



KIFF 26

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Festival Diary

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SOUND OF MUSIC



Thursday evening's adda topic was Cinema for music or music for cinema and had a galaxy of stars like Silajit Majumder, Jayati Chakraborty, Anupam Roy, Anindya Chattopadhyay, Upal Sengupta, Iman Chakraborty, Srijato Bandopadhyay, Ujjaini Mukherjee, Saheb Chatterjee, Srijit Mukherjee, Rafiath Rashid Mithila and was moderated by Gautam Bhattacharya.

The evening started with Bhattacharya remarking that it has been a while since such an offline soiree has taken place in the city.

Srijato felt that this discussion can only happen in India because no other country has so many songs in films. We cannot imagine an Indian film without songs. We may not have seen the film, but the song remains in our memory while sometimes the film slips into oblivion.

Bhattacharya mentioned *The Sound of Music* where both the film and the songs have become immortal and an entire city Salzburg has been curated around the film. He remembered when Christopher Plummer first heard the script he thought that it was saccharine sweet and would not last in the movie hall for more than two weeks. Julie Andrews, his leading lady, thought the same. However it was the songs which made the movie immortal.

Iman Chakraborty said that song and music is indispensable in Indian cinema. Sometimes both the film and the song are equally important. She sang a duet with Anupam "Je kota din tumi chhile pashey" from *Dwitiyo Purush*. She also sang "Rangabati" from *Gotro* with Saheb.

Jayati Chakraborty who sang "Sakhi bhabona kahare bole" amongst others felt that a song is also part of the language of cinema and takes the screenplay forward.

Anupam Roy opined that when the artist uses something personal, it adds to the creation of both the song and the film.

Silajit Majumder concurred that every song has its own cinema. We can see a vision while listening to the song and use it again while singing it. He also felt that sometimes a song becomes an extension of dialogues and fills up gaps in the script. Many stars were created and redeemed because of hit songs, said Silajit.

Ujjaini Sengupta wanted to be a playback singer from her childhood. She had very strict parents and was not allowed to watch films, so she listened to songs and imagined the scene. Ujjaini and Anupam sang "Amake amar moto" from *Autograph*.

On this note Silajit said that this song is a milestone and you cannot imagine the film without this song. Anupam clarified that the song was not originally written for the film.

Upal Sengupta believed that both music and films are independent art forms.

Anindya Chattopadhyay suggested that a film may not need songs. Chattopadhyay rarely gives music in his own films and uses songs as transition. He pointed out that it is wrong to presume that songs will be lip-synced by the lead pair.

Saheb Chatterjee felt Indian films are lyrical while Srijit Mukherjee does not see music and cinema as different. He said that storytelling is important where sometimes he uses a song in a montage instead of a scene. For him, a song is a tool. Mithila remembered that before she met Srijit, she had not seen any of his films but had heard many of his film songs.

The icing on the cake of the evening was the song "Gobheere Jao" from *Baishey Srabon*, sung by Roy and Mukherjee joined by Ujjaini. The programme reminded everyone of the pre Covid days when "we had joy, we had fun, we had seasons in the sun". The evening was aptly rounded up by "Purano Shei Diner Kotha" where all the stars as well as the audience joined in together.



FROM THE CHAIRPERSON'S DESK

2020 had us all turned in. But 2021 opened with the magic of cinema. None of us thought we would actually be able to pull off this year's festival, that we will have enough entries, and most importantly whether the audience would turn up in adequate numbers. Holding the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival was indeed a challenge. However what infused life and courage in us was the Honourable Chief Minister's infectious optimism which has the quality of sparkling against all odds! Besides this the Festival Director's efficiency, his strong and dedicated team who always gave us full support from the back office, the committee members all worked together to make the festival happen. The audience with their spontaneous yet responsible participation while adhering to the Covid protocol made the festival special. This year we had **132 films from 41 countries**. The number of films had been reduced, many events had to be curtailed, there were no foreign delegates, and the festival was smaller than previous years. However Kolkata proved that small is beautiful, and the spirit and quality overwhelmed where quantity fell short. The quality of films was excellent and local celebrities and cine lovers turned up in large numbers. Every evening there were lively discussions in the adda sessions on various topics which ran to packed audiences. We paid our homage to the iconic Soumitra Chatterjee through a well curated exhibition, and to other giants like Fellini, Bhanu Bandopadhyay, Eric Rohmer, Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and Pandit Ravi Shankar through the centenary exhibition and films. Not only the Nandan Complex but the audience flocked in large numbers at the Chalachitra Satabarsha and Rabindra Okakura Bhavan shows as well. The festival turned into a carnival with people getting back to watching films in theatres and with the film festival 2021 we broke the unholy spell cast by 2020 and an invisible virus. Now there will be only hope and cinema!



