

COVER STORY

OF PRESENT AND FUTURE

Over the years, versatile artists Ashna Habib Bhabna and Animesh Aich thrived in their respected works. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, the duo talked about director's perspective and what they plan for their future.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to *Uncensored with Rafi Hossain*. Today, we have two guests with us: Animesh Aich and Ashna Habib Bhabna. Welcome, Animesh and Ashna. How have you both been doing throughout this pandemic?

Animesh Aich: Both Ashna and I are awaiting the release of our novels.

Rafi Hossain: Why do many people assume that directors play favourites regarding their partners once they're romantically involved with an actor?

Animesh Aich: Everyone prefers working in their comfort zone, and Ashna is definitely in mine. But, it's not just her, I also enjoy working alongside many other individuals like Abul Hayat, Faruq Ahmed, Shahriar Shajib, Tamalika Kormokar, and so on. This is helpful to directors as we have a bond with the people we know and have worked with, especially if they understand our ideas. Of course, new people are added to the teams as well. Ashna and I have a very good artistic bond, but different characters need to be portrayed by different actors. For instance, if I want someone to play a forty-year-old woman, I will cast an actor like Bipasha Hayat who I'm comfortable working with.

Ashna Habib Bhabna: I believe I have to face a lot more criticism than Animesh in regards of this issue. Since he has been in the industry for a long time and is a respected director, people usually think twice before making these accusations against him. Since I'm new, they don't hesitate. I've even had people directly say that they can't cast me because I'm his girlfriend. However, I, myself, don't want to work alongside someone who views my identity as being someone's friend, daughter, or girlfriend. I would rather team up with someone who acknowledges my talents. I believe people judge more when a director is dating an artist because our society has normalised critiquing women harshly. Chiasuddin Selim casts Chanchal Chowdhury in his works quite frequently, but that is rarely talked about. Same goes for Mehzebien, Nisho, and Apurba. Our industry has a preconceived image of young

into this field. Since these are international platforms, we have to create content that can compete with such standards. I don't want to work on anything hastily without thinking extensively about the idea, the budget, etc.

Rafi Hossain: Most films that I watch nowadays are thrillers. Can you tell me why that is?

Animesh Aich: I would say that's a failure on our part. Our industry has a culture of replicating others' work. Since thriller, crime and such genres are quite popular on platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, directors here try to keep up with the trend and create similar movies as well. I believe this prevents the discovery of more possibilities. Rather than becoming fascinated by Western cultures and their films, we should try to highlight our traditions, indigenous cultures and so on.

Rafi Hossain: Are there any Bangladeshi OTT platforms that have gained traction yet?

Animesh Aich: Not that I know of, but I am hopeful. We readily pay for international

Animesh Aich: Once again, I will have to say that all we need is good content to change this behaviour amongst the audience. In the first decade of this century, we had many experimental works on television, which is an achievement that we shouldn't ignore or forget. If we can create good content, people will naturally gravitate to it. Moreover, our OTT platforms are very new, so we have yet to see how they will flourish.

Rafi Hossain: Another trend that I notice is that many new and young directors promote their own work too extensively, which makes it lose credibility. Do you believe it's a good strategy?

Ashna Habib Bhabna: In my opinion, this actually benefits some people. I find it odd, but there are many Facebook groups related to Bangla shows where people share their projects and others discuss its potential and promote it. Moreover, we see that many videos get over a million likes only hours or days after their release. There are many ways this can be achieved, such as buying subscribers. However, I don't want to speak

as he helped me edit and improve it. However, I am tired of hearing that he does all my work for me. Animesh tells me to not pay attention to these comments, but sometimes they make me really sad.

Rafi Hossain: What do you have to say about that, Animesh?

Animesh Aich: I would say that it's important to not pay heed to people's negative comments. I always tell Bhabna that because she is a celebrity now, people are going to criticise her actions constantly. It's important to remember who you are and your own accomplishments.

Rafi Hossain: I think a reason that many people say that you do Bhabna's work for her is because you both have similar interests. Would you agree with that?

Animesh Aich: That's definitely true. I believe it is natural to pick up positive aspects from the people around you. Bhabna has her own line of thinking, but I sometimes inspire her as well. We've known each other for many years now, and we discuss the arts together quite often. For instance, being a dancer herself, she understands dance very well. I had almost no knowledge of dancing before, but learning from her opened this new world to me. As long as we don't pick up any negative habit from each other, I would encourage this.

Rafi Hossain: Bhabna, you posted a dance video during the lockdown which I really enjoyed. Do you want to tell us more about that?

