

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 24, 2021, ASHAR 10, 1428 BS

A PUBLICATION OF *The Daily Star*

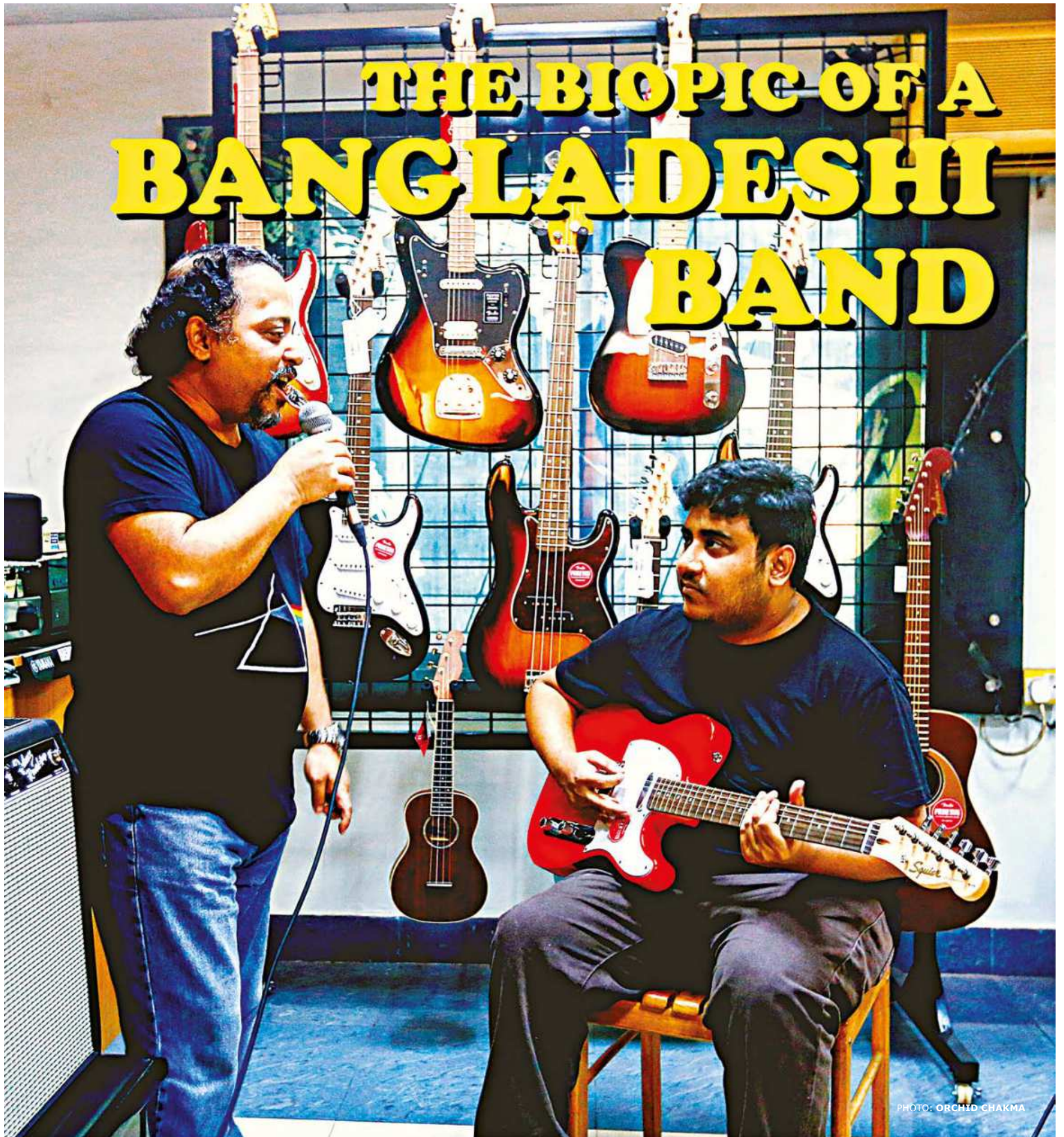
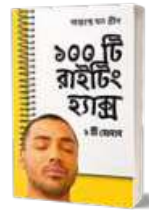


DREAMS OF DAMEER

PG 4

HOW TO BE A PUBLISHED
AUTHOR IN 2021

PG 6



THE BIOPIIC OF A BANGLADESHI BAND

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

EDITORIAL

The thrill of getting your first instrument is incomparable. After playing around on a harmonium for a while trying to learn Bangla music, one day when I was at my grandmother's house, my dad called to say our new instrument was here. It was an upright piano and all I could ask on the phone was what colour it was.

Over the next many years, my piano was my refuge. It was many years of trying to recreate my favourite movie and musical scores, playing each bar of a piece as my teacher punctiliously tapped her foot in the background going "one, two, three" in her Russian accent. It was also many years of rummaging her sheet music closet to grab the best pieces before the other students did to perform at the recital.

At night when I'd play my piano while everyone else slept, it was peaceful. Because the kind of dedication your instrument inspired is unlike anything else. It's not just learning which pedals to use when, but knowing which keys were slightly damaged and needed that extra push when playing, and diligently wiping your instrument clean when dust gathered on it.

-- Mrittika Anan Rahman, Subeditor, SHOUT



shoutds Tag us or use #shoutds to get featured.

Email us at shoutds@gmail.com with feedback, comments, and reader submissions.

