

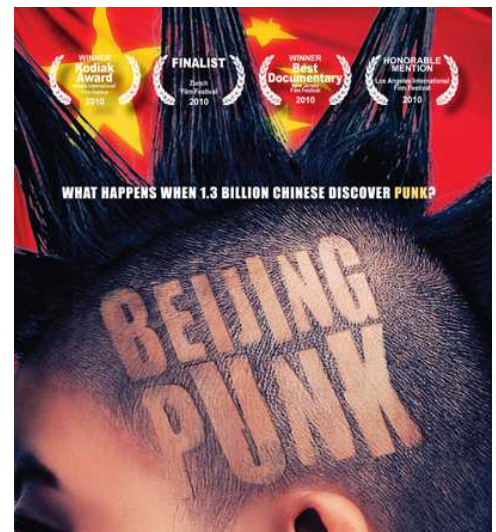


Video Fix #4: Beijing Punk Documentary and More!

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Punk's always best when things go bad. The UK during the 1970s had Margaret Thatcher and mass unemployment. Over here, we had Watergate, the oil crisis, Iran and eventually, Ronald Reagan. Nowadays, the only thing Chinese punks need to do for inspiration is to look right outside their windows. With Big Brother looming at every turn and little exposure to the outside world, the climate is ripe for a blossoming punk scene. The documentary *Beijing Punk* (MVD) brings it all to light in riveting style.

During the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, the government of China loosened its grip slightly, allowing foreign journalists a little more leeway with cameras and recorders



journalists a little more leeway with cameras and recorders. Filmmaker Shaun Jefford decided to make the most of it and see if there was such thing as punk rock in Red China. He proceeded to search out every teenage hangout he could locate, asking anyone that looked slightly alternative if they first, knew what punk rock was, and if so, where to find it. The search paid off, and Jefford struck gold at the D-22 club, the CBGBs of the Far East.



The doc focuses mainly on three bands: skinheads MiSanDao, the indie-ish Hedgehog, and the best of the batch, Demerit, who play more traditional, classic punk. While none of these bands sound particularly novel or original on the surface, when you take into account that they all live in a repressive police state with—until fairly recently—little exposure to the outside world, it's a pretty big deal. And, the similarities between these bands and those of the West, is uncanny.

The quirky Hedgehog—with manic female drummer in tow—are obviously major Nirvana fans. MiSanDao apes the UK skinhead style, down to the boots, suspenders and primitive machismo. The mystery here lies in what exactly they are rebelling against. Is there white supremacy in China? If they're simply proud nationalists, do they agree with the repressive regime that frowns upon what they do? It's all part of what makes this underground scene so fascinating. Demerit plays classic street punk, à la Rancid and The Casualties. While far from unique, the band's songs and style are the most polished of the bunch.



Jefford does a fine job in documenting this brave, budding scene, from the point of view of the bands, the fans and the club owners. There are also a few bits with visiting Westerners, who are equally blown away by the rebellious spirit that fuels this underground dichotomy. Truly a DIY affair, *Beijing Punk* is a fascinating view, for fans of punk rock and beyond.

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West of Memphis

This documentary follows the almost 20-year struggle to free the West Memphis Three, who as teenagers, were falsely accused of murdering three small boys, simply because they “fit the profile.” Said profile held that the three, led by the enigmatic Damien Echols, murdered the boys as part of a satanic ritual, based largely on the fact that Echols had long black hair and enjoyed non-mainstream music. The corruption that led to this travesty can be traced all the way from the police to sworn witnesses and the jury.

West of Memphis gives a long, detailed view through interviews and archival footage, and it's an emotional ride, especially since even in the end, justice has still not been served. Bastards. (Sony)