

"Khacha" in theatres in limited release from today

Partition drama stars Jaya, Azad Abul Kalam and Mamunur Rashid

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Impress Telefilm, in what can only be described as a rabbit-out-of-the-hat move, announced yesterday that their film "Khacha" is releasing today. The Akram Khan-directed film is based on a Hasan Azizul Haque short story of the same title has a powerhouse central cast including Azad Abul Kalam, Mamunur Rashid and Jaya Ahsan, and thus begs the question: Why is a film with so many high-profile names getting released in such neglected manner?

"Let's say I did a two-month extensive promotional campaign before releasing the film: press coverage, print and TV ads and whatnot. Will I be able to make money off this film? The answer is no; you know it and I know it too," said a rather dejected Ibne Hasan Khan, director, sales & marketing at Impress Telefilm, Channel i. "These films, with 'artistic value', do not appeal to the mass audience, and our experience says it is futile to spend that money and resources behind it." He also lamented the number of cinemas the film is releasing. "We are releasing it in six theatres; we asked another 150 theatres and they all rejected it. They said no one will watch this. The more theatres I will release it, the bigger my loss will be," he added. But what appears to be the actual reason behind this hurried release is the upcoming wave of 'big' films set for October release: heavyweights like "Dhaka Attack" and "Doob" will be interjected by smaller



but still promising films such as "Gohin Baluchor" and "Dulabhai Zindabad", and getting any halls in the coming weeks could be difficult, or at least Impress Telefilm seems to think so. "Khacha" was one of the recipients of the 2012-'13 National Film Grant (provided by the Ministry of Information) and began filming in late 2015 which took place in Narail, Munshiganj and Natore. The film was reportedly completed in October 2016, and after a long hiatus, received its censor certificate on August 31. Azad Abul Kalam co-wrote the screenplay with Akram Khan, along with playing the lead role of Ambujakkho. The film is set in the aftermath of the 1947 Partition, where a Hindu family

attempts to sell its house in Bangladesh and tries to move to India, but to no avail. Along with Jaya, Kalam and Mamunur Rashid, other cast members include Chandni, Kayes Chowdhury, Arman Parvez Murad, Shahed Ali and veteran yesteryears film actress Rani Sarkar. The Catch 22 of 'good cinema doesn't draw enough audience to make profit' and 'people don't go to halls because there are no good films in theatres' has been in the Bangladeshi film industry for a few years now, and seems to be getting more and more severe by the day. While that remains a bigger question for another day for a report to look into, "Khacha" will probably have the same fate of films like "Oggatonama"

(2016) and "Jalaler Golpo" (2015) – films that won widespread international acclaim at film festivals yet almost no one got to see it in theatres. Those two films have a couple of more things in common: they were Bangladesh's submissions to the Oscars (in the foreign language film category), and they were both Impress Telefilm productions. Let's hope "Khacha" doesn't fall in the same pitfall. For audiences in Dhaka, the film will play at the Star Cineplex. The other cinemas where "Khaca" will be playing are Chhayabani (Mymensingh), Liberty Cineplex (Khulna), Momtaz (Sirajganj), TK Cineplex (Serajdikhan) and Kollol Cinema Hall (Madhupur).



A scene from "Hotel Albatross".

Unburdened by his father's legacy

Nuhash Humayun on his directorial TV debut

NAZIBA BASHER

Nuhash Humayun carries one of the heaviest surnames in the Bangladeshi entertainment industry. The moment news broke out that the eldest son of iconic writer-filmmaker Humayun Ahmed was making his first mainstream TV play, anticipation ran wild. Under Amitabh Reza's supervision, the Eid special TV series "Osthir Somoye Swasti'r Golpo" featured Nuhash's directorial debut on television with "Hotel Albatross", and the young gun has made one thing clear through the work: he is on a path of his own, unburdened by his father's legacy. The psychological thriller, starring the masterful Asaduzzaman Noor along with a strong supporting cast, gained plenty of praise from the audience for originality and storytelling method.

Nuhash spoke to The Daily Star about the making of the thriller, his challenges and future plans. "One of the biggest challenges I faced was with time. Usually, when I work for myself, I take my time. Most of my time goes to post-production. When I began working on 'Hotel Albatross', I had to change my entire mindset. I was given a particular timeframe to work within, and getting all of it done was a challenge for me."

Nuhash believes one of the reasons he was able to pull off his play with such success was because of the involvement of Amitabh Reza's team. "Amitabh Reza's team is like a well-oiled machine: they know their duties and timeframe, and most importantly they market their products very well." When Nuhash made "Hotel Albatross", he made sure he told a story he personally felt must be told. "While there were compromises I had to make due to producers' calls even though I was reluctant to, the story was unapologetically me. I got away with a lot of things that I didn't think I would -- like insults, offensive language, and gore." But there will always be limitations, Nuhash believes. "Even if I'm not always happy with it, it's a part of the process that everyone must accept."