PLAYWATCH

MOVIES



Why Old Barbie Movies are Superior

ZIBA MAHDI

It's established at this point that old Barbie movies are better, so there's no point in rehashing that argument. But in order to find out why exactly they were better, I went on a Barbie movie marathon this quarantine.

Just like Disney, Barbie films had some common themes (e.g. power of friendship, happily ever after, etc.), but that was where similarities ended. Each of the stories had their own unique themes. A magical paintbrush that let Rapunzel paint herself outside of the tower, a purple Pegasus, a beautiful peacock ball gown, charming ballet scenes, dreamy underwater aesthetic: stuff like this just stuck with you even after the movie was over.

The newer ones had storylines that sounded fun enough on paper, but came off as bland and forgettable. They seem dumbed down to a point where anyone can tell how the story will end after the first five minutes. Some of them borrowed themes from their older counterparts, making minor tweaks along the way, which just made it worse. There are some exceptions, though. *Princess Charm School* and *A Fashion Fairytale* turned out pretty decent, and I say this as an adult.

The picturesque environments are something you can't ignore when it comes to Barbie. One would think that newer animations would trope older ones, but that wasn't the case here. Most of the modern flicks look like any other animated movie nowadays, just in a flashy pink setting. Pre-2010 ones had something that was distinctly Barbie. The

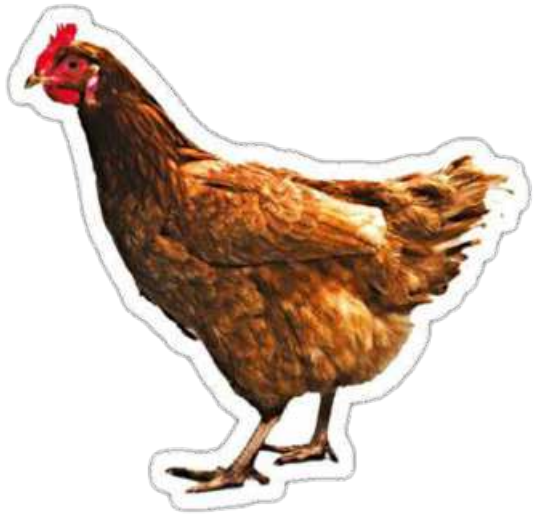
illustrations were stunning and immediately transported you to the elegant sceneries. And the best part is that there was always a transformation with a sparkly dress involved.

Beautiful paraphernalia weren't the only thing setting these movies apart. Catchy songs and ethereal instrumentals were a staple of the earlier films. "Shine" from *Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses*, "Free" from *Barbie as the Princess & the Pauper*, "All for One" from *Barbie & the Three Musketeers* are still stuck in my head a decade later. The instrumentals worked as a nice complement to the magical backgrounds.

The villains and supporting characters (most of whom were cute animals) were pretty memorable too. Preminger even had his own villain anthem. Then there was Bibble, known for his adorable babbling, and Shiver, who made me want to keep a baby polar bear as a pet.

I'll admit, I'm slightly (read: very) biased here since the classics were a big part of my childhood, but Barbie's decreasing popularity, even among kids, solidifies my position somewhat. There was even a petition requesting Mattel to bring back the old version of the blonde icon. There have also been numerous rankings ranging from BuzzFeed to YouTube videos, and you'll rarely see a recent movie making it to the top. Of course, this won't stop me from watching anything with Barbie in the near future.

Ziba Mahdi is your resident pessimist. Cheer her up at www.facebook.com/ziba.mahdi.735



Here's What You Need to Know About Urban Chicken Keeping

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

Chickens are great companions but they get outshined by the more popular pets like cats and dogs. Surprisingly, chicken keeping is fairly easy and cost-effective. On top of that, it's rewarding to have access to fresh eggs every day. But caring for a pet comes with its challenges and chickens are no different from that.

Last year, my dad decided to bring in company for the pigeons he raises on our rooftop. We brought in four chicks but, unfortunately, with chicken keeping, one must come to terms with the untimely death of the birds. Out of the two pairs, only one survived and grew up to be big, feisty chickens within three to four months. Hens are great for the daily supply of eggs. While some breeds lay eggs every other day, most do it daily. The eggs you get are free-range, organic, and richer in colour than the commercial ones.

Before getting into the nitty-gritty of rooftop chicken farming you must take into consideration the following factors. For starters, chickens are birds of flock meaning they get lonely without a mate. A flock of three is a good number to start with for beginners. One needs to decide what they want the chicken for – eggs, meat, or just for amusement? If you plan on rearing the chickens for meat, you're encouraged to add a rooster to the mix.

Before commencing, select a place to set your chicken coop. Chicken coops are easy to make with upcycled materials. Many pre-made ones are readily available in the market. It must be made sure that each chicken has at least 4 square feet to move around in the coop. Avoid raising chickens inside the house since they tend to kick up a lot of dust which can be uncomfortable for people with allergies and asthma. Then comes whether you want a natural alarm clock for your neighbourhood or not. Buff Orpingtons are known to be one of the quietest breeds of chickens. Friendly and docile to their owners, they make great pets.

Like any other pets, chickens need care and protection. Making the coops predator-proof is incumbent. Many such backyard chickens have fallen prey to stray dogs and lost their lives. Conveniently, chickens don't need to be bathed since they take care of their hygiene themselves but it is necessary to keep the brooders clean to prevent diseases. Chickens eat just about anything, from food scraps to twigs and leaves. They can jump and fly a little so there's not much fear of them falling from heights and dying yet proper security is necessary.

