

COVER STORY

THE VERSATILE SHOWMAN

Emon Chowdhury has made himself renowned with his skills in being a multi-instrumental musician. From playing for the band Chrikutt to making his own instrumentals, he has showcased his talents in various forms. He was even awarded the 'National Film Award' for doing the background score in the movie 'Maya The Lost Mother'. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, he talks about what inspired him to begin his journey in music and his ambitions with music.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to *Uncensored* with Rafi Hossain. Today, we are joined by the renowned music director from the new generation Emon Chowdhury. Emon, thank you for giving us your time.

Emon Chowdhury: Thank you for having me, Rafi Bhai. I am very happy to be here talking to you.

Rafi: Emon, I must congratulate you for winning the 'National Film Award'.

Emon: Thank you, I won it for doing the background score of the Masud Pathik film *Maya The Lost Mother*.

Rafi: What instrument do you prefer the most?

Emon: I am mainly a guitarist, and I like to identify myself as a guitarist. I also know how to play some other instruments.

Rafi: How did you learn to play so many instruments?

Emon: It was a gradual process. I still am learning to play instruments better, and I hope that I will keep on learning to improve my abilities for as long as I am alive. I was raised in a household where everyone was very invested in music. There was always many instruments lying around the house, and when I was young, I found out that guitar classes were being held at my house. Due to living in such a musical environment, it inspired me to become a multi-instrumentalist. When I was much younger, my father tried to teach me to play the guitar and the tabla, but I was never very keen towards it, so he gave up and thought that I would never be interested in music. But, when I was in class eight, I used to see this senior friend from my neighborhood

playing the guitar and singing. I was inspired by that and thought to myself that I need to learn to play the guitar. Then, I told my father about it, and he was skeptical at first, but he soon realized how invested I was when I borrowed guitars from others to practise. My father bought me a guitar and since then, he has been supporting me. My father has always been supportive in my musical ventures and I am very grateful to him for that.

Rafi: When getting married, did anyone from your wife's family raise objections because you are a musician?

Emon: I had to hear that a lot. There was even a point where we almost had to elope. It is a very funny story. At that time, I was on tour with my band Chirkutt in the US, and I heard that my then girlfriend, who is my wife now, might be married off. Fortunately, that did not happen. After hearing that, I quickly came back here, and we decided that we need to get married. Once we came back, Sumi apu



PHOTO: COLLECTED

told me that she will arrange everything for me. So, we booked a resort, and Sumi apu herself arranged everything, and even bought things like the Panjabis we all need to wear. My wife was also very enthusiastic about it, and it was decided that the wedding would be held, and we would invite our band members and some other friends. I even told my parents about it and said that if needed, we would hold a bigger ceremony in the future. However, the night before the wedding I got a call around four am. Sumi apu had called me crying saying that Pavel had got into an accident and had hurt his arm. Upon hearing that, I said that we have to cancel the wedding as we cannot do it without Pavel. However, a

year later, we finally held a wedding, this time with the support of both our families, but we still used the same clothing Sumi apu had bought.

Rafi: When you started, did you set yourself any goal, or do you not plan too far ahead in the future?

Emon: I did not plan too much, but I did set myself a few goals. I wanted to make good music, and music which I will feel good about making. I wanted people to enjoy listening to what I make. I also like making instrumentals. I have noticed how other countries value instrumental music a lot, but in Bangladesh, it is not given the

importance it deserves. That is why I try to introduce more instrumental music here, and I am doing that by doing instrumental styles which are a little uncommon here. I did that by making an instrumental where I incorporated both guitar and violin together. I also try to use different instruments from other countries. I even did an instrumental style called the one-man band, which is a very rare style, where I had to play all the different instruments a band might use by myself.

Rafi: Do you enjoy composing songs more or do you enjoy playing instrumentals more?

Emon: I enjoy all aspects of music. But, I enjoy playing the guitar the most. I really enjoy doing background scores, since I have to do that a lot with advertisements.

Rafi: What kind of music do you enjoy listening to the most?

Emon: I really enjoy listening to classic bands. I am a huge fan of *Pink Floyd*; *David Gilmour* is one of my all-time favorite guitarists. Other than that, it depends on my mood what I like to listen to. But, I try to listen to as many types of music as I can.

Rafi: Do you have any parting message for the readers?

Emon: We are now going through a very difficult time, so I would urge everyone to stay safe. My love and prayers to you all, and I hope you all will keep on supporting and praying for me. Thank you for having me here, Rafi Bhai. I would also like to thank *The Daily Star* for always supporting art.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

As we bid farewell to a year that brought forward world-shifting events, altering the course of life and our way of living over a deadly pandemic, we certainly are grateful to be alive with the hope for better days ahead. Here is a look back at our entertainment industry in 2020.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

This year, we lost many gems of our industry. We lost music composer Azad Rahman and National Award-winning musician Andrew Kishore. He was widely regarded as one of the best playback singers in the country. Composer and musical director Alauddin Ali, popular actor Sadek Bachchu, Ekushey Padak-winning stage and TV actor and director Aly Zaker, renowned actor Abdul Kader and Salim Khan, the proprietor of *Sangeeta*. The works of all these legendary personalities will always be reminisced for generations to come.



