pushup or increase the amount you squat by 2kg. Keep a log of all your workouts and how you felt about them (easy, difficult, energizing, etc). Don't skip working out on legs, back, triceps or the other parts. There's a lot more to working out than just biceps and chest, contrary to what the average person believes.

It is imperative that you also eat and sleep right. Without those, all the work you put in will go to waste.

ALBUM REVIEW

Obaid's "Prahelika -1"

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While many musicians create a sense of excitement about their debut album through years of work in the underground scene, Obaid was someone I hadn't heard of at all.

The album was released as a pair (the other being "Prahelika-2") and described itself as "probably the first example of exclusively acoustic guitar based double studio album" released in Bangladesh. My initial scepticism was blunted when I noticed that Samir Hafiz (of Power Surge and Warfaze) was involved with the mixing of the album. This album really is a solo effort. Everything from lyrics, music arrangement and art/illustration was all done by Obaid himself. Props to him for that.

The album has a total of 8 tracks. The first, "Ekakitto", starts off with acoustic guitar doodling. While the passages are decent enough, the multiple layers of guitar sometimes overlap too much, creating a confusing barrage; not the calm acoustic guitar intros generally aim for. Obaid's vocals are very husky, like a live John Mayer performance a few days after his surgery when he's having a bad



time at home and his vocal processor isn't quite working. The lyrics are predictable enough and talk about the loneliness of love and loss. The vocal pitch is surprisingly monotone, never really offering a rise or dip, or indeed anything interesting throughout the 4 minutes 40 seconds duration. Decent

guitars, the rest of it is bland.

The second song "Chiromlan" is a song I felt had a lot of promise. There was a catchy guitar arrangement and the lyrics came together for what could have been a very decent acoustic rock song but Obaid's vocals once again let the song down. If you're listening with HD

headphones at high volumes, it's almost unpleasant.

By the time you get to the fourth track it's clear that Obaid is a decent song writer and guitarist but singing isn't his forte.

The 5th track "Mounota" is very interesting. The guitar intro almost sounds like a modern take on Chicago Blues legend Robert Johnson, almost something Slash might play, and the chord progression is dark. The finger-picked sequences are also technically developed, which shows that Obaid has more up his sleeve than he'd hitherto displayed. He still sings though, so it doesn't work out.

The first thing that struck me about the 6th track, "Aguntuk", is that the intro is heavily influenced by Oasis' "Wonderwall". Apart from that, it isn't very different from any other track on the album. The same can be said for "Alo" and "Bhoi", the remaining tracks.

Overall, this would have been an almost decent album if a better vocalist had been on it. It's clear from this album that Obaid can probably make it as songwriter but singing is something he should leave to someone else.

A below average debut effort. I give it a 4/10.