About the casting, Nuhash said: "I believe the heart of the play was the story itself, for which I needed the characters to be well-developed. I required a lot of rehearsal, and the actors were really busy and yet they found time for me. Allen would come over even if it was at 3am, to discuss his character with me and go through the script." "Asaduzzaman Noor brings a completely different energy on set. I know how busy he was. But once on set, he took in the character so completely that it urged his co-actors to do better than they normally would have done," said Nuhash about working with the seasoned actor and Cultural Affairs Minister.

Nuhash already knew what the industry expected from him. "Of course because of my father, people thought I would make something similar to what he used to make. I don't mind this expectation -- it drives me to do better. But after the airing of 'Hotel Albatross', people told me it was very different from my father's work. A lot of what is the norm in directing plays today was established by my father. And I think, not many people have been able to go beyond that format and do something new. I want to explore more methods and ways to go about filmmaking."

Nuhash has one project right now that's keeping him busy. "I'm working on a short film called 'Paper Frogs'. It will be aired at this year's Dhaka Lit Fest. It's a simple coming-of-age story of a girl; very different from 'Hotel Albatross'. I don't know when I will work on my next TV play. I still have many stories I want to tell. Let's see where they take me."



"Dancing is an experience, not a performance"

Sashar Zarif brings spirituality on stage

NAZIBA BASHER

On September 18, a discerning audience was gifted with a special performance at the National Museum during the 64th presentation of "Nupur Beje Jaye", a bi-monthly programme organised by Shadhona Shangkritik Mondal to promote performing arts in Bangladesh.

Shadhona had invited internationally-acclaimed dancer and performing artiste Sashar Zarif, founder and director of Sashar Zarif Dance Theatre in Toronto, Canada, to perform for the Bangladeshi audience.

Sashar Zarif is a multi-disciplinary performing artiste, educator, and researcher whose artistic practice encourages a union of creative and cultural perspectives. His interests are identity, globalisation, and cross-cultural collaborations. His practice delves in the artistry and history of traditional, ritualistic, and contemporary dance and music of the Near



The artiste performs at Jatra Biroti.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Eastern and Central Asian regions. "Dance, to me, is a tool. What we need is inspiring content; stories that can be wholly and perfectly told only through dance. Dancing is an experience, not a performance. This whole

idea of 'performance' is a residue of colonialism. Traditionally, we don't have 'audience', we have 'participants', who give you support while you are dancing, they are a part of the whole experience. The dancers here

too, like anywhere in the world, want to break out of the mould and make dance a greater, more spiritual journey," says Sashar.

Titled, "Dance of Dilnawaz", the performance was an exploration of Urdu short story "Dilnawaz" by Rahat Ara Begum, a pioneering Urdu writer of 20th century Kolkata. The text is based on Sufi philosophy. Shadhona and Sashar Zarif together presented this creative project.

The following day, Sashar held a demonstration and lecture on the Dance of Mugham at Jatra Biroti in Banani. "Mugham" is one of the many folk musical compositions from Azerbaijan. Sashar's Dance of Mugham is the result of over twelve years of research and reconstruction. His aim was to re-establish the nearly lost element of dance back into the ancient form of Mugham, through expanding an understanding of the relationships between the poetry, music and dance.

Gal Gadot in talks to join supernatural thriller "Deeper"



"Wonder Woman" star Gal Gadot has found her next project: MGM's supernatural thriller titled "Deeper". Gadot is in early talks to join Bradley Cooper in the film, which was a hot Max Landis spec package when the studio picked it up in 2016, The Hollywood Reporter confirmed.

Kornel Mundruczo, the Hungarian director behind "White God", is directing the project, which centers on a disgraced astronaut who is on a deep-sea dive exploring a newly discovered trench but soon finds himself confronted by a sinister and dangerous force. It was described as having a tone similar to recent hits "Gravity" and "The Martian".

It is not yet known which character Gadot will play. David Goyer, Kevin Turen, Russell Ackerman, John Schoenfelder and Landis are producing, as is Cooper.

Gadot became an international star thanks to her "Wonder Woman" role, with the movie becoming not only a phenomenon but one of the year's biggest hits, grossing over \$818 million worldwide.

The actress will be back for the superhero film's sequel, which will be once again directed by Patty Jenkins, but the goal is for her to shoot "Deeper" before segueing to the Warners DC movie.

Cooper, a multiple Oscar nominee, was also last 'seen' (actually mostly heard) in a comic-book tentpole, Marvel's "Guardians of the Galaxy vol.2" directed by James Gunn, where he voiced (and acted in motion-capture) Rocket Raccoon.

Source: Hollywood Reporter

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