

Music means the world to me:

Runa Laila

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Melody queen Runa Laila has garnered her career with numerous hits throughout decades. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, the legendary singer talks about her illustrious career and what music truly means to her.

"I am really thankful to the Almighty and to my family for always encouraging me to follow my dreams. My achievements would have been incomplete without the love and support of the audience too," says Runa Laila. The prolific singer is a household name in the Indian subcontinent, for her versatility and songs of different languages.

"My first priority is singing songs in Bangla. Other languages come second. People know me as Bangladesh's Runa Laila and I want to represent my country through my music," adds the singer.

In spite of her incredible achievements and overarching stardom, Runa Laila always embraces humility. "I have a lot of plans regarding singing as I want to concentrate highly on my music. Music means

the world to me, and I want to live with it forever," shares Runa Laila.

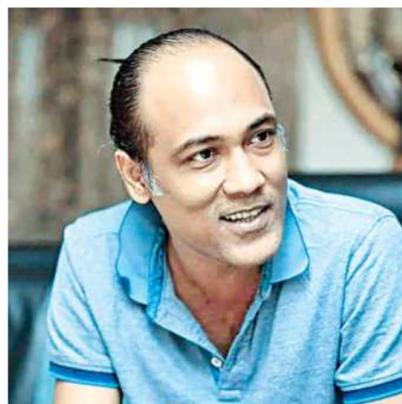
The "Priya Tumi Shukhi Hou" singer also feels that artistes have a responsibility towards society.

"Audiences always follow the words of an artiste. For instance, when the vaccine drive started in our country, I took the shot and posted about it on Facebook so that everybody would be aware about the effectiveness of vaccination. It is our responsibility to promote such matters," says the singer.

Furthermore, the renowned singer is quite hopeful about the young talents in the arena of music.

"The newcomers are doing quite well but I would advise them to do more original songs as people are attracted towards originality," she concludes.

PHOTO: STAR



Sumon Anwar PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Behind Sumon Anwar's multifaceted performances

ASHLEY SHOPFORSHI SAMADDAR

Filmmaker, scriptwriter, and actor Sumon Anwar always stands out from the crowd, be it with his unusually calm yet enigmatic role in Robiul Alam Robi's anthology series "Unoloukik", or his gruesome dialogues in Raihan Rafi's political thriller "Khachar Bhitore Ochin Pakhi".

On the other hand, his directorial releases like the Chorki original fiction "Joar Bhata" and Bioscope's "Mood Swing", turns the spotlight on feminism in the media. In a candid chat with the *Daily Star*, the polymath talks about his recent ventures, and more.

You have carved a space for yourself as an actor and a director, especially on OTT platforms. How is being in front of the camera different from being behind it? Each form of art has its unique kind of expression, and as an artiste, it is my duty to present that meaningfully. I rely on what each story demands from my characters.

However, while I am behind the camera, my priority is to ensure the comfort of my time. Crowd, chaos or conflict only lead to disrupted minds, and creativity can never thrive in such atmospheres.

You usually play antagonistic roles that are strong willed and gruesome, but in your directorial ventures, you always highlight strength and resilience of women. What is your intention behind this?

I always intend to vocalise the thoughts and struggles of women in our society. I also look to only present them as faces that we often come across in our rural areas, as I hope to empower and inspire such women, while making them aware of their own capabilities.

Your recent performances is being widely appreciated by the audience. How do such responses effect you?

The overall preference has changed, and the emergence of OTT platforms is managing to ensure viewership while maintaining the quality of work. Our work is reaching audiences all over the globe through social media, where we directly get to interact with them, which is fantastic.

However, I don't believe that criticism should become a tool when it comes to limiting your thoughts as a performer.

What are your upcoming projects?

I plan to work on the second season of "Sadorghater Tiger". I also have a few upcoming films, including Mezbaur Rahman Sumon's "Hawa", alongside OTT projects.

Fantasy shows to get excited for

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Fantasy movies and shows are growing popular by the day because they allow us to escape into a world not bound by the laws of reality, with larger-than-life narratives of enemies to lovers, unlikely heroes, chosen ones and heroic quests, among other things.

Conventional wisdom long held that there could not be a faithful adaptation of Frank Herbert's "Dune" novels. But the 2021 adaptation, starring an impressive ensemble cast and directed by the leading sci-fi director of our generation Denis Villeneuve, was a remarkable success. It was brimming with character drama, intrigue, unforgettable scenes and suspense – enough to leave even non sci-fi and fantasy fans in awe.



"House of the Dragon" features a stellar cast.

The beloved classic "Lord of the Rings" is being remade into a series by Amazon Prime. The first season will likely feature a young Aragorn, Celebrimbor, Galadriel, Elrond, and Sauron. Nowhere is better than New Zealand to capture the splendor of Númenor, Misty Mountains, and the elf-capital of Lindon. The series is expected to release next year.

Netflix's highly anticipated series "Shadow and Bone" took the world by storm. An adaptation of Leigh Bardugo's Grishaverse novels, the first season traverses through the life of the mapmaker with a rare power, Alina Starkov, as she gets ensnared by a megalomaniac and a trio of alluring characters from Bardugo's "Six of Crows"



A second season of "Shadow and Bone" is in the works.

duology. Bardugo is currently working on the next installment of "Shadow and Bone" as well as the "Six of Crows" spinoff series.

Neil Gaiman's "Sandman" comic book series is finally being adapted starring Tom Sturridge as Morpheus and Gwendoline Christie as Lucifer. If the poster and trailer are anything to go by, we will be reeled into a captivating tale of The Lord of Dreams who breaks free from the hold of a malevolent sorcerer.

After the controversial finale of "Game of Thrones", HBO decided to renew the magnificent world of George R.R. Martin. The upcoming 10 episodes of "House of the Dragon" will be based on "Fire & Blood," which chronicles the House of Targaryen's rule as well as House of Hightowers and House Velaryon, prior to the events of "Game of Thrones".

Meanwhile, Amazon Prime is adapting Robert Jordan's "The Wheel of Time" series, which spans across 14 books. The trailer gives us a glimpse of Moiraine's first arrival in the Two Rivers, the city of Aes Sedai and an island fortress. We follow different character arcs and adventures as The Chosen One myth takes action. It is indeed an exciting time for fans of the fantasy genre.

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"The Wheel of Time" is set to release this month.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Watching myself on screen often bores me:

Siam

SHARMIN JOYA

Over the years, celebrated actor Siam Ahmed has garnered his career with a multitude of hit films. In a short span of time, his unparalleled performances and charm won over audiences. In a recent conversation, Siam gets candid about his expectations, upcoming releases, and more.

"Bishwoshundori" was widely appreciated, with 115 days of screening during the pandemic. Did you expect such a response?

Absolutely not! We are grateful to the audience for it, especially at a time when people were not confident about going out to theatres for watching movies with their families and loved ones.

You are starring in 6 of the many big-budget films that are up for release. Are you expecting a tough fight from your competitors at the box office?

Not really. We are all colleagues. I am as excited for their films as I am for my own. I believe that if we support each other, the audience will support our good work and industry. I have wrapped up the dubbing for "Ontorjaal" and "Mridha Bonam Mridha". Rest of the films, "Operation Sundarban", "Adventure of Sundarban", "Shaan", "Paap Punno", are on the waiting list. Some of the post production are yet to be finished. We have our fingers crossed for the audience's response.

You made your OTT debut with "Morichika". How was the experience?

OTT platforms are a dynamic zone, where we have much more to offer to the audience. Yet, I believe the big screen experience will always stand out. Although my schedules are booked until March, I look forward to challenging stories on OTT platforms.

How would you critique yourself as an actor?

Watching myself on screen often bores me. Usually, I feel that I should have put in a bit more effort, or convinced the director to let me do a scene in a different way. My best is yet to come!

Recently, Shapla Media's owner Selim Khan called you a 'superstar' and said that your future is bright. Any comments on that?

Well, I think I do not deserve such a huge title yet! However, if he really meant it and watched my work, I am grateful. That being said, I don't want to be in any sort of controversy, where my senior colleagues will be disrespected. I request everyone to keep this in mind.

You are starring in Raihan Rafi's film "Rasta" where you were given a remuneration of BDT 1001. We want to know the story behind this.

It is just an auspicious beginning. I have worked in two back to back films with Rafi. He is more than a brother to me. In fact, I am excited to work with the team once again. It is about a current issue, with a heavy, drama-based plot. We are still working on the script. We hope to begin the shoot from January.



PHOTO: STAR