Interestingly, chickens are very clever animals. They can remember faces, think about the future, are self-aware, and even do basic arithmetic! Studies say that these feathery friends are cognitively smarter than toddlers. Not only do they save you a trip to the supermarket for your daily protein intake, but they are also great playmates. Perhaps if people knew how goofy and intelligent these birds are, they would be more than just dinner to us.

Farnaz Fawad Hasan is a disintegrating pool noodle wanting to stay afloat. Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

MIDDLE CHILD MYTHS, DEBUNKED

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

With 17 solid years of experience of being a full-time middle child, I can safely tell you that I "suffered" more from assumptions about middle children than from actually being one. In fact, considering a lot of factors go into how your family treats you and the personality you develop other than just your birth order, most stereotypes that exist in society about middle children, often promoted by popular media, are either overly dramatised or downright false.

It's not uncommon to associate a resentful, troubled youth with a middle child. While it may come as a surprise, not all of us are envious of our siblings as portrayed by Edith Crawley in the mainstream British TV drama *Downton Abbey*. She was given a character extremely lacking in social skills, a quality contributing to the concept of middle child syndrome. Further promoting this concept is an entire episode of the American sitcom *The Brady Bunch*, where Jan, the middle child, wails in desperation for she feels she's always in her older sister's shadow. But the so called "syndrome" is not backed by any reliable scientific research. In fact, psychologists say many of the traits associated with it are likely a result, and not a cause, of these ideas.

Middle children are often perfectly capable of having strong bonds with their siblings, especially since they are closer in age to both the youngest and the oldest than the youngest and oldest are to each other.

An incident in the popular K-drama *Reply 1988*, where Deok-sun's parents accidentally leave her behind in a gas leak, but remember to carry their oldest and youngest children outside, is an irresponsible but extremely influential portrayal of the concept that middle children are unloved or least prioritised by parents. While it is true that the first-born provides the parents with beloved first

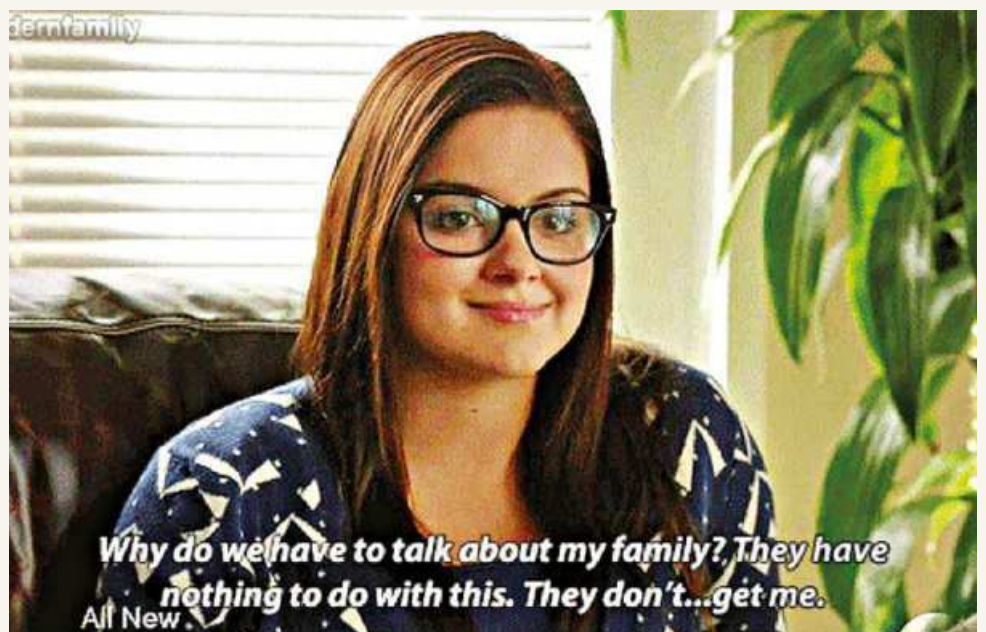
experiences and the last may enjoy being the baby of the family, middle children possess some quality or other that their parents favour them for. It may be a distinct personality trait that is important to the parents, their talent at certain skills, or at least the virtue of being another one of their children.

Lisa Simpson from *The Simpsons* is just as steeped with stereotypes as she is popular. Her portrayal as the smartest, most creative, and most accomplished in the family at just eight years of age is over the top to the point that, in one episode, she's made the president of the US once she grows up. Emphasis of such ideas in pop-culture contributes to stigmatising middle children. Middle children themselves may feel a burden of expectations imposed on them, and when they do achieve success owing to hard work and ambition, they might face the misfortune of it being credited to their birth order.

In my opinion, fellow middle children should enjoy the intrigue they receive as their birth order is revealed in any given context, but avoid taking to heart assumptions about their personality or competence that come with it. It is quite a waste to disregard who you really want to be in order to adhere to some abstract expectations that may accompany your birth order. Preventing yourself from being a certain way for fear of aligning with existing stereotypes is equally damaging.

Conventional stereotypes aside, it's absolutely not biased when I claim that middle children are the coolest. If you are one, don't let anyone else's idea of you confuse you, and remember to believe in your own aspirations, they are bound to be cool.

