

Representing traditional Bangla music worldwide

Sohini Alam on her musical philosophy

AAQIB HASIB

Sohini Alam, the vocalist of Khiyo—a fusion band of British and Bengali descent that was formed in London, England—recently sat down with me to talk about all things music. Having grown up primarily listening to the Bangladeshi underground scene, I was extremely curious about learning about Khiyo's interpretations of different traditional Bengali songs.

I wanted to start off talking about Khiyo's version of "Amar Sonar Bangla", which had many people talking for days upon its release in 2012. Some see it as the peak of Khiyo, so I wanted to know your opinion about this.

I think we all knew that that would be the peak for the band. Because there's nothing we can do that will ever be of that stature. So, the best thing about that is, once you know you've reached the peak, you can start to relax. So, once we knew that, the pressure was off and so we just continued to make music in our way.

Now, there are a lot of people who have a problem with songs, mostly classical, that are remade or redone in some form of fusion? What would you say to these people?

When we made our songs, we felt that it was an appropriate way to show our love for these classic Bengali songs. The fact that some people found it controversial was a surprise to us as well.

Now, I can only give my perspective on this matter, as I cannot dictate what someone else's perspective should be. I think any time you are not

enjoying a certain type of music, you should just turn it off. I think you should only listen to songs or consume media that makes you happy. In my case, I listen to and make the type of music that represents my existence and journey.

Would you say that your background as a British Bangladeshi has shaped your music in some form?

I'm a third culture individual that was born in the UK, to a family that has been making the music of Bangladesh, in Bangladesh.

Which means that, while I have a great respect for tradition, that's not how I hear this music. I feel that, with every story, if you don't tell your own, somebody else is going to tell it for you. And then if you don't like it, there's nothing you can do about it.

Could you tell me a bit more about Khiyo's upcoming album?

With this new album, half of the songs will be rearrangements of traditional Bengali songs. But then, the other half will be original songs. So this is kind of an evolution for us. The album launch will be at the Rich Mix in London, on July 15, with the international launch taking place on July 22.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

'Want to present the political context of the Agartala Conspiracy'

Amitabh Reza Chowdhury on government grant, '1969'

After "Munshigiri", Amitabh Reza Chowdhury recently received a government grant for his upcoming film "1969". The period drama, which is based on the Agartala Conspiracy, received the highest grant of BDT 75 lakh among the 19 other projects that have also received grants from the government this year. We caught up with the "Aynabaji" famed director to know more about "1969" and his other upcoming projects.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

In a recent interview, you said that the grant you received will not be enough for this production.

Having evaluated the budget that I need, the grant will only be able to partially fund the production. My estimation says that we need two or three times the amount we have received from the grant for "1969".

As this is a period drama, we cannot compromise on the cinematic depiction of historic events, as such films also function as archives.

I look forward to managing more funds for this production.

You also mentioned that the government is now funding commercial projects. Are you taking this positively?

There has been a change in their strategy, and both positive and negative outcomes are expected from this decision.

Previously, the government used to primarily focus on unorthodox projects. Nevertheless, the grants are also being given to mainstream cinema in recent years.

There are always two sides to a coin. I feel that mainstream productions have the scope to generate revenue. However, the productions may fail to bring about the expected profits.

I am not criticising this step, as they have decided to select around 20 productions instead of 10, for government grants.

Thus, it is not the case that mainstream cinema is sidelining unorthodox projects in this regard.

Why have you chosen to narrate the Agartala Conspiracy case cinematically?

The incident of the Agartala Conspiracy case has been wrongly depicted in our historic archive. I wanted to put forward a more well-researched version of the incident for our audience. I also look to present the political context behind this conspiracy, to help the audience better relate to the course of events around this conspiracy.

We have finished the scripting of the film, and we plan to start pre-production preparation from October of this year. Additionally, we are planning to start shooting from February or March of next year.

What else are you busy with these days?

I am almost done with the pre-production of my Hoichoi original web series, "Bodh". We will start shooting from next week. After this project is finished, I wish to give my full attention to "1969".



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

'Keyamot Theke Keyamot' to be remade

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Sohanur Rahman Sohan directorial "Keyamot Theke Keyamot" was a smash hit when it released on March 20, 1993. Salman Shah and Moushumi were propelled to superstardom for their debut film.

The director recently told the media that he is looking to remake the film with new faces. Sohan said that he has been looking for young faces that can emulate the superb performances by Moushumi and Salman Shah.

Next year, which marks 3 decades of "Keyamot Theke Keyamot", will see the release of the remake, according to the director.

The original film itself was a remake of Aamir Khan and Juhi Chawla starrer "Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak".



Shahidul Alam's retrospective exhibition starts in Kolkata today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

"Singed but not burnt" an exhibition on the works of Shahidul Alam, which is curated by Ina Puri, will be starting today, June 18. The exhibition will be taking place at Emami Art at the Kolkata Centre for Creativity for a month before moving to other Indian cities.

The retrospective exhibition will be covering the photographer's 40-year long career. A total of 80 photographs will be showcased at the exhibition, covering Alam's work from his earliest archives to his most recent work. Apart from Alam's photographs, there will also be vignettes from his life and other rare visuals, alongside models created by his niece Sofia Karim.

The exhibition will run from June 18 till August 20. The exhibition will be available at Kolkata for a month.

