



The Daily Star
CELEBRATING
33
years of
JOURNALISM WITHOUT
FEAR OR FAVOUR

LIFESTYLE DIARIES

SEGMENT 4

ANNIVERSARY SUPPLEMENTS 2024

DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2024

FALGUN 12, 1430 BS

22



Golden frequency: A story on Dhaka's audiophiles

FROM PAGE 20

to another and I ordered a pair of active speakers online. After I set it up, I played "I'll Remember" by Madonna, and the impact it had on me was profound."

For the first time since the pandemic started, he felt genuinely happy. Suddenly, Ferdous was listening to music while working, eating, and here's something new: while just lying in bed and doing nothing else but listening to music!

"Since then, I have gone down the rabbit



is entitled to their opinions, but such incidents are few and far between.

Due to the increase in interest, the need for top tier hardware is also growing. There was a time, long ago, when sourcing good speakers, headphones, and amplifiers was a tough order. Thankfully, the community itself has stepped up, opening the doors to many new establishments that bring in brand new products, as well as deal with vintage products imported from abroad, or taken off from ships in Chattogram. There are also private importers who take custom orders and specifically imports for their clients.

Speaking to one such establishment that deals with home audio products, both old

personalised theatre setups at home. The biggest surprise has been the growing interest in vintage gear, as people tend to fall quickly in love with their sound signature and history," elaborated a store's owner, wishing to remain anonymous.

"SEND HER MY LOVE" Some see audiophilia as yet another so-called hobby that has 'no return' and a waste of money. And while there are many who simply will not care how music sounds even in a kilobuck setup, remember that there are also those who would gaze upon a planet through a telescope and go 'meh.'

While our views may stack up, one thing is common. If you have us as friends and happen to share a video clip of someone performing a song, our first



Rainbow store to score the latest albums, stealing my older brother's Sony Walkman/ S a n y o BassXpander for field trips, listening to music loud on my dad's speakers when no one was home, the sheer wonderment of CDs and Discmans, and ushering in the digital age with an iPod Touch.

The passion still runs strong, just as my wallet keeps getting weaker.

"OOPS I DID IT AGAIN!"

You have seen the memes by now; significant other buys new *insert audio product* and then sweats about the inevitable interrogation and speech on wasting money from their partner. In fact, this very article mentions 'buying this to hear/experience that' more than once. So how important is investing in this hobby? Do you even need to? How you start is a contentious matter.

hole, as they say, and fully invested in this hobby. It is safe to say that becoming an audiophile has helped retain my sanity," gushes a genuinely happy Ferdous.

In my case, however, I guess the easiest way to summarise my origin story is I inherited both the hobby and the tools. My father and his brother were both into music and had turntables, cassette players amps, and speakers at home.

In fact, for my sixth birthday, I was handed a red National portable cassette player with a built-in speaker and two cassette albums — Michael Jackson's Bad and Enigma's MCMXC a.D. Along with shaping my tastes in music, it has kickstarted a passion that burns to this day and the journey from there has been memorable, — copying a friend's cassette with our dual deck at home, going to the

amplifier, and a pair of speakers or headphones.

There are others still, who have taken the above ethos to a whole new level by having multiple pairs of speakers, amplifiers, headphones, etc. Their rationale? Each speaker/headphone/amplifier combo sounds different, and these differences can sometimes harmonise with different genres in their library, elevating the listening experience.

So, is it just about the gears? I say, if music is your solace; if you actively seek out music to either make a memory even more special or use it to drown out the voices (negative or otherwise) and look at the bigger picture of life, then you are already on the first couple of rungs on the ladder to be an audiophile.

"Why this obsession with gears?" I hear you ask.

Well, once you familiarise yourself with music, and develop close bonds with your select favourite songs, listening to them again with new/better gear brings a joy/high that you might have experienced when you first discovered said favourite song.

In my opinion, the gear is merely a way to reduce the gap between you and the artist. Akin to looking at the Mona Lisa through a smartphone screen and then finally seeing the masterpiece by standing in front of it at the Louvre.

"HAZARD"

While we understand music as digital and have been doing so since the early 2000s, some will say that nothing is more

'organic' than listening to an LP record.

One such person is Shamim Newaz, a person who is heavily invested in LPs, still buying albums old and new, and playing them on his LP player, complete with a vintage amp and speaker pair.

When asked why he puts himself through so much trouble sourcing LPs, he states, "Every time someone has said that or that high-res digital music is the same, I persuade them to come over, sit them down, take out Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon and let them listen to the album. And then I switch to a digital version of the same album and see their reaction. The LP's sound is so organic that once you hear it and compare, the digital version will always sound lifeless."

"LOVE WILL NEVER LIE"

You will be pleased to know that Bangladesh has a very strong audiophile community scene, and it seems to be growing ever larger.

A quick search on Facebook will yield many audio related groups, dealing with both portable audio, as well as the traditional home audio setup groups. The people in these groups are extremely supportive of one another, and offers each other valuable insight/feedback on whatever gear or service they are using, as well as buying and selling old CDs, cassettes, and LPs.

There will be the odd disagreements taking place, as in the end, this is a very subjective hobby and everyone



and new, stated that they have witnessed a growing interest amongst even the general public.

"We have seen a huge surge in demand for speakers and AVRs, especially after the pandemic. I believe many of them have picked up the hobby during their confinement at home.

"Many are also investing heavily into making

comment would probably involve the state of the recording and/or the dynamic range of the audio. So do not lose patience with us and keep sharing those posts, because if we happen to talk about those aspects first, chances are we like you.

By Intisab Shahriyar
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed