

# INDEPENDENCE IN AMERICAN AND CHINESE CINEMA

## MEANINGS AND CRITERIA





# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INDEPENDENT?

<http://today.io/1P33D>



# American Independent Cinema

- (Economic) Made without funding or distribution from the major studios and/or
- (Content) Unconventional or unusual personal films with intelligent plots





*The Lord of The Rings: The  
Fellowship of the Ring*  
2001

Dir. Peter Jackson

Prod. Wingnut Films and  
The Saul Zaentz Company

Dist. New Line Cinema

Budget \$93 M

(586 M RMB)

Gross \$871 M

(5.4 B RMB)



# INDEPENDENT

1960S-1970S



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大學

**THE  
ACCLAIMED  
MOTION  
PICTURE**

"FAR AND AWAY THE  
STRONGEST, BLUNTEST,  
MOST IMPORTANT AMERICAN  
MOVIE OF THE YEAR!"  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

"A POWERFUL--SHATTERING  
FILM! A MERCILESSLY INTIMATE  
MOVIE!"  
THE HAWAIIAN GAZETTE

"A PHENOMENALLY  
GOOD PICTURE!"  
NEWSWEEK

"HAS THE STRONGEST IMPACT  
OF ANY FILM OF THE YEAR!"  
THE WASHINGTON POST



JOHN CASSAVETES'  
**FACES**

The Walter Packer Organization presents JOHN CASSAVETES' 'FACES' starring  
Jack Waley • Gene Hackman • Faye Dunaway • Dennis Quaid • Fred Sayer  
• Bill Bixby • Produced by Walter Packer • Associate Producer Al Rusk  
• Written and Directed by John Cassavetes • Released by CONTINENTAL



© 1968 W.P.O.

*Faces*  
1968

Dir. John Cassavetes  
Prod. Walter Packer  
Organization  
Dist. Continental  
Distributing



# THE INDIE YEARS

1980'S TO 1990'S



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大學

**sex,**

"Two Thumbs Up!"  
- Siskel & Ebert



**lies,**

"Brilliant! A Sexually-charged film!"  
- Sheila Benson, Los Angeles Times



**and**

"Dazzling, High-Spirited,  
Hilarious and Scorchingly Erotic!"  
- Peter Travers, Rolling Stone Magazine



**videotape**

"One of the best of 1989!"  
- Vincent Canby, New York Times



an outlaw production 'sex, lies, and videotape'  
james spader andie maddowell peter gallagher laura san giacomo photographed by walt lloyd  
music by cliff martinez executive producers nancy tenenbaum, nick wechsler, and morgan mason  
produced by robert newmyer and john hardy written and directed by steven soderbergh



**R** RESTRICTED



© 1989 Outlaw Productions  
All rights reserved.

VHS

00453

© 1999 Artwork & Design RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video. All rights reserved.

NOW AVAILABLE ON VIDEOCASSETTE AND LASER VIDEODISC

*Sex, Lies, and  
Videotape*  
1989

Dir. Steven Soderbergh

Prod. Miramax

Dist. Miramax

Budget \$1.2m

(7.5m RMB)

Gross \$36.7m

(232m RMB)





1989 *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (Ind. prod. Ind. Dist.)

1991 *Kafka* (Ind. prod. Ind. Dist.)

1993 *King of the Hill* (Ind. Prod)

1995 *The Underneath* (Ind. Prod)

1996 *Schizopolis* (Ind. Prod. Ind. Dist.)

1998 *Out of Sight* (Major)

1999 *The Limey* (Mini Major)

2000 *Erin Brockavich* (Major)

2000 *Traffic* (Ind. Prod. Ind. Dist.)

2002 *Ocean's Eleven* (Major)

2002 *Full Frontal* (Subsidiary)

