



Blender's Choice The Daily Star OTT & DIGITAL CONTENT AWARDS 2023

DHAKA MONDAY DECEMBER 30, 2024

POUSH 15, 1431 BS

A publication of The Daily Star

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01



Festivities, felicitations and fervour OTT'S PREMIER EVENT RETURNS



PHOTOS: STAR AND DREAMWEAVER



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Premium Tea



The premiere OTT & Digital Content Awards

Amidst all speculation, political restlessness and uncertainty, stars started to land from the skies at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre (BICC) on December 12. As they treaded the red carpet, curious fans and professional newsmen rushed towards them to get a glimpse.

Anticipation rose as time went on: who would win in the various categories of **Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards**? The third iteration cemented the event as the biggest celebration of OTT and digital content in the Bangladeshi industry.

The Daily Star and Ispahani Tea Limited worked for months to make the event special. We would also like to thank Dream Weaver for their amazing photography and videography throughout the event.

This supplement is a celebration of the segments, the stars and those who made the event possible – you!

Arts & Entertainment Desk



WINNERS' LIST 2024		
CATEGORY	AWARD	RECIPIENT(S)
Popular	Best Actor (Male)	Mosharraf Karim (Mohanagar 2)
	Best Actor (Female)	Azmeri Haque Badhan (Guti) and Tasnia Farin (Nikosh)
	Best Supporting (Male)	Dibya Joyti (Mohanagar 2)
	Best Supporting (Female)	Tanzika Amin (Mohanagar 2)
	Best Antagonist	Afran Nisho (Sharey Showlo)
	Best Director (Series)	Ashfaque Nipun (Mohanagar 2)
	Best Director (Film)	Raihan Rafi (Friday)
	Best (Series)	Mohanagar 2
	Best (Film)	Baba Someone's Following Me
Critics	Best Actor (Male)	Nasir Uddin Khan (Myself Allen Swapan)
	Best Actor (Female)	Nazia Haque Orsha (Jahan)
	Best Director	Mizanur Rahman Aryan (Unish20)
	Best (Film/Drama/Series)	Unish20
	Best Cinematographer	Sheikh Rajibul Islam (Mohanagar 2)
	Best Editing	Leon Rozario (Myself Allen Swapan)
	Best Makeup Artist	Atia Rahman (Myself Allen Swapan)
	Best Script Writing	Shihab Shaheen and Robiul Alam Robi (Myself Allen Swapan)
	Best Costume	Bijaya Ratnabali (Guti)
	Best Art Director	Naeemah Zaman (Myself Allen Swapan)
	Best Sound Design	Rajesh Saha (Guti)
	Best Background Score	Khayam Sanu Sandhi (Virus)
	Best Lyricist	Indraneel Chattopadhyay (Aguner Pakhi)
	Best Music Composer	Sajid Sarkar (Pakhi Pakhi Mon)
	Best Singer	Abanti Sithi, Mahtim Sakib (Unish20)
Individual Content	Best Education	Nafees Salim
	Best Entertainment/Sports	Rnar
	Best Travel	Nadir On The Go and Shuvashish Bhowmick (tie)
	Best Food and Recipe	Petuk Couple
	Best Podcast	Jon Kabir
People's Choice	People's Choice	Myself Allen Swapan





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03



The performers who **ELEVATED THE EVENT**

It never disappoints, does it? **Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards** is known for its scintillating performances, and this year was no different. A scintillating dance by Alifia Squad, headed by Mofassal Alif and Shahnaz Sumi, opened the show – a magnanimous mishmash of contemporary and classic. Mumtahina Toya, with her grace, turned the energy up a notch when she took the stage, while Tama Mirza, no less than an actual Pakhi, soared around the stage with her signature poise and grace. The audience saw the musical duo of Elita Karim and Tashfee – apparently only a one-time thing – sing their heart out, originals only. Pritom Hasan, returning as the headliner yet again, had new tricks up his sleeve as he sang his greatest hits, accompanied this time with the amazing acapella group Beatmosphere. The amazing and unforgettable performances from the talented individuals are what made the night truly special.



