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Zhan Tai

Platform

Jia Zhang-ke

**HONG KONG, CHINA/JAPAN/
FRANCE, 2000**

192 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Hu Tong Communication**
Executive Producer: **Masayuki Mori**
Producer: **Li Kit-ming, Shozo Ichiyama**
Screenplay: **Jia Zhang-ke**
Cinematographer: **Yu Lik-wai**
Editor: **Kong Jing-lei**
Production Designer: **Qiu Sheng**
Sound: **Zhang Yang**
Music: **Yoshihiro Hanno**
Principal Cast: **Wang Hong-wei, Zhao Tao, Liang Jing-dong, Yang Tiang-yi**

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"Platform" was a rock & roll hit in China in the early eighties. It is a song about expectation. I choose it as my film title to salute the hope of the people. *Platform* can be both a starting and finishing point. We are always expecting, searching for, and always on the way to some place.

— Jia Zhang-ke

For some years now, young Chinese filmmakers have been pressing the idea that the capitalist changes in China during the eighties were as disorienting for the nation as the Cultural Revolution was a generation before. Even if the loss of life was nowhere near as great, the complete shift of values and priorities since then has been socially devastating. Jia Zhang-ke's quietly powerful epic, *Platform*, is an extraordinary attempt to trace this quiet revolution. The film follows the lives of five actors in a small provincial amateur theatre troupe from their lethargic, by-the-book performance idolizing Mao Zedong in 1979 to the late eighties, when their show has become a glitzy Vegas-style salute to Hong Kong "Cantopop."

In the beginning, youthful and naïve, these young actors are happy to do propaganda work, reserving most of their energy for dating and avoiding their old-fashioned parents. They are desperate to obtain information about life in the big cities, now flooded with Western ideas and music. Life is moving fast everywhere, it seems, except in little Fenyang, their hometown.

A year later, their troupe leader announces they will gradually work Western music into their performances; several actors start sporting perms and bell-bottoms. One of their friends returns from booming Guangzhou and they dance all night to the raucous music he brings back.

In the mid-eighties, government cuts in subsidies force changes upon the troupe. Though they create a new show to tour the province, it leads to broken couples and newly formed ties. While the young actors are happy to still be able to perform, their "privatized" show is a struggle and the travelling is hard. Ultimately a run-in with police causes more turmoil, splitting up the group's longest lasting couple forever.

The troupe soldiers on, contending with the twin pressures of love and money.

Awesome in its cumulative power, *Platform* is certainly one of the finest films to emerge from anywhere to discuss how the vast socio-economic changes sweeping our planet can rupture individual lives. Essential viewing.

■ **Noah Cowan**

Jia Zhang-ke was born in 1970 in Fenyang, Shanxi Province, China. Features include: *Xiao Wu* (97) and *Platform* (00).