



Behind the scene of 'Taqdeer'.



Still from 'Taqdeer'.



Director Syed Ahmed Shawki with co-creator Saleh Sobhan Auneem.

TAQDEER – A STELLAR WEB ORIGINAL

SHARMIN JOYA

“Taqdeer”, the fourth Hoichoi original from Bangladesh, released on December 18, 2020. It is gaining immense appreciation and rave reviews from different corners of the world, besides Bangladesh and India. In a recent chat with *The Daily Star*, the creators Syed Ahmed Shawki and Saleh Sobhan Auneem spoke about the success of the show.

“Taqdeer” features Chanchal Chowdhury in the lead role, along with Sanjida Preeti, Manoj Pramanik, Partha Barua and Sohel Mondal Rana among others. The eight-episode series has stirred intrigue, and is being showered with praise all over social media.

In “Taqdeer”, Chanchal Chowdhury plays a man who gets entangled in a murder scandal, when he finds a mysterious corpse in his freezer van.

While conceiving the idea for the show, director Shawki and co-creator Auneem crafted original characters who represented Bangladesh. Some reviews from India said that “Taqdeer” is one of the best shows of Hoichoi till date. “I carefully read all the reviews and comments,” says Shawki. “I am overwhelmed and humbled by the fact that people loved our show so much.”

Shawki also said that people are liking Chanchal Chowdhury’s work, which is expected, but Sohel Mondal



Stills from 'Taqdeer'.

Rana wins the hearts of the viewers with a breakthrough performance.

The director added that Manoj Pramanik is brilliant on the show. “Chanchal *Bhai* fit the lead character’s role perfectly. Rana’s character is very loving and people can easily get emotionally attached to him. Manoj’s character has shades of grey, and he is not easy to like,” he says. “I welcome constructive criticism and look forward to those who can point out the flaws. It will help us to improve upon our future projects.”



On the other hand, Auneem had a different view about reviews. “I absolutely try to avoid reviews and comments,” he says, “rather, I try to discuss and take suggestions from colleagues and friends.”

Shawki asserted that OTT platforms must offer variety to the audiences. “I am actually reading the reviews to observe the kinds of stories that people are looking for,” he says. “We often hear that audiences look for specific genres such as dark comedies or thrillers on OTT platforms. However, I think these platforms should be full of options,

so that people get to choose what they want to watch, according to their mood.”

He also mentioned that people in Bangladesh are mainly saying that they are proud of “Taqdeer”, whereas Indian reviews are drawing comparisons between the show and India’s own web originals. In many cases, “Taqdeer” has earned higher scores, in comparison to Indian projects. Even certain dialogues from the show are a hit among the viewers.

The co-creators Shawki and Auneem are grateful to Hoichoi for supporting them and giving them full creative freedom.

“We didn’t expect such widely positive responses,” shares Shawki.

Auneem further adds, “Frankly, without Hoichoi’s support and their belief in us, we would not have come this far.”

“Taqdeer”, a Film Noir and Film Syndicate Production is jointly written by Neyamutullah Masum and Syed Ahmed Shawki. Film Syndicate is owned by Tanim Noor and Krishnendu Chattopadhyay.

Film Noir will start working on their new project soon. “We are planning to collaborate with other creators, and produce our next projects, as we believe collaborations will make us stronger and more refined,” concludes Auneem.

Catching up with Amzad Hossain

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

In more than two decades in the music industry, multi-instrumentalist and music director Amzad Hossain has continuously adapted and evolved with the changing times. The Daily Star catches up with the Meghdol and Fuad and Friends drummer to talk about his musical philosophy, current projects and more.

The latest renditions of songs uploaded through your studio page are mind-blowing. What other projects are you working on now?

I wanted to feature artistes that I shared my journey with throughout the years, as well as upcoming talents, through my studio page “Taal Kachari”. I am grateful for the response that I have received, and many more surprises are coming from the page! Besides stage shows and other commercial studio work, I have done the theme song for OPPO O Fan Festival, and a UNDP project raising awareness against violence against women.

How are you keeping yourself motivated during these tough times?

To be honest, I feel like being alive is a blessing during this pandemic! Even though it is more difficult to record music with artistes during limitations in movement, we have eventually adapted working remotely. I am also listening to a lot of music and watching movies, whenever I get the time.

You started your musical career as a drummer. What prompted you to learn the art of music production?

I started tinkering with a software called “Cakewalk” in 2001, out of curiosity. However, I then became busy with session work. I only started producing seriously in 2010, when I did 7 songs for Shuvo *bhai*’s album, “Onek Kichu”. You can say that after drums, I learned everything else situationally.

How do you think our music industry can improve in the post-covid days?

