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Author(s)	Tony Rayns
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Film on the Square

24 City (Ershisi Cheng Ji)

Jia Zhangke's masterly combination of fact and fiction turns a previously hidden page in China's modern history and reveals the human cost of a great upheaval.

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24 City



Shot in Chengdu before the earthquake, Jia Zhangke's new film is a masterly combination of fact and fiction. The fact: a once-secret military hardware factory and its workers were moved deep inland in the late 1950s to protect them from a perceived Soviet threat. Now an aeronautics plant, it has shed many staff and is moving to a greenfield site, yielding its prime location to a luxury flats/shopping mall development called '24 City'. Jia explores the old site as it's demolished and talks to former and present workers about their experiences.

The fiction: four of the workers (three women, one man) are played by actors. The words they've been given amplify the human cost of what the workers went through: forced relocations, broken families, political U-turns... Jia once again humanises China's modern history – and turns it into poetry.

Tony Rayns

Directed by:	Jia Zhangke
Written by:	Jia Zhangke, Zhai Yongming
Cast:	Joan Chen, Lü Liping, Zhao Tao, Chen Jiabin
Country:	China
Year:	2008
Running time:	107min

Screening with:

Cry Me a River

In Jia's piercing new short, four old college friends reflect on what might have been.

Directed by:	Jia Zhangke
Written by:	Jia Zhangke
Cast:	Zhao Tao, Guo Xiaodong
Country:	China
Year:	2008
Running time:	19min

Related films and events

Winstanley »

- Meticulously researched and sparsely beautiful account of the creation and destruction of England's first commune.



Under the Tree »

- Indonesian master Garin Nugroho interweaves three stories about women, births and deaths, all set in the distinctive (and sometimes mystical) culture of Bali.



Modern Life »

- A masterful and uniquely moving portrait in Depardon's continuing series of films documenting the changing face of rural France.



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