Blender's Choice Premium Black Tea





Sakib R Khan (7th from right) with team Hoichoi

OTT visionaries share their approach to growth

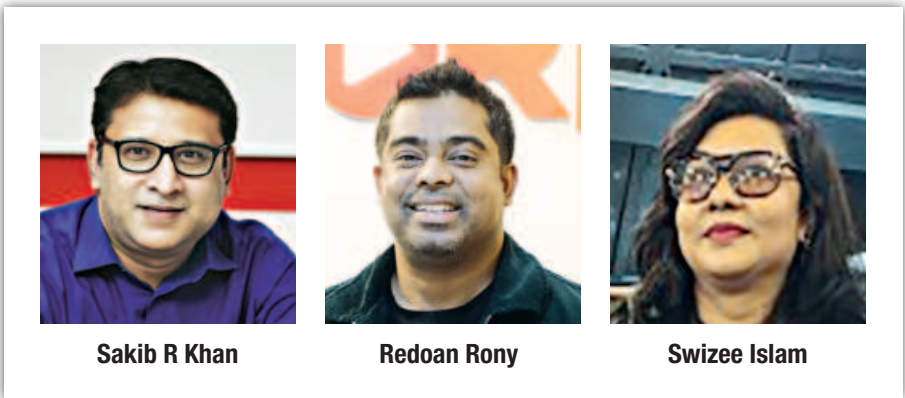
The country might have undergone an unprecedented shift in power this year, marked by various sacrifices that have, and will continue to, drive seemingly necessary transitions across all sectors. The ever-evolving entertainment industry, particularly in the OTT space, has been no exception. This year, the third iteration of *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2023* took place on December 12, once again recognising the best of the best.

The year presented an assortment of genres for audiences to enjoy, ranging from thrillers, crime mysteries and even love stories. Aside from industry leaders Chorki and Hoichoi, platforms such as Binge and iScreen also picked up the pace.

We reached out to a few illustrious figures in the OTT sphere to gather their insights on the reception of this year's productions, as well as their approaches to navigating audience interests in the near future.

Honoured in 30 categories for their outstanding on-screen performances and behind-the-scene excellence, spanning Individual Content, Music, Critics' Choice, and Popular Choice segments, Chorki snagged the most awards, much like its pronounced streak of wins last year.

Redoan Rony, CEO of Chorki, expressed, "I would foremostly like to congratulate all the winning artistes and crew



members under our banner. However, the orchestration of this award show is nothing short of inspiring for all of us considering the dearth of the availability of credible digital award shows in the country. Other shows tend to arrange for a mixture of award categories from all platforms but *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards* is a purely digitally-focused initiative, which keeps on progressing well."

Sakib R Khan, country director at Hoichoi Bangladesh, commented, "As expected, this year's OTT Awards was a spectacular event. These awards not only celebrate artistes but also inspire professionals like us, who work in the content industry, to strive for even greater achievements."

Swizee Islam, content head of Binge, told The Daily Star, "This year's award ceremony was exceptional. Artistes like Nazia Haque Orsha and Mosharraf Karim deservedly won their awards. At the end of the day, if and when artistes and industry professionals receive the appreciation that they deserve, they will always be inclined to do more."

In terms of a possible shift in their priority of content programming, Redoan Rony stated, "Frankly, we have only ever focused on generating and developing quality production and working alongside people who are interested in devising the necessary content. So, we don't determine content selection based on the governing body of our country. We simply have never

held onto any form of political priority."

Sakib R Khan commented, "The impact of the change in government on the content approval process is something that only time will reveal. However, we firmly believe that producing high-quality content to meet audience demands has always been a priority and will remain so in the future."

Swizee responded, "I don't think we will change the way we operate, because we believe in our approach to recognising good work. If we can inspire more people to join the industry by creating and acknowledging great work, we can contribute to its growth, which is crucial as our numbers are still small. I believe it is our responsibility to help the industry grow."

When inquired if Redoan Rony thought a nominated production deserved to win but didn't receive an award, he said, "I think *Guti* could have also won as it has a winning quality about it. Nonetheless, we are glad that our *Myself Allen Swapan* won big."

Sakib R Khan conveyed, "The best content and artistes have won awards based on audience preferences and the judges' decisions. The Daily Star has always strived to recognise and celebrate the finest works."

By Zareen Nawar



Hosts bedazzle in Safiya Sathi outfits

When Bangladesh's glitterati descended upon this year's *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards*, they brought with them an air of sophistication that could rival any international red carpet. Behind the scenes, pulling the strings of this sartorial symphony was none other than Safiya Sathi, whose design house returned as the event's costume partner for the second consecutive year.

This year, Sarah Alam and Shommo Joyti commanded the red-carpet festivities, while Naziba Basher, FS Nayeem, Rafsan Sabab, and Azra Mahmood guided audiences through various segments of the gala event. The red carpet transformed into a runway of



Shommo Joyti



Sarah Alam

in leading it. I received immense support from my team and I am grateful for it."

