

A NEW MILESTONE



The artists have been practising for a long time for this. They put their heart and souls into every single song. The end result was incredible.

COVER STORY



For over five decades, Runa Laila, our nightingale, has been enchanting audiences around the world with her mind blowing performances. The enchantress has yet again presented her fans with captivating music as a composer – five songs which were released as part of her new project, where she collaborated with international artists, including Asha Bhosle, Hariharan, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Adnan Sami. The renowned Indian musician Hariharan graced the launching ceremony. In an exclusive interview with Rafi Hossain, Runa Laila opens up about her new project.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL & RUNA LAILA'S COLLECTION

Rafi Hossain: How were these songs released officially?

Runa Laila: They have been released online. City Bank and Prothom Alo sponsored the project.

Rafi Hossain: Do you have any other plans regarding music?

Runa Laila: Given the opportunity, I am very interested in working with the artists of the new generation. I also want to work with other legendary artists, and I believe I will be able to do so because of this project.

Rafi Hossain: Do you want the wider audience to listen to Bangla music?

Runa Laila: I hope I will achieve something great with the inception of these songs. I generally make semi-classical music, and I want these to reach the wider audience. There is a fast-paced song in this album, sung by me and Adnan Sami. The rest of the songs have classical and melodious elements. I hope people will enjoy them.

Rafi Hossain: The joint efforts of Adnan Sami, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Asha Bhosle, Hariharan and you are what makes this album special.

Runa Laila: We put in a lot of hard work for this project. We perfected the tracks, pre-recordings and video-making together. I could not have done this alone. The teamwork and joint enthusiasm made this possible.

Rafi Hossain: Was the shooting of the music video done in Mumbai?

Runa Laila: No. The shooting was done in Bangladesh. Our music video team consisted of young individuals. I really loved working with them. I hope they prosper in the future.

Rafi Hossain: My only hope is that Bangla songs gain recognition worldwide through amazing projects like this.

Rafi Hossain: First of all, congratulations on receiving this year's 'National Film Award'. How many of them have you won so far?

Runa Laila: I have received many of these accolades for my singing. But, this is the first time I got an award for the category of Music Director. This is a great achievement for me as I got the award for my music direction for the film, *Ekti Cinemar Golpo*, directed and produced by Alamgir Shaheb.

Rafi Hossain: This award must truly be a special one for you.

Runa Laila: Yes, it is. I am more elated about the fact that this is the first time I have won the National Film Award for a film's song composed by me.

Rafi Hossain: Alamgir Shaheb also got the 'National Film Award' this year.

Runa Laila: He received the Lifetime Achievement Award. His film also won many prizes.

Rafi Hossain: You have received the 'National Film Award' for 'Music Director', but there is another thing that must be mentioned. We are aware that earlier this year, you composed four songs together for Bangladeshi singers:

Tami Laila, Akhi Alamgir, Luipa and Haimanti Rakhshit Das. However, the big surprise for us this time is that you composed five more songs, and international artists like Asha Bhosle, Hariharan, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Adnan Sami and yourself gave voice to them. Could you share your experience?

Runa Laila: I composed the five songs for a company, and I must mention that without everyone's cooperation, a project of such calibre would not have come to life. Later, I discussed this project with Kabir Bakul, who wrote three of the songs, and asked him to schedule a meeting with the Editor and Publisher of Prothom Alo, Matiuur Rahman. During the meeting, I shared my dream project with him. A few days later, he got back to me and told me that we got a sponsor from City Bank, and we decided to start working on this project.

Rafi Hossain: Did you reach out to the artists?

Runa Laila: During the planning process for this project, I already had a few specific artists in mind. According to the plan, Asha Ji sang one song, Adnan Sami and I did a duet together, Rahat Fateh

Ali Khan did one of the songs and lastly, I did a solo song myself. The solo was initially supposed to be sung by Lata Ji. When I composed the song, I sent her a demo. She really liked it; the tune of the song reminded her of the golden era of music. After hearing the audio clip, she said that if her health allows her, she will obviously sing it. Unfortunately, due to her physical condition, she was unable to make it. However, she sent an audio message, and it will be played at the end of all of the five tracks. It was a blessing and great honour that a legendary singer like Lata Ji would do something like this for me. Everyone I worked with on this project was very helpful. All the artists were very eager to work on this project and they all gave their best. The musical arrangements were done in London by Raja Kaasheff.

Rafi Hossain: Tell us about the music videos for the songs.

Runa Laila: The music videos have been made by Shahrear Polock. We released them yesterday.

Rafi Hossain: Did you face any difficulty convincing

the artists to sing in Bangla?

Runa Laila: Asha Ji has already done many songs in Bangla, but it was the first time for Hariharan, Adnan Sami and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan. They all were very nervous about the pronunciation, but eventually everything worked out perfectly. I never imagined that I would be receiving so much love, respect and admiration from all of them. I also have to thank you, Rafi, for giving me this wonderful idea.

Rafi Hossain: Thank you for giving me credit here. It means a lot to me.

Runa Laila: Of course, I would give you credit here. It would be unjust if I didn't, since you're the one who came up with this idea. I'm glad that the project turned out a success.

Rafi Hossain: This project will be remembered for years to come because of the culmination of the efforts of legendary singers and your composition.

Runa Laila: As the task was very daunting, I never thought I would be able to accomplish it this easily.

