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## Liberated Punks Accelerate China's Musical Evolution

By Scott Thill September 13, 2008 | 8:45:46 PM Categories: [Interviews](#), [Music News](#), [Music Videos](#), [Shows](#), [Videos](#)

From Pigface and Ministry to PiL and Killing Joke, drummer Martin Atkins has pounded the skins for some very loud punks. But he didn't realize that China's underground sound would throw him into a time machine and dial it back to the '70s and '80s, when bands were pushing the envelope on conventional rock and not really caring how you felt about it.

Atkins shot 80 hours of video from his 2006 trip into Asia's 21st century powerhouse, and chopped it down into the recently released documentary *Sixteen Days in China*. Listening Post caught up with him to talk about China's greatest bands you've never heard and more.

**Wired.com:** How did your experiences with Ministry and your other bands match up to the scene you witnessed in China?

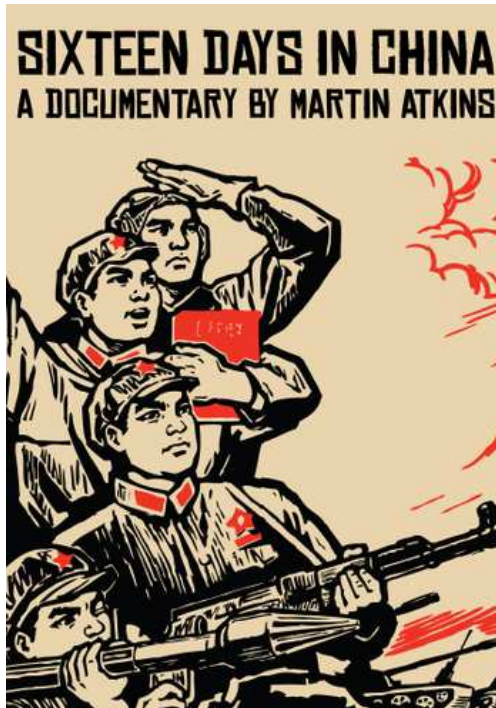
**Martin Atkins:** I think time and location has more relevance, like London in 1977, New York in 1980 or maybe Chicago 1989. These were cities that had exploding scenes that I managed to be a small part of. Add to that some entrepreneurial what-the-fuck-ness, and there you go! The backdrop is different, but the immersion, the focus on just the music and attitude feels like a definite ripple from those times. It doesn't feel strategized in a careerist way. The guys in D-22, who now have a label called Maybe Mars, and their venue reminded me of the vibe of CBGB's. While I was over there, I saw the club on CNN, and that rang a bell for me. It fueled the feeling that I was in the middle of a swirling energy field. That's also why I extended my trip a couple of times, to the horror of my office!

**Wired.com:** What are some of the bands that kicked ass?

**Martin Atkins:** Well, different bands for different reasons. Apart from the fact that I loved their vibe, the fact that Snapline had a drum machine knocked me on my ass. Great vocals, songs, lyrics and awesome guitar. Hang On The Box had great experimentation: Here's a cool song on guitar, now I'm hitting a chair! Subs singer Kang Mao was terrific, on a Monday afternoon sound check, no less. She really brought it, from gentle crooning to full-on screaming. I loved the juxtaposition. China MC Brothers were casually tight as fuck, with tinkling keys and clever scratching. They were B-Boys with attitude. White also had cool experimentation. Car Sick Cars' guitarist Jeff just rocks. We jammed one night at D-22 to a confused table full of late-night drinkers. PK14 kicked ass on the first night. There were many more. I need to go back!

**Wired.com:** Does our cultural lens on China suck? Should we fix it?

**Martin Atkins:** It just needs to be focused. I think a natural process is underway. One of the reasons I mentioned New York in 1980 and London in 1977 is that both of those places and times seemed to be on another planet to me. In the UK, my cultural lens on New York was episodes of *Taxi* and *Kojak*, or



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**CONTRIBUTOR:** Lewis Wallace | [e-mail](#)  
**CONTRIBUTOR:** Angela Watercutter | [e-mail](#)

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