



FURRY CELEBS

How do our adorable four-legged casts operate?

In one of the most iconic Hollywood films, a cat with an orange coat was the beloved companion of Holly Golightly, an American socialite. I am, of course, talking about 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' and the cat, who was described in the films—to have no name—was a star in his own right. Orangey, the adorable ginger cat, an adored co-star of Audrey Hepburn, was one of the most famous feline actors of Hollywood.

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Be it a beloved companion or a fearsome predator of the wild, animals have long been part of the silver screen, since we began using it as a mode of storytelling. The IMDb listings of animal actors have grown much longer since then.

The Daily Star sat down for a conversation with our very own local animal actors and (human) directors, about their experiences and insights.

While watching an animal actor on-screen, the first thing that naturally pops into anyone's head is—"How did directors give them instructions?"

Well, the secret ingredient of working with an animal actor seems to lie in understanding and empathy, according to, National Award-winning director Dipankar Dipon. He spoke exclusively about Toto, a Speagle-Husky mix, who had apparently starred in his yet to be released film, *Antarjal*.

"Usually, in other industries, the more difficult shots are achieved using CGI, but that's not what we did here (*Antarjal*). Since Toto is my companion, I had prior knowledge regarding his movements," replied Dipon, who also emphasised the need for understanding the furry actor, which helps connect the filmmaker and them—achieved usually via an animal handler.

"There is a gap in the industry for such handlers. Thus, it can prove difficult to navigate when one might require an animal

actor. For instance, Toto actually came into my life when I featured him in a drama of mine. I could not find an actor then. So, I thought, I'll buy one. However, after I was done shooting, he became family instead".

While speaking about Toto's film ventures, Dipon also praised Siam Ahmed's efforts in connecting with his co-star. Apparently, in *Antarjal*, Toto plays the role of Siam's trusted companion, and has quite a few scenes where he gets to show off his acting chops. Even before filming commenced, Siam had spent time with Toto in an effort to get closer, and form a bond.

"There were scenes where Toto had to look sad, thinking Siam abandoned him. Being connected to your animal actor helps achieve those takes easily, as you know how to convey the commands, how they'll react", said Dipon, which is also agreed upon by Raka Noshin Nower.

Apart from being one of the upcoming filmmakers in Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's *Ministry of Love*, Raka is also the founder of Studio Yellow Something, and has lent her magic to crafting a multitude of adverts and campaigns. Her recent project with Gramenphone has gained her immense love from Bangladeshi audiences for the campaign's exceptional message and execution.

For its *Bondhu Bojhe Amake* campaign, the telecom company featured an animal welfare organisation, PAW Foundation, and its founder, Rakibul Haq Emil. The 2-minute long advert was posted with the hashtag,



Accept The Friendrequest, and gathered around 350 thousand likes on social media. The video features Emil being approached by a dog, marking the beginning of a friendship which takes the audience around different areas of the city, acquainting us with many furry friends.

Raka, who is a human companion of a beautiful cat, believes that the relationship

helped her work with her animal crew. It is one thing to work with domesticated animals, but how did she approach the strays, who are usually skittish and distrusting?

Describing her filming experience, Raka mentioned that she consciously chose a small, animal-loving team for her project. "If my team doesn't love animals, they won't feel connected to the vision. For example, there was a chase scene that we had to execute but proved difficult because the strays were already our friends", laughed Raka. "So we had to entice the dog with food on the other side, which honestly didn't feel more difficult than human actors," Raka added jokingly.

A common commotion associated with filming—how do animals react when directors shout 'Lights, camera, action!?' Or when they see a large contraption floating towards their face?

"I used the smallest camera possible and communicated as softly as I could," answered Raka. "These (stray dogs and cats) aren't trained professionals and we kept that in mind. There was no chaos on set".

While directing Toto, Dipon too made sure that the canine was focused on his human companion, who was on the other side of the camera. Even in scenes with Siam, when Toto was on screen, it was Dipon he was looking at with adorable expressions.

