



"CALL ME BY YOUR NAME"



The 67th Berlin International Film Festival was a grand event, with "Teströl és lélekröl (On Body and Soul)" grabbing the award 'Golden Bear for Best Film'. The festival culminated in a grand array of emotions, primarily due to the spectacular variety in the films showcased there. Opinions differed regarding which film was truly deserving of the 'Best Film' tag. Star Showbiz's editor Rafi Hossain elaborates on his journey to this year's Berlinale.

Throughout the duration of the Berlinale, I stayed at a friend's residence. Her name was Julia Lindwick, an utterly amazing person. Even though she is in her 60s I am yet to see her liveliness and enthusiasm reciprocated anywhere else. I would say that she is a 100 times more energetic than me. As we have similar interests, we became very close friends in a short time. In the 16 days that I stayed there, not once did I feel that I was an outsider, because she treated me like family. Julia is a theatre activist, actress, and also a connoisseur of films. The interesting thing for me was that her former husband worked with Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of my most favourite directors of all time. Julia was telling me that a few years ago in the Berlinale he even won an award in one of the segments.

This was only my second Berlinale, and I noticed that it was thematically very different from last year's. In the previous year, they tended to focus on migration-based films whereas this year saw an influx of films based on ethnicity and equality. Obviously, all of the films which are featured in the Berlinale are top notch; there is no question about that. There are jury panels consisting of experts and they are all highly qualified professionals. Even though I would never call myself an expert, I would say that I am well-versed on film criticism as many of my predictions regarding awards turn out to be true. However, this year I did feel that there tended to be an inclination to reward the films which meet a specific requirement or theme.

Another thing which struck me as quite odd and mostly disappointing was that, there was little to no Bangladeshi representation in the Berlinale. Is it the notion that Europeans are not interested in our storytelling? I will be the first to testify that it is definitely not the case. We have a rich heritage and culture, and most of the high-quality designer garment that they wear is made in Bangladesh, a fact which I am very proud of. Moreover, this is exactly the time when the world wants to know stories about different countries through films. So many countries, which are more economically backwards than us, are creating films that are getting critically acclaimed in film

festivals worldwide. So why not us? We have so many talented filmmakers who do not get regular platforms, and this is exactly the reason why I travel so far; to create a bridge between these young directors and the international film festivals. I want to convey the message that it can happen only if you want it to happen. Just take the initiative and send your films.

Since the last four years, I have been traveling to different film festivals. Each time I land somewhere, I meet the same group of journalists who cover the events. It makes me happy to be a part of a thriving community of journalists, and we all share a common love for films. Usually, what happens is that we all have our personal favorite films in these festivals that do not get the 'Best Film' award. Each edition of the Berlinale features 400-500 films, so it is impossible for one person to watch all of them. I tried my absolute best to watch as many as I could. Films like "God's Own Country", "Fantastic Woman" and many others which were nominated were obviously amazing. Many of the winning entries in different segments are amongst my favorites. However, one particular film touched my heart.



As I was extremely busy covering the Berlinale, I did not get the time to watch a film with Julia until the very last day. When we did, it was "Call Me By Your Name". I had to watch it in my 6th attempt, so I had to buy a ticket in black to get to see it. I was awestruck and amazed at this love story between a teenage boy and a middle-aged man. It was its international premiere, and the acting was so solid that the final scene did not need dialogues to convey emotions; just the actor's eyes sufficed at times. After the film ended, the entirety of the audience was in tears, including me and Julia. We embraced each other and cried our hearts out; it was a moment of a vulnerability that we could not mask. After the film, we went for a little sightseeing in her car where we did not speak a word. We were both thinking about the film.

As all good things come to an end, so did this year's Berlinale. As Julia accompanied me to the airport, I kept reminiscing about the journey that I just had. Before I left for the flight, she waved me goodbye and exclaimed, "Call me by your name!"

