

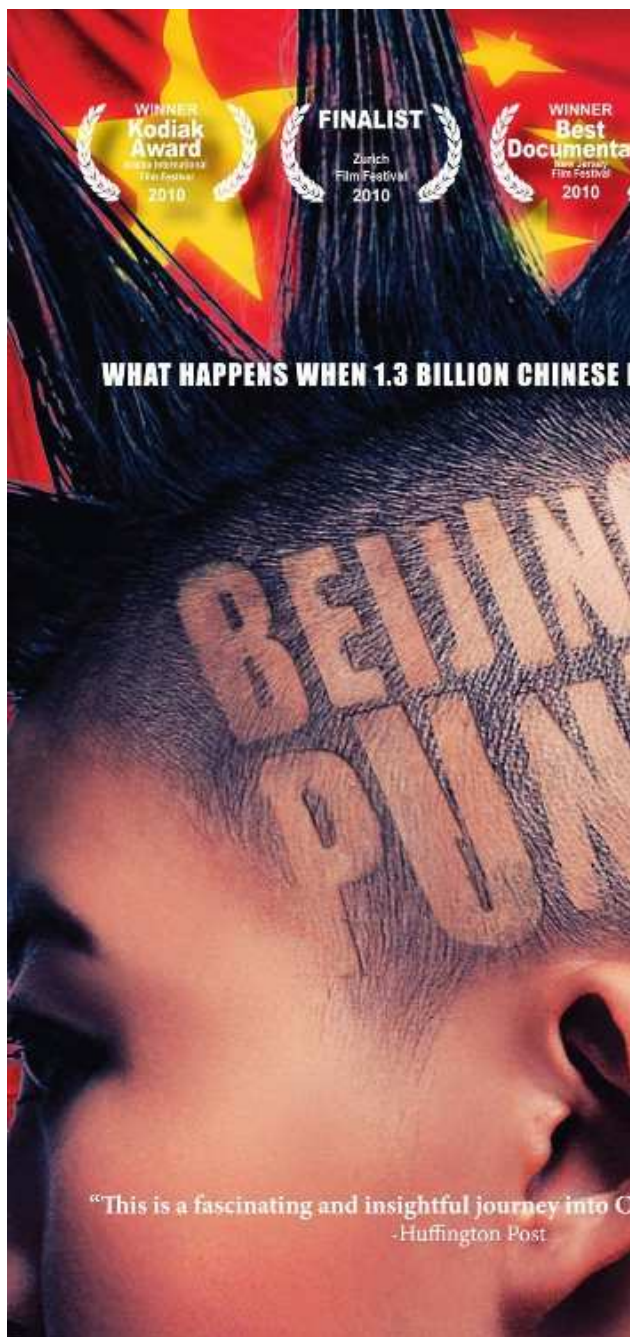
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Released By: [MVD Visual](#)

Released On: 11/20/2012

Director: Shaun Jefford

Cast: Demerit, MiSanDao, Hedgehog, Nevin Domer

Year: 2010

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The Film:

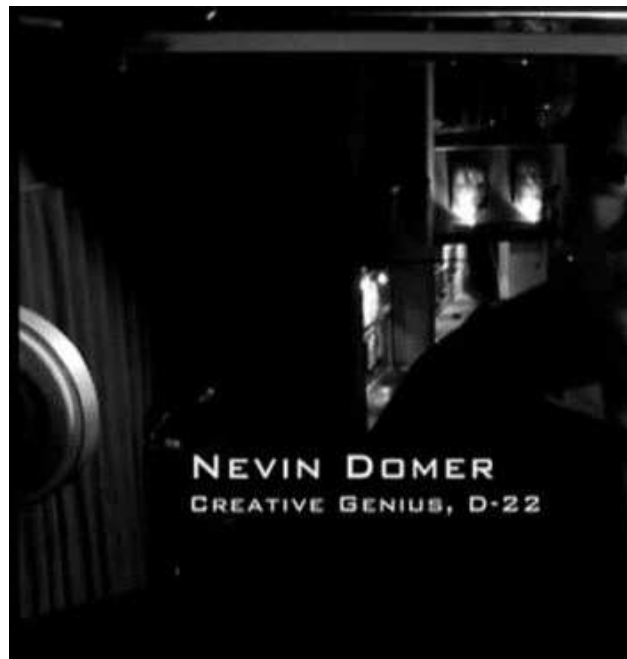
Ask me to name some rockin' bands from Japan off the top of my head, and I'll come right out of the gate with some excellent examples; **The 5,6,7,8's, The Boredoms, Electric Eel Shock, Guitar Wolf.** That's right. Just that handful of names is enough to spell R-A-W-K in 200 foot-tall letters of fire and bodily secretions. Now ask me to do the same with bands from nearby China. No, wait...don't. Dammit. I've got nothing. I couldn't tell you anything about bands from China. Do they have bands in China?