While it's not entirely possible to speak with an animal actor, we did get a hold of Poly Karmakar, who is the human companion of Lucifer, also known as Aduri from the

acclaimed serie *Karagar*. In the series, the Turkish Angora cat shared the screen with stars like Chanchal Chowdhury and Jayanta Chattopadhyay. Both of them adored their feline co-star, despite Chanchal Chowdhury's limited interactions with cats before.

Much like Dipankar Dipon, Poly also commented on the lack of proper accommodations for animal handlers in the Bangladeshi film industry. "Lucifer was introduced to *Karagar* via my friend, who informed me that they needed an animal actor in the series. Despite the team being very helpful, the shooting experience wasn't very joyful for her," said Poly, "She fell sick and got fleas. So, that wasn't very pleasant for us".

Lucifer has been Poly's companion for almost two years now, and is also famous on Instagram. Her account @lucifer.morningstar2022 has many followers, and after her acting debut in *Karagar*, it has received love from fellow influencers as well.

Despite the reign of CGI over our film industry nowadays, the call for recognition of furry actors still remains paramount. Even recently, there have been talks of introducing a new Academy Award category to recognise the best animal actors in films, who've braved their reluctance and relied on their trust of their humans, to provide entertainment for us all. Similarly, Dhallywood's progression in providing an inclusive space should include both bi-pedal and quadruped artists.

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TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
El Conde/The Count



Amazon Prime
Wilderness



Hoichoi
Kumudini Bhavan



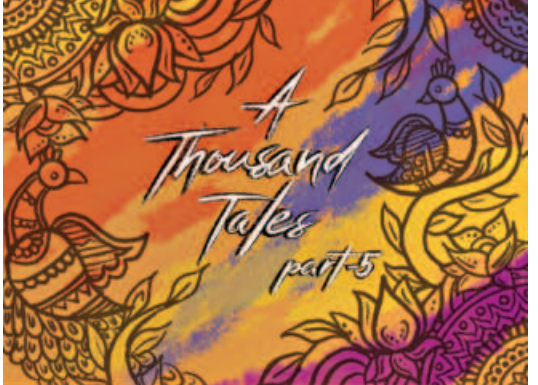
Hulu
The Other Black Girl



Disney+ Hotstar
Arthdal Chronicles



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



A Thousand Tales, part: 5
September 15- 18 | 5.30 – 8.30 pm
Safuiddin Shilpalay



Tribute to Niloy Das
September 22 | 6 pm
Alliance Francaise de Dhaka



Ontore Bahire Chitragada
September 23- 24 | 7 pm
Neelima Ibrahim Auditorium,
Bangladesh Mohila Samity

STYLE STATEMENT

Nazifa Tushi

The scintillating serpent from *Hawa*, Nazifa Tushi, cast a magical spell at the red carpet of Meril Prothom Alo Awards which took place on September 8. She bewitched her fans with her winged eyeliner while her long luscious hair was tightly bound in an everlasting braid. Her eyes shined brighter than the burning strokes of fire. The gorgeous actress draped herself in a black saree and a sleeveless blouse, which only added more layers to her enchanting smile.



WHAT'S PLAYING

Amay Dhore Rakho

How many of you have returned to the original version of *Amay Dhore Rakho* after listening to the latest Coke Studio Bangla production *Dilaram*?

Amay Dhore Rakho, written back in 2009 as the first song of Arnob & Friends, is a mesmerising track that effortlessly captures the essence of love and longing. Arnob's soulful voice and his acoustic guitar create a soothing and enchanting atmosphere that immediately draws you in.

One of the standout features of the track is its simplicity. Arnob relies on minimalistic instrumentation, allowing his voice to take centre stage. The singer's heartfelt rendition of the lyrics adds a layer of authenticity to the track, making it incredibly relatable to anyone who has experienced the pangs of love and separation.

Amay Dhore Rakho is a timeless gem that deserves a place in any music lover's collection.

