

'Protistruti', 'Prottasha', 'Proyash', 'Probaho'... the list of milestone albums of Bangladeshi band music continues with the pioneering journey of the band Miles. They have gone across the borders and set fire to arenas all over the world throughout their almost four decade long journey. The creator of Miles' evergreen guitar solos of 'Firiye Dao', 'Jala Jala' and many more epic numbers has recently opened up to Star Showbiz about his views on the past, the present and the future of Bangla rock music. Here is Hamin Ahmed, with a touchdown on life and beyond.

# Hummin' Along with Life

## PICKING UP THE SIX STRINGS

Barely fifteen, I used to listen to Jimi Hendrix and *Deep Purple* a lot. At the same time, I often used to go to, what we called back then, the 'Pop Concerts'. The then famous bands like *Abnormal Three* and *Ugly Phases*, and of course *Uccharon* of guru Azam Khan, used to perform there. The vibe of distortion guitars always felt somewhat very close to my heart. It did not take me much time to decide – I HAD to learn this magic. Then there was a phase of heavy listening to bands like *Pink Floyd* and *The Doors*. It was around 1973, the good old days of collecting the 33 RPM long-plays like precious gems, and listening on and on again. Eventually, I became friends with Rafiqul, Iqbal and some other guys with similar appetite for music. An intense teen spirit had us together to form a band. It was our time when we did not know much of how to do, but had rock solid confidence of what to do. That band never had a name. Then I came across Nayan Munshi. Nayan was about 15 as well, but was way too skillful with guitar for his age. Seeing him play flawlessly sitting next to, was like an eye-opener for me. Back then, there was a restaurant called *Dimple* in Dhanmondi 27. Shafin, Babu (Fuad Nasser), Nayan and I made a musical arrangement together and started playing at a corner inside *Dimple*. By that time, Nayan was already playing with Azam Khan, but he was more interested in doing English covers. So every often our group would come together and cover songs of *The Beatles*, *Eagles* and other contemporary hits. Within a short time, large crowds started to gather to see us perform. In the following year, 1978, I formed a band with comparatively senior musicians of that time named *Barouque*. After a year of successfully performing with *Barouque*, I got the call from *Miles*. *Miles* was one of the biggest names in the city, and so it was a great privilege.

## FINGERS AND PHILOSOPHY

My influence of guitar playing came through certain phases. Jimi Hendrix was one of my early heroes. Later I started listening a lot to Ritchie Blackmore, Carlos Santana and Al Di Meola. Then I drifted into the purely instrumental zone through listening to Jeff Beck, Eddie Van Halen, Joe Satriani and others. Parallel to developing my techniques, I have always been experimental with guitar tones. I am a tone-freak, I would say. Perhaps if you listen to the early songs of *Miles*, you can tell that. I used to study the setups of famous guitarists and try to implement their techniques. Also I would thank my

parents, because of them I learned to seek the musical totality. I have always tried to relate my playing to where and what I am playing. For me, music has to seem relevant. My solos must fit well with the mood and contribute to the wholeness of the song. I would never attempt to shred full speed inside a ballad. It may seem good for showmanship, but would just be pointless for the music. In 1993 I brought the very first Steve Vai signature *Ibanez JEM* series guitar to Bangladesh. It was a *JEM 77 BFP*. I had fallen in love with the guitar just by

fascinated me, and I still try to practice those unique techniques.

## JUGGLER AFICIONADO

Music and other works can go hand in hand considering how one allots time, plans own self and approaches towards it all. I have played for the national cricket team as well. When I played, I tried to give my hundred percent for the team. Similarly when I am with my band, I tell myself I have to nail this solo. Same applies for my job. One has to learn to prioritize, it is really vital. Things will collide, and cause one another to suffer.



looking at it. Songs like *Shopnovongo*, *Polashir Prantor* were recorded with that guitar. It perfectly suited to the mood and the kind of sound I wanted. Since then, I have bought myself a number of *JEMs* and some collectors' items as well. On a different note, I would say, the guitar only keeps getting intimidating. Every time I open the case, it immediately tells me the guy who initiated this masterpiece is a legend. And one has to have a certain level of playing caliber to even show up on the stage with this guitar. The way Steve Vai uses the tremolo has always

But one has to be bold and recover from damages quickly. And also, you have to do music for the sake of music. Not with stardom in your crosshair.

## ON THE CHANGING TIDES

The color of our music scenario has evolved. Those who kept pace with the evolution with true purpose in heart have shone sooner or later. Those who managed to establish their own identity through their music have reserved a place in the minds of our dear audiences. If you listen to *Nemesis*, *Arbovirus* or *Artcell*, they have their very distinct sound, just the

way *Miles* have always had. What bands like these did with metal put together with Bangla lyrics, is absolutely their credit. They have sustained, because their music makes sense. Differences in our listening tastes fall ahead like barriers. And breaking the barriers to reach the general audience with no matter what you are doing, is the key. From my experience I would say, music is a subject. You may start with enthusiasm, but you have to get yourself educated with passing time.

A proper music industrial mechanism functions to help artists concentrate solely on doing music. It assures to protect the value of artists. But sadly, we lack such infrastructural strength. Here the artists have to plan, navigate and execute – all by themselves. Although the industry uses the fame and fortune of artists, it hardly contributes to save their entity. However, the newcomers in our scenario are highly enthusiastic and passionate despite so many obstacles. Independent musicians are the biggest strength we have, unlike many countries with long-established industries. Now that we are fighting for establishing Intellectual Property Right (IPR) law, the future for musicians looks even brighter. IPR has to be implemented sooner or later, because we are signatory for the WIPO convention. Our government is bound to show results through periodic reviews. Artists are ought to know that they are protected under this law. They will have the power to ask, "Do you have the right to use my song?" every time their art contents are used by third parties.

## DEAR TO MY HEART

*The Song Remains the Same* by *Led Zeppelin*, *Who Do We Think We Are* by *Deep Purple*, 1984 by *Eddie Van Halen*, *Black and Metallica* by *Metallica* are some of my most favorite musical albums. I absolutely love the movies of Al Pacino and Robert De Niro. I am also a big fan of the works of Humayun Faridi and Asaduzzaman Noor. Of the contemporary, I like Mosharraf Karim's acting. I wish he played serious roles more often.

## FOR THE MEMOIR

I am forever grateful to our fans, they have made *Miles* happen. *Miles* never sought media publicity, our audience kept us alive in their thoughts. It is for them we do what we do. I would request dear readers to keep seeking out the news, never stop knowing what is happening in the scenario. As for upcoming musicians – whatever you do, do it passionately. Your passion will create your magic.

By Tasbir Iftekhar