Ashna Habib Bhabna: Even though I am not known for being a dancer, it's something I have pursued ever since I was a little child. My mother and I have a strong bond over this as she was the one who enrolled me. During the lockdown, I saw that many celebrities, even those who aren't dancers, posted videos of themselves dancing in their homes. So, I wanted to do something similar. While it received a lot of love, especially from my gurus, there were a few rude comments left. This is something I don't understand, if I dislike someone's work, I will either be honest about it or keep quiet, even if it's a colleague of mine. I would never shame someone for their endeavours, especially on a public platform.

Rafi Hossain: I'm sure you both have to hear this question a lot, but are there any wedding plans coming up soon?

Ashna Habib Bhabna: Our families are already close to each other, and we all meet up during our birthdays and other events. We still haven't discussed a wedding in detail.

Rafi Hossain: I'm sure the audience has a lot of love and blessings for you both. Do you have any parting comment for the audience?

Ashna Habib Bhabna: I only want to say thank you to my followers because they are always kind to me. I would like to ask everyone to stay safe because COVID is still a danger to us. For my female followers, I would like to say that it's important to reflect on yourself and love yourself. For those living with your parents, I ask you to respect and cherish them.

Animesh Aich: I ask the audience to forgive me for discussing many grave topics today. I generally refuse to join lives like this because I believe I don't have much to preach. However, Rafi bhai is one of my most favourite people, which made this discussion enjoyable. Lastly, based on today's discussion, I would like the audience to remember that it is always important to operate social media safely. Stay well.

Rafi Hossain: Thank you once again for being with us today. Lots of love and blessings for you both.

Shreya Shomoyeeta

GRAPE VINE



PHOTO: COLLECTED

ANIMA ROY'S NEW SONG

Rabindra Sangeet artist Anima Roy has released a new song. The song, which has been written and composed by Atul Prasad Sen, is called *Bodhua Nid Nahil Akhi Pate*, and has been given tune to by Prattyush Bannerjee. The music video for it was directed by Yamin Elan. Anima Roy said, "In the past, I have performed songs by five different poets. I have also performed on multiple television channels. I hope that the listeners will like my new song."

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

BUBLY'S BACK!

After an eleven-month long break, Shabnam Bubly is returning with two new films. She will be seen on the Topu Khan directed film, *Leader Ami Bangladesh*, alongside Shakib Khan, and also on the Iqbal Asif Jewel directed movie *Chokh* alongside Nirob. Bubly began her acting career in 2016, when she starred alongside Shakib Khan in several movies, including the likes of *Bossgirl*, *Chittagainga Powa Noakhaila Maia* and *Passsword*, among several others. She also has two movies awaiting release: *Casino* and *Bidrohi*.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub



PABEL ON A ROLL

Singer Zahed Parvej Pabel garnered a lot of attention for singing the old songs of the movies *Bidhi Tumi Bole Dao* and *Buk Chin Chin Korche*. On a drama, titled *Shilpi*, which is directed by Mohidul Mohim and starring Afran Nisho and Mehzebien Chowdhury, he sang in the voices of both the male and the female lead. The songs which he did in both voices gained a lot of popularity online. Pabel released his first solo album in 2015. He will soon be releasing the songs *Shundori* and *Shona Bondhure*.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

PHOTO: COLLECTED



POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some binge worthy movie and series you can spend your time watching while you stay at home social distancing, keeping yourself, as well as others, safe.



IT'S A SIN

It's a Sin is a five-part drama TV series, surrounding a friendship between gay men in 1981 England through the quick development of HIV and AIDS. It was written and created by Russell T Davies, directed by Peter Hoar, produced by Phil Collinson under the banner of *Red Production Company*, and stars Olly Alexander, Omari Douglas and Callum Scott Howells, among others. It was first released on January 22 2021 on *Channel 4*.

SUPERMAN AND LOIS

Superman and Lois is a comic-based action-drama series, developed by Todd Helbing and Greg Berlanti, produced under the banners of Berlanti Productions, DC Entertainment and Warner Bros. Television, distributed



by Warner Bros. Television Distribution, and stars Tyler Hoechlin, Elizabeth Tulloch and Jordan Elsass, among others. The storyline follows the most famous DC superhero, Superman, as he navigates through life being a working parent. It was aired on February 13, 2021 on *The CW*.

NOMADLAND

Nomadland is a neo-western drama film, released in theatres on January 29, 2021. It was directed by Chloé Zhao, produced by her along with Frances McDormand, Peter Spears, Mollye Asher and Dan Janvey under the banners of *Highwayman Films*, *Hear/Say Productions* and *Cor Cordium Productions*, distributed by *Searchlight Pictures* through *Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures*, and stars McDormand, David Strathairn and Linda May, among others. The plot, which is based on the eponymous non-fiction book by Jessica Bruder, follows a woman on her journey through the American West on a van after losing everything in the Great Depression.

Amina Hossain