Amrin Tasnim Rafa is always confused, it's literally her dominant personality trait. She challenges you to find something she won't think is confusing. Try your luck at amrinrafa@gmail.com



Dreams of Dameer

In conversation with a young, rising musician

EAHSAN ABEDIN

Upon hearing the words, “*Hariye jeyo na, amar jaan, amar jaan*,” I jumped out of my bed to look at the artist, only to fall in love with the music and listen to it on loop for hours to come. It was Dameer.

Dameer Khan, 20, is a singer-songwriter, producer and most importantly, a dreamer and an aspiring changemaker. By combining Western indie rock/pop and jazz with Bengali influences, pairing lo-fi tunes with psychedelic riffs, the exception in Dameer’s music is easily noticeable. Lyrics containing odes to positive romanticism, heartbreak and politics, and even mental health, will make you feel as if the words have been taken right out of your mouth and have been perfectly structured in three-to-four minute idiosyncrasies.

Dameer’s lyrics are the kind that will carry you to another realm at 4 in the morning, where you will laugh and cry, and if it’s raining, you will look outside your window in a different perspective.

With beginnings in Dhaka, finding new inspiration and vibrance in Kuala Lumpur in his mid-teens to recording at Red Bull Studios in Berlin, Dameer offers extraordinary music. SHOUT sat with Dameer for a cup of coffee and conversation over Zoom, and talked over his thoughts on music, life and Bangladesh.

Dameer grew up around music; his father, Pilu Khan, is part of the legendary music band *Renaissance*. Although his father never forced music onto him, musicians like Bappa Mazumder and Partha Barua regularly visiting the house had a positive impact. Picking up the guitar at a relatively early age, Dameer always went the extra step, simply because he loved doing it. He fell in love seeing his cousin using FL Studio and, with YouTube as his teacher, Dameer started learning and producing genres like hip-hop, EDM and indie.

By 16, Dameer had started sending out his music to different labels. After two consecutive years of dedication, making demos, producing and constant rejection, Majestic Records responded one day. Dameer says, “People are listening, everybody is looking for the next big thing. Send your demos out. Go to the internet, do a bit of homework and you can do it.”

From growing up in Dhaka and hanging out with friends at Star Kabab after exams, to moving to Malaysia, Dameer grew both as an individual and as an artist. But he still believes he has unfinished work in his hometown. He misses Dhaka and the city’s charm. He misses the sound of the flute player

all night beside Pizza Hut in Gulshan. He reminisced about how he misses playing cricket on the rooftop, how much he liked the roadside *fuchka* and how that will always be a part of him. Although he’s set to settle in Canada soon, Dameer can’t get over the beauty that Bangladesh has to offer.

“If we, as young people, as artists, are not trying to find something that makes Bangladesh beautiful, we are going to step into an artistic quagmire, a cultural quicksand that we will never get out of. This should be the start of a new movement re-aligning the public image of Bangladesh, because we can do so much more,” he shares.

Coming back to music, Dameer has new things coming out. He will be releasing one final song in his current album *For We Are Distant*. He also has plans to release Bangla music, and in his words, do it justice.

Talking about the backstory of his popular track “*Amar Jaan*”, he says that the song was written about a long distance relationship when he left the country. That relationship was the only source of mental peace to him amidst the cultural shock and new environment he was then in. This song was written quite a while after the end of the relationship which took a lot of love and effort but turned sour. Dameer mentions, in retrospect, the relationship was very special to him and that’s why the song resonated with many listeners.

The music video of the song – when contemplating what this song meant to him – Dameer

thought it felt like marriage. Dameer converted a 180-minute VHS tape of his parents’ wedding into digital and settled on this cheesy, corny, 90s Bangladeshi wedding footage, realising instantly this was what he was looking for. This music video felt like a good shift, after his two previous music videos being professionally produced.

Although Dameer is aware that the chances of succeeding as a musician is terrifyingly low, he tells himself that it’s not always about succeeding, but more about loving and exploring the music. Music was always his form of escapism and he is proud of being able to curate his job around it.

He also didn’t think he would make it this far. In the future, Dameer wants to expand his art and be something Bangladesh has never seen before. With the experience and knowledge that he is gaining abroad, he wants to help and build new artists in Bangladesh and possibly open up his own record label company one day. He wants to fix the problems he sees in the Bangladeshi music industry and push it in an interesting, ground-breaking, paradigm-shifting way. He wants to embody the change he wants to see and create progressive, innovative music.

Dameer’s final message is very clear: If we don’t turn this ship around, we are looking forward to a very bleak future. He is, of course, talking about the need for a major change in the current Bangladeshi music scene, from introducing entertainment lawyers, better labels and more organised deals, to building up a new music environment which will include better trap, EDM, dance and other genres.

To him, “The artist has lost all credibility in Bangladesh and we need to put out a message.” Dameer is anxious, but at the same time, very hopeful for the future, saying, “We have been juggling through trauma for too long and we are slowly finding an outlet for it and that’s why new artists are growing. Let’s not build the Bangladesh we want, but the Bangladesh we deserve.”



PHOTO: GEORGE CHONG



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

THE BIOPIC OF A BANGLADESHI BAND

AAQIB HASIB

The summer of 2008. That was the year Bangladeshi underground music scene was at its peak. Jam pads were booked 24/7 and there was never a weekend where the hallowed halls of Russian Cultural Centre (RCC) in Dhanmondi were empty.