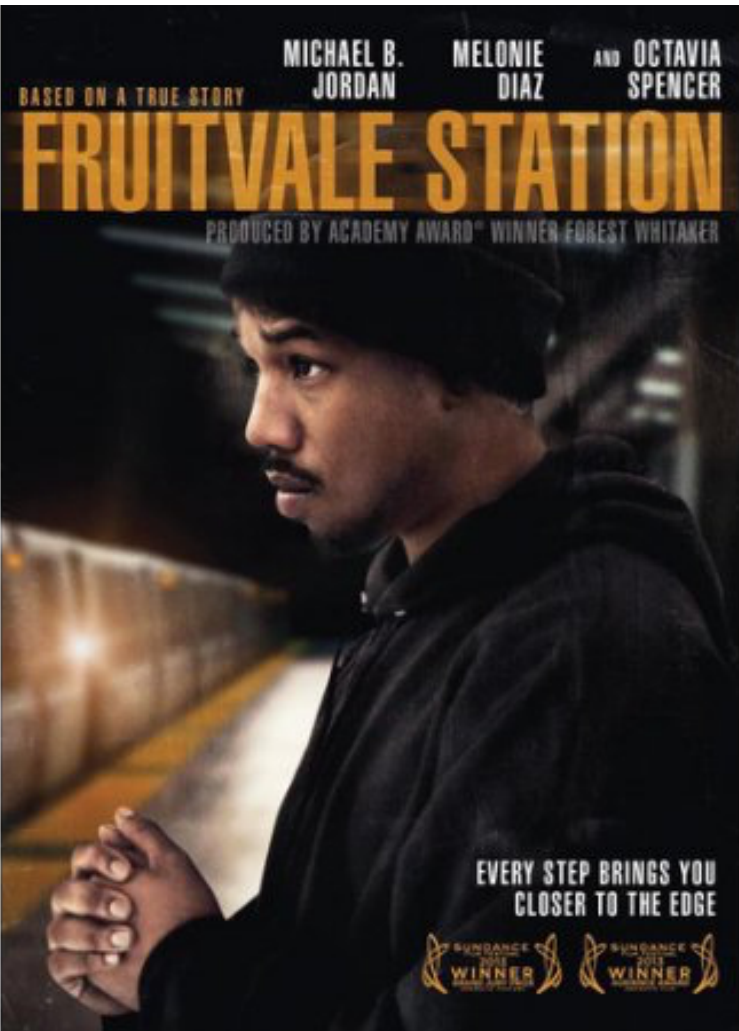
2002 *Solaris* (Major)

2004 *Ocean's Twelve* (Major)

2005 *Bubble* (Ind. Prod. Ind. Dist.)

Steven Soderbergh





Gross \$17.4m  
 (109m RMB)  
 Budget \$900t  
 (5.6m RMB)  
 Dist. The Weinstein Company  
 Prod. Significant Productions  
 2013  
*Fruitvale Station*  
 Dir. Ryan Coogler  
*Black Panther*  
 2018  
 Prod. Marvel  
 Dist. Walt Disney  
 Budget \$200m  
 (1.2b RMB)  
 Gross \$1.1b  
 (6.9b RMB)



# INDIEWOOD

1990'S TO PRESENT



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大學

Ellen Page Michael Cera Jennifer Garner Jason Bateman Allison Janney J.K. Simmons

 A Fresh,  
Unusually Intelligent  
Comedy With Dialogue  
So Quick And Funny  
You Feel The Actors  
Are Performing It  
On A High-Wire. 

ROGER EBERT, CHICAGO SUN TIMES

From the Director of  
"THANK YOU FOR SMOKING"

# JUNO

A comedy about growing up  
...and the bumps along the way.



FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES PRESENTS A MANDATE PICTURES PRODUCTION A JASON REITMAN FILM JUNO ELLEN PAGE MICHAEL CERA JENNIFER GARNER JASON BATEMAN ALLISON JANNEY J.K. SIMMONS  
CASTING BY KIMMY DORSON COSTUME DESIGNER STEVE N. PERMAN HAIR AND MAKEUP DESIGNER BARBARA TAYLOR EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JEFFREY K. BRADSHAW JACQUELINE I. GILBERTSON PRODUCED BY STEVE SOKOLOFF WRITTEN BY JESSICA KROPPENBERG DIRECTED BY JASON REITMAN  
www.foxsearchlight.com  
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In select theatres December

*Juno*  
2007

Dir. Jason Reitman  
Prod. Mr. Mudd and  
Mandate Productions  
Dist. Fox Searchlight  
Budget \$7.5m  
(47m RMB)  
Gross \$231m  
(14.b RMB)



# BRAND

trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer and conveying a set of attributes and qualities to consumers



# Chinese Independent (Underground) Cinema

- (Regulatory) Made outside the government's approval process
  - (Economic) Made outside the major studios or TV stations
- and
- (Content) Dealing with social issues the government would censor



# Official Procedure

- Acquire film permit from a studio
- Submit a script or script outline to censors for approval
- If sending to a foreign film festival, submit to censors for approval beforehand
- Submit to censors for license to screen film in China

## Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China

Order of the President of the PRC

No. 54

The Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China, having been passed by the 24th Session of the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China on November 7, 2016, is hereby promulgated, to take effect on March 1, 2017.

Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China

November 7, 2016

Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China

(Passed by the 24th Session of the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress on November 7, 2016)

Contents

Chapter I: General Provisions

Chapter II: Film creation and production

Chapter III: Film Distribution and Screening

Chapter IV: Film Industry Support and Protection

Chapter V: Legal Responsibility

Chapter VI: Supplementary Provisions



# Independent from the State?

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## Independently Chinese: Duan Jinchuan, Jiang Yue, and Chinese Documentary

*Chris Berry*

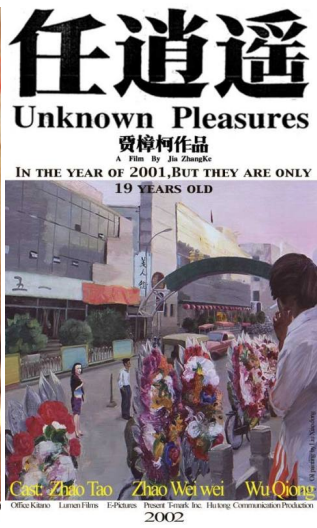
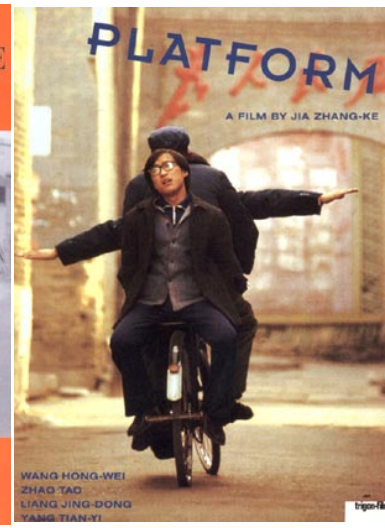
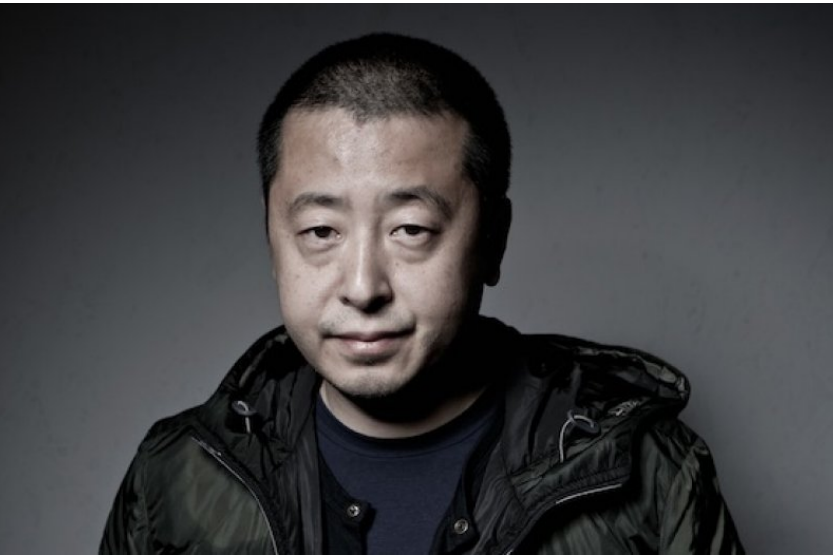
Why was it always “underground” and “independent” back then? Because we had no opportunities.

