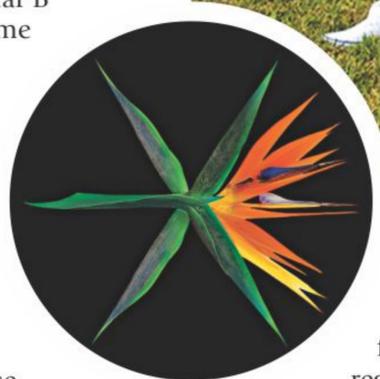


# EXO's 'The War' – An Honest Review by a K-pop Fangirl

If you have heard of K-pop, you must be familiar with the term "EXO". EXO is one of the most popular boy groups in K-pop. They debuted in 2012 with 12 members, and now have 9. Being a South Korean boy band, they have 8 Korean members: Baekhyun, Kai, Sehun, Xiumin, D.O., Chen, Suho and Chanyeol; and 4 Chinese members: Lay, the only active Chinese member, and former members Kris, Luhan and Tao. EXO has been on top of the game when it comes to beating the charts, and they are back with their fourth studio album called *The War*. The album had the highest number of K-pop albums preorders, topping numerous charts, beating records - even beating their own records on 'Billboards 200'.

*The War* contains 9 tracks, the title track being Koko Bop. The physical album has 3 versions: regular A, regular B and a private version. They come with a random member's photo card and poster, different photo book and cover with each. The CD inside also has a different design on each, with the 3 different summer-themed logos. The private version's photo book has small messages and speech bubbles from the members themselves. Of course, you may purchase the EXO-M (Mandarin) or EXO-K (Korean) album of these versions. That makes a total of 9 versions, having a cartoon-version of a random member's postcard in 1 out of 9.

The tropical-themed album *The War* paints a picture of the perfect summer



vibe, with palm trees, lazy days and just chilling with your mates. The new EXO logo is a flower called "strelitzia reginae", which blooms every 5 years, and coincidentally, this year is EXO's 5th anniversary. Their title song *Koko Bop* is a dance-bop-reggae-EDM mix, the perfect party song for this season, sure to leave listeners in awe and admiration. The director of this music video did a good job at making it

eccentrically fun, throwing in EXO candies, uniquely colorful drinks, burgers, clouds and other things floating around. A lot of weird things go on in the video - sort of like a tropical fantasy. This gives an overall relaxing, sunny and thirst-quenching color scheme. The term "shimmy shimmy koko bop" is now a meme among the fans.

The members have been given quite striking looks; Kai's controversial dreadlocks, Baekhyun's objectively debatable red mullet, Chen's beautiful blonde

hair, Sehun's flaming-orange hair and Chanyeol's strawberry-pink rainbow hair. Their looks give a nice touch to the summer-based theme of the album.

It's not just the title track that sounds like a paradise, the rest of the album is just as entertaining, rich in vocal power and containing amazing beat-drops; having pop, EDM, reggae, hip-hop and dance music, making the listener want to get up and start dancing!

By Shazmeen Haq

## BHOYONKOR SUNDOR and Controversy Thereafter; How Much Justified?

Expectations were sky-high on the Parambrata Chatterjee and Bhabna starrer *Bhoyonkor Sundor*. The film, directed, produced and written by Animesh Aich, garnered a lot of criticism after it was released in major theatres in the country on 4th August. The trailer promised a lot, and the film included songs from renowned artists including Chirkutt, Tahsan and Elita. Why it that a film poised for almost 'certain' success is facing so much criticism online, that too in such a short span of time?

"Every film we make as directors are like our children", said Animesh Aich, the director of the film. "After a child is born, the people in the society try to accept it in a positive way. The critique comes after it grows up and starts being a burden." The director was understandably disappointed at some overreactions on social media. "I welcome any and all criticism on my film, as long as they have actually seen and tried to understand it. But it seems like anyone and everyone is joining in the bandwagon against it." It is to be noted that the director has relentlessly worked on the film for two years, slowly but steadily building up the project from ground up. Animesh's leap from television serials to film has been



deemed commendable by many top figures in the industry.

The film follows an unconventional story, which tackles different themes all throughout. The story of Muku (Parambrata) and Nayontara (Bhabna) is a love story riddled with adversities. The character of Nayontara is not one of a damsel-in-distress, which is difficult for Bangladeshi directors to digest. The role

was difficult and woman-centric, but well embraced by the debutante actress Ashna Habib Bhabna.

"I gave all I could for the role of Nayontara", proclaimed Bhabna, "and got mostly positive reviews from the audience that viewed the movie. I am baffled by the negativity on social media; some have even resorted to commenting ludicrous things on my profile pictures. I am a

human being, and like all other human beings I have emotions too, and people have to remember that."

The negativity is astounding, but the positivity that comes from the artists and scholars are encouraging. A prominent dancer recently mentioned on Facebook, "I think people are more concerned with how Bhabna, a debutant actress, received such an important role with Kolkata's biggest actor. Bhabna, you did an amazing job and I am obsessed over Nayontara. You will have to suffer a lot if you are an actress, but you are only 22 years old and have a long way to go." Bhabna further added, "If you searched up honest reviews from Jaya Ahsan, Bonna Mirza, Manosh Chowdhury, Shazu Khadem, Shatabdi Vobo and other qualified people from the film and scholarly fraternity, you'll see a different picture."

All the indicators suggest a simple fact; one just needs to see the film themselves before judging its competence. If "Bhoyonkor Sundor" was "Bhoyonkor Baaje", it probably would not have garnered full houses in a place like Jamuna Future Park on non-festival holidays.

By Sadi Mohammad Shahnewaz