



# Can we sell music again?

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Raef Al Hasan Rafa

**SAKIB SHARIF**

Tutul is a college student, and a crazy fan of band music who goes mostly to free concerts and listens to songs on YouTube and makes social media posts.

On the contrary, his friend Nahian listens to

audio quality in the apps, they are yet to get habituated to the practice.

In exchange of anonymity, one of the country's most popular streaming apps told us that its average monthly listeners declined to around from over 1,00,000 to just 25,000 in just two years.

Shadhin Music, arguably the country's largest streaming platform, has 3.5 lakh plays on its most streamed song, which is a single by Hridoy Khan. However, the same singer has 35

To find a balanced solution to this never-ending conundrum, streaming platform GAAN came up with an experimental approach to support the bands in a more convenient manner.

Fans will be able to purchase songs in a digital package for Tk 50. The "digipack" includes the exclusively released song, instrumental or karaoke version of the song, ringtone, and HD wallpapers. Besides, lucky fans will be able to collect souvenirs like posters and t-shirts, as well as meet and greet band members exclusively.

According to the GAAN team, the majority of the revenue would be provided directly to the band. And the bands under this programme will be able to keep track of the total purchase.

Bands like Warfaze, Artcell, Mechanix and AvoidRafa have already joined this initiative, and other bands are yet to be announced.

"The unfortunate reality of country's music industry is that despite the popularity of many musicians and their band's music, they do not always receive appropriate royalties. However, there exist many fans who are keen to support their favourite bands and artists with the royalties," said Kazi Ashequeen Shaju, managing director of GAAN, and the drummer of Artcell.

YouTube has now become the major platform to release songs. However, the average production of a song with a music video now costs over BDT 2 lakhs, whereas the band gets approximately around Tk 40 thousand per million streams depending on ad clicks on the platform.

George Lincoln D'Costa of Artcell believes that if people can spend a good sum of money on things like food and clothing, spending BDT 50 for music is not that big of a deal.

"If other platforms also take such initiative, and a law is made in this regard, the practice of paying for music will gradually be normalised, benefitting musicians," said Lincoln.

According to Aftabuzzaman Tridib, the vocalist of Mechanix, the amount a band used to spend on the production of a complete album is now being spent on a single song, due to the need of music videos. However, YouTube often fails to reach the target group of the band.

Mechanix's latest song, "Shophobhongo", was released on the GAAN app as a digipack in the last week of September. So far, the song has received a great response on the app, and the number of listeners buying the song is increasing day by day.

"Nothing is free in this world," says Tridib. "There used to be a time when people would buy a CD for Tk 120, but we, the musicians, somehow started giving music away for free, destroying that practice."

Most musicians believe that the initiative of selling is long overdue.

Its impact might not be huge overnight, but they are hopeful that gradually the practise of buying songs will return among the audience, if more musicians join the cause.

Can the initiative really change the habits of the audience? Will fans learn to say no to free music? Only time will tell. If history does indeed repeat itself, musicians just might find themselves on better footing, owing to their loyal fans – just due to the sales of their music.

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Aftabuzzaman Tridib

PHOTO: TAKEN FROM FACEBOOK

songs on streaming platforms with a monthly subscription, and feels that such amounts are not enough for the bands. To support local bands, he goes to ticketed concerts and collects merchandise.

Nahian was introduced to Bangladeshi band music by his uncle, Suman, who is now in his 40s, and still goes to ticketed concerts. He used to collect original cassettes and CDs but is now frustrated about the declining situation of the band-music scene.

The aforementioned characters are the most common kinds of audience existing in our country's music scene today.

Though their habits and mindsets are different, they are used to the consumption of free music, owing to the lack of a proper revenue-generating distribution process. Some listeners might not even be familiar with the word 'piracy', as everything comes for free.

However, the brunt of the suffering is shouldered by our band music industry, who now have to make their living through live performances.

During the Covid 19 outbreak when the concerts were restricted, people came across the harsh reality that the commissions and revenues from merchandise and streaming platforms were of little to no value for survival. Many skillful musicians had to look for alternative means of monetary support.

In reality, most people here enjoy videos more than the audio itself. Even though they have access to many songs for free with better

million views on the same song, on YouTube.

According to Raef al Hasan Rafa of AvoidRafa, technology drives the musicians, and that's why many were bound to go with the flow of giving away music for free. Where the western world takes a well-planned marketing approach before adapting any new technology, we fail to adapt to any of them.

"As the culture of buying songs had not developed here, we the musicians, as a whole, never tried to sell them. In fact, no one had the courage to take such an initiative," says Rafa.

He added that there will always be some fans who'd love to pay for songs, but to make the majority of the audience pay, an environment and option must be created – where they feel like paying.

"The process of buying physical discs and cassettes had an exclusivity, buying a cassette was like owning a piece of music for yourself", says Ziaur Rahman Zia of Shironamhin. "When people get things for free, they don't have the feeling of ownership or love for it. Eventually, music loses its value."

Musicians do not get any royalty when the music is given away for free. If the music is sold exclusively at a platform that is widely available to the listeners, it could bring greater good for the music scene, according to Zia.

A question that should cross your mind right now is: can the songs be sold again so that the bands can benefit?

An initial answer lies in another question: are we ready to buy songs?



Ziaur Rahman Zia



George Lincoln D'Costa

## Out and about IN DHAKA



**The Tin Soldier and Paper Ballerina**  
October 29 | 7 pm  
Satori Meditations



**Shajgoj Female Fest 2022**  
December 1 | 4 pm  
ICCB HALL 4.



**Carnival of Hope**  
October 29 | 11 am  
ULAB Permanent Campus

## Pritom, Shahtaj tie the knot

**SHOWBIZ DESK**

Musician and actor Pritom Hasan will get married to actress and model Shahtaj Monira Hashem, in a 5-star hotel in Sreemangal yesterday.

Even though the two had been in a relationship for a while, they had kept it private. The news broke out when actress Sunerah Binte Kamal posted the pictures of the couple's "Mehendi" programme on Thursday.

Pritom, who has made strides both as a musician and actor, recently appeared in "Araal", the psychological thriller that released on Chorki recently.

On the other hand, Shahtaj is a well-known actress and influencer. She also has a vibrant career in Showbiz – even appearing in Pritom's music video of "Jadukor".



PHOTO: SNAPSHOT

## TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix- 20th Century Girl

Hoichoi- Hello! Remember Me?

Chorki- Araal

Amazon Prime- The Devil's Hour

Disney Plus - Willow