

JOY SHAHRIAR: A one-man artistic ecosystem

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Noteworthy as well is Joy's passion for events, as he arranges a landmark tribute concert for maestro Sanjeeb Chowdhury every year, known as the *Sanjeeb Utshab*. Aajob Karkhana also successfully arranged Nachiketa's 30-year celebration concert in Dhaka, last year.

"I could have bought a very nice phone with the money I bought this guitar with," said Joy Shahriar in The Daily Star's canteen, proudly flaunting his baby guitar. "But I chose this expensive guitar. I don't have unlimited funds, but I know my priorities." In a way, this sums up the *Shotti Bolchi* singer's entire career – a story of passion, strife and street smarts.

Clad in his signature *gamcha*, Joy rose initially rose to fame with his band Nirjhor, before breaking out with his aforementioned solo album. Today, the artiste is arguably a pillar of the entertainment industry, especially for young up-and-comers, with Aajob Records helping dozens of musicians find their place in showbiz, and Aajob Prokash disrupting the books market while giving opportunities to unlikely writers. To top that, Aajob Karkhana, Joy's video production and event management firm, has made 150 music videos and reached its century of events.

So, what enticed Joy, the son of a journalist, to not only chase his dreams of being a musician, but create a space for others to express their art as well? "I was 23 years old when Nirjhor got the offer from G-Series for a 3-album deal, which was the norm back then if you wanted to work with them," he said. "I did not want to 'sell out' my art, or be bound by contract for such a long time." He declined the offer to sign with Impress, who gave him a more favourable 1-album deal. Ultimately, for his debut solo album, Joy negotiated a deal with G-Series. "I convinced Khalid *bhai* to let me opt out of a 3-year deal, and for a then nobody like me, it was a big step – a lot of big-time musicians could not do that," said the artiste. "I was always like this, I stood up for myself."

As the album, *Shotti Bolchi* became an instant hit, Joy's music was all over the country on television and FM radio, which controlled the flow of music. ". From 2008 to 2010, artistes like Minar, Elita Karim, Parvez Sazzad, Hridoy Khan, Kona and Leemon had their first albums, and it is not a coincidence – music really thrived at that time, because the distribution channels were stellar, driven by audience demand and not the algorithm."

In 2013, when Aajob Records was born, Joy's initial goal was to launch his own album. "When I started producing for other artistes,

I realised the immense potential that the newer ones had, added to the array of knowledge that I could derive from legends of the industry," stated Joy, who has worked with legends like Nachiketa, Subir Nandi and Kumar Bishwajit, and was the first proper producer for artistes like Riad Hasan, Bay of Bengal and Kamruzzaman Rabbi. "The way I see it, Bappa *bhai* (Bappa Mazumder) produced songs for me when I could not even think of affording him, from his fondness for me. Pavel Areen offered to do the sound design for my solo album in exchange for virtually nothing. Emon Chowdhury played a few songs there as well. How can I ever repay them? For me, it's about giving back, while relieving younger artistes of industry syndicates".

Since the past decade, Aajob Records has released more than 700 songs, no small feat in a market shifting towards self-publishing. Besides that, Joy claims that his publishing front comes more naturally to him. "My father owned a magazine called *Biborton*, and I regularly went with him to the press." Aajob Prokash, after its inception during the pandemic in 2020, has published more than 120 titles. "Once you are aware of your rights and are used to doing stuff yourself, you can never let

others skim you of your earnings!", laughed Joy, who further attributes being a publisher to wanting his daughter to read more in Bangla.

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After his albums *Shotti Bolchi*, *Ekhoni*, *Thik Ebhabel*, and *Lapatta*, Joy Shahriar is coming with his fifth solo album. "I've never been the most 'popular' artiste out there, but I am content with my career. I am an analogue artiste of the digital age, but I was arguably among the first digital artiste when no one thought of their online footprint," concluded Joy, who did, indeed release his single *Chhuto* in 2013, when people did not think outside albums.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

TRENDY STREAMS

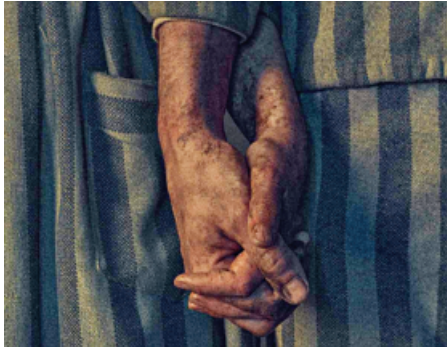
Netflix
Heeramandi



Amazon Prime
Fallout



Peacock Original
The Tattooist of Auschwitz



HBO Max
The Sympathizer



Hulu
Under the Bridge



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WHAT'S ON THE GRAM

Azmeri Haque BADHAN

The stunning Azmeri Haque Badhan looked undeniably radiant during the celebration of Lux's 100th anniversary. She was breathtaking in a pink chiffon saree complemented by emerald jewellery and soft brown eye makeup.

Adding to the glamour, she wore pink lipstick and styled her hair in a half-loose updo. Her glamorous makeover was done by Zahid Khan while the dazzling jewellerys are from Amishee. Badhan additionally amped up her look in a golden sleeveless blouse, further enhancing her breathtaking appearance.

TV TALKIES

Dead Boy Detectives

Dead Boy Detectives, a spinoff of Netflix's *The Sandman*, is inspired by yet another one of Neil Gaiman's creations and led by showrunner Steve Yockley – known for his work on *Supernatural* and *The Flight Attendant*. While its opening may be confusing, the premise becomes clearer with time, offering an intriguing viewing experience.

The story revolves around two boys – Charles (played by Jayden Revri) and Edwin (played by George Rexstrew) – who are best friends. Both boys are deceased: Charles passed away in the 1980s, while Edwin died in 1916.

Despite their deaths, they remain on Earth, with Edwin having spent some time in hell before escaping. Together, they use their time to locate souls that are trapped unhappily on Earth and help set them free.

In a sequence of unplanned and thrilling events, the boys serendipitously enlist the help of Crystal Palace (portrayed by Kassius Nelson) and Niko Sasaki (played by Yuyu Kitamura) to assist them in tackling the growing number of cases that come their way.

Riddled with paranormal mystique and heartfelt allure, the show is a welcome addition to the increasing number of screen adaptations of Neil Gaiman's books.



WHAT'S PLAYING

Manush Pakhir Gaan



After a five-year hiatus, Black released their third studio album *Abar* in 2008, featuring 10 songs, including *Manush Pakhir Gaan*.

Manush Pakhir Gaan stands as a quintessential representation of Black's introspective and emotive style, reflecting on themes of separation and longing. Penned by Jon Kabir and Zubair Hussain Imon, the track's haunting melody, complemented by Jon's soulful vocals, Tony's rhythmic drumming, Jahan's mesmerising guitar, and Sagar's resonant bass, creates an immersive sonic experience for listeners.

The song's evocative imagery, comparing lovers to birds with broken wings, adds depth to its emotional impact. As one of the standout tracks from their commercially successful rock album, *Manush Pakhir Gaan* continues to captivate audiences with its timeless allure.