

#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

READING THE ROOM: Rukhsara Osman on DJing and self-belief

The path to becoming a DJ in Bangladesh's underground scene is not always easy, especially for women. For Rukhsara Osman, known as "VampBetch" in the music scene, her pull toward music was instinctual and driven by immersion. She had never planned to become a DJ but loved being surrounded by electronic music. It began during a quiet phase of her life, while she was pregnant and resting from her business as a chef for her bespoke catering company, Romalicious.

"When I was pregnant, I would sneak a practice in here and there with my husband's music and DJ console," she recalls. At that time, DJing was not an ambition; it was slowly turning into something she would like to keep learning. "I was surrounded by amazing DJs like Psytaraa and Izhaqo, who are my core influences. In fact, Izhaqo was the first person to give me stage time at one of his shows."

No glitz, just grit

VampB's first time performing was when she was eight months pregnant at her close friend's birthday party. "I was surrounded by seasoned DJs and was somewhat nervous,

yet I think I did a great job. Everyone loved it," she exclaimed. She went on to perform at a show called 'Abar Nach' in Cox's Bazar. "From that moment on that beautiful stage, I knew there was no turning back," says VampB.

VampB makes it clear — she wants to share

her love for music and the art of DJing. In the two and a half years she has been in this industry, she has done notable shows, from morning coffee shows like Breakfast Club to intense underground shows like her recent performance at Spectrum, and she has even appeared on the YouTube channel named "Beware of Falling Avocados."

Playing the crowd, not playing to it

Her performances reflect a clear emotional intelligence, not just musical. "I watch



the crowd, slowly their inhibitions start to fade — moving and grooving to the music. It's exhilarating to watch them enjoy themselves," she says.

For a DJ, VampB notes that awareness of the crowd depends on every show.

"It's like a wave and a counter-wave. You give something, and it comes back to you. You establish a deeper understanding by looking at people's eye and their dance moves. Even if they walk away. Your next move is being processed."

Having played both morning and night shows, each offering different dynamics. "Morning sets can be much softer; people are much more accepting of groovier music that slowly builds energy. On the other hand, people on evening sets are ready for the music to take them over, through energetic and dark sounds."

For the girls who want in

As a woman in an unconventional profession in Bangladesh, VampB does not sugar-coat her experience. "In my first year as a DJ, I didn't face many problems,

but then, the completion really started, and things started to take a different turn. It's not easy to be a player in the male-dominated scene."

When asked how people perceive her professional choice, she responds, "Realistically, I have the support of my family and friends. People will always have comments about what I do, but it does not faze me. I know I'm doing something off the beaten path, but I love what I do. I love the stage, the music, the audience who shows up for me... There isn't anything better."

Her advice for young women wanting to enter the scene was blunt but affirming: "Making the right friends in the music scene is key. You have to be aware of the perception you are creating about yourself. I highly advise that one doesn't go under any group or company that would dictate where or how you play. The first couple of years are about self-exploration, gaining experience (however little the show might be) and understanding, really, figuring out the kind of music you want to put out there as a DJ."

She parts with a solid thought, "Confidence in the performing industry is everything. You could be a model, a musician, an influencer, a dancer or anything else for that matter. The secret is to have faith in what you do. Be determined and confident; all the negativity that will come towards you will not affect you all that much."

Rukhsara Osman's commitment to thoughtful curation and emotional connection stands out. She reminds us that DJing is not just about dropping the next track, it's about reading the room, knowing when to hold back and curating space for others to feel free.

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