

7th Dhaka International Film Festival

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Dhaka played host from 20 to 28 January 2002 to the premier international film event of Bangladesh. This was the 7th Dhaka International Film Festival, and was organized as in previous years by Rainbow Film Society, a front-ranking film society of the country. They put together a dedicated team of film connoisseurs and enthusiasts in the Festival Committee and were successful in giving the event its high profile. The 7th Festival also coincided with the Silver Jubilee of the Society and was also part of the celebrations. A couple of words here about the organizers. Young film enthusiasts of Bangladesh formed rainbow Film Society in the year 1977. The Society has been organizing the Dhaka International Film Festival since 1992; and in the short span of nine years since then, it has attained global recognition through successive holding of the Festival in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2000 and 2002.

The 7th Festival consisted of the following 8 (eight) segments: Competition of Asian Cinema (fiction films with a minimum length of 70 minutes), Retrospective, Cinema of the world (open for all feature film categories), Children's Film Festival, Country Focus, Tribute, Bangladesh Panorama and Films on Genocide. Around 100 films from a total of 19 countries including Bangladesh were screened during the festival. Foreign delegates to the event included Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi, film critic Derek Malcolm, and some young directors.

In the Competition segment, FUTURE DIARY- THE MOVIE by Sugimoto Toru was adjudged as the best film by the International Jury Board. This most prestigious award included a crest, certificate and a cash prize of Bangladesh Taka 100,000/-. Sugimoto Toru was born in 1964 and has directed such legendary midnight TV shows as "Canossa's Shame" and "TV Bookmaker". He moved on to direct prime-time variety shows with Japan's most popular comedy duos The Tunnels, and Unchan Nanchan. In addition, he also wrote and directed "Strange Stories". The Future Diary is his first feature film.

There were four other sponsored awards, viz. Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award, Audience Award, International Film Societies Federation -- Don Quixote Award, International Film Critics--FIPRESCI Award. As part of the silver jubilee celebrations, Rainbow Film Society announced the Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award to recognize the best Asian film screened during the Festival. The award went to MONKALANGAL (Guardians of the Earth) by Subrahmanian Santa Kumar, a young filmmaker from the South Indian province of Kerala. MONKALANGAL is Subrahmanian's first film. The award consisted of a crest and certificate.

The Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies co-ordinated the Audience Award through an active audience survey. Mr. Jafar Panahi earned recognition as the audience favourite with his film THE WHITE BALLOON. Panahi, a very promising young filmmaker from Iran, has, in recent years, earned global acclaim and distinction in modern world cinema. This award also consisted of a crest and a certificate.

The International Film Societies Federation-Don Quixote Award went to a Sri Lankan film THE COMPENSATION by Bennett Rathnayake. The Don Quixote Award included a crest and certificate.

The International Film Critics Association-FIPRESCI Award went to another Iranian film director Mazir Miri for his film UNFINISHED SONG. This prestigious award also included a crest and certificate. UNFINISHED SONG was one of the main attractions in the Asian Competition Section.

The Festival featured four very notable Retrospectives, perhaps the most attractive segment of the festival. Cinelovers of Bangladesh got the opportunity to view some of the major works of such great directors as Jean-Luc Godard and Claude Chabrol of France, G Aravindan of India and Mohsen Makhmalbaf of Iran. The repertoire of films in the Retrospective segment is detailed below:

G. Aravindan:

KANCHAN SEETA, KUMMATTY, VASTHUHARA AND CHIDAMBARAM.

Claude Chabrol:

LE BEAU SERGE, A DOUBLE TOUR, QUE LA BETE MEURE, INSPECTEUR LAVARDIN, BETTY, LA CEREMONIE, RIEN NE VA PLUS.

Jean-Luc Godard:

ALPHAVILLE, BREATHLESS, THE CHINESE GIRL, LITTLE SOLDIER, FIRST NAME CARMEN, A WOMAN IS S WOMAN, JEAN-LUC GODARD BY JEAN LUC GODARD.

Mohsen Makhmalbaf:

BOYCOTT, ONCE UPON A TIME CINEMA, THE PEDDLER, THE CYCLIST, MARRIAGE OF THE BLESSED, THE ACTOR, FLEEING FROM EVIL TO GOD

The Retrospectives aside, one of the other major achievements of the 7th Dhaka International Film Festival was the presence of a personality like Jafar Panahi and screening of his films for the Bangladesh audience. Panahi, who was born in 1960 in Mianeh (Iran), studied directing at Tehran's College of cinema and TV. Before turning to feature films, he made several short and medium-length films for Iranian television and served as assistant director on Abbas Kiarostami's *Through the Olive Trees*. He has earned a reputation as one of the world's most promising new filmmakers. His highly successful and critically acclaimed directorial debut, 1995's *The White Balloon*, received numerous awards, including the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and recognition as the Best Foreign Film that year by the New York Film Critics circle. *The White Balloon* was screened at dozens of international film festivals. His other widely acclaimed film *The Mirror* received the Locarno Film Festival's Golden Leopard and confirmed the young director's renown as an innovative and insightful filmmaker.