2008 was also the year my friends and I started our own band. This is our story.

May 23, 2008

The summer of 2008 started like any other summer would for the backstory of a soon-to-be obscure musician — with a heartbreak. My girlfriend had just broken up with me and it was taking quite a toll on me. In a desperate attempt to distract myself, I decided to meet my best friend, Jahangir Kallol at Dhanmondi Lake.

“Yo, Mishu. What’s up, man?” Jahangir greeted me, as we shoulder bumped each other. “I heard Maria turned you down and humiliated you in front of everyone. How’s that burn feeling?”

Typical Jahangir, he had shown up just to rub salt in my wounds.

“I feel great. Why would I care? She’s dating that loser Ateek now!” I replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

Ateek was the biggest loser from our school. He was tall, moderately good looking and played football. But none of that had attracted Maria before. It was only recently when he had shown up to the Pahela Baishakh Mela at school with a guitar and performed Artcell’s *Pothchola* five times on repeat that he really caught Maria’s eye.

“Pfft, I’m sure I could be so much better at the guitar than him. He barely knows the power chord.”

Thus, a journey began. Things were set in motion that day and there was no looking back.

June 2, 2008

Having learned five different chords and watched two YouTube tutorials at 240p, I felt that my journey as a musician needed a band around it to truly succeed. After all, I wasn’t just about to become a solo pop star. We all knew what happens to solo artists with deep voices.

With my mind now set on the idea, I called upon my closest friends to join the lineup of the next great rock band out of Dhaka. We called ourselves “Unconscious Subconscious”. US.

Shabbir: Classically trained in the tabla, we assumed that he’d naturally take to a drum set.

Tafsan: He wanted to play the guitar, but was forced to play the bass because I had already decided to be the guitarist.

Jahangir: Having sung the national anthem at a school festival once, who else would be the vocalist in US?

“But there’s a problem. We all know Jahangir isn’t a cool name,” said Tafsan, “We should give him a cool name if he is going to be the frontman.”

“How about Jango?” suggested Shabbir. “No, we need something more iconic,” I replied.

Jahangir looked up at us, smiling. It was as if he had waited his entire life for this moment because things would change forever. No one would ever call him Jahangir again.

“Joe. Call me Joe,” he said. The rest of us



looked at each other and nodded, slowly, in agreement.

The rest is history. Even now, 13 years later, people still call him Joe.

July 17, 2008

As I alluded to earlier, it was hard to find a jam pad free on the weekend, so it was only after around two sessions in our local jam pad, Excursion, that US was ready to make its debut on the stage.

Our first “gig” was scheduled to be at the upcoming “Battle of the Bands” and we had our hearts set on winning it.

On the night of, as we gathered at the show, everyone was ecstatic. Who else could win but us? Did anyone else have the same level of dedication as we had two sessions in a jam pad in beforehand? Our talent was undeniable.

That was before the show. What happened during the show changed our lives forever.

Having performed our cover of *Khaite Paro*, we awaited the judges comments.

They were stunned. Mortified by our

presence, I assumed. After a short break of them just looking at us with their jaws dropped to the floor, the reputed vocalist and keyboardist from *Cryptic Dementia* coughed hard, and said, “That was quite a performance. Unfortunately, we don’t think you’ll make it to the next round on the back of it but keep practising. I am sure you’ll get somewhere. Rock on.”

We were screwed by the system. A bunch of immensely talented musicians pushed out of a talent show for simply being too talented? It hurt, but there was no going back.

July 21, 2008

band before us to finish their set, Jawad Ahmed from *Enemy Lines* approached us.

“Hey, I heard you guys playing in Battle of the Bands,” said Jawad bhai, smiling. “I thought you guys were really good. It’s always good to see new kids on the block. Keep rocking.”

He walked away, having changed our lives in the process. We looked on, star-struck.

As we stepped on stage, it felt different this time. Previously, we had just let our cockiness kill the nerves, but this time we had the words of one of our idols to push us through.

We looked at each other, the widest grins across our faces before I slammed the D chord and opened US’s set with our very own *Pagla Batpar (1)*. ***

June 20, 2021

Life is a little weird. Looking back, it feels funny to know a bunch of kids with a few months of experience and a heart full of passion actually made it.

Unconscious Subconscious™ became a hit after our first performance at RCC. *Pagla Batpar (1)* and *Pagla Batpar III: BatparAshlo Firey* were two of our most commercially successful songs.

Our albums *Unconscious Subconscious* and *Greatest Hits of Unconscious Subconscious* both went platinum twice.

Joe went on to run for public office. He used *Pagla Batpar 2* as his campaign song and saw great success in the tri-state area.

Shabbir went on to become a doctor, but still plays as a session drummer for 37 different bands.

Tafsan left the band in 2010, to pursue his solo career. Initially there was a bit of beef between us, but as with all brothers, we eventually reunited in 2013 for our five year anniversary show. He proposed to his girlfriend on the stage. She said no.

As for me, I decided to start making music commercially. You may have heard my work in TV and Spotify ads for Khaka Ball Shaban and Gucci Mishti Chanachur.

We’re all in different fields and places now, but Unconscious Subconscious™ holds a special place in all our hearts. The community of musicians and fans kept us going through some of the hardest times. So, till Hoichoi picks up a documentary about our journey and our 13th anniversary (virtual) concert.

