

# PACKING DHAKA Down Under



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SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

When talented Bangladeshi vocalist Samin Al Sabah, better known as Samin Ahmed, went to Sydney to study, he was at the peak of his rise as an indie musician in Dhaka. At the time, he juggled his studies and attempted to continue singing from 7,000 kilometers away from his homeland.

Samin is considered amongst a rare breed of musicians, a Bengali boy who was comfortable in composing and writing English songs. It all came to fruition when he formed Packing Dhaka at Macquarie University. "Timo and I met on-campus, while Hartley joined us as a drummer after an audition in 2020", said the vocalist, as the band took haphazard last-minute preparations for the release ceremony of *Rush*, their latest single. We stood at a backyard in Sydney's Ashfield, while having this impromptu interview.

### MEMBERS

Samin Al Sabah  
Hartley Duggan

Bryan Oh  
Timo Jokela  
Dan Algeri

The band took inspiration from a local act called 'Bowling in Japan', while using Samin's heritage as an inspiration. It is fitting, too, as the incredibly tight group comes together with Samin's outspoken personality and Dhaka-ite soul. As the evening dawned, people from all over Sydney started gathering to see Packing Dhaka and its opener, *Apocalypseboyo*.

The stage was adorned with various paraphernalia, including Samin's old glittery jackets, the band's banner and colourful bedsheets. This show, was in essence, a contrast to their recent performance at the *Fusion Botanical Festival 2024*, in front of hundreds of people. "Man, back then, we had a mosh pit of children dancing to our songs!", exclaimed a jubilant Hartley, who was partway through greeting the guests at the show.

As Packing Dhaka started their set, performing *Firecracker*, *Crumbling*

*Crossroads*, *Ami Keno Ami* and finally *Rush*, the audience sang every lyric, grooved to every beat, and felt every note that the band played – the musicians had them eating from the palm of their hands (Figuratively and literally, they had biriyani for the guests at the concerts).

It was then that I believed the hype that the young lads had created in Sydney is indeed deserved. "We are not alone, the entire underground scene in this town is amazing. Apocalypseboyo, who were kind enough to open for us, Silky Roads and even our producer, Yossif Kay, are amazing musicians. We have regular open-mic nights at different venues where people regularly surprise us with their crazy talent," said Bryan, still reeling from the effects of their energetic set. "We want to grow and hopefully, sign a record deal. Until then, we will keep hustling and playing music that we love."

The question of who keeps the band together sparked a lively debate, culminating in a three-way tie: Bryan, Hartley, and Samin. "Bryan, our grounded voice of reason, excels at keeping us focused on the present, ensuring we don't get lost in lofty ambitions," said Samin. "Hartley, the quintessential organizer, possesses the drive to translate ideas into

action, pushing us to meet deadlines and achieve our goals." Samin is the optimist and frontman, besides being the 'dreamer' of the bunch. However, the members agree on Timo being their 'visionary', who brings all the ideas together. Dan, being the youngest member, keeps the 'boomer' mindset in check.

The band might be called "Packing Dhaka", paying homage to Samin's roots, but it truly has become a project where five neurodivergent creatives have come together, creating music that's unapologetically them. To the all-important question of whether they plan to come and tour Dhaka, they were unanimous in their reply: "Get us tickets and we'll be there!"



Photos: Courtesy

### OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



#### Puppet Show: Aubak Jolpan

January 7 | 4pm  
Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi



#### Surey Surey Panchashey

January 17 | 6:30pm  
Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Tejgaon



#### Rickshaw Artistry: A World Heritage

January 10 – 24 | 5:30pm-9pm  
Alliance Française de Dhaka, Gulshan

### TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix  
Missing You



Chorki  
Dui Shaw



Prime Video  
Lockerbie The Search For Truth



Disney+  
All We Imagine As Light



Apple TV+  
Severance



### WHAT'S PLAYING

## 'toxic till the end' by Rosé

The song *toxic till the end* sung melodiously by Blackpink member Rosé is a standout for the singer's vocal prowess and songwriting abilities. Not only has the song made a mark in Rosé solo musical career but its album *Rosie* has broken several records. This song in particular has even cemented her new found musical approach as Taylor Swift-esque for



many fans.

The song, confessedly about her previous relationship with an ex, hits the tunes of feeling duped due to being a part of an overall toxic love affair. Featuring pleasant melodies that make it enjoyable to listen to, it has several memorable moments and a lively pop instrumental that strikes all the right notes.

### TV TALKIES



## 'SQUID GAME'

Season 2 deepens the drama with fresh faces

The second season of the record-breaking Netflix show *Squid Game* came out several days ago to a second round of thundering reception. As per Variety's report, it premiered to 68 million views in its first four days of availability. It surpassed all other Netflix series in its premiere week, breaking the 50.1 million view record set by the series *Wednesday* in 2022.

The second season proceeds when Gi-hun (Lee Jung-jae) seeks revenge on the wealthy masterminds behind the deadly game, three years after winning the prize money. Using his "blood money," he funds a mercenary

force and, alongside Hwang Jun-ho (Wi Ha-joon), hunts for the mysterious Salesman and island. Their search leads to numerous dead ends.

Gi-hun however returns as Player 456, adding a twist that revitalises the storyline. The story further explores the lives of the masked soldiers, introduces new players, and tackles the theme of costly healthcare, highlighting the intersection of wealth and health.

The icing on the cake of the season is that just when you think that you've figured it out, the story shifts, raising the stakes and gaining momentum.

### STYLE STATEMENT

## Mehazabien Chowdhury

Recently, Mehazabien Chowdhury graced an award ceremony draped in an exquisite satin saree featuring a delicate interplay of pink and red hues that whispered elegance with every fold.

Her ensemble was elevated by a magenta blouse, resplendent with intricate zardozi work, and crafted with devotion by Audriana Exclusives.

Her hair swept into a classic bun, exuded timeless simplicity, allowing her ensemble to take center stage. A pair of tana earrings delicately framed her face, their subtle shimmer a perfect companion to the opulence of her blouse.

The talented actress is currently busy promoting her debut film *Priyo Maloti* which was released on December 20.