Only twelve films were released!

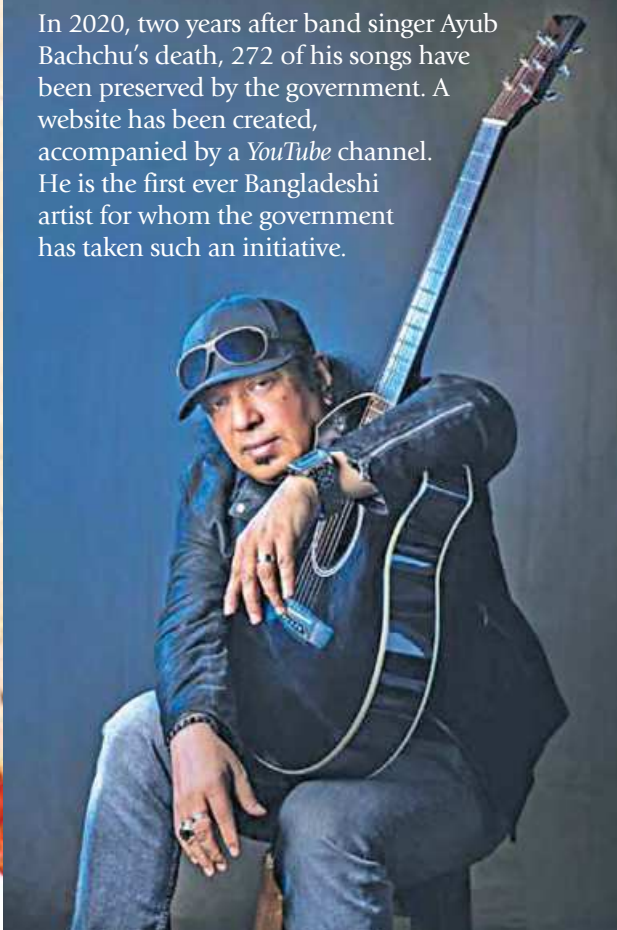
In 2020, only twelve films were released which, compared to the forty-one that were released in 2019, seem overwhelmingly low. The reason behind the small number is the COVID-19 pandemic. Cinema halls, only sixty to seventy in number, had closed down in March, and finally opened on the 16th of October. Multiplexes followed by opening on the 23rd of October. Among the released films, *Bir* managed to make some profits.

Star Cineplex shutting down?

Around September, the first cineplex in Bangladesh, Star Cineplex announced that it would be shutting down the Bashundhara City branch. However, after further talks with Bashundhara City authorities, it was decided that the cineplex would remain there. Star Cineplex has been running in Bashundhara City since 2004.

Official preservation of Ayub Bachchu's songs

In 2020, two years after band singer Ayub Bachchu's death, 272 of his songs have been preserved by the government. A website has been created, accompanied by a *YouTube* channel. He is the first ever Bangladeshi artist for whom the government has taken such an initiative.



Ferdous Wahid leaving music

Musician Ferdous Wahid has decided to not release any new music after the 31st of December this year. He also announced that he will no longer be performing onstage.



Jaya Ahsan won an international award

In *Madrid International Film Festival 2020*, Jaya Ahsan had won the *Best Female Actor* award in the *Foreign Films* category. She won this award for starring in the film *Robibaar*, directed by Indian director Atanu Ghosh.



PHOTO: STAR

Songs that gathered attention

The song *Keu Kotha Rakheni* by Minar garnered over half a crore views on *YouTube*. Monir Khan's song, *Onjona 2020*, got over one crore views. Imran gifted his listeners by releasing both audio songs and movie songs. The song he did with Kona for the film *Bishua Shundori*, called *Tui Koba Amar Hobi Re*, gathered over three crore views, while *Jani Pabona* also got a lot of attention from fans.



Three films of Shakib Khan

A total of three films have been released in 2020 starring Shakib Khan: *Bir*, *Shahenshah* and *Nabab LLB*. *Bir* was directed by Kazi Hayat and produced by Shakib Khan. It is the fiftieth film of the director. *Nabab LLB*, directed by Anonno Mamun, was released on the OTT platform *iTheater* on 16 December. It is the first ever film in Bangladesh to be released solely online.

Sabina Yasmin the music director

For the first time in her career, Sabina Yasmin became the composer and music director of a film. She did it in the Sarah Kabori directed film *Ei Tumi Shei Tumi*.

Pori Moni in 'asia's 100 digital stars'

On the 7th of December, American business magazine *Forbes* released their list of *Asia's 100 Digital Stars*. Bangladeshi actor Pori Moni has been featured in the list. Aside from this, *socialbakers.com* has also released the names of the top Bangladeshi digital artists, where Pori Moni can be seen at the top of the list.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub & Amina Hossain