The Country Focus Section also generated a lot of interest. Films from three countries were screened in this segment, viz. Japan, Latvia and Russia. The local viewers connected specially well with the Japanese films. For most, it was indeed a first as regards watching a Latvian film

Bangladesh Panorama consisted of seven selected films spanning the period from 1956 to 2001, and offering a sweeping panorama of the 45 year-old history of motion picture in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Panorama consisted of Nadi O Nari (The River and the Women) by Sadek Khan, Aasia by Fateh Lohani, Dharapat (Table Counting Book) by Salahuddin, Kakhono Asheni (It Never Came) by Zahir Raihan, Kancher Dewal (The Glass Wall) by Zahir Raihan, Megher Onek Rang (Many Colours of the Cloud) by Harun Ur Rashid, Surja Dighal Bari (The Ominous House) by Masihuddin Shaker and Sheikh Neyamat Ali.

A series of seminars was organized as part of the Festival that provided cerebral content to the event. The seminars dwelt on the following themes and aimed at promoting serious discourse among film society activists and cine enthusiasts:

- i. Practice of filmmaking : experience in video format (keynote paper presented by Anisul Huq, film society activist)
- ii. Role of film society movement to promote cine-culture in Bangladesh in the face of globalization (keynote paper presented by Mohammad Khasru, President, Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies)
- iii. Towards a new film movement in Asia (keynote paper presented by Probodh Moitra, formerly director of Nandan, Kolkata, India)
- iv. Genocide, women, war and justice (keynote paper presented by Dr. Hamida Hossain, eminent intellectual, human rights activist)
- v. Film criticism: a support for filmmakers or a hindrance (keynote paper presented by Derek Malcolm, renowned film critic and Honorary President, International Film Critics Association – FIPRESCI)

Dhaka in January was Festival city with the 10th Asian Art Biennale and the 7th Dhaka International Film Festival. And it does not end there. Into February, the month commemorating the language martyrs is a whole month of events, festivities galore. The 7th Dhaka International Film Festival succeeded in making its presence felt with a host of people queuing up not only at the main Festival venue but also at the four cinema halls that screened festival films for the first time this year. The viewers represented all social segments – students and housewives, office goers and traders, intellectuals and cynics. The media was full of it. This despite limitations in facilities, funds and sponsorship. The Dhaka Festival again made a bang, the fruit of Rainbow's labour of love.

1. *Rainbow Silver Jubilee Award*

Name of the Film : **Monkalangal (Guardians of the Earth)**
Director : *Subrahmanian Santa Kumar*
Country : India
Prize : Crest and Certificate
Co-ordinator of the Award Committee: Mohamed Mijarul Quayes

2. *Audience Award*

Name of the Film : **The White Balloon**
Director : *Jafar Panahi*
Country : Iran
Prize : Crest and Certificate
Audience Survey is co-ordinated by Bangladesh Federation of the Film Societies
Convener of the survey committee: Mr. Sirazul Islam Khan

3. *Don Quixote Award*

(By International Federation of Film Societies)

Name of the Film : **The Compensation**
Director : *Bennett Rathnayake*
Country : Sri Lanka
Prize : Crest and Certificate

The jury of the International Federation of Film Societies has selected for its DON QUIXOTE AWARD a film of good craftsmanship and a good story.

The film comes from a small nation where it is no doubt hard to get near the expensive and complex film medium and probably demands a lot of sacrifice from the person who wants to survive as a serious film maker in that country.

*Our prize goes to “**The Compensation**” and its first time director **Bennett Rathnayake**. With a blend of theatre and film actors the story is told in a very convincing visual style. It does have some problems with equality in acting and with the timing and credibility of certain sequences.*

Yet, the story comes well across and makes its points, and although it goes back and forth in time there is a straightforward flow which makes you stay on till the not bitter but rather happy end.

We hope for Mr. Bennett Rathnayake that the Don Quixote Prize will help him go on with his career and develop his and his collaborators’ talent.

International Federation of Film Societies

Dhaka 28th January 2002

Jury members were:

Mr. Ole Petter Bakken (Norway)
Mr. Ebbe Preisler (Denmark)
Mr. Morshedul Islam (Bangladesh)

4. International Film Critics Association – FIPRESCI Award

Name of the Film : **Unfinished Song**
Director : *Seyed Maziar Miri*
Country : Iran
Prize : Crest and Certificate

A First feature from Iran, which succeeds in telling its audacious story about a woman, denied the free expression of natural talent with poetic feeling and dramatic power.

Jury members were:

Chairman: *Mr. Derek Malcolm (UK)*
Mr. Probodh K. Maitra (India)
Mr. Nasir Uddin Yousuf (Bangladesh)

5. International Jury Award for the best film

Name of the Film : **Future Diary – The Movie**
Director : *Sugimoto Toru*
Country : Japan
Prize : Crest, Certificate & Taka One Hundred Thousand (US \$ 1.00 = Tk. 58.50)

A very balanced combination of spontaneity and structural discipline is remarkably present throughout the film. It is thanks to this that what could appear to be a typical one-girl-two-boys triangular story has become an intriguing study of youth with its elements of strangeness, friendship, inspiration, jealousy, love and sacrifice.

Jury members were:

Chairman: *Mr. Masihuddin Shaker (Bangladesh)*
Mr. Baby Islam (Bangladesh)
Ms. Sreelekha Mukherji (India)