The answer is yes...of course it's yes. China has some rockin' bands that you've probably never heard of. And when the 2008 Olympics hit Beijing, so did filmmaker **Shaun Jefford** and his crew, in search of Chinese punk rock; the subject of his 2010 film, **Beijing Punk**. And it wasn't an easy task at first, as the film shows. Starting in the music shops, Jefford attempts to communicate with the locals, who stare blankly back at him with a complete lack of understanding. "Punk?" Shrugged shoulders. Further attempts on the street yield uglier results when they find a group of "punk" kids who respond enthusiastically, "Punk! Yes! Sum 41!" Jesus, help us.

Obviously some gold had to be struck or the film would be a lot shorter, and that gold arrives in the

form of Peking University Professor and the owner of Club D-22, **Michael Pettis**; an American who gave a venue to some of Beijing's nihilistic youth bands that didn't ape the sound of Joy Division, the Talking Heads, or the Cure, which was the style at the time. In conjunction with band booking agent and musician **Nevin Domer** (also an American) they paved the way for live performances from Chinese crust-punks **Demerit**, the weirdo musical stylings of **Hedgehog**, and the frighteningly laughable Oi! of Beijing skinheads **MiSanDao**.



Beijing Punk focuses mainly on Demerit and MiSanDao, a good choice being that they seem to be the most interesting. Stopping in to the Demerit house in a terrible neighbourhood that goes by the

name of "TZ", Jefford and his crew get a taste of the boozing, brawling, drugging and unclean lifestyle of the group, while at the same time uncovering the politics that the band deal with every day. With China's government keeping an eye out for rebellious music, anti-social behaviour, and trying to keep everything in line for the tourists in town for the Olympics, it becomes apparent that being a Beijing Punk requires a great deal more courage than going down to the mall and getting crazy colour for your hair. Heavily enforced rules are in place to prevent anyone from speaking out against the Olympics and the poverty and corruption that the government are covering up, and according to one band member, you're prohibited from even "speak punk on TV". With standard employment taking approximately 12 hours of every day, the decision to be an unemployed musician is one that the members of Demerit take very seriously, especially when the vices of such a lifestyle can land you in a government-run institution that doesn't care much for civil rights.





The flip side of the serious punk rock lifestyle showcased by Demerit is found in MiSanDao, who represent the beer-swilling, fist-pumping skinhead contingent, right down to their boots and braces; fitting, says singer Lei Jun, as Doc Martens and Lonsdale shirts are now manufactured in China. The guys from MiSanDao seem pretty funny at first, yelling lyrics like "Oi! Oi! Chinese Boy!" during their shows, but they're not too far off from their more extreme English and German counterparts, causing trouble at gigs, drinking too much, and getting into brawls whenever they can. While Demerit seem concerned that the police state may kick in their door at any given moment, MiSanDao are too busy getting messed up to worry about it, pushing the boundaries of the law by drinking openly while driving, and raiding drug stores for codeine cough syrup to wash their alcohol down with. Though they seem to have the most trouble of any of the bands when it comes to the police, they have no problems getting travel visas to play shows in other countries; a good thing when the local venues have shut you out for too much violence at the shows.

Beijing Punk is an interesting but far too short look at the punk scene in China, and that brevity works against it. Coming in at just over 70 minutes, there's never really any time for the film to get into detail, and the viewer walks away feeling that they've maybe scratched the surface at best. That being said, Jefford wisely focuses on the two most film-worthy bands, which keeps things entertaining; the documentary moves along at a good clip, juxtaposing footage of the bands with the shots of Chinese Army soldiers and police, as well as footage from the Olympics. And although it is amusing to hear Lei Jun talk about how he

broke his hand, Beijing Punk also evokes the memory of a lone student staring down the barrel of a tank in Tiananmen Square not so long ago.



Video/Audio/Extras:

MVD Visual brings Beijing Punk to DVD in a 1.78:1 anamorphic transfer that looks decent enough, considering the source material. Shot on Super-8 and what appears to be digital video, the lighting conditions aren't always optimal, and a lot of handheld shots means that we're not getting a pristine, steady image throughout. Still, there isn't anything in the transfer that should bother the viewer as far as compression artefacts, and interlacing isn't apparent.

The audio track is a Dolby Digital 2.0, and like the video, it's basically adequate. The interview dialogue is mostly clear and concise, though some of the live footage suffers from distortion, and the outdoor scenes are obviously a little out of the control of the film crew. All in all, the track is pretty much perfect for the material.

Unfortunately, there are no extras to be found on the disc. Some deleted scenes may have rounded the film out a little more, but who knows, maybe there aren't any deleted scenes.

The Final Word:

Beijing Punk is a cool snapshot of a few Chinese punk bands, and is worth seeing. Some extras would've been nice, but such is life.



