



BEIJING TAXI

BEIJINGTAXITHEFILM.COM
A film by MIAO WANG

Three BEIJING taxi drivers connect a morphing cityscape and a lyrical journey through an era of China in transition.

PRESS QUOTES

“Poignant... Seamless” *The New York Times*
“Engrossing... Imagistic... Revealing” *Variety*
“Mesmerizing” *Critics’ Pick* *New York Magazine*
“An Outstanding Ride” *The Huffington Post*
“Evocative” *The Wall Street Journal Speakeasy*
“Strikingly gorgeous... Revelatory” *Greencine*
“Exciting and Relevant” *AMC Film Critic*
“Reality-television compelling” *Baltimore City Paper*

BEIJING TAXI is supported by

Sundance Institute Documentary Fund
New York State Council for the Arts
Jerome Foundation
Women Make Movies
Tribeca All Access
Independent Film Week
Independent Filmmaker Labs
Crowdfunding via Kickstarter

FORMAT

Feature-Length Documentary
78 min | HDCAM | Color | 16:9 Anamorphic | Stereo
Mandarin w/English subtitles
2010 | China/USA
A Three Waters Production

CREDITS

Directed and Produced by Miao Wang
Produced by Ivana Stolkner
Directors of Photography Ian Vollmer and Sean Price Williams
Edited by Sikay Tang and Co-Edited by Miao Wang
Original Score by Stephen Ulrich and Itamar Ziegler



Bai Jiwen



Wei Caixia



Zhou Yi

LOGLINE

Beijing Taxi vividly portrays modern-day China through a humanistic lens, documenting a profound transformation in an era of Olympic transitions. The intimate lives of three Beijingers connect a morphing cityscape and a lyrical journey through fragments of a society riding a bumpy road to modernization.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

BEIJING TAXI is a feature-length documentary that vividly portrays the ancient capital of China undergoing a profound transformation. The intimate lives of three taxi drivers are seen through a humanistic lens as they navigate a quickly morphing city, confronting modern issues and changing values. The three protagonists radiate a warm sense of humanity despite the struggles that each faces in adapting to new realities of life in the modern city. With stunning imagery of Beijing and a contemporary score rich in atmosphere, BEIJING TAXI communicates a visceral sense of the common citizens' persistent attempts to grasp the elusive. The 2008 Summer Olympic Games serve as the backdrop for BEIJING TAXI's story, a coming out party for a rising nation and a metaphor for Chinese society and its struggles to reconcile enormous contradictions while adjusting to a new capitalist system that can seem foreign to some in the Communist-ruled and educated society. Candid and perceptive in its filming approach and highly cinematic and moody in style, BEIJING TAXI takes us on a lyrical journey through fragments of a society riding the bumpy roads to modernization. Though its destination unknown, the drivers continue to forge ahead.

LONG SYNOPSIS

BEIJING TAXI is a feature-length documentary that vividly portrays the ancient capital of China undergoing a profound transformation. BEIJING TAXI's main character is the morphing city of Beijing. The intimate lives of three taxi drivers are seen through a humanistic lens as they navigate a quickly morphing city, confronting modern issues and changing values. With stunning imagery of Beijing and a contemporary score rich in atmosphere, BEIJING TAXI communicates a visceral sense of the common citizens' persistent attempts to grasp the elusive. Chinese society find itself in the midst of an enormous transformation, its people struggling to reconcile enormous contradictions while adjusting to a new capitalist system that can seem foreign to some in the Communist-ruled and educated society. BEIJING TAXI takes us on a lyrical journey through fragments of a society riding the bumpy roads to modernization. Though its destination unknown, the drivers continue to forge ahead.

The story is told through the eyes of three protagonists. Through the struggles and aspirations in their everyday life, a transitional city with its opportunities, hopes, shattered dreams, and social ramifications comes alive. Bai Jiwen, a driver in his mid 50's, represents the older, lost generation that came of age during the Cultural Revolution; Wei Caixia, a mother in her mid-thirties, aspires to a free-spirited life and entrepreneurial success that has captivated the younger generations in China; and Zhou Yi, an optimistic and contented man in his late thirties, holds on to the more traditional Beijinger's lifestyle of the past as the city modernizes around him. The three taxi drivers are faced with the impact of socio-economic changes across every aspect of their lives - from healthcare and unemployment to marriage and family values. Beijing is in the midst of a transformation so rapid and far-reaching that long-time local residents feel like strangers in their own city. Though each faced with their own struggles and limitations, the three characters radiate a warm sense of humanity.

