

# SYNERGY MAGAZINE

TEAR SHEET

MARCH 2009

**Sixteen Days in China**  
**A Documentary by Martin Atkins**  
**Invisible Records**  
**MVD Visual**  
**2008**

Martin Atkins is/was the demented drummer from groups such as Public Image Limited, Pigface and Nine Inch Nails. Currently he is doing more talking about touring to wannabee musicians, and he is producing for Invisible Records.

He had become tired of the North American music scene and in 2006 he traveled to the Peoples Republic of China to study the music and bands coming from that unlikely source. He found an interesting range of local groups, some combining traditional singing styles with a rock backing, others using traditional instruments in their musical mix. Over three nights at a local club he listened to a number of bands, then tried to coax some of them into signing contracts with Invisible.

He found them surprisingly reluctant to trust anyone involved in the U.S. music industry, and with his budget shot to pieces and time running out it looked as if he would not get a single band into the studio. Finally he coaxed Snapline to record, and added Carsick Cars, Queen Sea Big Shark, Joyside and others.

The final mixes and overdubs were done at Invisible's Chicago studio and issued as the compilation "Look Directly Into



The Sun". A further compilation "China Dub Soundsystem" featured Tibetan instruments and singing styles.

The cover for "Look Directly Into The Sun" was based on an old poster from China's Cultural Revolution. In China, such posters are apparently now regarded as curiosities of some antique value but little else, and irrelevant to the music.

The music itself is not featured strongly in the documentary. Clips are short, but show that the performers have an enthusiasm for their art

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that is not always matched by their musical ability, but is refreshing in its range of styles. Some of the bands, it should be noted, are very very good, and I quite enjoyed the clips, brief as they were.

The same cannot be said for Atkins' narration and speech. His language is constantly littered with swearing, and this gets a bit tiring. His reaction to the Chinese political situation and censorship is also irrelevant. Overall I would like to have seen more time

devoted to the bands and less to Atkins. Still, he wrote, directed and produced the documentary so I guess he is entitled to his opinions.

If you are interested in trends in music, have a look at this documentary. You could well be hearing more of the bands in the future.

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