



Mank



The Father

OSCARS 2021

The most diverse yet

SHABABA IQBAL

Even though the 2021 Oscars were arranged in the midst of a pandemic, it had its silver linings. The ceremony marked a moment of real change, when it came to celebrating diversity. This year saw the first Asian-American best actor nominee (Steven Yeun for "Minari"), two women nominated for best director for the first time (Chloé Zhao for "Nomadland"; Emerald Fennell for "Promising Young Woman"), and the first Muslim best actor nominee (Riz Ahmed for "Sound of Metal"). Nearly half the top acting nominations went to people of colour.

Chloé Zhao's "Nomadland," a wistful film about itinerant lives on open roads across the American West, won Best Picture at this year's Oscars. China-born Zhao became the first woman of colour to win Best Director, and a historically diverse group of winners took home awards.

The Academy Awards took steps to make changes, in response to the recent shamings of #OscarsSoWhite. They included more people of colour, women, and young filmmakers in their membership criteria. This year, consequently, was exceptional in terms of diversity and representation.

That being said, there is a significant relationship between the two phenomena — Covid-19 and diversity.

The March 2020 shutdown and the ongoing closure of cinema theatres led studios to withdraw big films such as "Dune", "West Side Story", "The French Dispatch", and "In the Heights". This made the way for smaller films by newcomers and lesser-known directors through "Sound of Metal", "Nomadland", "The Father", "Minari", and "Promising Young Woman". The closure of cinema theatres also opened up opportunities for streaming platforms. Netflix's "Mank" garnered the most Oscar nominations

this year (10). Netflix is also behind "The Trial of the Chicago 7", and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom", which received 11 more nominations between them.

Voters of the Oscars are known to be susceptible to the "buzz" or influence, which essentially comes down to a combination of industry pressure, box-office success, and simply following the herd. Last year, through an amazing combination of momentum, merit, and marketing, "Parasite" took home the Best Picture trophy — which highlights an underdog success story. This year, it appears that free from any "buzz", the voters had the space to make up their own minds.

Decisions by the Academy Awards may be changing Hollywood from within, but cruelly, this year's recognised films are likely to miss out on commercial success. With cinema theatres shut, we will have to find out on the internet which streaming platform is showing what, and for how much.



Fakir Alamgir reflects on the significance of May Day

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Ekushey Padak awardee and Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra artiste Fakir Alamgir is one of the leading exponents of Gono Sangeet -- the songs of the masses, in Bangladesh. Infusing modernism with traditional songs, his recognition has stretched far and beyond. He has always been a strong voice for the working-class commoners in the country. On the occasion of May Day 2021, the singer shared a few thoughts with *The*

Daily Star. **What does May Day mean to you?** May Day, also known as International Workers' Day, is celebrated with a pledge to establish the rights of workers across the globe. This day holds paramount significance for the working class. The day is celebrated for establishing the right to work for eight-hour per day, which was an important milestone for the labour movement. Every year, the importance of this day is getting more and more recognition.

and many of them dying. May Day is about celebrating the working class, but unfortunately, due to nature's much dismay, they are forced to refrain from celebrating. We must adhere to the health and safety protocols and avoid social gatherings. Yet, May Day is here and I welcome this day with utmost gratitude.

Are the workers still deprived of their rights?

It is very unfortunate, yet it is true that workers across the globe are still deprived of their basic rights. Child labour is still a threat in developing worlds. Women labourers are yet to gain equal payment opportunities.

In our country, during the Rana Plaza tragedy, thousands of workers gave their life and yet the survivors are deprived of their rights today. Overall, workers and labourers are still deprived in every sphere.

Many of your popular songs are based on May Day. Can you mention some of them? My personal favourites are "Naam Tar



PHOTO: STAR

What was the history behind May Day?

May 1 was chosen to be International Workers' Day to commemorate the 1886 Haymarket affair in Chicago. On May 1, 1886, there was a general strike for the eight-hour workday. On May 4, the police acted to disperse a public assembly in support of the strike by firing on the workers. The event led to the deaths of thirty-eight civilians with hundreds of workers injured. Hundreds of labour leaders and sympathizers were later rounded-up and four were executed by hanging, after a trial that was seen as a miscarriage of justice.

The workers' sacrifice was later recognised and the government accepted their demands afterward. Workers had to sacrifice their lives to establish their rights and emerged victorious that day.

This is the second consecutive May Day celebrated amid a pandemic. What are your thoughts regarding this?

During the pandemic, May Day celebrations have been different, as thousands are getting affected by the virus

Chhilo Henry", "1886 Shaler Pohela May Chicago", "Duniyar Mojdur Bhai Shob" and "Buk Bedhe Lorte Hobe" among others. All of these songs are widely popular and appreciated by everyone.

Over the years, I have written and composed a wide array of songs on May Day and I have performed them for the masses, both at home and abroad.

Why did you choose to pursue the genre of Gono Sangeet?

Gono Sangeet is particularly inspired by the journey of labourers. I believe that the daily workers are our biggest asset, as they form the foundation of our economy. In addition, be it a revival of our human rights to our language in 1952, the Liberation War in 1971, or the rebellion in 1990 -- no revolution is complete without Gono Sangeet. It speaks for the masses and is the key to positive reformation in society. Thus, I treasure this genre of music as an asset and love it with all my heart.

Translated by Rasheek Tabassum Mondira

OBSERVING MAY DAY WITH MOVIES

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Today, we celebrate the lives of workers, who are the backbone of any nation. Marking this special day, here is a list of films (and one miniseries) that are reflective of the struggles of the working class, and give us some memorable characters.

The White Tiger (2021)

Starring Adarsh Gourav, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Rajkumar Rao, this Netflix movie traces the life of a driver who starts his own taxi service by outwitting his employers. In a captivating tale of escaping poverty and reaching the pinnacle of success, the film explores the various dynamics associated with a low-paying job. It is based on the Booker Prize winning novel of the same name, and addresses class differences.



Made in Bangladesh

Made in Bangladesh (2019)

Directed by Rubaiyat Hossain, this film revolves around Shimu, a young girl who works at a clothing factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. After a fire outbreak, she decides to start a union with her co-workers, despite threats from the management. She also intends to address ways in which her co-workers have been oppressed. This powerful film is currently available for rent at \$ 2.99 on Amazon Prime.



Machines

Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C. J. Walker (2020)

Based on the book, "On Her Own Ground", this four-episode Netflix series features Octavia Spencer as Madam C.J. Walker. It navigates through the journey of an African American washerwoman who eventually builds her own beauty empire. The series tells the inspirational story of how a black woman became a self-made millionaire in turn-of-the-century America, overcoming different obstacles along the way.



Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C. J. Walker(2020)

Sui Dhaaga: Made In India (2018)

This film, directed by Sharat Katariya, revolves around Mauji (Varun Dhawan) and Mamta (Anushka Sharma), who start their own garment business after becoming jobless. In this heartwarming tale of pride and independence, the characters end up discovering their lost heritage and use their traditional art forms to build their own brand. It is currently streaming on Amazon Prime.

Machines (2017)

"Machines", a documentary, presents a close look into the lives of workers in a textile factory based in Gujarat, India. It showcases the everyday struggles of these people, as they work under poor conditions for minimal rewards. Available on Amazon Prime, this documentary takes viewers on a journey to explore the demands and hardships that exist as a result of unregulated industrialisation.

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Sui Dhaaga: Made In India (2018)



The White Tiger