The pandemic has really been harsh on musicians and live performers. However, the biggest problem with our music industry is that it is not specialised at all. For a musical production in, say Bollywood, a different person would be assigned to playing instruments, mixing and mastering a song. More often than not, we have to do most of these things ourselves here. The culture of industrial involvement needs to be instilled in our industry for it to become more professional.

Who are your favourite artistes to collaborate with?

That is a difficult question indeed! I would especially mention Shuvo *bhai*, with whom I have shared the stage for 17 years. I really enjoy working with Shawon Gaanwala, Elita Karim, Priyanka Gope, Palbasha Siddiqui, and Johan Alamgir. Artistes like Tashfee, Antora and Sameera are also very talented, and have a good future ahead of them.

What is your ultimate musical goal?

It might sound farfetched, but I dream of collaborating with David Gilmour one day!

Do you have any message for the readers?

I will just say that not a single person can survive without music, so be sure to continue supporting good music and your favourite artistes.



Nuhash Humayun on his first feature film

SHARMIN JOYA

Nuhash Humayun is one of the most promising young filmmakers in the country, proving his pedigree with many web projects, short films, TVCs and music videos. He is also one of the directors of Bangladesh’s first anthology film “Iti Tomari Dhaka”, which was recently selected for an Oscar nomination in the International category.

Nuhash has recently announced his first feature film “Moving Bangladesh”, produced by Arifur Rahman and Bijon Imtiaz. Besides direction, the story of the film is also written by Nuhash. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, he shared insights and more details about the film.

“Moving Bangladesh” is said to be based on the true story of a young university student in Dhaka, who is tired of being stuck in traffic, and life itself. Demanding change, he and his friends struggle to create a motorcycle-based ridesharing



service that may change the way we travel in Bangladesh, forever. In fact, it may even change himself. This was the beginning of something special - the creation of the ridesharing service we know now as Pathao.

“Pathao today is a 100 million dollar plus company, changing the lives of people in Bangladesh and beyond,” says Nuhash. “Our film is about the early days, the failures, the



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NUHASH HUMAYUN

roadblocks. It’s the kind of inspirational story about Bangladesh that I always wanted to see on the big screen.”

“I have known Nuhash since he was a kid,” says Arif, one of the producers of the film. “It was probably in 2003 that I interviewed him as a journalist. Since then, I have seen his extraordinary talent, and he also shared with me that he likes making creative stories.” Arif also said that it is their sixth project in Film Bazaar. “We have a good rapport with Nuhash. He pitched two stories to us. Between the two, the plot of “Moving Bangladesh” seemed more relevant and different to us. We hope to start the shoot from next year,” he adds.

“Moving Bangladesh” has been selected for the new edition of NFDC Goa Film Bazaar Co Production Market. It is the only Bangladeshi film represented this year. Even in the film’s writing and development stage, the project has gained international attention, being selected for the Open Doors Consultancy of Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland in their second phase (two other projects from Bangladesh were previously selected).

As part of the consultancy, Nuhash is assigned script supervisor Nicos Panayotopoulos for a year-long mentorship. “It was also selected for Los Angeles based Film Independent’s Global Media Makers workshop in May 2020, where it caught the eyes of Hollywood producers Jim Young and Tatiana Kelly,” he shares.

“I was at the world premiere of “Iti Tomari Dhaka” in 2018 watching our anthology film with a global audience - I was completely

overwhelmed. I’ve been wondering since then, what’s the story I want to tell for my own feature - then I realised the answer was right in front of me, on an app in my phone and everywhere in my city. Too many stories from Bangladesh are about poverty or oppression; but I want to tell an inspirational one,” asserts Nuhash.

Nuhash also informs that Pathao will not have any financial stake or creative control over the film as it is an independent project. “The founders have been very cooperative and also aware this is a work of fiction, although based on facts,” says Nuhash. “At the end of the day, this is a Nuhash Humayun film, not a documentary on a start-up. It’s a human drama about the struggles of our generation.”

Nuhash explained why it is his first debut feature, since he had previously worked in “Iti Tomari Dhaka”. “Iti Tomari Dhaka” is an anthology film, with multiple directors making shorts. This is why I consider “Moving Bangladesh” to be my first full length feature.

Although the director previously got many filmmaking offers, he was waiting for the right time and plot to begin with. “I wanted to take the time to develop the story for my first full length feature,” shares Nuhash. “I met Bijon in Busan by complete chance and we started talking about movies. Bijon and Arif have since signed on as my producers. It’s very cool to find producers who help you achieve your vision. Throughout the lockdown, we’ve been having virtual meetings, conducting research, discovering the soul of the film.”

The cast and shoot date of the film is yet to be announced.

PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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