Known for her signature zardozi ornamentation and bespoke creations, Sathi has carved out a unique niche in Bangladesh's fashion landscape. "We start with a conversation with the client and learn all about their preferences – pattern, cutting, colour, fabric, and everything else needed," she explained. "If they are ever confused, I show them some old designs for inspiration. After the final sketching is approved, we move to the factory where I am constantly present to make sure everything goes just the way my client wants it."

Looking ahead, Sathi envisions a future where established designers



Naziba Basher and FS Nayeem

glam and tradition as the hosts showcased a variety of styles, blending traditional elegance with contemporary flair.

Shommo Joyti in the black suit opted for a classic look with a subtle sheen, a sleek black shirt, and a pocket square, embodying timeless sophistication. FS Nayeem dazzled in a bold burnt orange suit paired with a striking blue shirt and pocket square, exuding confidence and individuality. Naziba Basher in the show-stopping golden one-shoulder gown is a vision of glamour, with shimmering

sequins, a flowing sheer cape, and statement earrings enhancing her bold and dramatic vibe.

Finally, challenging the notion of preferring Western outfits on a red carpet, Sarah Alam went for a red saree. She exuded traditional charm, wearing a rich, vibrant saree with intricate gold embroidery, paired with an elegant updo and understated jewellery for a timeless graceful look. Together, their outfits reflected a perfect mix of modern, bold, and traditional aesthetics, ideal for a glamorous event.

Naziba Basher shared, "Both my experiences with Safiya Sathi have been incredible." She added, "Last year, she draped me in a beautiful purple gown with a trail that was so regal. This year, we planned the outfit from the get-go. From picking out the fabric to discussing the design, we were like a team. When I did the final trial, it felt like I was wearing magic!"

Shommo Joyti brought classic sophistication to life in a black suit that fit like a second skin. "In one word, the

experience was amazing! I never expected my suit to fit me," he laughed, referencing his recent weight loss for an upcoming film. "When the suit fitted me perfectly, it instantly lifted my mood and boosted my confidence. Even the black shirt I donned was recommended by Safiya *apu*. When both *apu* and my mom approved the outfit after the trial, I knew this was it."

Rafsan Sabab cut a dashing figure in a navy blue double-breasted suit paired with a crisp white shirt, while FS Nayeem turned heads in a bold burnt orange ensemble that perfectly straddled the line between classic and contemporary.

For Sathi, the challenge wasn't just about creating stunning outfits – it was about doing so during the bustling wedding season. "We have bindings and constraints, so artists barely get to experiment," she acknowledged. "Since this is wedding season, we had to work swiftly. All of the artistes we designed outfits for, everyone was satisfied with them." Her secret weapon? A dedicated team that takes ownership of their work. "As a female entrepreneur, I never faced difficulties



Hosts of the gala event, Rafsan Sabab, Naziba Basher, Azra Mahmood and FS Nayeem, on the red carpet

continue to evolve with robust teams while welcoming fresh talent to strengthen the industry. Her success at the *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2023*, coupled with the rising popularity of the brand, only further highlights her ability to blend traditional craftsmanship with contemporary glamour, creating looks that not only photograph beautifully but also empower their wearers.

By Mahiya Tabassum

LEADING STARS celebrate their triumphs

While ‘Blender’s Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2023’ aimed to celebrate talent both behind and in front of the camera, it is impossible to overlook the star power that lead actors bring to both the screen and the event itself. We speak with six exceptional performers who were major winners at this year’s ceremony.

BY SHARMIN JOYA AND RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA



Winning in the ‘Popular Category’ was a great experience: Badhan

Azmeri Haque Badhan, has always been a favourite for critics with her stellar roles in both movies and OTT. This time, the actress jointly won the Popular actress award for *Guti* for her role as Sultana.

“Winning in the popular category was a new experience for me. I’ve previously won critics’ awards for *Rehana Maryam Noor* and *Guti*, so this recognition felt important. I was happy, though I later found out my critics’ score was higher than the public votes – something I’ve faced before,” said the actress.

I’ve often found myself lagging in public votes despite doing meaningful work, including projects like *Guti*. I feel that, in Bangladesh, people often vote for artistes based on their image rather than their actual work. Perhaps I haven’t been able to create an image that appeals to the masses. That’s why winning this award felt different from my previous awards and it felt great.”



The greatest award is the people’s adoration: Mosharraf Karim

The iconic role of OC Harun in *Mohanagar* series was taken to another level by Mosharraf Karim. He took home the Best Actor award this time in the popular category.

