

EDITORIAL

One thing we don't want to live with is uncertainty. Sure, there may not be assurance or guarantee with everything but even that's better. Much like the Bangla proverb, "Dushtu gorur cheye shunno gowal bhalo." Sadly, the promising youth of our country who were ready to take on the world last year face a difficult task ahead, thanks to uncertainty.

Exams or no exams? Study or no study? In the search for an answer to these questions, we've spent an entire year. Not to mention the constant fear for their own lives, and the lives of their near and dear ones. Uncertainty and constant – what a dichotomy! Looking forward, who will ensure these hardworking kids get deserved scores and placements in their desired institutions? How is it fair for an entire generation to be dubbed as "the ones who got away with it"? The questions keep piling. We just keep looking for answers in the dark.

The virus attacked more than just our bodies. It infected our minds, our dreams.

Don't let it get to you. Wear a mask. Stay home.

-- Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Editor In-charge, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

ALBUM REVIEW



The Artist Reclaims Her Art

ANUPOMA JOYEETA JOYEE

When on April 9, Taylor Swift re-released the entire *Fearless* album, now called *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, containing 27 songs, it might have come as a surprise to most because all the new tracks sound completely similar to her older recordings. Then what's the point to all of this?

Since 2019 Swift had been in a legal battle with her old label, Big Machine Records. Founder Scott Borchetta, once her ally, sold off the label and with that the "masters" (original recording of a song from which subsequent copies are made for sales) of her first six albums to Scooter Braun, in whose hands Swift had been bullied and tormented for a long time. Braun then sold those masters to a third party which meant she would not own the rights to those anymore and if she wanted to make copies of those albums for sales or redistribution, she would have to negotiate with Braun.

That is now going to change. With the release of *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, Swift will once again own her masters.

Her old *Fearless* songs sound almost exactly the same in the re-recording, but with much better vocals and cleaner instrumental arrangement. This time, she hits the notes more firmly; her voice is stronger and reflects the standard which she had to reach to thrive in this industry for 16 years.

The musical merit of *Fearless* was not up for much debate when Swift first released it in 2008, so that is not what this review seeks to do. Swift made an amazing business move by including her songs 'from the vault' which she had written around the same time when *Fearless* was


first released. As a young female artist, she did not have the freedom to surmount the limitations her label put on her and could not release some of those songs as part of the album at that time.

However, with a career seasoned with theatrics and scrutiny, she serves it back to Braun and Borchetta who clearly underestimated the kind of power Swift holds. She has included 6 new songs on *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*, not only to give her fans access to her art that had been long buried, but also to make a point. Fans who enjoy her music will now definitely choose to buy her new record as it contains fresh, never before heard music as well as the old ones.

Not many artists get the opportunity to do what Taylor Swift will do in the coming months with the re-release of her albums. While many would say that she is lucky to be able to do it, it is important to note that it is purely her hard work and diligence that has created this opportunity. Apart from being a testimony to her mastery as a lyricist and storyteller even when she was a teenager, *Fearless (Taylor's Version)* above all is a tale of caution for entitled executives like Braun and Borchetta, who wished to exploit a contract signed by a naïve 15-year-old.

Like all the feuds Taylor Swift has ever been in, she is winning this one too and she is giving her fans the rare gift of perfecting what they had already grown to love for many years, while also giving herself the extraordinary satisfaction of reclaiming her own art.

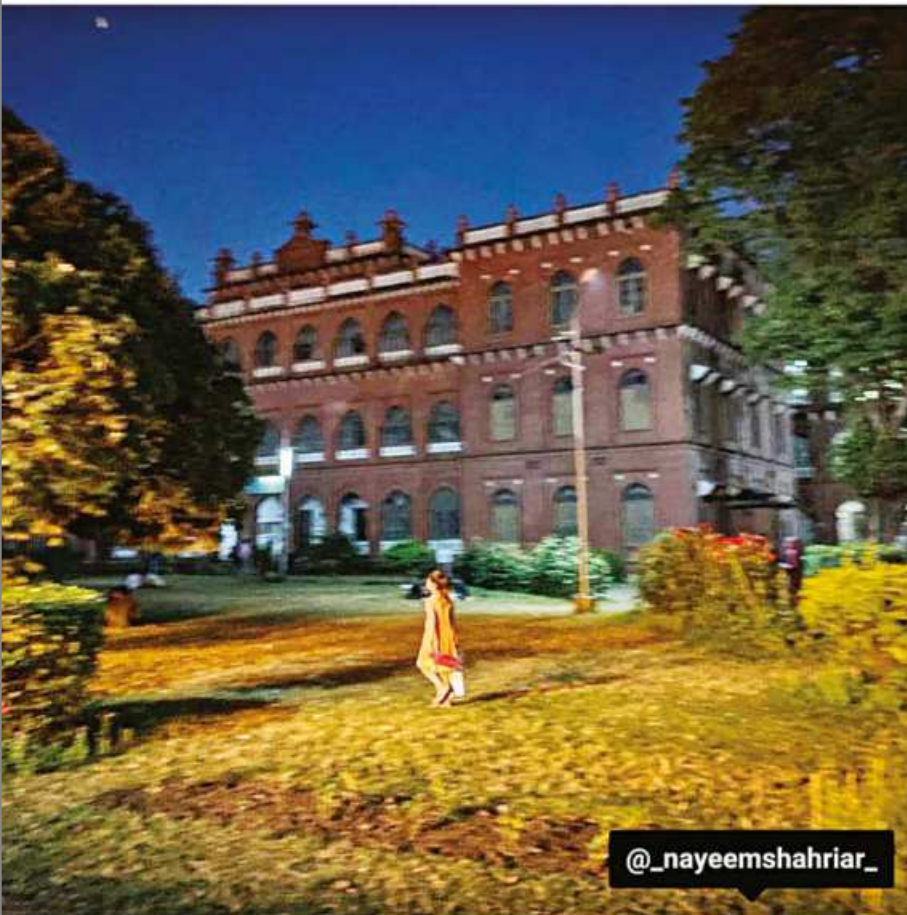
Anupoma Joyeeta Joyee's favourite song in Fearless (Taylor's Version) is Change. Tell her about yours at anupomajoyee@gmail.com



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