The 2008 Summer Olympic Games serve as the backdrop for BEIJING TAXI's story. The Olympics are a catalyst for change and the biggest metaphor marking an era of China in transition. The Games are the new China's coming-out party to the world. BEIJING TAXI is a vérité film, candid and perceptive in its filming approach and highly cinematic and poetic in style.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Born and raised in Beijing, I moved to the US in 1990 and returned to visit only three times in 15 years. The colors, textures, sounds, and characters of my childhood city always remained present in my memory. As the Olympic fever ushered in a new era of unprecedented transformations in Beijing, I understood that the timing was ripe for me to return. I wanted to capture the juxtapositions between the old and the new Beijing that exist side by side today, and, most importantly, to experience how the lives and mentalities of people on the ground have been affected. I have had countless raving conversations about the unique characters of Beijing taxi drivers, with their notoriously gregarious and quintessentially Beijinger personalities. All taxi drivers in Beijing are locals, whether they're city residents or farmers from nearby suburbs. The taxi itself is not the focus of this film, but it is a cinematic device and the thread that unravels the story of the common citizen's struggles in this morphing city.

From a stylistic point of view, I want to focus on capturing the visceral through rich imagery and sound, through the textures, light and mood. I want to render the feeling of the city as it had floated through my dreams and memory. In the cab the shots are often composed to be very tight to generate a real sense of the intimacy of the space. The viewer is simultaneously peeping into a fragment of the taxi driver's character defined by the edges of the rear view mirror, and zooming out to the more disconnected world outside framed by the window of the car. The private vs. public space, the modern vs. the traditional and the internal vs. the external worlds are some of the dualities I want to juxtapose.

China has emerged into the forefront of Western consciousness through its unprecedented speed of economic growth in a climate of global interdependence. While China is ubiquitous in current world affairs, there is very little understanding in the West about the culture and society of China today. BEIJING TAXI hopes to bring to light the human faces of Beijing. Through a rich portrait of Beijing and the connections the audience will make with the characters in the film, the viewer will cultivate a deeper understanding of the current socio-economic situations in China today. I started this project with a mission to illuminate the humor, heart, and the humanity of a slice of this massive culture and people. It is very important to me to present a humanist look into the Chinese society, in an era when China has been portrayed mainly in a dehumanized way in Western media.

It is a film very much portrayed from my point of view as an emigrant Beijinger: the old China is like an intimate childhood dream, while the China of a new era is ushered in by a historical event. I wanted to transcend the nostalgia and a child's remembrance of things past for the Beijing of my childhood and rise to an understanding of the Beijing of the Olympic era. It is in the end a film that takes you on a journey to experience the complex contradictions China faces today, through a down-to-earth understanding of the common citizen's persistent attempts to grasp the elusive. The world is changing faster than they can keep up with, but they will keep on going, and forge ahead.

— Miao Wang



MIAO WANG DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / CO-EDITOR

Miao Wang is a filmmaker based in New York, currently splitting her time between NY and Beijing. Born and raised in Beijing just after the Cultural Revolution, she grew up with the last remnants of a pre-modernized Communist China. She immigrated to the US in 1990, a year after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Her first half-hour documentary film, YELLOW OX MOUNTAIN (2006), which she directed, produced and edited, is an insightful look at the impact of China's Cultural Revolution on two Chinese

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contemporary artists based in New York. It has screened at over 20 film festivals and institutions worldwide, received a Best Short Film Award, broadcast on Thirteen/WNET, and is distributed by Filmmaker's Library.

Miao absorbed inspiration from the legendary Albert Maysles while working as an apprentice at Maysles Films. As an editor, she has edited a feature-length PBS documentary and programs for National Geographic. She also edited numerous video projects collaborating with renowned artists such as Steven Holl, Malcolm McLaren and Miru Kim.

Miao has a B.A. with honors in economics from the University of Chicago and a M.F.A. in design and film from the Parsons School of Design. Her multidisciplinary pursuits have led her to organize large-scale art happenings; publish an art book; and work on award-winning designs with acclaimed graphic designer and art director Stefan Sagmeister.