“Like the first season, *Mohanagar 2* has been adored by everyone, with audiences thoroughly enjoying it. The overwhelming response has been incredibly gratifying for me as an actor. I am truly delighted and amazed, and I hope we can return with the next season very soon!

In the inaugural iteration of this award, I was honoured with the Best Actor award in the critics’ category for *Mohanagar*. Unfortunately, I was unable to accept it in person at the time. Now, being able to receive this honour myself feels incredibly special and deeply rewarding.

I must emphasise that the director, Ashfaque Nipun, worked with exceptional care and dedication, and much of the credit belongs to him. We, too, gave our utmost effort to our roles, and being nominated in two categories is truly wonderful.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the audience, Ashfaque Nipun, Hoichoi, and the entire team for their unwavering support and contributions to this success.”



I consider this a powerful source of encouragement: Nasir Uddin Khan

Nasir Uddin Khan nailed his role of Allen Swapan, continuing the role from *Syndicate* to the spin-off, *Myself Allen Swapan*. He won the Best Actor Award in the critics category.

“Criticism is as valuable as praise, offering opportunities to learn and grow. Yet, when harsh words linger, award in the critic’s category provide comfort and reassurance. I am deeply honoured to receive three nominations across the Critics’ and Popular categories for *Myself Allen Swapan* (lead role) and *Friday* (antagonist). Winning the award for my portrayal of Allen Swapan has brought me immense joy, and serves as a powerful source of encouragement.

My heartfelt gratitude goes out to my audience and The Daily Star for this recognition. I dedicate this award to the entire *Myself Allen Swapan* team.”








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My husband was happier than me for this award: Orsha

Nazia Haque Orsha impressed critics with her genuine depiction of a character battling a mental disorder in the Chorki film **Jahan**. Her performance earned her the Best Actress award in the critics' category.

"My husband was excited because **Jahan** was produced by his company, Methodica. I didn't have high expectations, but with three nominations – Best Film, Best Actor, and Best Actress (Critics) – he remained hopeful that we might win at least one. When I won the award, he was overjoyed. This was only the second project from his production house, and winning an award made him incredibly proud. My mother was also extremely happy and excited for me.

The psychological nature of the film required deep research and wasn't aimed for all audiences. Being recognised for such work inspires me to take on more projects like this."



Grateful to audiences for my hatrick win: Tasnia Farin

It was a hatrick win for Tasnia Farin, as the actress continues her winning spree. She won the Best Actress award in the popular category for her performance as Sultana in **Nikosh**.

"It feels amazing to receive this recognition. Since the first OTT awards, I've felt the audience's love – winning in the Popular category the first time, then Critics the second, and Popular again this year. It's definitely a great feeling. In Bangladesh, The Daily Star is the only platform giving awards for OTT, it's rewarding to be acknowledged every year. I didn't have high expectations this time, but receiving the award again felt really special," she said.



Awards are always encouraging: Afran Nisho

Afran Nisho has been awarded three times in a row at **The Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards**. His first award was for the antagonist role in the Chorki web series **Morichika** in 2021, donning the role of Salam Sharif. Last year, he took home the Best Actor award in the popular category for the Chorki web film **Redrum**.

This year, the actor was honoured with the Best Antagonist award in the popular category for his performance in the Hoichoi web series **Sharey Showlo**.

He told The Daily Star, "Every time I receive an award, it fills me with a childlike sense of happiness and wonder. These ceremonies are more than just celebrations of success; they are a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with beloved colleagues from the industry. It's heartwarming to share in their joy and applaud their achievements as well.

This time, I must express my gratitude to Yasir Al Haq, the talented and promising young director of **Sharey Showlo**, the project that earned me this award for portraying an antagonist.

As with all my achievements, I dedicate this award to the legendary Humayun Faridee. Whenever I hold an accolade in my hands, his name is the first that comes to mind."



