



BEIJING BUBBLES

Punk and Rock in China's capital

Beijing Bubbles is a documentary about the punk and rock scene in Beijing, a portrait of five bands in the capital of China. It is also a movie about being different in a country which is the most developing in the world today and in which everybody seems to be obsessed with social advancement and the accumulation of prosperity.

With **Beijing Bubbles**, Berlin filmmakers Susanne Messmer and George Lindt go on a ramble through the musical underground that is rarely recognised in China. The protagonists of this subculture naturally and spontaneously give them insights into their everyday lives. They ask them over, invite them to their rehearsal room or out to dinner, or actually take them to their parents' homes.

These musicians are melancholics, dreamers and disillusionists. They are self-confident loners and outsiders banking on their creativity and their concentration on music. They are not part of a rebelling youth movement, neither are they interested in political protest. But they react precisely on China today. With their idea of life they brace themselves against the pressure to do well and the compulsion to buy. They also appear infectiously authentic to the western observer.

Beijing Bubbles attends five Beijing bands in their daily lives: the punk band **Joyside**, the girl band **Hang On The Box**, the blues band **Sha Zi**, the rock band **New Pants** and the band **T9** who combine rock with traditional Mongolian music. Despite their diverse music styles, they share the same attitude: They have retired from the world in which they've grown up. They say: „It's no use to be a hard working man“ (Joyside), „We need a quiet mood to think about music“ (Hang On The Box), „We don't want to be a part of this society“ (Sha Zi), „We are still Underground“ (New Pants) and „I have isolated myself for a long time“ (T9). For the German filmmakers the encounters with them were like a kind of journey into their own past: „These musicians' passion and sense of humour reminded us of times in which punk in Europe was quite a big deal. We felt as if punk had moved to the other side of the globe. We grew up with punk, we experienced how it became an empty fashion – and we were touched to find out that its strange eccentricity, its holy seriousness and its lovely attitudes found a new right to exist in China.“

The numerous contacts grew out of a domino effect: At the show of one band the directors would meet the members of another band, which they then might also accompany. Out of the very personal terms with these individualists developed a film which is very close to lives of its protagonists. Kind of a video diary it gives insight into a counter culture hardly anyone would assume in an authoritarian state like the People's Republic of China.

Between the flying visits with the bands **Beijing Bubbles** delivers impressions of today's China and thus of the surroundings in which these musicians don't seem to fit in and which they also oppose to: the camera straggles through financial districts, cramped streets at rush-hour time and glistening shopping malls, but also through the slums on the outskirts, where people struggle to survive by collecting rubbish or trading on the streets. Restaurants and karaoke bars where China's youngsters enjoy themselves with saccharine mainstream pop contrast with parks where revolutionary songs are played. Beijing thereby is representative for the whole of today's China – depicting growth and development, but also enormous social discrepancies within extraordinary political circumstances.

Beijing Bubbles is a personal and intimate document of China's subculture. Stylistically it ranges also in a punk rock spirit. Due to the fact that most of the shots in public had to be done without filming permits, the often abrasive camera work is used as a stylistic device. In form and content **Beijing Bubbles** catches a glimpse of life and society in Beijing behind common clichés. The genuine pictures fall smoothly into place with the fresh sound of these five bands, which arrestingly accompanies the film. The result is an almost tangible impression of a counter-culture that forms tiny islands in the hustle and bustle of the big city.



Credits:

A film by: Susanne Messmer, George Lindt
Camera: George Lindt, Lucian Busse
Editing: Lucian Busse
Production: Lieblingslied Records
Distribution: Kloos & Co. Medien GmbH
Country: Germany/ China
Year of production: 2006
Length: 80 min.
Website: www.beijing-bubbles.com

Selection of international festival participations:

- Göteborg Filmfestival (January 2006)
- Thessaloniki Documentary Festival (March 2006)
- Inter Doc. Film Festival Ljubljana (March 2006)
- DocAviv Filmfestival Tel Aviv (April 2006)
- Philadelphia Film Festival (April 2006)
- Singapore International Film Festival (April 2006)
- Achtung Berlin – New Berlin Film Award (May 2006)
- Orientalia Festival Warsaw (May 2006)
- International New Zealand Film Festival Auckland (July 2006)
- Leeds International Film Festival (October 2006)
- Exground Film Festival Wiesbaden (November 2006)
- New York Museum of Modern Art (February 2007)

Selection of press releases:

- *Beijing Bubbles* reveals a side of China you've never seen and that its government is unlikely to want you to see. (*DOX Documentary Film Magazine*)
- Above all the film is bubbling with wonderful energetic and refreshing music kindling a longing for the sixties and seventies in the west before music was controlled by big Labels. (*Doc Aviv*)
- A lack of understanding in society and being excluded from China's rapid economical growth, that's what defines the concepts about life of China's punk scene. (*hr online*)
- Although made on a manifestly tiny budget, pic by Teuton newcomers Susanne Messmer and George Lindt makes a joyful noise and scores some insights. (*Variety*)
- Susanne Messmer and George Lindt deliver an insightful documentary that shares the same low-budget DIY aesthetic as the film's subjects. (*Philadelphia Film Festival*)

The directors:

Susanne Messmer, born 1971, lives in Berlin and Peking. Since 1995 she has worked as a music journalist, literary critic, reporter and columnist for several daily newspapers and magazines. Furthermore she was one of the founders of record label "Flittchen records". "Beijing Bubbles" is her first documentary, for which in 2004 she travelled to China several times and stayed there for four months– two of them with the help of a scholarship of the International Journalist Programme.

George Lindt, born 1971, lives in Berlin. He has been running an independent record label for 15 years, and has been working as a TV journalist for five years. His first novel "Provinzglück" was published in 2005 at S.Fischer Verlag. "Beijing Bubbles" is his second documentary film. The first one, "Wir werden immer weitergehen", portrays subcultures in Hamburg and Berlin and is soon to be released on DVD.

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