



The team of 'Poran'.



Siam Ahmed in 'Shaan'.

The film industry's unforeseen revival

Both "Hawa" and "Poran" have helped revive near-dead cinema halls all over the country, as well as inaugurate new ones. Be it Jessore's Monihar Hall which saw record revenues, or Sylhet's Grand Cineplex opening to optimistic responses, it seems that the surge is not over yet.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Recently, the trailer for Raihan Rafi's "Damal" was released, much to the delight of cinema-goers who have been enjoying a steady stream of quality projects. The Siam Ahmed, Bidya Sinha Mim and Shariful Razz starrer tells the story of the historic Shadhin Bangla Football Team, led by Zakaria Pintu. The film is currently reaping the benefits of a revitalised film landscape, where netizens are planning their schedules as to when they will go and see a film in theatres.

It was not too long ago when, amidst the wave of ground-breaking OTT projects, many had written-off the Bangla film industry. Frankly, it was hard not to—with the dwindling number of cinema halls made worse by the pandemic, and the ease of access to shiny new content available every other weekend from the comfort of your own homes.

On top of that, Shakib Khan, arguably the biggest star in the industry, had seemingly lost interest in Dhallywood owing to the multitude of politically charged smear campaigns, and the Film

Artists' Association election that was nothing short of a fiasco.

And yet, by the time



ILLUSTRATION: DHAKA YEAH

country on Eid-ul-Azha, reaching up to 41 on its second week, and 60 within its fourth. The film has also been released in Australia, Finland, Denmark and Sweden.

"The feeling is surreal," said Bidya Sinha Mim to the Daily Star. "I myself watched 'Poran' four times, with friends, my husband and in-laws separately." Aside from being on top of her profession, the actress is glad for the industry as a whole. "When more producers are lining up to make more movies, it can only bode well for us."

On the other hand, Raihan Rafi is already planning for the future. "Damal is my dream project, and it will outperform 'Poran' at the box office," says the director, who wanted to pay homage to our rich, rebellious history.

"Hawa", which released on July 29, captured the audience in two major steps, the first being an absolutely stellar album led by "Shada Shada Kala Kala", the Hashim Mahmud original that became a sensation across the country—everywhere from tea-stalls to turmeric ceremonies. The entire nation grooved to the rustic beats mastered by Emon Chowdhury, Arfan Mredha Shiblu and Mithun Chakra.

Added to that, the film had one of the most well-rounded and tasteful promotional campaigns, pairing rickshaw-art, printed sarees and official merchandise, alongside team trips to various universities, which the team is still partaking in—they travelled to KUET (Khulna University of Engineering and Technology) yesterday. "Hawa" is also being showcased in the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

The film took a huge toll on the actors as well. "For three years, we were not allowed to do another project," says Nazifa Tushi, who solidified her place as one of the fastest rising stars in Dhallywood with "Hawa". "I lived and breathed the character of 'Gulti'."

Sariful Razz is arguably one of the most sought-after stars in the industry right now, having been an integral part of both "Poran" and "Hawa", once as the ratchet gangster Roman, and the latter as sweet and simple Ibrahim. He will also be seen in "Damal", donning the role of a dashing footballer.

"These are the best times of my life", says the star, who recently became father to a beautiful baby boy with his wife, film star Pori Moni. "All I can say is that I am exhilarated to be a part of this phase of the film industry."

Both "Hawa" and "Poran" have helped revive

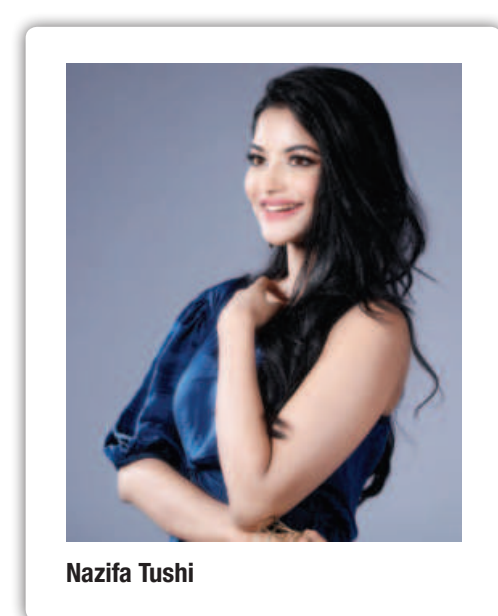
near-dead cinema halls all over the country, as well as inaugurate new ones. Be it Jessore's Monihar Hall which saw record revenues, or Sylhet's Grand Cineplex opening to optimistic responses, it seems that the surge is not over yet.

