

## How women in OTT are redefining narratives

**“There are multiple layers to female characters that are waiting to be explored, and preferably from the perspective of women, which is still not common in our industry. Women should be telling women’s stories,” says Mamo.**



Shabnom Bubby

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR & RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

The representation of women on screen has taken a turn with the emergence of OTT platforms. Not only are actresses portraying women in challenging professions, but even directors have taken a leap when it comes to storytelling that goes far beyond socially accepted gender standards.

We caught up actresses who excel in such against-the-tide roles to know more about their experiences.

National Film Award-winning actress Deepanwita Martin played the role of a documentary filmmaker in the Reehan Rahman directorial web series, “Nikhoj”.

“The difference between a male and a female is biological, but we have been conditioned to see them in roles defined by a patriarchal society,” she shares. “I believe I can pull off any job, regardless of my gender.”

“I never want to be like a man. Rather, I want to excel at all of my responsibilities, whether they be professional, social, economic, or political,” she mentions. Deepanwita will be seen in the role of a cop in Tanim Noor’s “Kaiser” next.

She does come across people who are



Deepanwita Martin

intolerant of this transition, but their hateful words are eased by the appreciation she receives for playing such ‘bold’ women.

Noted actress Zakia Bari Mamo also intends to alter the perception of women through her OTT ventures. While she won hearts for her performance in Shawki Syed’s “Taqdeer”, Mamo was lauded for projecting strength, intelligence, and courage in Ashfaque Nipun’s web series “Mohanagar”.

She appreciates the opportunity to explore different roles. However, she points out that female characters are still widely crafted from the lenses of men.

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Mehazabein Chowdhury ventured into OTT with Vicky Zahed’s thriller web film “Redrum”. The actress is garnering much appreciation for her performance in Ashfaque Nipun’s web series “Sabrina”. Mehazabein will soon be seen in Bongo’s “Freelancer Nadia” where she will play the role of a homemaker who becomes a successful freelancer.

“Only five to ten percent of the content we put out is crafted from a women’s perspective. Sadly, most other plots are male-dominated,” said the actress.

Mehazabein believes due to screening restrictions, TV and YouTube fail to provide a platform for female-led projects. Nevertheless, OTT platforms have facilitated an avenue for such stories.

“Filmmakers were hesitant on making



Nazia Haque Orsha. PHOTOS: TAKEN FROM FACEBOOK

women-centric content before as they were not doing well with the audience. Even producers were reluctant about backing such stories,” asserts Mehazabein. “However, our audience is more open-minded today, and stories that focus on women are garnering acceptance.”

Popular actress Bubby shook off her glamorous avatar to portray Abani, a strong and resilient woman in the Raihan Rafi web film, “Taan”. She tries to tackle her addict husband, and fight for herself.

“Actresses are not only meant to play the role of a ‘lover’ or a ‘good wife’. We are so much more than that,” she says. “In everyday life, women have struggles which are hardly shown, due to censorship in movies. However, on OTT platforms, directors have more scope and freedom to tell their stories realistically.”

Orsha has garnered high praise for playing the role of a burn victim in “Sabrina”.

“I have been bullied for the way I look and sometimes for my acting,” she says. “It doesn’t matter whether I am playing the role of a homemaker or a lover, as long as the storylines attract me.”

“It is a male-dominated society where women are showcased as ‘supporting characters, more or less,” she adds. “OTT platforms are a boon for people who prefer feminist content.”

With the stupendous success of projects like “Sabrina”, “Tithir Oshukh” and “Ladies & Gentlemen” on streaming platforms, more directors are inclined towards strong female characters and their inspiring stories. OTT platforms are leading the way in redefining the portrayal of women on screen.



### Priyanka Chopra’s action thriller ‘Ending Things’ lands at Amazon

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Priyanka Chopra’s “Ending Things”, an upcoming action thriller that will feature her alongside “Captain America: The Winter Soldier” star Anthony Mackie, has been picked up by Amazon.

The movie follows a hitwoman who wants out of the assassin business, but that also means ending her relationship with a fellow assassin. Realising she isn’t done with him, they team up for one last job.

Kevin Sullivan will write and direct the movie, which is said to be similar to James Cameron’s 1994 action-comedy “True Lies”. Priyanka is also looking forward to the release of her Hollywood romantic comedy, “Text For You”.

### Mosharraf Karim in and as ‘Isaac Liton’

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

National Award-winning actor Mosharraf Karim will appear in a new web series for the streaming platform Binge.

The show, titled “Isaac Liton”, is written and directed by Ashrafuzzaman.

Mosharraf Karim plays the role of Isaac Liton, who tends to walk against the tide. His father names him Isaac Newton. However, his friends teasingly call him Liton, which results in his name being ‘Isaac Liton’. Orchita Sporshia will be sharing the screen with the noted actor. The series is slated for release on Eid-ul-Fitr.

It also features Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Azizul Hakim, Saberi Alom and Maznun Mizan among others.



Zakia Bari Mamo

## Music, magic and madness My visit to the Grammys

When I was arriving in Phoenix, Arizona last year for my Humphrey Fellowship, I did not imagine that I would get to be a part of one of the most prestigious musical celebrations of the world – the Grammys.

The credit would go to Qinetiq music, who receive passes every year, and make sure that a Bangladeshi artiste gets to attend this event. This time, I attended with Russell Ali, a tremendous musician and former Warfaze guitarist.

I entered the majestic MGM Grand Garden arena, just in time for Trevor Noah saying “tonight is a concert where we give away awards” – and that indeed would set the tone for the night.

Luckily, I got a good enough view from the amphitheater above, and could enjoy the entire show.

As I settled in, I was lucky to get a good enough seat, sometimes being able to spot certain indie stars who sat below us. Surprisingly, many Tiktokers and social media celebrities like Nas Daily were also present during the programme.

Without a doubt, the highlight of the show was its management, which should not be surprising, but was still a treat to watch for someone habituated to shoehorned concerts in Dhaka – although it will not be fair for me to compare any musical event to the Grammys.

An anecdote is, perhaps fitting here to explain the difference – before Silk Sonic’s performance, I saw their instruments being moved through the crowds, but no one batted an eye. This is unimaginable in a music



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percent due to his recent fight with Covid. Lady Gaga, Billie Eilish, Silk Sonic, Lenny Kravitz, were phenomenal as well. Billie’s tribute to the late Foo Fighters’ drummer Taylor Hawkins was heartfelt.

I did not know of the beef between fans of BTS and Olivia Rodrigo, who really shone in this event with three awards in the respective categories. It is shameful that some fans decided to bomb the 19-year-old singer’s social media handles, and I feel that it is very silly on their part.

At the end of the day as I boarded the plane headed to Arizona, all that I thought about was the music, magic and madness that I had witnessed. I am hopeful that like Pakistan’s Arooj Aftab and India’s Falguni Shah, one of our young talents will hold a Grammy one day.

Narrated by Elita Karim  
Interviewed by Sadi Mohammad Shahnewaz

scenario in Southeast Asia.

As a performer myself, it was inspiring to see these artistes maintain the highest level of professionalism. Every artiste performed a full set with his or her own props and choreography, without having to lip-sync any single song. As a long time supporter of BTS, I could see them in full glory, even though Jungkook was not at a 100

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