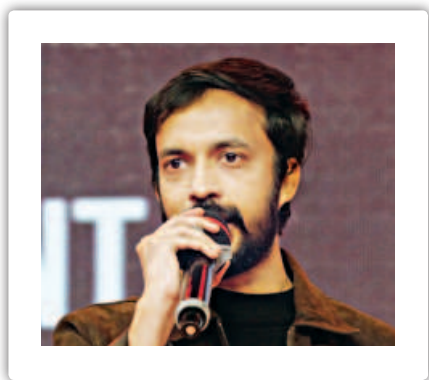
Blender's Choice Premium Black Tea



GUIDING THE SHIP

Directors relish the spotlight

A project's journey from concept to completion is impossible without the unwavering commitment of its directors—rightly regarded as the captains steering the ship to its destination. These gifted individuals have demonstrated their excellence, earning prestigious honours at the 'Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2023.'



injured of the July Uprising: Ashfaque Nipun

The most remarkable aspect of *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards* is their recognition of the technical crews who work tirelessly behind the scenes. Such an honour is unparalleled among private award programmes in the country, and it is truly

We eagerly anticipate this award every year: Raihan Rafi

We eagerly anticipate this award every year, as it serves as a significant source of inspiration, particularly for the technicians. This recognition motivates us all to push the boundaries and undertake

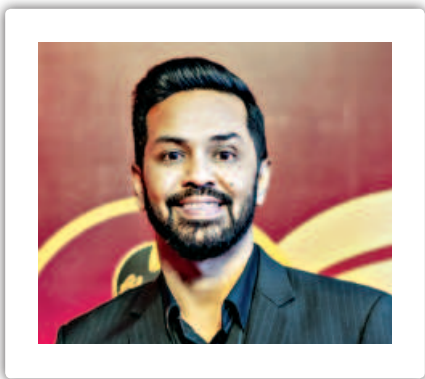
This is the Bangladeshi 'Oscars': Shihab Shaheen

I am honoured to have received six awards in the critics' categories for the project *Myself Allen Swapan* and People's Choice Award for *Baba Someone's Following Me*—an incredible achievement for the entire team behind

Such a popular piece receiving critical acclaim doubled our joy: Mizanur Rahman Aryan

Unish20 emerged as one of Chorki's most popular projects in 2023, earning immense recognition from the audience, for which I am truly grateful. To have such a beloved piece also receive critical acclaim—winning Best Director and Best Film in the critics' category—has doubled our joy. I extend my heartfelt thanks to *The Daily Star Awards*, our incredible audience, and the entire team for making this achievement possible.

I dedicate my award to the martyrs and



heartening to witness. *Mohanagar 2* has earned six awards across both popular and critics' categories, and this achievement belongs to all of us. Regarding the critics' jury decisions, it is natural that not everyone will agree with their choices. However, they have their own criteria and parameters for selecting winners, and we must respect their judgement. I would like to dedicate the Best Director award to all the martyrs and injured individuals of the July Uprising. OC Harun will return with yet another bang in *Mohanagar 3*.



more innovative projects. In a creative field such as ours, which often operates under numerous constraints, such acknowledgements are invaluable. Being honoured with the Best Director award in the popular category is undeniably rewarding and invigorates the drive to embark on fresh endeavours. This achievement is not merely a personal triumph a testament to the relentless dedication of team *Friday*. It is through the collective efforts of every member that this recognition has been made possible, and special thanks to Binge for believing in us.



the project. My joy was doubled when those working tirelessly behind the scenes were recognised for their hard work. As for my own victory, I am, of course, delighted. To be honest, we eagerly await this award every year, especially those of us involved in OTT platforms. For us, it feels like the Bangladeshi Oscars! Attending such programmes is always a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with colleagues from across the industry, and receiving so many nominations is equally rewarding. I am already looking forward to next year's event!

By Sharmin Joya



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ARCHITECTS OF THE DIGITAL SPACE

Influencers take home trophies

These influencers have shown us that entertainment can be meaningful, that education can be fun, and that every upload has the power to inspire. The third edition of the supplement celebrates the visionaries who have turned their passions into award-winning acts, honoured at the *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2023*. These creators are the forerunners of a new frontier, smoothly braiding knowledge into their travel diaries, humour into their podcasts, and life experiences into recipes.

Jon Kabir, a name synonymous with music, has found yet another avenue to connect with people—podcasting. The lead vocalist of Indalo, one of Bangladesh's most iconic rock bands, ventured into the world of podcasts with the same passion that he brings to his music. His podcast, *I Started a Podcast* Season 4, recently earned him the prestigious award for Best Podcast.

Jon's foray into podcasting wasn't born from an agenda to gain fame or recognition. Instead, it stemmed from his genuine love for connecting with people. "I love talking to people, getting to know who they are, what they want to achieve," Jon shared with The Daily Star. It is this



Baap Ka Beta



Nafees Salim



Jon Kabir

enfoldng travel, family, and cricket into a story that hit home.

