

Jaya and Sharmin TAKE OVER

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I want to help drive positive change in our film industry. We're witnessing a shift in Bangladeshi cinema—even Hollywood films are being replaced at Star Cineplex to make way for local productions. Despite limited resources, our directors are doing amazing work.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The stench of hexisol and death surrounds the gloomy capital. Formerly known as the hub of Bangladesh, Dhaka resides in an eerie, desolate moment in history – the Covid-19 pandemic. An unlikely pairing of a middle-class woman and her house help, in spite of all social barriers, make an unlikely bonding that

defies convention and become each other's crutch for survival in the soul-cleansing flick that is Piplu R Khan's *Jaya aar Sharmin*.

As Jaya Ahsan and Mohsina Akhter, the two leads of the film, take sips of black coffee and *rong cha* respectively at The Daily Star's studio, the excitement levels vary among the illustrious mega-star and respected theatre practitioner. “We learned nothing from the pandemic,” Jaya Ahsan sighed at one point in the interview. “We should have taken that as a warning that it is unwise to go against nature, to learn empathy and tolerance, but many, including myself, have forgotten.” The National Award-winning actress further

emphasised that going back to the pandemic days, in an earthly story about two wandering souls, would rekindle the comradeship and the sense of community that was built then. “However, it is indeed heartening to see the reaction that the film got, I was taken aback by the kind messages that people sent, and the reviews on social media,” said Jaya.

For Mohsina Akhter, it is a breakout role in films, especially after travelling all over the world as a renowned theatre artist. “It was a scintillating experience, especially because the freedom that I was given by Piplu *bhai* – at first, I genuinely thought that he would not let me improvise as I do on the stage, but I was taken aback when he told me to ‘go for it’.

Evidently, Mohsina's performance as the layered Sharmin evokes a range of emotions for the viewer. These emotions in front of the camera had an unintended spill over effect. The director had staged the set in a way that the cameras were not as visible, and the suspension of disbelief was at its peak. “Regardless of if the cameras were rolling, we were simply Jaya and Sharmin – the characters – going about their day. We were not in character, we simply were. This is why the audience will find it easy to connect with us,” said Jaya Ahsan.

The artistes reminisce fondly of a time when they had to maintain an unscrupulous amount of distancing, when they were forced to shoot the film with severe limitations, which includes the lack of a supporting technical crew, including a makeup artist. “I do feel that it was charming, eye-opening even, that we went through that,” echoed the actresses.

Jaya aar Sharmin comes at a time that cultural personalities, and progressives in general, are under attack by right-wingers. In response to my curious query of how it affects them and how the artistes have decided to fight the ‘cultural’ war, Mohsina's answer is simple: “We have to resist. Through our art, through social discourse, through simply being more humane, we have to resist, and promote tolerance, there are no two ways about it.”

On the other hand, Jaya Ahsan has been fighting another fight for years – that of promoting awareness on violence against animals. “I believe that I get much more credit for that than I should,” she states ever-so-humbly. “There are actual heroes out there who have dedicated their lives to those who cannot speak.” As Eid-ul-Azha looms around the corner, the actress has but one request for her fellow countrymen: “In the season of sacrifice, please make sure to be humane towards the animals that we will sacrifice. Let's not hurt them unnecessarily, and keep them comfortable before the sacrifice is made, that is the true spirit of this season.”

As *Jaya aar Sharmin*, jointly produced by C to Cinema and Applebox films, continues to receive praise for cinemagoers, the actresses believe that the movie, surpassing its box-office legacy, will leave a humane mark on the viewer unparalleled to any other experience that they've had.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



WHAT'S PLAYING

‘PRETTY LITTLE BABY’ by Connie Francis

STYLE STATEMENT CARLOS SAINZ

The flashbulbs erupted as Carlos Sainz, the matador of motorsport, traded racing leathers for red carpet elegance at the Cannes Film Festival 2025. Dressed in a classic black tuxedo with a crisp white shirt and a faultless bow tie, Sainz redefined suave with every step.

The ensemble, sharp in silhouette and rich in detail, featured a perfectly tailored jacket, satin lapels, and a cummerbund that nodded to timeless Hollywood glamour. With a calm confidence honed on the Grand Prix grid, he brought a polished charisma to the La Croisette—and Cannes couldn't look away.



Connie Francis's 1962 track *Pretty Little Baby* is enjoying a viral resurgence across social media. Anchored by Francis's tender vocals and a dreamy, doo-wop-inspired arrangement, the song captures the ache of reconciliation—pleading for a second chance at love with soft, melodic longing.

Though recorded more than six decades ago, *Pretty Little Baby* has found new life through thousands of TikTok videos, where users pair



its romantic lyrics with slow-motion visuals, nostalgic fashion, and sepia-toned filters.

The absence of an official music video has inspired a wave of creative reinterpretations—from grainy homemade montages to lip-sync performances.

The song's emotional warmth and timeless quality have propelled it up TikTok's Viral 50 chart, cracking the top 10 in multiple countries.

TV TALKIES

‘YOU’ SEASON 5 Joe’s final reckoning

Season 5 of *You* offers a final, haunting mirror—less about Joe Goldberg (played infamously by Penn Badgley) and more about us. While previous seasons flirted with romanticised danger, this one pulls no punches. Joe's mask slips entirely, revealing not genius, but entitlement wrapped in cultural immunity.

The show forces us to confront why we sympathised with a killer in the first place, and how easily society forgives violent men. The new character Louise's arc delivers a wake-up call.

Joe once again beguiles this woman, even when she is vaguely aware of his previous murderous actions. He furthermore ruins another family to somehow also get a grasp on his withering married life.

Joe might have brought his son back

into his life to use him as an excuse for wrongdoings, but Joe receives a reality check on his monstrous self. It's not Joe's charisma that protects him—it's the world we live in.

In the end, *You* isn't just a thriller—it's a lesson in unlearning toxic love, reclaiming self-worth, and breaking cycles. A fitting, if unsettling, finale to a story that was always about more than murder.



TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Love Death + Robots



Apple TV+:
Murderbot



HBO Max
Duster



Prime Video
Overcompensating



Hulu
Nine Perfect Strangers



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Play: Pakhider Bidhansabha
May 22-23 | 4:30pm and 7:30pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Weekend Kick-Off Show
May 22-23 | 8pm-9:30pm
Naveed's Comedy Club, Gulshan 2



Musical Evening: Sinpat
Jomjomat
May 23 | 6pm onwards
Jatra Biroti