

FILM REVIEW

KHACHA

Bangladesh's Oscar entry deserved a better release and bigger audience



FAMMIM FERDOUS
The curse of Bangladesh's Oscar entries (in the Foreign Language Film category) at the box office continues this year. Akram Khan's "Khacha" – this year's nomination – was taken off the only movie theatre in the capital, Star Cineplex that was screening it after just a week of running. Previous Bangladeshi Oscar entries – "Oggatnama" (2016) and "Jalaler Golpo" (2015) – suffered the same fate of empty seats and truncated runs at the theatres. Despite having Jaya Ahsan, one of the biggest names in Bangladeshi film, in the lead role along with a heavy-weight ensemble cast including film, TV and theatre veterans Azad Abul Kalam and Mamunur Rashid, "Khacha" shut shop as quietly as it was released.
Based on Hasan Azizul Haque's short story with the same title, "Khacha" is set in a village in present-day Bangladesh, and chronicles the strife of a Hindu family trying to migrate to West Bengal (as many Hindu families did during and following the Partition in 1947) by

exchanging their home with a Muslim family from India looking to move here. The once-wealthy family of Ambujakkho (played by Azad Abul Kalam) and Sarojini (Jaya), along with their elderly father (Mamunur Rashid) and four children drift aimlessly for a decade and a half of failed attempts and evaporating hopes of a new beginning and a better life.
Despite this being his second film (after "Ghasphul"), Akram Khan gets pretty much everything right in this moving, cathartic work of tragedy. He expertly averts the problem of producing a period piece on a modest budget by limiting his location and characters, and sets a truly believable backdrop of 1948. Akram's attention to details in his frames – both visually and audibly – is remarkable. The sound design, with plenty of ambient sounds of nature and surroundings, helps to fill in the rather slow screenplay, and the cinematography, kept fairly simple, only enhances the depressive mood of the story. By having these secondary elements strongly in place, the director gives his actors the space to

fully shine, and shine they did. Three of the finest actors of their generations go toe to toe in showcasing great character complexity, and with a support cast holding their own, the film is seamless in its storytelling. Azad Abul Kalam in particular (being the co-writer of the screenplay and dialogue), is mesmerising in his character, and Jaya shows why she is equally adept in her commercial ventures as she is in arthouse projects. The film also sort of drifts along for a fairly long runtime of almost three hours, and I don't know if that is intentional to give the audience the same feeling of directionlessness as his characters. The interactions of the members of this family with other people, like Ambujakkho's visit to a recently-settled Muslim family, or the children's interactions with other kids, are also purposeful and striking in their own subtle way. Akram Khan shows plenty of glimpses of his storytelling style, one of the most memorable being his choice of using the only moment of intense emotional outburst to close the film.

"Khacha" shares a few more resemblances to its two predecessors (in Bangladesh's yet-in-vain Oscar dream): they all feature excellent actors, are hard-hitting humane stories, and are productions of Impress Telefilm. "Khacha", which was also the recipient of the 2012 National Film Grant, got its censor certificate on August 31 this year, and was originally planned to be released in December. It was released on September 22 by Impress Telefilm on three days' notice and near-zero promotional campaign (only a rather shabby-looking trailer that gained little traction) and it is of little surprise that a big fraction of the discernable film audience even got to know of it. It appears in retrospect that the rushed release was only to meet the Oscar submission deadline, considering there was only one other film that was submitted for consideration ("SonaBondhu" starring DA Tayeb and Pori Moni). This film deserved a much better release and a bigger audience. It's a shame it received neither.

AKM Zakaria birth centenary celebrated at Bakultala

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To celebrate the birth centenary of archaeologist, puNthi exponent, anthropologist, historian and sports organiser Abul Kalam Mohammed Zakaria, "Dhaka'r Shapatya Bishoyok Grontho Pronoyon Committee" organised a two day (October 1-2) programme at Bakultala, Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka.
Chairman of the committee Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique said, "AKM Zakaria's research-based works revolve around diverse disciplines. But his prime focus was on studying Ancient Bengal based on which he wrote several original books. His works are an immense source of inspiration and contribute greatly to the development of human civilisation."
Eminent professors from different universities, artistes, researchers, theatre and cultural activists, photographers, journalists and family members of AKM Zakaria

