

# Ritu Raj blends tradition and panache



**From his early days in 'Close Up-1' to his enthralling performance in Coke Studio Bangla's 'Bulbuli', Ritu Raj's melodious voice has left a lasting impression on audiences. While 'Tomakei Khujchhey Bangladesh' served as a stepping stone towards his musical journey, his corporate life posed challenges to his dreams. However, destiny intervened, and after eight years in the corporate world, he made the bold decision to leave his job and pursue his passion, reigniting his musical career. Since then, there has been no turning back for the artist.**

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

A while back, the singer released his track *Poro Choitali Shajhe* from his album *Raj*, a project that had been a dream for both him and his elder brother, Prithwi Raj. Unfortunately, Prithwi's untimely passing in 2019

sync along. Later, I met Arnab da, and that's when I learned that Coke Studio Bangla was coming to Bangladesh. I never imagined that Nazrul Sangeet would resonate with the younger generation to the extent that they'd sing along."

While Coke Studio Bangla's *Bulbuli* remains one of the most-watched songs with over 28 million views, there is a sense of pressure on Ritu Raj to prove himself after delivering such a massive hit.

"I'm uncertain which of my songs will become hits or go viral, especially considering my genre isn't dance or pop-oriented. Making my songs go viral can't and shouldn't be my primary goal. If it gets picked by the mass, then that's also great. I simply remind myself that my focus should always be on producing quality work. Ultimately, I have no control over which of my songs the audience will embrace," he confessed.

Recently, Nazrul Sangeet exponents stated that changing the original form and distorting Nazrul's songs in order to modernise them is a form of disrespect to our national poet. Ritu Raj, who has sung mostly Nazrul Sangeet, holds mixed feelings regarding this perspective.

"Failing to secure the perpetuity of his songs would arguably be the greatest disrespect to his memory. I believe

it's crucial to ensure that his songs reach the younger generation, while the interpretations of them are also preserved. This approach serves to honour Nazrul and keep his legacy alive for both our current and future generations," expressed Ritu Raj.

"While contemporary arrangements are necessary for this purpose, it's equally important to safeguard the essence of the music, ensuring that it remains intact. Now this is solely my view, and out of respect for their expertise as Nazrul Sangeet exponents, I don't want to refute their statement. However, if the authentic essence of the music is preserved, I believe additional changes will not be a big issue for Nazrul Sangeet," he added in conclusion.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

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momentarily halted their work.

"We had nearly completed eight tracks for the album. However, we couldn't bring it to fruition. Then, in 2019, my brother passed away. He was the driving force behind our YouTube channel *Jilapi*, boasting over 2.5 million subscribers. There's a dedicated crowd that adores his work. Completing his unfinished projects would allow his fans to continue enjoying his work," explained Ritu.

The arrangement for *Poro Choitali Shajhe* was finalised in 2014, but its release was delayed until 2024, a decade later.

"Even though it was finalised a decade ago, feedback from listeners suggests that the song still resonates with contemporary audiences. My goal was to preserve the essence of the music as arranged by my brother during that time. The upcoming tracks will embrace a rock format, pretty different than my usual style which audiences have grown accustomed to," the singer elaborated.

For an artiste, corporate life can be quite cumbersome, as Ritu Raj experienced firsthand. "I had to constantly request leaves for shows; and organisers were often hesitant to hire me, as they thought I wouldn't be able to make the time for it. Then, Covid struck, and it was a miserable time. Working round the clock took a severe toll on my mental health. Frustration and misery pushed me to resign from my job. I found myself staring at the ceiling for hours until an opportunity for an online show arose, where I performed alongside Nandita, with Shuvendu Das Shuvo *bhai* on guitar."

After that show, Shuvo approached him and asked him whether he knew the song *Bagichay Bulbuli Tui*. And unfortunately, he didn't. "He then sang the entire song right in front of me, and I attempted to lip-

## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



**Pathshala presents 'All That Weathers'**  
April 27 | 5pm  
DrikPath Bhubon, Panthapath



**International Jazz Day**  
April 30 | 7pm  
138 East



**Prachyanat edition of 'Khowabnama'**  
April 30 | 7pm  
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

## 1-MINUTE REVIEW

### Fiction branches off of Elly's reality in Matthew Vaughn's latest

Matthew Vaughn who is known for helming massively relished films like *X-Men: First Class*, *Kick-Ass*, and the *Kingsman* series amongst others, takes on yet another turn at blurring the lines between fiction and reality through his film *Argylle*.

Featuring a star-studded ensemble cast comprising Henry Cavill, Bryce Dallas Howard, Bryan Cranston, Dua Lipa, Sam Rockwell, and many others, the film depicts the story of a struggling author Elly Conway (Bryce) trying to determine why the story she is writing is bewilderingly transpiring in real-time.

On her way to discover the reason behind the big question, Elly not only encounters new people associated with the professional spy world but a series of action-packed events unfold considering she ventures into the world of a super spy called Argylle (Henry Cavill) and his comrades.

The glimpse into the more grounded aspects of Elly's life — as a bestselling spy writer, she engages with her adoring fanbase at sold-out bookstore readings amidst many other activities — intermingled with the heightened dealings surrounding the spy world cook up a storm of a fascinating watch.



## STYLE STATEMENT

### GRETA LEE

Greta Lee's style statement exudes effortless elegance and understated glamour. Clad in a golden sage greenish backless silk gown, she epitomised sophistication and grace at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party this year.

The choice of attire perfectly complements her poised demeanour, enhancing her natural beauty without overpowering it. Lee's ensemble captures

the essence of refined luxury, showcasing her impeccable taste and fashion sensibility. With this look, she radiates confidence and allure, embodying a modern aesthetic that is both timeless and captivating.

It's a stunning representation of Lee's ability to effortlessly blend elegance with contemporary flair, making a memorable statement on any major red-carpet event.

## TRENDY STREAMS

**Netflix**  
Baby Reindeer



**Amazon Prime**  
Fallout



**Disney Plus+**  
Secrets of the Octopus



**HBO Max**  
The Sympathizer



**Hulu**  
Shōgun



## WHAT'S PLAYING

### Little Trip to Heaven (On The Wings Of Your Love)

Tom Waits' *Little Trip to Heaven (On The Wings Of Your Love)* from his debut album *Closing Time* (1973), is a treasure trove of piano-based singer-songwriter gems.

The song, infused with a jazz-tinted lullaby and adorned with Waits' signature gravelly vocals, reflects the profound joy and contentment inspired by a cherished muse. Waits' evocative lyrics capture the euphoria of being in love with heartfelt sincerity.

This song, wrapped in a warm musical embrace, is a glimpse of the album's enduring appeal and Waits' ability to craft melodies that linger in the hearts of listeners long after the music fades.

