



TV REVIEW

"Mr. Johnny": A remarkable tale of friendship

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Every Eid brings along a torrential wave of TV plays as families gather together and flick through channels to spend leisurely time, and this Eid has been no different. What is even better is that with the advent of YouTube, TV channels are partnering with entertainment channels on the video streaming platform to upload their plays for anyone to enjoy on their own time. The Chabial Eid Reunion that is taking place on Ekushey TV this Eid, brings together seven single-episode plays by seven directors of the Chabial collective. The first of them, aired on Eid day, was Redoan Rony's "Mr. Johnny", and it's safe to label it a landmark production on Bangladeshi television in terms of its cast.

Mr. Johnny, a dog who is a constant companion of rickshaw van puller

named Mr. Doyal in the capital's Mohakhali area, became well-known to social media users of the country a few months ago after a video report on him went viral. "Mr. Johnny" is a fictionalized story of these real characters, told with finesse and emotions.

The play is set in a slum where Doyal (played by Mostafa Monwar) lives with his dog, and their friendship brings trouble in his life. His landlord, an elderly, religious Muslim man vehemently opposed to the friendship as he believes dogs are 'unclean' animals and are disrupting his religious practices. His wife (played by Joyeeta Mahalanabish) also leaves the house because of the dog staying in the house. A conflicted Doyal has an outburst with Mr. Johnny, and a heavy-hearted Johnny walks away from their lives.

Without giving further spoilers, here are what makes the play great:

the first thing is Mr. Johnny's screen presence. Kudos to Redoan Rony for having the confidence to make a dog the hero of his play -- and Mr. Johnny, like any faithful friend, delivers an incredible performance. His screen presence and mannerisms are fantastically natural and believable, probably better than half of the actors who frequent the small screen. Mostafa Monwar may not be an instantly-recognisable name or face, but he did win Best Actor at the prestigious Singapore International Film Festival last year for the film "Live From Dhaka", and his performance here shows that was no fluke. The narrative is also built expertly, from the opening shot that swiftly sets the scene for the play, to the initial mystery of who Johnny is that a man living with him in his house upsets the entire society -- drawing a not-so-subtle entendre of homosexuality.

The cinematography, screenplay and music is also done very well, culminating in an intimate, heart-wrenching relationship of a man and his canine best friend. If there is any criticism, it is that the ending feels a little undercooked.

Overall, the play is brave in its decision to tread new territories, and mostly successful in its execution. Stories of people and their relationship with their dogs have made for some amazing cinema worldwide over the years -- from yesteryear classics like "Old Yeller" to the more recent "Hachi: A Dog's Tale" and "Megan Leavey" that came out only this month, but to attempt that in Bangladesh and pull it off is remarkable.

The play is available, like all other episodes of the Chabial Eid Reunion, on the YouTube channel of Rabbitholebd Entertainment, and is a must-watch.

DOOB wins Kommersant Jury Prize at Moscow



Farooki receives the award from Andrei Plakhov.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mostafa Sarwar Farooki's "Doob" ("No Bed of Roses") may be still awaiting censor clearance at home, but the film has already gotten some international recognition. The Irrfan Khan-starrer India-Bangladesh coproduction won the Kommersant Jury Prize at the 39th Moscow International Film Festival, where it is also in the main competition.

Farooki informed The Daily Star yesterday that the Kommersant Jury Award is an official award recognized by the festival, handed out by an independent film jury. All the films in the main competition are also in contention for the award. The award is given by Kommersant, a leading Russian daily and the jury is headed by eminent Russian film critic and film historian Andrei Plakhov.

The film had its jury screening at the festival on July 27 and audience screening on July 28. When asked about the audience's reception of the film, Farooki said: "I was amazed by the emotional connect of the Russian audience to the film, especially with the women audience. Many members of the audience came up to me and Tisha (who plays the female lead in the film) and said they connected emotionally with it, and that was an amazing feeling."

The film, which The Hollywood Reporter said is "the kind of indie destined to turn up at fests for the rest of the year ... and could swing some commercial playdates thanks to [Irrfan] Khan's worldwide following," premiered at the Shanghai International Film Festival last week in competition, before heading to Moscow. The film, however, is yet to be cleared by Bangladesh's censor board and thus has no release date as of now.

Lost in the beauty of nature Jol Abeg hosts art camp in Birishiri

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

A group of young artists organised an art camp at Birishiri of Netrakona's Durgapur upazila recently. The four-day art camp was organised by Jol Abeg, a Mymensingh-based organisation of young painters.

This was the first time for the artists to be at an art camp at a picturesque location with and rivers coming from the hilly borders of India, organisers said.

The artistes who joined the camp were Jol Abeg's coordinator Md Nazmul Hossain Rahat, its assistant coordinator Md Rajon, Sajib Dey, Gautam Kumar Devnath, Biswajit Karmakar Tapu, Joyanto Mondol, Elias Khan, Rajib Mahmud, Mehdi Hasan Anik, Nupur Poddar, Sharmista Roy, Nusrat Jahan Mouri and Joba Roy.

The art camp was assisted by Fazle Hasan Shishir, Saikat Sajid and Sadiqur Rahman.

Talking to this correspondent, Jol Abeg's coordinator Rahat said, they selected the place to draw pictures in an idyllic atmosphere. "It was an extraordinary experience to be close to nature and to draw lively pictures what we saw before us," said Rahat.

The artistes drew some 100 paintings on rivers, natural environment and the indigenous Garo people living in the area, and their homesteads.

Another artiste of the camp, Gautam Kumar Devnath said "Nature is the best teacher and for any creative art, there is no alternative but to be inclined with the nature and its endless beauty."

Nupur Poddar, a young talent, said "The experience we gathered from the camp will surely benefit them to come in direct contact of nature to develop out imagination for this creative art."



Jabba the Hutt set to appear in Han Solo movie?

The Han Solo movie has been getting a lot of attention over the last week due to the sudden departure of directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller. Ron Howard has since taken their position, and while there's still a lot to absorb about what went down behind the scenes during Lord and Miller's tenure, the project is gearing up to begin filming again with Howard at the helm. In the aftermath of this turmoil, it's now being reported that one of Han Solo's familiar nemeses may be appearing in his spinoff movie: intergalactic gangster Jabba the Hutt.

Supposedly, the Han Solo movie will show Han's history with Jabba "played out", and the Hutt will be party CGI and partly an animatronic puppet, reports CinemaBlend. The Hashtag Show came across this information before Phil Lord and Chris Miller left, but the outlet does not believe that Jabba will not be taken out of the movie because he is a "big

plot point." It's worth taking this report with a grain of salt, but if it's true, that would make Jabba the fourth established Star Wars character to appear in the second Anthology film, following behind Han himself, Chewbacca and Lando Calrissian.

Jabba the Hutt was first mentioned in "A New Hope" when Greedo came to collect the money that Han owed Jabba. While a CGI Jabba was later added into the 1997 Special Edition of "A New Hope", he didn't make his true debut until "Return of the Jedi", and it wasn't long before he was killed by Princess Leia during the Sarlacc sequence. Jabba briefly appeared in "The Phantom Menace" to watch the Podrace in Mos Espa, and he also made several appearances in 2008 TV series "Star Wars: The Clone Wars".

Although specific plot details for the Han Solo movie haven't been revealed yet, Jabba's inclusion would make sense, as Han

performed several jobs for the Hutt before getting on his bad side. Since this movie takes place years before "A New Hope", presumably it would either depict Han meeting Jabba or at least show the young smuggler at a time when he was still in good standing with the gangster.

Along with potentially showing Han and Jabba's history, the Han Solo movie is also rumored to show how he acquired the Millennium Falcon from Lando Calrissian. The main cast includes Alden Ehrenreich (as Solo), Donald Glover (playing a young Lando), Woody Harrelson, Emilia Clarke, Thandie Newton, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Michael K Williams, Ian Kenny and Joonas Suotamo.

The Han Solo movie is still scheduled to storm into theatres on May 25, 2018.



Source: CinemaBlend