—Jiang Yue

This chapter asks what it means to be an independent filmmaker in the People's Republic of China by examining the careers of Chinese documentary filmmakers Duan Jinchuan and Jiang Yue, as well as their colleagues and peers Li Hong and Wu Wenguang. All have been active independent documentarians for over a decade, making it possible to trace changes in independent practice through their careers. Despite Jiang's seemingly dismissive remark, he and Duan still consider themselves to be independents. But what that means for them has clearly changed. The Soviet model of independence as dissent was frequently invoked in the early days of Chinese independent film culture, although not, I must emphasize, by documentarians like Duan and Jiang. Today, the American experience of corporate independence is also in the air. In this essay, I acknowledge that both are relevant to the Chinese context, but note that neither of them fits exactly. Rather, Chinese documentarians define themselves in relation to a three-legged system, composed of the party-state apparatus, the marketized economy, and the foreign media and art organizations that have built up a presence in China today. Furthermore, both the American and Soviet models are also conceptually inadequate. They are grounded in an understanding of independence as freedom from power rather than something produced through power. Only by beginning from this different understanding of power can we hope to grasp the qualities of Chinese independent film production today, where Jiang and Duan's experience indicates that contrary to commonsense assumptions, working with state

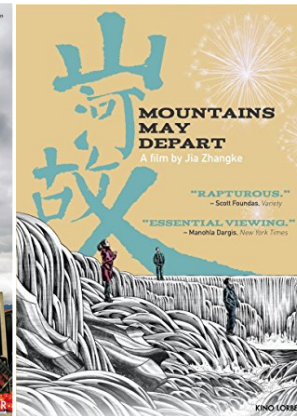






Jia Zhangke 贾樟柯

independent



state  
authorized



## China's Indie Icon Jia Zhangke Launches Commercial Venture Fabula (EXCLUSIVE)

variety.com/2016/film/asia/jia-zhangke-launches-fabula-commercial-venture-1201775144/

May 16, 2016



CREDIT: Courtesy of Fabula Entertainment

May 15, 2016 9:30PM PT

By Patrick Frater

In an opportunistic swerve from his indie film roots, Chinese film maker [Jia Zhangke](#) is going to start making commercial movies.

With a base in Shanghai, he has established Fabula Entertainment (the Chinese name translates as “warm currents”) and raised money for a slate of movies that he will produce.

China Merchants Bank and online giant Tencent, have provided some \$4.5 million (RMB30 million) in return for a 10% stake. That gives Fabula an implied value of \$45 million (RMB300 million.)

Fabula will operate across two sectors: production of commercial movies and vocational training for the film industry. “We chose these two areas because, frankly, too many Chinese movies are s\*\*t, and we’d like to show a way forward that is based on quality,” Jia told *Variety*. “And training has become increasingly important now that China’s film production has risen from about 100 titles per year only a few years ago, to (close to) 1,000 per year now.”

To the relief of his global fans, Jia says he has no plans to give up making his unique brand of contemporary commentaries on China’s plunge into modernization. These have made Jia a marginal voice in mainland China — some of his films have been refused release — but a massive presence on the international art film stage.

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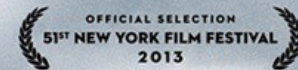


# A TOUCH OF 天 涯 愛 SIN

A FILM BY  
**JIA ZHANGKE**



WINNER BEST SCREENPLAY  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
51<sup>ST</sup> NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL  
2013



## Chinese cinema A touch less sin, please

economist.com/blogs/analects/2013/11/chinese-cinema

CHINA'S film market may be the fastest growing in the world, but the strictures governing it appear as immovable as ever. A recently leaked directive from the Central Propaganda Department instructs media not to conduct interviews, report or comment on director Jia Zhangke's "A Touch of Sin". The film had already gone through a mandatory censorship review for its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May, where it won best screenplay, and was bound for Chinese cinemas in early November. A delay, and the directive, cast doubt on its future.



### Latest stories

The release of "A Touch of Sin" would mark significant progress for Chinese film. It is graphically violent, with four interlacing narratives depicting individuals driven to bloody acts by grim social realities. In one, a miner in Shanxi province confronts his village bosses, who have long profited from selling collective land. In another, a young factory worker in Dongguan—home to Foxconn, a big electronics maker—caves to family pressure and debt.

Mr Jia's critically acclaimed films often blur fiction and non-fiction. The four narratives in "A Touch of Sin" are based on news reports he followed through microblogs, and the film delves into prickly contemporary topics, such as prostitution and a scandalous Wenzhou train crash in 2011. In an interview with the *Hollywood Reporter* at Cannes, Mr Jia (pictured) said he wanted to bring change to China, "to let everyone see that with that belief in the free spirit, we can tell stories that help propel society forward".

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# THE AMBIGUITY OF INDEPENDENCE



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

西交利物浦大學

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# THANK YOU

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