Our special thanks to Neo Mendes and Omni Music for the photoshoot. Find your music equipment, and more, at www.facebook.com/OmniMusic

When Brazil was burning, Bolsonaro was playing the vuvuzela

ALAVI ASHRAF ERAM

The 47th edition of the world's oldest tournament – Copa America – was set to take place in Colombia and Argentina before the political unrest and surge in Covid-19 cases took these two countries out of contention to host. In an astonishing turn of events, the 105-year-old tournament was shifted to Brazil despite the country going through both of the aforementioned adversities.

Brazil currently has the second largest death toll, amassing over 480,000 deaths. President Jair Bolsonaro has been abysmal, to say the least, in terms of tackling the pandemic. With no sign of steadying the curve, Bolsonaro has decided to host the prestigious tournament.

Bolsonaro, from the dawn of this pandemic, has tried to downplay coronavirus as just a "little flu" and he has been adamant with his stand ever since, in face of all the protests; the virus, with all its might, is causing the demise of around 2000 people on average, every day. Brazilian Senator Renan Calheiros has already launched an investigation into the Bolsonaro government on whether they have taken the most pragmatic approach towards mitigating the crisis. Touting this tournament as the "Championship of Death," he has made



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

a plea to Neymar and Co. to not take the field. Brazil managers and players have been found to be disgruntled on the decision to shift Copa to Brazil, even pondering the possibility of a boycott, which they eventually have decided against.

The 2019 edition of Copa America brought his country around USD 118 million in revenue, which will eventually be spent for stadiums, only to be left empty for the most part. The president is focused on that monetary aspect rather than paying heed to all concerns around bringing in

new variants in a country that's going through a fatal third wave of the pandemic. Bolsonaro, after getting the go ahead from the Supreme Court to host the tournament, has even gone on record saying Brazil will "massacre" their opponents rather than addressing the concerns surrounding the lives of his fellow countrymen.

Horrific death toll and all the scathing reports against Bolsonaro have led to a 24 percent drop in his approval rating. Needless to say, he doesn't even bat an eye to what's going on around him. He's aware

of the fact that he doesn't have that massive support anymore and has decided to turn the tide in the most outrageous way possible, bringing in football to push people into turning a blind eye. Football is heralded as a sanctity in Brazil and Bolsonaro has decided to commit a sacrilegious act by playing with people's lives in the name of football.

Brazil has a long history of corruption and glaring wealth disparity, and the incorrigible far right leader, with his disconcerting round of decisions, has driven the country towards a harrowing situation. The cries of the slum don't reach the high castle of Bolsonaro, where he sits, apathetic, on his gaudy throne. And to the Brazilians' utter disgust, he has decided to sweep all the concerns under the rug by volunteering to host Copa, an exploitative tactic that has been overused in a football frenzied nation; this time though against the demand from any sect of society.

Copa America, tainted by Bolsonaro's bloody hands, is underway and may very well turn into "Championship of Death."

Alavi Ashraf Eram likes to blabber about his favourite movies, songs and sports. Drop him your movie critiques at www.facebook.com/alaviashraf.eram

SATIRE

HOW TO BE A PUBLISHED AUTHOR IN 2021

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

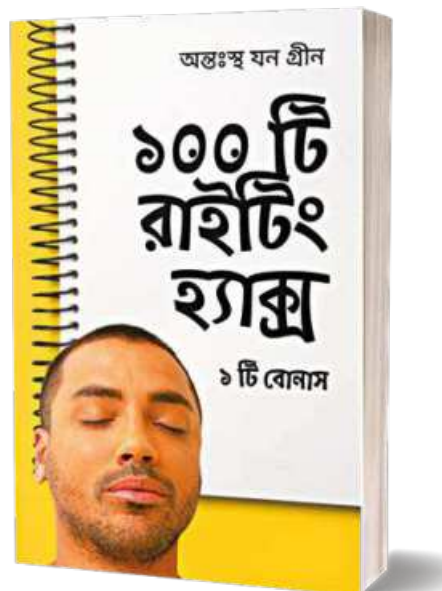
From selling books to thriving on authors' brand value, the publishing industry has come a long way. Books aren't just words on pages anymore. It's a ticket to your favourite online celebrity's meet-and-greet event. Avro intellectuals might judge your dearest YouTu—pardon, "author" for being a sellout, but getting published in 2021 is harder than you might think.

Here are a few tips on how you can get published.

BE AN INFLUENCER ON INTERNET DOT COM

Try making a list of all the things you're good at. Chances are, three minutes into the process, you'll realise that your miniscule attention span didn't let you invest enough time or effort in anything productive in life, ever.

That's when you're ready to be a social media influencer. Take the most primitive human ability and exploit it till you get famous. Can you eat and also have a questionable palate? Open a food review channel and give 10/10 to everything that is deep-fried and has cheese on it. Motivational speakers, YouTubers, whatever it is that vloggers do -- the options are limitless.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

Does this sound like too much work? You can always use Snapchat filters, make a squeaky voice and come up with unoriginal jokes based on Bengali aunt stereotypes.

GET A MARKETING TEAM

Hire unpaid interns to make you famous

for all the wrong reasons. When it comes to controversies, timing and consistency are crucial. Have a few online news media keep you relevant throughout the year so that everyone keeps asking, "Why is this dude famous again?"

ANNOUNCE YOUR BOOK

Lack of original content should lure the YouTubers right in to make videos about how stupid the idea of someone like you writing a book is. Internet snobs will offer constructive criticism judging the current generation of readership and the role of influencers like you in corrupting them. Free advertisement served on a silver platter. *Bon appetit.*

WRITING YOUR BOOK (OPTIONAL)

This shouldn't take long, a week perhaps. Though working on something for a week might be challenging for an ADHD content creator like you, the money should be worth it. Give your readers the most obvious advice on academics and pursuing success, take 200 pages while you're at it and yet miss the point. Maybe write a Chowdhury & Hossain rip-off or an autobiography nobody asked for.

Remember, it's the controversy-per-page ratio that sells. Since writing Bangla in En-

glish exists, maybe you can go with English in Bangla. Or keep a few pages blank inside your motivational book and tell the readers to write their precious thoughts. Better yet, keep all 200 blank and say "Nobody can motivate you unless you motivate yourself. Write your own book." Easy money.

ALWAYS. BE. PRESENT.

Attend the book fair every day. Take as many selfies as you can. Remember, your selfies are worth 500 bucks (minus 25 percent); your books, nada. It's 2021! Don't bother signing autographs for those who want it, pre-sign all the books in advance. Hey, you'll have to overcompensate for that abomination of a book with something, right?

Once the fair's over, Almaricom will probably have your book on their bestseller list and internet intellectuals will bash you over it. The delusion of your competence and talent should allow you to label them as "haters", ignore further criticism and live the life of a published author.

Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti reads books, idolizes Osamu Dazai and plans to check his email any day now. Send him book suggestions at: hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com



How shall I quantify my love for Saadia?

ARYAH JAMIL

How shall I quantify my love for you?
 Cloaked within frayed sheets and blotched ink,
 I fall into a maniacal peace
 In attempt to quantify a force
 Who lays to rest even those who pledge draconian.

How shall I quantify my love for you?
 The white shine in the blackness of above, they are but a
 faint speck in your eyes.
 To say a tear pains me more than the slow saturnine death
 in the oceans,
 For I'd rather give in to the blackness and present my purity
 to Ceto
 To force our lord to give into the destitution of gravity,
 So your tear would never have to see a day where it must
 befall upon you.

How shall I quantify my love for you?
 I love thee with purity
 Imbrued in the follies of youth,
 A purity that draws upon the envy of angels,
 A purity so fair, so bright –
 They say it was the one to paint Cupid blind.
 White seraphs burned black in envy, the drenched and
 depraved rose from the seas.
 You knew they could never reach you,
 So you stood in a brooding silence, mocking their vain
 efforts.

How shall I quantify my love for you?
 I love to the depths of you,
 From grace to fallen euphoria,
 From when I am but a consciousness to when I lose mine.

How shall I quantify my love for you?
 Every time my heart mellows in anguish
 My mind screams your name and I am left gasping for air,
 Only to see you were never there.

Aryah Jamil is mediocre at everything except laughing at her own jokes. Tell her to stop talking at jamil.aryah@gmail.com

REMINISCENCE

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

Today, I bought a bouquet of ivory poppies for you.

The sun was shining over our heads ever so happily. While the clouds drifted away into a faded sea of blueness, the birds fought and flew against the strong wind that clashed with their soft fragile wings. I stood at the heart of this graveyard, feeling the breeze as it rubbed away more and more of my thoughts. "Where are you? How are you?" My soul wonders as it wanders into a meadow of meagre memories. Trauma thrashes in like a loose monster, fear crawls in like creepers on a dead plot, but somehow, I find you. Standing in the middle of this meadow, smiling at me, telling me it's all going to be alright.

I remember that day, when the sky reddened with rage. The wind stood steadfast to let the birds burn away as they screamed for help. I remember the uneasy smell of thick smoke filtering its way into the deserted clouds. The horror of the destruction is still vivid, that day when we both awaited our finale. That day amidst the darkness, I heard the lullaby of children. I heard the melody of the birds who welcomed my heart to an open cage. Thoroughly I felt the

inevitable pain, perhaps death was a beautiful option. I gave up on my life as easily as that, but little did I know that I was giving up on ours.

Suddenly I sensed someone pulling me away from my asserted destiny. I felt the darkness being pulled away from me. That day, I never thought it was the final time I'd hear your familiarly warm voice.

The bloody sky soon resorted to an opaque shade as the rain crashed down upon the fiery disaster to cool it down. Though the sirens deafened my ears, I could somehow hear you breathing heavily in utter pain. You were there with me, to console me one last time, before you grabbed the hands of death leaving everything behind. One last time, I would hear you say, "It's all going to be alright."

It's been a year, yet I can't move on. But as if we had an unspoken promise, I continue to cherish life as you told me to. I continue to try to find the things in life that you couldn't find, and enjoy them dearly so that when we reunite, I can tell you all the stories about them. Until that day, wait for me wherever you are and I'll wait for you.

The ivory poppies that you loved so much, here it lies today resting above you ever so reminiscently.



Dissecting The Intolerance Towards Korean Wave

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI

As an avid K-drama fan and the occasional K-pop listener, I have come across many people who passionately despise the Korean wave. Interestingly, most of these “haters” have never experienced anything related to the Hallyu.

Rather than getting needlessly defensive or aggressive about it, I decided to take a closer look at this unabashed hatred and rejection.