Amidst the discussion of recent blockbusters, one cannot help but mention the successful films that laid the groundwork for this recent revival. On Eid-ul-Azha, M Raahim's "Shaan", featuring Siam Ahmed and Puja Chery, and S A Haque Olike's "Golui", featuring Shakib Khan and once again Puja Chery, initially brought back a surge of audiences to the halls when no one thought possible. Even when the 'king' was not here to promote "Golui" in person, Siam gave it his all, travelling from one hall to another for the sake of his film.

Ananta Jalil's "Din-The Day", a supposed BDT 100 crore film, helped fan the flame of revival this Eid, even though the ultimate box-office collections remain unknown. On Thursday, the director of the film Morteza Atashzamaz announced that he will sue Ananta for a 'breach of contract'.



Sariful Razz



Nazifa Tushi

Likewise, controversies mired not only "Din-The Day", but also "Hawa", as some people spread rumours that it was copied from South Korean film "Sea Fog". Recently, the Wildlife Crime Control Unit sued Mejbaur Rahman Sumon because in the film, a *shalik* was shown to be captured and eaten by the film's protagonist, Chanchal Chowdhury, even though the director made it clear that no animals were harmed during filming.

Where there is success, there will be scandals—that is the ultimate truth of any film industry. As long as there is discussion and interest in the product, it will sell. As much as the credit goes to the stars of the industry, it also goes to the enthusiastic, supportive and frankly integral audience that brought back the industry to life.

An exciting line-up of films, including "Operation Sundarban", "Mujib: The Making of a Nation", "Adventure of Sundarban", "Mission Extreme 2", "Noor", "Jinn" and "Commando" awaits us. Now that Shakib Khan is back in Bangladesh, his films "Maya", "Leader: Ami Bangladesh", "Antoratta" and "Kobi" will undoubtedly create hype as well. Now, it is as much a duty of ours to extend them the same support we have shown our recent films, as is theirs to provide top-tier entertainment.

"We need more films like Hawa and Poran"



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

From the innocent 'Sonai' of 'Monpura' to the ruthless and barbaric 'Chan Majhi', the multifaceted Chanchal Chowdhury is able to mold himself into complex characters, the kind that takes the film industry by storm. Currently, the actor is basking in the glory of his performance in "Hawa", and the release of Hoichoi series "Karagar".

The star opens up about how the film industry can be revived.

It seems that the wind of good fortune has finally arrived for Bangla cinema.

The film industry is witnessing a new wave of resurgence and popularity over the past couple of months. Cinema goers are finally flocking to theatres. Many cinema halls have finally reopened and are making up for their past losses. The shows of "Hawa" are going houseful, and word of mouth is spreading like wildfire. It feels great to hear the word 'houseful' after such a long time. "Hawa" has created quite a buzz amongst audiences, and I am truly happy with the way good fortune is finally smiling down upon us.

Content is king, and we need more movies like "Hawa" and "Poran" to revive the film industry. If we can produce 10-12 quality productions for viewers, then the audience will continue flocking to the theatres.

What are thoughts about the young filmmakers of the country?

Young filmmakers have the passion to portray their imagination on the silver screen. Their dedication and talent are what make them really special. For instance, the directors of "Hawa" and "Poran" are relatively young, and are working hard to challenge themselves. Such promising directors can make an immense contribution to the film industry.

What kind of changes should be implemented for the development of our film industry?

We really need to bring in a lot of innovation, especially in terms of plot and characterisation. We need to release movies with good plots every



month. Cinema halls need to be renovated, so that cinema-goers can have a great movie experience. Last but not least, our movies need large-scale promotions.

All of your movies do extremely well in theatres. I truly believe that we can change our fortune with hard work and dedication. If we give our best, then luck will look after us. I get offered a lot of movies, but I only choose the ones which attract me as an artiste.

Secondly, I look for stories that can bring about a positive change to society. The character I am playing needs to be highly enticing, so that I can completely absorb myself into the role.



Upcoming films of the industry.

COURTESY: BOX OFFICE NEX NEWS

Sariful Razz is none of the most active contributors in Showbiz, having been an integral part of both "Poran" and "Hawa", once as the ratchet gangster Roman, and the latter as sweet and simple Ibrahim.

you read this, Raihan Rafi's "Poran" will be on its sixth week, still occupying 39 halls and going houseful in select shows. It is still difficult to get a hold of tickets for Mejbaur Rahman Sumon's "Hawa", usually requiring an advance commute to the halls to secure tickets.

"Poran"—The story of love, betrayal and bloodshed, based on the infamous Rifat-Minni-Nayon Bond love triangle, started out with a modest 11 movie theatres across the

Bidya Sinha Mim

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED