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'BEIJING PUNK' - UK PREMIER AT REBELLION FESTIVAL

Posted on August 2, 2011 by [Phil Newall](#)[Like](#) 0 [Tweet](#) 0

'A subculture is a group of people with a culture (whether distinct or hidden) which differentiates them from the larger culture to which they belong'

Overt followers of music, in its various forms and genres are themselves a subculture, their appearance often being a distinct display of their membership "" it can be as small a gesture as a button badge, to full body modification in the form of tattoos and beyond. Within this subculture its possible to then further narrow the groupings to there own particular ""tribes' "" punks, ravers, rockers, goths, mods, rastas, hippies, its also possible to then further subdivide in cyber-punk, EBM, crusties etc etc



Here in the free west, being a member of a subculture is a largely easy act, you buy the records, buy the T-shirt, cut your hair "" you choose; also, as society has evolved it's become ever more socially acceptable to "express yourself". That said prejudice sadly still exists, and was viciously displayed with the tragic killing of [Sophie Lancaster](#) in Bacup on the 24th August 2007. Whilst this was a truly barbaric act, and those responsible were subsequently brought to justice and jailed, it has to be remembered that the crime was committed by the attackers and not the victim.

Things are very different in other parts of the world"; in China being different is tantamount to committing a crime

In late 2009 Manchester based [Goldblade](#) secured a record deal with Beijing's [Kids Union Records](#), the aim was to release a compilation CD, and then Goldblade would travel to China to play a few dates in Beijing (the deal did not progress – the Chinese Government shut down the label) It was during these talks that I was told about an Australian film maker, [Shaun Jefford](#) who during the 2008 Olympics had travelled to Beijing with a small film crew to investigate a developing subculture "" [Beijing Punk](#).

Being a punk in China is not easy; Punk is as far from the picture of the model Chinese citizen as you can get, and therefore reason for its appeal to a growing number of Beijing's youths. Though not against the law, it is anything but socially acceptable to be a punk in China.

Set this against the backdrop of extraordinary state control and you have an environment that is ripe for outrageous rebellion where stakes are as high for the bands as they are for their followers. Flaunting freedom and outrage in public spaces in a country where the Internet and YouTube are still being blocked is hugely seductive. It is this flagrant disrespect for the old, staid and conformist that is stoking the desires of China's youngest generations.

Jefford met up with some of the growing scenes more active participants at the infamous **D-22** club which has become a magnet for dissident musicians, disaffected youth and anyone brave enough to take a rebel stance. One of the musicians featured is Leijin – skinhead punk rocker and founder of the band **Misandao** (a Chinese word for sweet cream puff!!), Leijin is big, tough and tattooed. He is also intelligent and media savvy. For him and the few dozen punks like him scraping a living from this art form it is all about freedom "" "if you are human, you want to be free."

Jefford follows Leijin and is introduced into their world; he is also introduced to the key players in the developing scene, bands such as **Hedgehog**, and **PK14**, [Demerit](#) "" ""Beijing Punk' is a snapshot, an expose of the developing scene.

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Think about where as a person you are right now "" what are you wearing, what are you watching, listening to? Whatever it might be has historical references, influences "" no one woke up one day with a full record collection, we all started with a band an elder sibling or friend liked, and our tastes evolved from there. Not so in China "" some eight years ago a switch was turned; the internet "" suddenly the youth of China had available every band, every record, every book, the views and thought of radical thinkers, philosophers "" ""Beijing Punk' shows how one group of these kids are trying to absorb all those influences, and to make sense of them all the while living under an authority that openly practices censorship, controls the movements of its people, there is even suggestion that the authorities practice a version of lobotomy on its drug users"]

Some of them are clearly succeeding, some I would suggest are failing "" believing alcohol/drugs are the way forward "" ""Beijing Punk' has captured their efforts, it shows how getting a CD pressed involves the lyrics being submitted to the government for approval, the artwork requires similar approval "" it follows bands who know that to survive they need an audience outside China, and that the government refuses to allow them access to that audience.

Jefford's film allows us access to some of these bands. The film is a glimpse into the future of youth culture in China "" a future the government would rather you not see; the film is already banned in China, two of the subjects featured are currently serving jail terms; others continue to struggle against a regime desperate to control its people

""Beijing Punk' is to get a UK premier at the forthcoming [Rebellion Festival Blackpool](#) - Saturday 6th August "" Screening times to be advised.

Previous screenings and plaudits have come from the 2010 Los Angeles and Zurich Film Festivals, the New Jersey and Cambridge (US) Film Festival "" the screening at Rebellion will be the only opportunity to see the film prior to release.

""Beijing Punk' will be commercially released in late 2011

Since the completion of the film Demerit were able to gain visas to leave China and have joined the Vans Tour in the USA.

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AUTHOR BIO

PHIL-NEWALL

Phil Newall is 47, from The Wirral "" he earns his living not writing about music or playing music, though wishes he could. He was fortunate enough to see many of the first generation punk bands when they played the U18's matinee shows at Eric's™s, Liverpool. As an attendee at Eric's™s he was exposed to punk rock, dub reggae, art rock, and all manner of weirdness; as a customer at Probe Records he was variously served and scowled at by Pete Wylie and Pete Burns "" he has written for Record Collector, and Spiral Scratch and wanted to write a book detailing the Liverpool punk scene; only with ""Head-On""™ Julian Cope beat him to it, and did a much better job.