



## Talking jazz with the IMRAN AHMED TRIO

**MOHUA MOULI**

One lazy afternoon a few days ago, I sat with the Imran Ahmed Trio at their base in Shantinagar, Dhaka. But not before I was completely lost in the circuitous streets, from which I was rescued by none other than Imran Ahmed himself, and their drummer, Arjo Shrestho. They escorted me to their cosy little apartment where they plan on establishing a music school.

While we were chatting about the apartment view and cats, their bassist Mohaimin Karim arrived and soon I got the chance to speak to the group about their passion for jazz music, the upcoming international tour, and a few words about hairstyles in fashion.

**When did you first start considering music as a career choice?**

Imran: Well, I started playing the guitar when I was in Class 4, and while in school, I played in a few bands with friends. But I really considered it when I started performing. At first I was in a metal band then I continued playing the guitar with different line-ups and slowly ended up getting into fusion during 2014.

Mohaimin: I started off with playing the guitar too, but I was never really interested in making a career out of it. Then a few friends asked if I could play the bass for their band and that was it. I started

jamming with the jazz band "42". Then in early 2015 I started working with Imran.

Arjo: I never thought of becoming a musician. I used to play tabla back in Class 6. Then later on I picked up the drums and realised I am good at it. I went to University of Leeds to get an undergraduate degree in music but I never finished. Mohaimin and I went to the same school. I met Imran through him and we started working together around March of 2015.

**Tell me about some of your musical influences.**

Imran: I am inspired by John McLaughlin, who is one of the greatest jazz guitarists in the world.

Mohaimin: Yes, we even opened for him when he came to perform in Bangladesh. This was during the Jazz & Blues Fest back in 2015.

Imran: Other than him, currently I don't follow anyone in particular. I listen to anything and everything I like. There are influences like Chick Corea. We call ourselves a jazz band because it is easier to do fusion under this umbrella. It is convenient to borrow sounds from different cultures through jazz and that's how we take influences from a variety of styles, be it Brazilian jazz, Flamenco jazz, New York jazz, Bebop Jazz and so on because essentially, jazz is not a genre but a method of improvising on any

genre of music.

Arjo: Personally, I would say my musical influences come from Imran himself, and Turjo (Towfiq Arifin of 42).

Mohaimin: As a band our main influence is perhaps the Shai Maestro Trio. My own influences come from Jaco Pastorius, Bill Evans Trio, Gilad Hekselman, and so on.

**About your upcoming international tour. What do you want to take away from it?**

Imran: We contacted the Ministry of Cultural Affairs about the tour and they are funding the expenses of all our flights. The food and accommodation will be covered by the festivals we are going to. The first two are in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. On May 4, we play at Starhill Gallery of Shook! and on May 6, at Auditorium DBKL. We fly to Germany next and perform at the Jazz Studio Nürnberg on May 11. Through the shows we are kind of making our international debut as the first jazz band from Bangladesh. We want to understand how the international scene works which will essentially allow us to grow further as a group.

**What do you think sets you apart from other Bangladeshi musicians trying to get a foothold in the industry?**

Imran: I would say that we do have

enough exposure, but not enough music education available. As a result many of us fall short on realising how to reach out to our audience, or make our music available. I would say social media is a very important tool that we used to find the feedback we were looking for. In short, you need to have an adequate level of musical talent as well as business acumen in order to grow as a musician.

Mohaimin: We also need more venues and outlets where artists can perform. But I also believe musicians need to be more serious about their work and put in the time and effort needed to be recognised as a successful musician.

Arjo: And that is where the idea of our music school comes in.

Imran: Yes, through the music school, we will be offering a three-month long course under a curriculum that offers a compact version of the jazz degree in music schools across the world. We hope that this school will solve many of the fundamental problems musicians face in our country.

The conversation came to an end as soon the trio was ready to start practicing for the upcoming tour. And for the 15 minutes I listened to them play, I knew there was more to be written about them soon.

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