

Beyond The Mast

93 minutes | 2025 | Bangladesh | Fiction | Bengali | Subtitle: English | Suitable for all ages

FILM CARD

Film Title: Mastul

Original Title: Beyond the mast

Genre: Drama

Country of Production: Bangladesh

Director: Mohammad Nuruzzaman

Producer: Mohammad Nuruzzaman

Creative Producer: Clementine Ederveen

Associate Producer: Syed Hadiuzzaman

Language: Bengali (with English subtitles)

Duration: 93 minutes

Color Format: Color

Aspect Ratio: 2.35:1

Sound Format: 5.1 Surround Sound

Screening Format: DCP, ProRes

Year of Production: 2025

Story & Screenplay: Mohammad Nuruzzaman

Cinematography: Mohammad Arifuzzaman

Editing: Mohammad Nuruzzaman

Production Design: Md. Hosnain Linkon

Sound Design: Mohammad Nuruzzaman

Music: Chaitanya Rajbongshi

Production House: CineMaker, Bangladesh

Co-Producers: Gulmohar (Germany), Lotus Film (Netherlands)

Cast: Fazlur Rahman Babu, Deepak Suman, Arif Hasan, Aminur Rahman Mukul

Age Rating: Suitable for all ages

Premiere: World Premiere at 47th Moscow International Film Festival, 2025

WEB: <https://cinemakerbd.com/beyond-the-mast/>

LOGLINE

A tender bond between an aging cook aboard a fuel tanker and a street child from the river port slowly unravels a story of drifting lives marked by affection, deceit, power struggles, and the relentless fight for survival.

SYNOPSIS

Maqbool, an honest and kind-hearted elderly cook working on a fuel supply tanker, becomes the target of suspicion by the ship's ambitious second-in-command, Helmsman, who dreams of becoming the Captain. When the ship halts at the port for repairs, Helmsman seizes the opportunity to engage in fuel smuggling in the absence of the captain. Meanwhile, Maqbool forms a caring bond with Noora, a street child living near the port. Upon hearing rumors of theft,

the shipowner arrives unexpectedly. Impressed by Maqbool's cooking and against Helmsman's objections, he allows Noora to stay onboard as Maqbool's assistant. But soon, in a cunning twist, Helmsman frames Noora for the fuel theft, leading to a harsh trial of Maqbool's trust, compassion, and moral courage.

CAST

Fazlur Rahman Babu as Maqbool

Renowned for his portrayals of complex, multi-layered characters in Bangladeshi cinema, Fazlur Rahman Babu captivates audiences with his exceptional acting prowess. A five-time National Film Award winner, Babu brings Maqbool to life with subtle expressions and minimal dialogue, capturing the weariness, wisdom, and untold stories of an aging cook aboard a fuel ship with remarkable nuance and depth.

Deepak Suman as Helmsman

The character of Helmsman reflects a deeply conflicted and power-hungry mind. An experienced actor in both television and film, Deepak Suman Captainfully embodies Helmsman's cunning, ambition, and deceit. Through his piercing gaze, distinct dialogue delivery, and physical presence, he makes the role strikingly authentic and compelling.

Arif Hasan as Noora

Praised for his performance in Aam Kathaler Chuti, non-professional actor Arif Hasan once again draws attention in Beyond The Mast with his portrayal of Noora—a helpless yet courageous street child. His believable performance makes the character feel like a real person pulled straight from the riverside streets.

Aminur Rahman Mukul as the Captain

A multi-talented artist—actor, director, playwright, designer, and photographer—Aminur Rahman Mukul brings a distinct depth to the role of the ship's captain, a man torn between leadership conflicts and self-doubt. His effortless performance adds a unique dimension to the film.

Zulfikar Chanchal as the Ship Owner

As the ship's owner, Zulfikar Chanchal delivers a grounded and realistic performance, portraying the tension between authority and hesitation, and the underlying complexities of power struggles with great nuance.

Shikdar Mukit as the Crew (Laskar)

A rising actor from the theatre scene, Shikdar Mukit makes his film debut with *Beyond the Mast*. His natural and convincing performance as a seaman aboard the tanker stands as a remarkable milestone, showcasing his talent and promise in cinema.

Supporting Cast: Real Crew Members of the Oil Tanker

To create an authentic atmosphere, *Beyond the Mast* features the actual crew of the oil tanker OT Insaf-1 in supporting roles. Their spontaneous and genuine performances greatly enhance the film's realism and credibility.

DIRECTOR'S BIO

Bangladeshi writer-producer-director Mohammad Nuruzzaman is an Architecture graduate. He is known for his minimalist, audio-centric and open-ended storytelling. He is an advocate for the auteur concept and enjoys working with non-professional actors, writing screenplays, managing production, editing and designing soundtracks. His debut full-length feature film, *SUMMER HOLIDAY*, showcases his unique vision and creativity. He is in post-production with his second feature *BEYOND THE MAST*, simultaneously shooting *DEEP INSIDE THE SOUL*. He also co-produced the award-winning feature film, *THE INSTINCT* (2022), which received several international awards, including the NETPAC and Silver Saint George Award at the Moscow International Film Festival in 2022.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Beyond The Mast has been a uniquely personal journey for me. Through this film, I've tried to explore how people survive in monotonous and hostile environments, and how—despite harsh realities—human relationships can still blossom with light and air.

Taking on the challenge of filming aboard a working fuel tanker on the river was no easy feat, but in the end, the real location became the soul of the film. I wanted to blur the line between fiction and reality, offering the audience a glimpse into a rarely explored facet of life.

From the beginning, my intention was to avoid anything artificial or contrived. That's why, alongside professional actors, I cast real crew members of the tanker in supporting roles. Their presence added a documentary-like authenticity to many of the scenes.

Drawing from my experience directing *Aam Kathaler Chuti* (*Summer Holiday*, 2022), I chose to forego traditional background music in favor of natural ambient sounds. The hum of the engine, the clank of metal, the flow of water, the wind, the daily noise of the port—and, in some moments, silence itself—were carefully used to create a soundscape that feels inherently musical.

Every day of this production brought new and unexpected challenges, but it was these very challenges that made our work all the more meaningful.

Beyond The Mast is not just a voice from Bangladesh's independent cinema scene—it's a universal film. Audiences across borders and age groups will be able to connect with its many layers in their own way.

— Mohammad Nuruzzaman

PRODUCTION NOTES

Beyond The Mast is a sincere effort by the CineMaker team to make a film independently. Rather than constructing artificial sets, the film was shot in real locations—on a working oil tanker, in bustling fish markets, and among real people—blending professional actors with non-professionals. With a crew of just five to six members and a minimal camera setup, the film adopted a guerrilla filmmaking approach.

This near-invisible working style allowed the team to film without disrupting the natural flow of life in crowded areas, infusing the film with a documentary-like atmosphere. The decision to use handheld cameras further added to the film's raw and lifelike aesthetic.

Shooting was done in strict alignment with the tanker's operational schedule, ensuring no interference with its real-time activities. As a result, some scenes had to be reshot due to changing lighting conditions or were even omitted. At the same time, unexpected elements—impossible to imagine during the writing stage—found their way into the final film through spontaneous decisions.

Due to the constant roar of the ship's engine, recording live sound was not feasible. This led to the plan of reconstructing the soundscape entirely during post-production. While this made shooting more flexible, it also opened up opportunities for sonic experimentation.

Midway through production, the COVID-19 pandemic cast uncertainty over the film's future. Yet, pushing through every obstacle, CineMaker learned firsthand how a film is truly born—through resilience, adaptation, and creativity.

PRODUCTION HOUSE: CineMaker

Founded in 2010 by five young Bangladeshi film enthusiasts, CineMaker began with the unique vision of forming a "film band"—a collaborative group where members with different creative skills come together to make a new kind of cinema. Their goal was clear from the start: to tell stories rooted in the soil and soul of Bangladesh in a way that resonates with audiences across the world.

From its inception, CineMaker has operated independently, and their creative initiatives have opened new doors for independent cinema in Bangladesh. Some of their notable projects include:

- **Cinescope:** A cozy, 35-seat home-style cinema hall dedicated to screening alternative and independent films.

- **CineLoop:** An alternative distribution network designed to bring independent cinema to every corner of Bangladesh and to Bengali-speaking communities around the globe.
- **CinePeeth:** An informal, hands-on film school where everyone is both a learner and a teacher. There are plans to establish a permanent campus to continue and expand this collaborative learning initiative.

Feature films produced by CineMaker, such as **Aam Kathaler Chuti (Summer Holiday, 2022)** and **Adim (The Instinct) (2022)**, have not only introduced bold and unconventional storytelling but also helped solidify the international presence of Bangladeshi cinema.

FILMOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR

1. Mastul (Beyond the Mast) – Writer/Director/Producer (2025)
2. Aam Kathaler Chuti (Summer Holiday) – Writer/Director/Producer (2022)
3. Adim (The Instinct) – Co-producer (2022)
4. A Black Cat in the Darkness – In Post-Production
5. Deep Inside the Soul – Currently in Production
6. Image of a City – Documentary (2021)
7. Jatra (The Journey) – Short Film (2014)
8. Junction – Short Film (2010)

KEY CREW MEMBERS

Mohammad Arifuzzaman – Director of Photography

With over two decades of experience, cinematographer Mohammad Arifuzzaman brought precision and artistic harmony to every frame of *Beyond the mast*. Through his lens, he didn't just capture visuals—he deepened the emotional resonance of each scene, making every frame an extension of the film's soul.

Juboraj Shamim – Casting Director

International award-winning filmmaker Juboraj Shamim skillfully selected the perfect faces to bring each character to life. His keen eye for casting ensured that both professional and non-professional actors appeared authentic and emotionally compelling on screen.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the inspiration behind *Beyond the mast*?

The inspiration for *Beyond the mast* lies in the director's childhood memories. Set in his hometown, the bustling river port city of Narayanganj in Bangladesh, the story draws from locations and characters he knows intimately. The challenges of power struggles, survival, and the depth of relationships in isolated and confined spaces like a ship have been shaped by his personal experiences, which fueled the creative drive for this film.

What is the difference between *Beyond the mast* and *Summer Holiday*?

Summer Holiday, the debutant film, was a deeply personal film for the director, documenting his own feelings and childhood memories. In contrast, *Beyond the mast* has a much broader and more expansive context. While the first film involved a team of non-professionals, both in terms of acting and technical crew, *Beyond the mast* features professionals in both departments. The journeys of the two films are completely different.

What challenges did you face during the making of the film?

If we hadn't decided to shoot on a busy oil tanker, the film wouldn't have been possible. There were many challenges, such as limited space to set up the camera for the desired frame composition on a moving ship, the unbearable noise of the engine, and sudden schedule changes due to the ship's operations. However, every member of the team, from the artists and crew to the workers on the tanker, handled these challenges with great patience and skill. For proper lighting on the moving ship, we had to create our own battery-operated lighting setup, use pocket-sized cameras with minimal gear, and shoot in crowded locations, blending in with the surroundings like guerrilla filmmakers.

How did you handle the sound work in such a noisy environment?

Due to the constant noise of the engine on the moving ship, recording location sound was impossible. Therefore, we decided to carefully create a soundscape during post-production for the entire film. The sounds of the environment were layered in a way that not only brought the setting to life but also enhanced the emotions of the scenes, all without the use of additional background music.

What role did Cinemaker play in the making of *Beyond the mast*?

Getting permission to shoot on a moving oil tanker was a major challenge, but Cinemaker made it possible. While shooting, they gained the trust of the authorities without disrupting the ship's routine operations, and as a result, all the crew members provided various forms of support. Unknowingly, they blended into the shooting unit. Throughout the production, various problems arose, but Cinemaker turned limitations into strengths. This approach to problem-solving helped

Beyond the mast establish an unprecedented connection with both local and international film circles.

What makes *Beyond the mast* different from other films in this genre?

Apart from its unique filmmaking style, the greatest strength of *Beyond the mast* is its humanistic perspective. It shows how people break down and, at the same time, how they fight to survive in the midst of conflicts of relationships and power. Every moment is filled with depth, emotion, and a reality that truly sets *Beyond the mast* apart.

How did the performance of real dock workers affect the film?

The inclusion of real dock workers made the story much more vivid. They brought their own lives to the screen. Their body language, eye contact, walking style—everything reflected their experience of working on a tanker. Only highly skilled actors could have mastered these nuances through rigorous practice, but the effortless presence of the real dock workers made *Beyond the mast* even more believable.

How do you think *Beyond the mast* can connect with both Bangladeshi and international audiences?

Although set in the context of Bangladesh, the feelings of isolation, affection, dishonesty, the fight for survival, and power struggles in *Beyond the mast* are universal. By presenting characters and environments realistically, *Beyond the mast* transcends the borders of the country and resonates with international audiences as well.

What do you think the audience will learn or feel from the film?

We want *Beyond the mast* to make the audience think. Even when everything seems to be falling apart, how do people maintain relationships, love, and fight for survival? These are the central themes of the film. There are moments in the story that will provoke questions in the audience's mind. Does the oppression of power break human relationships, or does it deepen them? When we grow distant physically, does our spiritual connection also break? Instead of providing direct answers to these questions, the film encourages the audience to find their own conclusions.

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