attended the programme.
Eminent artiste Farida Parveen performed an opening song at the programme. Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique with noted personalities unveiled a memorial book on AKM Zakaria, who edited books like "Gupichandrer Sanyas" and "Bangla Sahitye Gazi Kalu Champabati Upakkhyan". Later, Tachher Mondol Gayen and his troupe from Natore presented Jogi'r Gaan incorporating tales and songs.
Islamuddin Palakar and his troupe from Kishoreganj performed Gazi'r Kissa Gaan on the opening day's event.
On the concluding day, Mongol Mian Gayen and his troupe from Bikrampur (Munshiganj) presented Gazi'r Pat Gaan while Chan Mian Gayen and his troupe from Manikganj performed Gazi'r Pala at the event. Thespian Syed Jamilur Rahman and pat painter Shambhu Acharya spoke on the occasion.



Chan Mian Gayen and his troupe sing at the event.

PHOTO COURTESY: NELOY I HOSSAIN

Liza pins high hope on her new music video

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Talented singer Sania Sultana Liza has exciting news for her fans: after a hiatus of two years, the celebrated artiste is releasing a new music video today. Titled "Bhalobashi Bola Hoye Jaak", the music video is being released under the banner of CSV.

The song has been written by Ishtiaque Ahmed, and composed by Belal Khan. Mir Masum is the music director for the number. The video depicts a poignant love story in the historical, ramshackle setting of Old Dhaka.

"Two years ago my eagerly anticipated music video 'Suraya' was released. Now I am back with even more hopes and dreams for this venture," stated Liza.

The singer went on to add that the ambiance of the song and video were made to pique the audience's interests. "I am hopeful that it will be received well," she said, "'Suraya' was on everyone's lips after its release, and I hope it will be the same this time around also."

Aside from this accomplishment, the singer is currently busy with television appearances, stage shows, and hosting programmes.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

"Breakup 3" on ATN Bangla

A CORRESPONDENT

After the widely popular TV plays "Breakup 1" and "Breakup 2", director Mohammad Mehedi Hasan Jony is back with another sequel. "Breakup 3" will see Apurbo, Shokh, Moushumi Hamid, Kazi Ujjol reprising their roles along with other cast members. The play will air on ATN Bangla tonight at 10:55pm.



KATE WINSLET to reunite with James Cameron in "Avatar" sequels



Kate Winslet has come on board James Cameron's "Avatar" sequels, reuniting with the director two decades after they collaborated on "Titanic".
"Kate and I have been looking for something to do together for 20 years, since our collaboration on 'Titanic', which was one of the most rewarding of my career," Cameron said. "I can't wait to see her bring the character of Ronal to life."
The four sequels will hit theaters starting on December 18, 2020 for "Avatar 2". "Avatar 3" will open on December 17, 2021, followed by a three-year break for "Avatar 4", set for December 20, 2024. The final one, "Avatar 5", will debut on December 19, 2025.
Cameron began filming the first of the four Fox movies last week in California. The creator of the original "Avatar" – the 2009 fantasy epic that remains the all-time worldwide box office champion with \$2.8 billion – first announced plans for four films in 2016. He had initially envisioned two sequels, but after meeting with the screenwriters, artists,

and designers, he realized that he had too much material for just two films, decided on three sequels, then jumped to four.

Cameron and Jon Landau are producing through their company Lightstorm Entertainment. The returning stars include Zoe Saldana, Sam Worthington, Sigourney Weaver, CCH Pounder, and Stephen Lang, with "Game of Thrones" star Oona Chaplin recently joining the cast in an unspecified role. The script was written by Cameron with Josh Friedman, Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, and Shane Salerno.

Winslet stars with Idris Elba in Fox's upcoming "The Mountain Between Us", which opens on Friday, and in Woody Allen's "Wonder Wheel for Amazon", which opens Dec. 1. Her recent credits include "Collateral Beauty", "The Dressmaker", and "Steve Jobs", for which she received her seventh Academy Award nomination.

Winslet won an Oscar for "The Reader" and received nominations for "Titanic", "Sense and Sensibility", "Iris", "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind", and "Little Children".

The news about "Avatar" was first reported by Deadline Hollywood.

Source: Variety