



Sixteen Days In China

a documentary by Martin Atkins

Invisible Records China MVD

This sounded pretty cool as advertised and it is. *Nothing like a guy wandering into a situation and all sorts of logistical stuff going fucking sideways.* This DVD entails "the guy", (Martin Atkins), who has been involved in the burbling under/cult/whatever of alt.rock for a jillion years. He was in Public Image Limited for a bit there, started up and ran Pigface for a couple decades 'er so, played with the Trent Rezners 9 inch nail experience and was in (was?) Brian Brain; a band with a name so horrible I couldn't bear to hear it. Oh yeah, he's a drummer.

Mr. Atkins has also written an instructional manual concerning being in a recording, touring, "rock band"; an activity which generally yields the income a touch less than a copy shop clerk with the perks of a migrant farm worker. *Ok, OK! -- there are additional positives- fan boys who, "have your first 7", (Hi!,- Man its great to meet you man! my names Craig!), will buy you shots, and: "know a guy who can get you coke". Plus they care enough to put your dumb ass up for free and feed you the next day. They're the secret glue that keeps the whole thing moving, spill a PBR in their honor. Martin is a slice above all that but understands its real value- hey he's one of us- but with a better resume and a personal assistant like any other "project manager", cause this "event" is a project needing a little management here and there.*

"Project", meaning rolling into a totalitarian country to scrape away a bit of its cultural underbelly and waller in it a bit. What that under belly consists of is: bands centered in a "rock" club dedicated to rolling out quality local hum. Now "local's" spread wide- Tibet's "local" if yr way-over-there and we're "here"; right ? Martins gets worked up about the fresh nature of the goings-on name checking mid-70's NY and early 80's England. Its true, most of the stuff actually references those era's and their signifying elements of "newness" and "rebellion" which in context has some bounce even as the tuneage is kinda enh, ok. Hey if they were from Wook Iowa no one'd be making a movie about'm. I have to mention admit some of the stuff that is really based outside of the slightly warped view of my ageing hipsterism and loads a really different tradition into the "rock" thing. Not gonna say it's a great idea but it was done and you get to hear it and can judge if it's a rockier take on "world musics" streamlining of indigenous cultures or the symptom of their growth or capitalism brutal , blah, blah, blah.

When the "Situation" gets tense and annoying Martin jumps on a small dirty stage in that cool club and bangs a drum and lets it all out hang out; probably the same kinda thing he was reaching for when he started banging on drums in England 30 years or so ago. Then; *Back to the Grill:* can he sign bands,? , are they any good? Did the music get made? Is he (the potentially evil "business guy") gonna get purged or put bands over ? Hey I've been listening to this sorta rock-honk as long as hes been involved- and the recordings hes got , (esp. Snapline) sound like they might hit a mix tape between all kinds a '79 post punk grunt, (all tho generally much better rhythmically), American masters of the early 80's, Mission of Burma, sundry proto-goofus new-wave moments puked up in the bathroom at CBGB's and any band that opened for the Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs four years ago. A-OK. I really like Look Directly Into Ther Sun's Naked Raygun/Pegboy via emo-wack , (manifesting the strong Chicago-China connection) tune. The one "metal" band he ran into didn't seem to "gel" with him. So In the interest of stomp-ass I bought a lottery ticket so's I can get down with the Chi-Com Korn-tera scene once the millions flow in. Wish they hadn't capitulated to singing in fucking American/English tho and kept it all in the native tongue. Great fun to watch- I think I'll send it to my mentor, (the great one), Jim S. (now under cover for sundry reasons).

- Craig Regala