Reflecting on the award, Shuvashish shared, "This recognition is truly special to me, as it feels like a continuation of a family journey with Blender's Choice and The Daily Star. In 2021, my son won the Best Content Creator Award (Kids), and now, in 2023, I'm honoured to receive the Best Content Creator Award in the Travel category."

"This award holds a very special place in my heart," Shuvashish added. "The video that earned this recognition is the only one where my father makes a brief appearance, and having him present at the event when I accepted the award made the experience even more extraordinary. It's a memory I'll treasure for a lifetime."

Unearthing the rich and vibrant flavours of Chakma cuisine to the forefront, the Petuk Couple gained recognition in the Food and Recipe category for their standout work, *Uncovering the Secrets of Chakma Cuisine*. Through their innovative food vlogging of this culinary tradition, they introduced food enthusiasts to a renewed appreciation of heritage cooking.

Among the honourees this year was Nafees Salim, recognised for his outstanding contributions in the Education and Well-Being category. His acclaimed video, titled *Honey Nuts Eto Jonopriyo Holo Kibhabe*, gripped the attention of audiences by exploring the rise in popularity of honey nuts.

This year's honourees represent the incredible diversity and breadth of skill within the digital content space. From candid podcasts and laugh-out-loud entertainment to travel stories and innovative food vlogging, these creators have a far-reaching influence on their audience.

By Maisha Tasnim Sreshtha



Rnar

curiosity about human stories that laid the foundation for his podcast.

In Jon's own words, "I didn't know it's gonna be this big and have this much impact." Yet, for anyone who knows his journey, whether in music or podcasting, it's clear that his commitment to passion will continue to make waves.

For Rasheduzzaman Rakib, widely recognised as RnaR, receiving the award for Best Entertainment/Comedy for *Waste of Masud Rana*, was more than just recognition. Known for his humorous reviews of Bangla cinema, RnaR shared, "This was a great achievement for me. My gratitude towards Blender's Choice and

The Daily Star for honouring me on the biggest stage for content creators."

As a content creator, RnaR is used to a fast-paced cycle of producing content, receiving immediate feedback from the audience, and moving on to the next project. However, this award stood out as something truly special. "It reminds me of that particular content and that time of life," he expressed.

The spotlight shone brightly on Shuvashish Bhowmick as his YouTube channel, Baap Ka Beta, clinched the award for Best Content Creator in Travel. His winning video, titled *Baba Ke Niye England Er Lord's Cricket Stadium E*,





Tama Mirza poses during rehearsal



A perfect pose by Toya

Magic in the making

Behind a successful event, there are a lot of work that goes into preparation which makes a show magical. The event's organisers huddle for a meeting to ensure every detail aligns seamlessly. The sweat and hard work in the rehearsal, become the canvas for the mesmerising dance performances that dazzled the audience in the event. However, it's not all work; laughter and camaraderie fill the air as well.

Amid the hustle and bustle, the organisers find time to share light-hearted moments, jokes, and smiles. Their shared passion for creating a memorable event binds them together, and the moments of laughter are a proof to the joy they find in their work.



All teams together after a successful event



OTT leaders at The Daily Star, months before the event



The Daily Star's Marketing and Entertainment teams during the final meeting



Gearing up for a stellar opening act



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Ginger & Lemon Lemon Honey & Lemon



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Hasan Masud shows up casually during the show



Jaya Ahsan looks stunning in magenta and golden ethnic jacket



Toya has her 'princess' moment



Sajal brings out his SRK pose

Moments make the event

Amidst the tension and buzz surrounding the actual awards, it was the small moments of joy, reunion and familiarity that made *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2023* special. As a relatively small industry, most stars and artistes here are like a family, and it showed during their interactions. We bring to you a selection of only a few of those precious moments.

PHOTOS: CHECKMATE/STAR



Nishat Priom and Sentu having fun at the event



Four lovely actresses pose for a selfie



Chayanika Chowdhury and Ashfaque Nipun share a light moment



Musicians having a banter before the programme



Nisho and Nipun hug it out during the programme





Ridy Sheikh does a glam move in her unique outfit



Runa Khan shows off her newfound fitness



Priyonti Urbee blooming in red



Shahiduzzaman Selim embraces the OTT Awards

Moments make the event

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PHOTOS: CHECKMATE/STAR



Azizul Hakim and Zeenat Hakim exude class during the event



FS Nayeem has a fun exchange with Jaya Ahsan



Rituraj Bhowmick elated after winning an award



Sanjoy and Muza arrive at the event



A wholesome family moment



The pose that stole the show



Reza and Putul in perfect sync