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Still Life (2006)

Director: [Jia Zhangke](#)**Time Out rating****Average user rating**
[2 reviews](#)

Movie review

From Time Out London

Ironies abound in the latest by China's greatest contemporary cinematic chronicler [Jia Zhangke](#): There's politics in every one of cinematographer Yu Likwai's superbly composed HD frames, but it's feel that the former is after. And in the half-drowned town of Fengjie – the victim of the Yangtze river Three Gorges Project and capitalism as well as being the new home of rural Shanxi construction worker Han ([Han Sanming](#)) – the feeling isn't good.

Han is looking for his estranged wife and daughter; while, in another part of town, as if to show missed-connections are no male preserve, nurse Hong ([Zhao Tao](#)) is looking for an absentee husband. Meanwhile, the Yangtze flows on; they both end up gazing out to it, in search of answers to questions wider than the immediate.

Arguably, 'Still Life' marks a change for Jia, with a sharpening focus reflecting the translation of his observational eye from the particular modes, dilemmas and adaptations pertaining to his home province of Shanxi to the even faster-changing realities of the more industrialised Chinese heartland. But here – from the opening pan around the rolling community of the 'immigrants' boat through the film's mini-odyssey among the lived-in spaces taking occupancy during the hastening phases of deconstruction and erection – what is unchanged is Jia's unique ability to let us participate in people's experience.



Cast & crew

Director: [Jia Zhangke](#)**Cast:** [Han Sanming](#), [Zhao Tao](#), [Ma Lizhen](#) [full cast](#)**Duration:** 108 mins**US Release:** Nov 16 2006

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In 'Still Life' the director's assurance is such that the barriers between documentary and fictional film are made to seem an irrelevance; you may find his film's intimations of commonality – what we share as human beings – will surprise and move you in unexpected ways.

Author: Wally Hammond

Time Out London Issue 1954: Jan 30 to Feb 5

User reviews of this film

Oli said...

Posted on Feb 25 2008 08:33

Fascinating, thoughtful, beautiful film.

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Krroz said...

Posted on Feb 20 2008 10:24

Dauntingly beautiful film.

Amazingly complex and powerful.

I am already looking forward to watching the DVD again and discover some subtleties I missed this time.

Brilliant!!

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cathrin said...

Posted on Feb 02 2008 19:25

the worst movie i have seen in my whole life

- cathrin, 58

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