-Raj Chakraborty

PRESS MEETS: LIFE'S DEBTS

The cast and crew of *Daaye*, present at the press conference shared their experience of making the film, based on the 1936 novel *Kafan* written by Munshi Premchand. Director Jyotirmay Deb discussed the social challenges particularly the struggles of alcoholism which inspired him to make the film. Actor Amit Naskar described how his experience in theatre helped him master the rural dialects of the film, based in Purulia. The session ended with folk songs by Tirtha Bhattacharjee and Joy Shankar Chowdhury.



- Highways of Life (Competition of Indian Documentary Films) by Amar Maiben at 2pm.
- Beautiful Life (Bengali Panorama) by Raju Debnath (Director) and Sreela Majumder and Kalyani Mondal (Actors) at 3:30pm.

Editor's Pick



Coldfire
2020 | Colour | 32 mins
Director : Riddhi Sen
Country : India
Sisir Mancha
Time : 11am



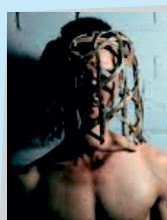
The False Eye
2019 | Colour | 72 mins
Director : Rahul Rijji Nair
Country : India
Chalachchitra Satabarsha Bhavan
Time : 11am



Genus Pan
2020 | Colour | 150 mins
Director : Lav Diaz
Country : Philippines
Rabindra Sadan
Time : 3:30pm



Juliet of the Spirits
1965 | Colour | 137 mins
Director : Federico Fellini
Country : Italy
Nandan II
Time : 3pm



Drowsy City
2019 | Colour | 73 mins
Director : Luong Dinh Dung
Country : Vietnam
Nandan II
Time : 11am



Triple Whammy
2020 | Colour | 106 mins
Director : Anish Chacko
Country : India
Chalachchitra Satabarsha Bhavan
Time : 3pm

IN SEARCH OF A SONG

A visually entrancing fable, Pushpendra Singh's *The Shepherdess and the Seven Songs* centers on the unforgettable Laila, a ferociously independent young Bakarwal woman from the politically fraught Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. She moves with her new husband Tanvir to a home in the forest, where her beauty and strength make her the obsession of a befuddled local police officer Mushtaq, whose attention she constantly, cleverly thwarts. All the while she tries to figure out her own, new identity. Structured around a series of local folk songs and poetic interludes which function as Laila's internal monologues, this humorous, meditative and timeless feminist tale observes a woman who wants to be free to make her own decisions in a rapidly changing modern world, despite her connection to age-old traditions.

Singh's methodically well-paced film slowly escalates a potential for betrayal and disaster, mirroring the tightrope stakes of great neo-noirs.

Srimoyee Sen, a film student, said the remarkable visual play between darkness and light and aural juxtaposition of folkloric music and the crashing sounds of thunder as Laila drapes a snake-skin over her shoulder and contemplates her position in life was stunningly mystical.



EMOTIONS BASED IN REALITY

Director Ujjal Paul and producer Ashim Paul discussed their motivations behind making the short film *Dusk*, inspired by real life events. They had an unique experience while filming in the red-light area. This was perhaps the first film to be shot openly in this area with the help of the inhabitants.



STAR ATTRACTION



Ranjit Mullick visited both Nandan and Chalachchitra Satabarsha Bhawan to watch films. Seen here with Haranath Chakraborty talking about past, present and future.

Dear Comrades had a huge turnout as the film was action-packed as well as thought-provoking.



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