

ARTCELLISM LIVES ON

In the dim light of a cosy studio, the air thick with anticipation, I found myself face-to-face with the rock legends of our country. The members of Artcell, clad in their iconic black band t-shirts, lounged before me with an air of casual camaraderie that belied their status in Bangladesh's rock pantheon.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

As I was preparing for the camera to roll, a humbling realisation struck me—this band had been crafting sonic masterpieces before I had even mastered my mother tongue. Their creations, like—*Oniket Prantor*, *Onno Shomoy*, *Obosh Onubhutih Deyal*, *Amar Poth Chola*, *Dhushor Shomoy*—had become the soundtrack to a generation's hopes, dreams, and rebellions.

Twenty-five years. A lifetime for some, a blink of an eye for others. For Artcell, it represented a journey etched in power chords and poetic lyrics, a reflection of their enduring impact on Bangladesh's musical landscape.

As four members from the current lineup—George Lincoln D'Costa, Kazi Faisal Ahmed, Kazi Ashequeen Shaju, and Iqbal Asif Jewel—graced The Daily Star studio, they talked about their 25-year celebration, recent tour, future projects, and more.

To mark their silver jubilee, Artcell embarked on an ambitious international tour. Lincoln shares, "We kicked off our celebration with a tour starting in Australia, followed by performances across nine Canadian provinces."

The Canadian leg proved particularly significant, with shows in major cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. Notably, Artcell made history as the first Bangladeshi band to perform in St John's, Newfoundland, and Regina, Saskatchewan. Band member Saef Al Nazi Cezann,

currently residing in Australia, rejoined the group for this tour.

Shaju highlights the unique connection experienced during these performances. "We reconnected with fans from our RCC days, many now settling into careers or pursuing PhDs. It's a rare opportunity to engage so intimately with our audience, something we don't often experience during larger gigs back home."

The tour, organised by Toronto-

since the massively successful *Oniket Prantor*. "Conceived over a decade ago, it explores the destination, something that we search for. The destination may seem incomprehensible, miraculous, or unreal at first, but it can be the only truth, to be comprehended in the future," says Lincoln.

"Lincoln is being cryptic with the answer," interrupts Jewel with a playful smile. He then goes on to elaborate, "This is a concept album, there's a lot of

The band also discusses the double-edged sword of digital platforms, which have democratised music distribution by labels but led to content oversaturation. "People are constantly looking for dopamine hits, even videos are becoming too long for their attention span. So, they are switching to reels with a shorter duration. This way, it has become difficult to find that space to grow a loyal fanbase for a song or band. But quality songs are being made, tons of them. We need to listen to them sincerely," he adds.

Jewel further emphasises the collective responsibility to promote quality, "Instead of making low-quality content viral, we must promote quality ones. Otherwise, not just the music industry, art, film, and every other form of media industry will suffer."

On the topic of AI in music creation, Jewel expresses measured scepticism. "While AI has its uses, like restoring old recordings, it can't replicate the emotional depth of human-created music. It's a tool, but not a substitute for genuine creativity."

Artcell hints at several upcoming projects, including a corporate collaboration featuring a music video. Jewel reveals, "We're developing six or seven new tracks and have plans for more. Our creative process is organic; we don't rush to meet external demands."

Reflecting on their enduring success, Lincoln attributes it to "perseverance, consistency, dedication, and passion for music."

Twenty-five years. A lifetime for some, a blink of an eye for others. For Artcell, it represented a journey etched in power chords and poetic lyrics, a reflection of their enduring impact on Bangladesh's musical landscape.

based MNC Entertainment, allowed Artcell to showcase a broader repertoire. Jewel explains, "In Bangladesh, mixed concerts often limit us to our greatest hits. In Canada, we had the freedom to play extended sets, as long as two hours, including deeper cuts like *Rahur Grash*, *Otrito*, *Bhul Jonmo*, and *Dhushor Shomoy*."

"*Bhul Jonmo* wasn't even on our list. The crowd started chanting it and we had to play it on the spot," shares Faisal.

In 2023, Artcell released *Otrito*, their third album, following a 17-year hiatus

room to think for the listener. This is a story set in the future, blending science, fiction, as well as spirituality."

The band acknowledges that *Otrito* hasn't resonated as strongly with audiences as their earlier work. Shaju explains, "We deliberately departed from our conventional approach. As a progressive rock album, we knew it might not immediately appeal to younger listeners. Our goal was to create a conceptual album and make a statement as a band, that would remain in history."

Discussing the current state of local music industry, the band reflects on the challenges of creating timeless classics in today's fast-paced, content-saturated environment. Shaju notes, "It's too early to say we're not getting enduring hits. *Oniket Prantor* was released in 2006. It was around 2012-2013 when it became a hit or achieved its classic status."



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Nachiketa Live in Dhaka with Joy Shahriar Vol 2
July 26 | 6:30pm-10pm
KIB Complex



Play 'Wolfed Down'
July 9-July 10 | 7pm-9pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Exhibition 'The Actuality of Fiction'
July 5-July 16 | 6pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka

TV TALKIES



‘Maamla Legal Hai’: Legal realities from diverse lens

The courtroom drama of Netflix's *Maamla Legal Hai* owes its entertainment value entirely to the whole cast. Directed by Rahul Pandey and written jointly by Kunal Anja and Saurabh Khanna, it cleverly blends real-life cases through each of its episodes—offering insights into the courts of the Indian heartland and their challenges.

Actor Ravi Kishan shines brightly in his role as advocate VD Tyagi. The show takes an engaging approach to depict the lives and challenges of various lawyers belonging to different social classes: some in their chambers, others seated on benches in the court's parking area, and some under trees. Most importantly, all of them face genuine struggles, including those in positions of judicial authority.

In *Maamla Legal Hai*, the lawyers are portrayed as complex characters with shades of grey, rather than simply black or white. While Ravi Kishan leads the cast, every character plays a significant and equally important role, making each one a unique hero in their own right.

WHAT'S PLAYING

Ami Jharer Kachhe Rekhe Gelam

Ami Jharer Kachhe Rekhe Gelam, sung by the legendary Hemanta Mukherjee, is a haunting Bengali melody that showcases the artist's deep, mellifluous voice. The song, composed by Salil Chowdhury, evokes a profound sense of longing and separation. Hemanta's emotive rendition perfectly captures the poignant lyrics, which speak of leaving one's beloved in the care of a storm.

The composition's gentle, flowing rhythm mimics the ebb and flow of emotions, while the orchestration subtly enhances the mood without overshadowing Hemanta's vocals. The interplay between the singer's rich baritone and the delicate instrumentation creates an upbeat yet melancholic atmosphere that lingers long after the song ends. This timeless piece, exemplifying the golden era of Bengali music, can be a perfect addition to your playlist to celebrate this monsoon season.



OLIVIA COOKE

Olivia Cooke, the leading lady of Team Green in the ongoing HBO Max series *House of the Dragon*, showcased a remarkable look during the show's London premiere.

Decked out in an all black Stella McCartney gown, embellished with glittering black tassels, the strapless piece gave the actress an edgy and moody look. Her understated makeup was accentuated by nude pink lipstick, and she finished off the look with a high-up curly bun.

Olivia's fluffed face-framing bangs, alongside the silver vintage-esque necklace, give her the overall regal flair—reminiscent of her character Alicent Hightower in the series.