

Animating the future

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"I had the opportunity to work with amazing artistes, and dabble in the basics of animation and filmmaking. It was my first, official job as an animator, and it was a fun experience," says Rafid.

"That being said, most animators in Bangladesh are self taught. We lack proper guidance, resources, and institutions. My goal is to gain a deeper understanding of 2D animation, and implement that knowledge into projects for Bangladesh."

Supti, who wanted to pursue a career in animation ever since she got into university, shares similar thoughts. "The CSE Department of DU offers a course that is heavily focused on 3D animation. So, those who are interested in 2D animation don't have much luck in this regard."

"On the bright side, cel animation used

to require artistes to draw every single frame by hand. It is a relief that we can do that and much more with digital tools more efficiently now. They have enabled us to find new possibilities of what we can accomplish with animation," she adds.

Mahathir Mahmud Antik spent the first decade of his life in Japan and it being one of the countries with the best animated productions, Antik's interest in cartoons grew early.

He also worked as a cartoonist for a renowned daily in Bangladesh while pursuing his higher secondary education.

"I started watching Marvel movies regularly and took a liking to their CGI. I was interested in CGI and VFX, and so, I took up a course on 3D animation at AAVA 3D, a training institute in Dhaka," shares Antik.

"I found the course difficult, and realised it was not my cup of tea. But I have immense respect for people who work with this medium."

Around the end of 2017, Antik started his journey as a YouTuber.

Even as a child, he was into making videos, such as for a friend's birthday, and drawing comics. When he started garnering appreciation from people online, he decided to go public and make 2D animated content.

Antik has a number of videos where he features as an animated version of himself. He enjoys telling funny, relatable stories about his everyday life. Today, his YouTube channel has over 500,000 subscribers.

He opened his own production house, Antik Animated Studio, in 2019.

It is the studio behind the official music video of "Behula" by popular band Shunno. It is one of Antik's most notable projects till date. The video garnered immense popularity throughout the country, since its release in March 2021. Currently, it has over 26 million views on YouTube.

"I initially opened the studio for myself. However, I foresaw the potential, and expanded the activities. Today, Antik Animation Studio has a team of 12. We want to make animated content for TV



▲ A snippet from Tahmina Yasmine's short film, "The Other Half".

on a regular basis, and we eventually want every library in the country to have our comics. Scaling up was always my plan," asserts Antik.

Elsewhere, Mighty Punch Studios, dabbling mostly in publications, adapted their popular comic "Captain Kathal" into a short 2-minute film, which was directed and written by Oishik Jawad and Junaid Iqbal Ishmam, alongside a team of seasoned veterans as well as aspiring young artists.

Growing up, Oishik was inspired by characters like Goku, Batman, Spider-Man, and SpongeBob SquarePants. Their approaches to life, and mindsets to never accept defeat resonated with him.

He started out as an intern at Mighty Punch Studios, before landing a job there as an animator and illustrator.

Oishik, being a cartoonist for many years, found the switch to animation quite easy.

"Regardless of the quality of my animation, my drawing experience helps me make things visually pleasing, which is a major advantage," he shares. "I think digital tools have made animation easier to approach. At the same time, they have created misconceptions about what it truly is. Owing to the current nature of digital animation, many mistake it as software knowledge, instead of an artistic skill."

Nonetheless, Oishik feels that

opportunities for animators in Bangladesh are promising. "The industry is still young. We have very few highly-skilled animators, but there is room for us to grow, and fill the gaps," he states.

Perhaps this desire to fill the gaps led Tahmina Yasmine, creator of the animation series "Bijli", to pursue her second master's in Animation and Game Direction from Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany. Before she left, she worked in Bangladesh as an animator for close to five years.

Yasmine created "Bijli" in association with Bangladesh's Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources. The story revolves around a 13-year-old girl of the same name, who aims to find new ideas to ensure proper use of electricity.

Yasmine has also worked on the short film, "The Other Half", which showcased a family's reaction when a girl wants to go on her university tour.

It took Tahmina six months to complete the visuals for the film, and another five months to work on the sound and other aspects. "You have very little time to make decisions, and you know you could have better ideas if you could experiment a bit more," she says, talking about the toughest part of the job. "Sadly, almost every project comes with time constraints. I used to feel overwhelmed while working on storyboards, because there are a number of things you need to remember. Dividing the process into smaller parts and sticking to simplicity helps."

There is no doubt that Bangladesh's animation sector needs better artistes, who push barriers. Nonetheless, with the country's first theatrically released feature-length 2D animated film now out and a 3D film by Bangladeshi animators gaining international recognition, this industry, with all its restraints, freedoms, and inspirations, is headed in the right direction.

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A snippet from Faiaz Rafid's unnamed project on androids that went corrupt.

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