

Saad Missing in Rotterdam

It is a well-known fact that international film festivals recognize film submissions from every inch of the world. However, Bangladesh is not a commonly heard name amongst the list. Now, I know, the many filmmakers who have previously been featured in many film festivals will be offended by what I say, but I am sure they will all agree to the fact that films have not been enlisted for the major categories in the A-liners of film festivals throughout our film making endeavours in Bangladeshi cinema.

I do recognize Tarek Masud's brilliance in "Matir Moina", as he won three international awards for it, including the International Critics' FIPRESCI Prize in the Directors' Fortnight section outside the competition at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival. However, this was an outside competition and not part of the main segment. Other than this, movies such as "Shoujo Dhigol Bari" and "Chaka" have gone to numerous film festivals.

Filmmakers such as Sheikh Niamat Ali, Moshiuddin Shaker, Morshedul Islam, Abu Sayeed and Golam Robbani Biplov have walked the carpets of many film festivals as well. However, those were ages ago and the industry, when it comes to international recognition, has become quite stagnant since then. The new faces that we get to see at international film festivals include Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Kamar Ahmad Simon, Abu Shahed Emon, Rubayet Hossain, Amirul Jiko and others. "Live from Dhaka" of the previous year has brought a change in the scene by getting screened at the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the Singapore Film Festival. The IFFR is one of the most important film festivals and its unique-



ness lies in the opportunity it presents to budding filmmakers. I had the fortuity of attending the preminent festival of Rotterdam for the first time this year, and seeing Abdullah Mohammad Saad's "Live From Dhaka" being featured was too big of news for me to fathom. His work was recommended in the 'bright future' category of the IFFR and I feel proud to declare that the audience enjoyed the film from the beginning to the very end. Where some recognized the potential the film has, others had a bleak expression as

to why more Bangladeshi films are not entered in such festivals. This made me realize that this film made people crave for more.

Europeans still recognize Bangladeshi people as Indians, and much of it is because of similar appearances and representations. And when identified as a Bangladeshi, the first question that many seemed to ask me was, does Bangladesh make films and why they do not get to see more of it. Thus, a representation of Bangladeshi art through films make me

feel honoured to represent its media on such platforms. Even though festivals have become increasingly lenient over the years, the submissions from our country don't seem to be increasing. The judges don't seem to want big budget films and the expensive cameras, great quality sounds and the production seem to make limited differences. What the judges and critics want to see is the authentic story of Bangladesh, the representation of it and the film maker's contemplation of our society. The sooner these facts are taken into consideration, the sooner the native films will start to reel in the illustrious achievements these festivals have to offer.

Saad, in his film, has told us an authentic story, the story of a disabled man who loses his grip on life in Dhaka and eventually his grip on family, love and money. With brilliance, Saad has represented the overambitious urban poor dreams people of Dhaka harbour within themselves. He has shown through the film why a strong star cast is quite unnecessary when it comes to presenting a good story. In all the glory of the film, Saad was simply not present for the whole event. Facing questions and queries of his disappearance, I wondered what I would have done if I was in his place. We have tried contacting Saad time and time again, but failed. My strongest reconnaissance of the whole scenario would be that Saad has gone into hibernation. The only statement I can make is that Saad can try and hide, but his work will not let him stay hidden for much longer. The flashes and the limelight will find him no matter where he is.

By Rafi Hossain

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