



JIA ZHANGKE, A GUY FROM FENYANG

A film by Walter Salles

Official Selection, New York Film Festival

Official Selection, Rome Film Festival

Official Selection, Sao Paulo Film Festival.

2014 / Brazil/France / 103 min. / Black & White / In Mandarin with English subtitles

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Short Synopsis:

Brazilian filmmaker Walter Salles accompanies the prolific Chinese director Jia Zhangke on a walk down memory lane, as he revisits his hometown and other locations used in creating his ever-growing body of work. At each location, they visit Jia's family, friends, and former colleagues, and their conversations range from his mother's tales of him as a young boy to amusing remembrances of school days and film shoots to memories of his father and to the shared understanding that if not for pirated DVDs, much of Jia's work would go unseen in China. All roads traveled are part of one journey—the destination of which is Jia's relationship to his past and to his country. The confluence of storytelling, intellect, and politics informing all of Jia's work is brought to light in this lovely, intimate portrait of the artist on his way to the future. –Synopsis courtesy of the New York Film Festival

Long Synopsis:

Jia Zhangke, A Guy From Fenyang is the portrait of a young Chinese director who has become one of the most important filmmakers of our time. The documentary, directed by Walter Salles, dwells on the question of memory (individual as well as collective) and cinema.

For *A Guy From Fenyang*, *Jia Zhangke* returns to his birthplace, the Shanxi province in Northern China, and to the locations of his films. His actors, friends, and close collaborators join him as Jia Zhangke retraces the inspirational sources behind *Xiao Wu*, *Platform*, *Unknown Pleasures*, *The World*, *Still Life*, *24 City*, and *A Touch of Sin*, among others. Through these films, the reflection of a country in convulsion gradually reveals itself.

Filmed entirely in China and most specifically in the places in which Jia Zhangke is intimate, the documentary portrays the profound and complex relation between the director and his environment.

Jia Zhangke, A Guy From Fenyang was shot in Fenyang, Pingyao, Hong Nan- che, and other cities and villages near the Shanxi region, and also in Beijing, at the World Park, the Film Academy, the Fine Arts School, and Jia Zhangke's production company, Xstream Pictures.

The interviews in the film were conducted by Walter Salles and Jean Michel Frodon. The documentary also gave birth to a book, *The World of Jia Zhangke*, which was also organized by Jean Michel Frodon.

Director's Statement:

When I saw *Xiao Wu* and later *Platform*, I was completely taken by the visionary talent of Jia Zhangke. Sometimes we doubt that film might still be the place where we can resort to better understand the world around us. Jia Zhangke's films are fundamental to grasp the complexity of the culture he unveils. He brought cinema back to where it belongs - to the heart of the discussion. *The World* and *Still Life* reaffirmed and deepened that perception.

To a growing number of film lovers, Jia Zhangke has become the most important filmmaker of our time. This was the feeling that united us - Leon Cakoff and Renata de Almeida from the Mostra Internacional de Sao Paulo, Jean Michel Frodon and I. In 2007, Leon and I interviewed Jia Zhangke at the Mostra de Sao Paulo, thinking already of a book and a documentary on this remarkable, singular filmmaker.

For Jia Zhangke, cinema is a medium for recording a memory in danger of being erased, the brutality of contemporary lives, and what will no longer be. His films offer a portrait of common people, those that, in his own words, are "non-holders of power" in a world of accelerated deconstruction. His films are also a place where an entire generation expresses the desires and anxieties of their time.

At the end of *Still Life*, we see a man walking on a tightrope between two buildings. The tightrope and its unstable balance, with a man confronted with something that seems greater than him, is perhaps the meeting point of the characters in all of Jia Zhangke's films. It is in moments like this that we realize his films are made of a matter that transcends a specific physical or human geography. His characters may come from the Shanxi region, but their existential quests have no borders and concern us all.

Credits:

Directed by....Walter Salles

Starring...Jia Zhangke

Interviews by....Walter Salles and Jean-Michel Frodon

Director of Photography...Inti Briones

Executive Producer...Maria Carlota Bruno

Edited by.....Joana Collier

Sound Designer...Li Dan-Feng