A FLAWED IDEA OF GENDER

Most people offended by Korean pop culture think BTS is all there is to the Korean wave due to their lack of exposure. Consequently, their primary reaction revolves around mocking male idols for their “feminine” appearance. To find something funny or inappropriate on grounds of being masculine or feminine is another way of saying gender is definitive – which is not the case.

The traditionally accepted behaviour ascribed to a specific gender is not set in stone, rather a cultural creation turned into the norm. Therefore, the idea of masculinity and femininity itself is a constructed normalcy, not an absolute truth. Reflection of this fluidity is readily available in the fashion world as well.

The idea of “manly men” that most people refer to while calling out the male K-pop idols as feminine is mostly based on the image of a man in modern western



clothing with no make-up or accessories. However, what is considered manly now was not considered so for most of human history. For most of both Western and Eastern fashion history, wealthy men with social standing wore colourful clothes, coats with frills, makeup and jewellery. They were not considered feminine then because the definition of gender is space-time specific, therefore subject to change. Rejecting a subculture based on non-conformist fashion

only goes to show the extent to which we have internalized the patriarchal construction of gender norms.

A COLONISED MIND

Usually, the same people who hate the very word “Hallyu” have no trouble worshipping Hollywood. People will look at you like you sinned if you accidentally say “Saranghae”, but admire you if you speak fluent English. Yes, one entertainment

industry might be better than the other and one language might be universal, but that is completely subjective. That subjectivity is lost when, despite having no prior experience, you start believing a subculture is essentially inferior just because it is Asian.

This is a classic example of a colonised mindset that still subscribes to a Eurocentric narrative by subconsciously believing that anything from “the West” is inherently better than anything that comes from “the East”. We may not be visibly colonised anymore but the cultural hegemony blinding us is a definite sign that we have yet to decolonise our minds.

Yes, you might not like the music, food, drama, fanbase and a lot of other things once you have tried dipping your toes in Hallyu. But if you are blindly hating the entire subculture without ever having experienced it, it is worth asking yourself why. And if by any chance you manage to look past the obvious racism and patriarchal mindset, what is on the other side might surprise you.

References

Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences (October, 2013). *Construction of Gender through Fashion and Dressing*

Tazreen is your typical angry liberal arts student who likes to blame it all on capitalism. Send her anger management tips at tazreenzahan@gmail.com

How “American” Is American Pop Culture?

RASHA JAMEEL

I loved Steven Spielberg’s *E.T. the Extra Terrestrial* (1982) as a child. I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve watched it with my mother. It was something of a weekend ritual at one point.

So, imagine how gutted I felt upon discovering that one of my favourite works in cinema was essentially a rip-off.

E.T. the Extra Terrestrial (1982) was never Spielberg’s work to begin with. It was based on an original work titled *The Alien* (1967) by the legendary Bengali writer and filmmaker Satyajit Ray. We all firmly acknowledge it; half the world’s population still credits Spielberg with the creation of *E.T.*

Welcome to Art of Re-packaging Cultural Elements 101, brought to you by American Pop Culture.

How many of you know what the following three films – Darren Aronofsky’s *Black Swan* (2010) and *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), as well as Christopher Nolan’s *Inception* (2010) – have in common? Here’s a name to help put things into perspective for you: Satoshi Kon. One of Japan’s most revered filmmakers and manga artists. Kon’s work in anime has received plenty of critical acclaim. Alas, Kon was unable to establish himself as a global icon through his works, unlike filmmakers Aronofsky and Nolan. The latter two essentially plagiarised the works of the former, added their respective Americanised spin to it, and marketed it for a global audience. Since Kon is no longer alive to hold the two filmmakers accountable for theft of intellectual property, here’s what our filmmakers say: “We were simply inspired.”



The meme about copied homework comes to mind. Let’s talk business. How much money does the USA rake in while ripping off other cultures? The answer: plenty.

Hollywood alone has profited tremendously over the years remaking foreign films. Popular examples include Martin Scorsese’s *The Departed* (2006) which grossed 132 million dollars after being remade from the Hong Kong

action film *Internal Affairs* (2002); the *Godzilla* movie that came out in 1998, part of Japanese film studio Toho’s *Gojira* franchise, was the ninth highest grossing film in the American box office that year, and upon being remade by Legendary Entertainment and Warner Bros. Pictures in 2014, grossed over 500 million dollars worldwide.

Outside Hollywood, we have even more white-owned businesses which tend to pass off the act of whitewashing other cultures as a “modern makeover”. In January 2021, an American business based in Dallas made headlines in several news portals for attempting to “refresh” the traditional Chinese game of Mahjong for “stylish masses”, selling each set for hundreds of dollars. According to the white owners of “The Mahjong Line”, founder Kate LaGere found the traditional Mahjong tiles to be unsuitable for her personality and sense of style, and hence sought to remake the game in her own image: a white American woman with no ties to the Chinese culture.

America at this point has a long and extensive history of re-packaging elements of other cultures, and subsequently presenting them to a global audience as part of the American pop culture. From the exploitation of sacred Native American dreamcatchers as a “Bohemian theme” or attempts to steal the spotlight away from Asian filmmakers through Hollywood, the distinctive white American-ness of American pop culture clocks in at about 20 percent, give or take.

Rasha Jameel is your neighbourhood feminist-apu-who-writes-big-essays. Remind her to also finish writing her bioinformatics research paper at rasha.jameel@outlook.com