In documentary filmmaking Miao has found the outlet to not only fully engage every aspect of her multi-faceted interests and talents, but also a platform to observe and explore what truly touches her heart—the human condition. She aspires to make genre-bending poetic and cinematic documentaries that inspire human connections and reflect on the universalities of the human condition.

Miao has just completed her first feature-length film, BEIJING TAXI. She captures Beijing from the unique point of view of an emigrant Beijinger carrying the perspectives of both a native and an outsider. Miao has been awarded a grant from the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund (2007), the Jerome Foundation (2008), and the New York State Council for the Arts (2009), for BEIJING TAXI. She is a fellow of DocuClub, the IFP Filmmaker's Lab, the IFP Independent Film Week, and Tribeca All Access (a part of the Tribeca Film Institute).

FILMOGRAPHY:

BEIJING TAXI (2010)—Directed, produced, and Co-edited by Miao Wang
WORLD PREMIERE IN COMPETITION - SXSW 2010
WINNER - Best Feature Documentary - Sidewalk Film Festival 2010
WINNER - Best Director - Duke City Docfest 2010
OPENING NIGHT FILM - Martha's Vineyard Film Festival 2010
NY Premiere - IFC Center NY - Sold Out
Maryland Film Festival, LA Asian Pacific Film Festival, Independent Film Festival of Boston, Maryland Film Festival, Asia Society HK, Hawaii International Film Festival, Stockholm International Film Festival

YELLOW OX MOUNTAIN (2006)—Directed, produced, and edited by Miao Wang
WINNER - Best Short Film - Asian Film Festival of Dallas 2009
Distributed by the Filmmaker's Library
Broadcast on Thirteen/WNET
Screened at over 20 festivals and venues



IVANA STOLKINER PRODUCER

Born in Argentina in the midst of the Dirty War, Ivana moved to New York City in 1998 with her father, to pursue a career in film production. After graduating with honors from the film program at Hunter College in 2004, she assisted the producers of the legendary Chicago filmmakers communal Kartemquin Films in several award winning documentaries (MAPPING STEM CELL RESEARCH: TERRA INCOGNITA, MILKING THE RHINO, GOLUB: LATE WORKS ARE THE CATASTROPHES and

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IN THE FAMILY, among others), assisted the producers of Engel Entertainment in several broadcast films for Discovery Channel and National Geographic and subsequently worked as an associate producer at Pacific Street Films in socially and culturally relevant documentaries such as IN DEBT WE TRUST and BEYOND WISE GUYS. Ivana lives and works in New York City, where she freelances in the commercial and documentary industries.

SIKAY TANG EDITOR

Sikay Tang is a video artist and a film editor based in New York City. Highlights of her editing credits include THE GOOD SOLDIER, CHISHOLM '72- UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSSED, by Shola Lynch (Peabody Award and Sundance '04), ELVIS –VIVA LAS VEGAS for ABC with Phil Shane and Ralph Avellino, PARLIAMENT FUNKADELICS – ONE NATION UNDER THE GROOVE by Yvonne Smith, THE UNTOLD STORY OF EMMIT TILL by Keith Beauchamp, CONAKRY KA, by Dr. Manthia Diawara, INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY –ON THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM, by Kirsten Johnson, SLOWLY THIS by Arthur Jafa for Alive TV, PBS. She also shot Rea Tajiri's LITTLE MURDERS. Tang has produced music videos and television programs in Hong Kong and Beijing. She worked on JUNGLE FEVER AND MALCOM X, and was Spike Lee's stills photographer after graduating from the University of Chicago where she majored in Photography and Sculpture and was awarded the Louis Sudler Prize of Outstanding Achievement in the Creative Arts. Tang has taught in the School of Art at the State University of Illinois and at Third World Newsreel in New York.

IAN VOLLMER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographer Ian Vollmer graduated with a B.A. from The Evergreen State College. Cinematography credits include: BEING WITH ME, WIDE AWAKE, YELLOW OX MOUNTAIN, ANOTHER LOST ANGEL, and ANNIE LEIBOVITZ: LIFE THROUGH A LENS. He lives and works in New York City and is currently finishing a film about the experience of travel.

SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Since age 17, Sean Price Williams has worked at great video stores including Kim's Video in New York, and breathed cinema and music every day of his life. Sean's breathtaking cinematography is showcased in Jessica Oreck's BEETLE QUEEN CONQUERS TOKYO, which premiered at SXSW 2009. Variety's Justin Chang calls Sean's cinematography "pure poetry." The film went on to win a Special Documentary Jury Prize for Artistic Vision at Cinevegas 2009. Sean was the cinematographer on Ronald Bronstein's FROWNLAND, which received a Special Jury Award at SXSW 2007, and was named 2007 Gotham Awards' "Best Film Not Playing at a Theatre Near You." Sean has since worked on many other films that have played in festivals around the world, including Cannes. He has worked for Abel Ferrara and extensively as Albert Maysles B-Cameraman.

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REVIEWS (FOR FULL LIST: [HTTP://WWW.BEIJINGTAXITHEFILM.COM/PRESS.HTML](http://www.beijingtaxithefilm.com/press.html))

NEW YORK TIMES

December 9, 2010 by Mike Hale - <http://movies.nytimes.com/2010/12/10/movies/10beijing.html>

“Interesting and Poignant... Seamless... Elegantly Framed”

VARIETY

December 8, 2010 by Ronnie Scheib - <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117944174?refcatid=31>

“Imagistic... Revealing... Engrossing”

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

December 7, 2010 - <http://nymag.com/listings/movie/beijing-taxi/>

“Mesmerizing” – **Critics’ Pick**

VILLAGE VOICE

December 7, 2010 - <http://www.villagevoice.com/movies/beijing-taxi-2123472/>

“Transformative... Soviet kinetic-kino pioneer Dziga Vertov might have liked the film’s ethos of a nation on the move.”

AMC FILM CRITIC

October 7, 2010 by Norman Shrager - <http://www.filmcritic.com/reviews/2010/beijing-taxi/>

“Combines the city’s speed and luminosity with the sad pride of its past life and current poverty... keeping the film both exciting and relevant... As Beijing’s post-Olympic future becomes clear in the coming years, Beijing Taxi could have even more impact than initially intended.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL SPEAKEASY

March 27, 2010 by Michelle Kung - <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2010/03/27/beijing-taxi-explores-countrys-evolution-from-perspective-of-drivers/>

“Evocative”- ‘Beijing Taxi’ Explores Country’s Evolution From Perspective of Drivers

GREENCINE

March 19, 2010 by Vadim Rizov - <http://daily.greencine.com/archives/007762.html>

“Strikingly gorgeous... revelatory, an admirably formal presentation of the baseline texture of contemporary Beijing. It’s not just valuable for the record, it’s elegant in the process.”

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HUFFINGTON POST

March 17, 2010 by Stewart Nusbaumer - http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stewart-nusbaumer/embeijing-taxiem-an-outst_b_502786.html

“Beijing Taxi dips us under the mainstream media’s radar screen and places us in the seat of a journey through the capital of China: a lyrical, funny and at times bitter journey... delivers rich details and intimate portrayals. It’s gritty and it’s beautiful; the focus on the subjects is sharp, yet you also get a sense of the larger China... Beijing Taxi can take everyone ... on a cinematic ride through the chaotic, full-steam-ahead, confident yet insecure Asian Goliath. More important, it can take everyone on a ground journey around Beijing to understand some average Chinese people. An important mission, and one that Beijing Taxi does extremely well.”

BALTIMORE CITY PAPER

May 5, 2010 by Martin L. Johnson - <http://www.citypaper.com/special/story.asp?id=20190>

“The characters in the film are reality-television compelling, and Wang... matches an outsiders fascination about everything with an emigrant’s appreciation for what Beijing is leaving behind in their embrace of modernity.”

NOT COMING

April 24, 2010 by Victoria Large - <http://notcoming.com/reviews/beijingtaxi/>

“Vivid but impressionistic... Wang has a gift for defamiliarization, transforming the everyday into something beguiling... Beijing Taxi has a powerful, defining sense of place, but the contrasting desires of all three drivers infuse the film with concerns that extend beyond Beijing. They are all seeking to happiness but struggling to define it.”

AUSTIN CHRONICLE

March 19, 2010 by Marc Savlov - <http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/story?oid=oid%3A982985>

“Rich and culturally challenging”

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