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Platform

Jia Zhang Ke (**Hong Kong/China/Japan/France**, 2000)

(Zhan Tai). China's tumultuous 1980s—a period of vast economic change and social upheaval—are revisited in this hyperrealistic account of one provincial theater troupe's struggles in a landscape dizzily moving from post-Cultural Revolution isolation to a consumer-age nightmare of bad perms and disco fever. The troupe is founded in 1979 as the Fenyang Peasant Culture Group, desultorily performing songs about Chairman Mao and tossing off insults like, "You sound like a capitalist roader." Soon, though, each member must deal with the country's economic and social reversals, and with the confusion, alienation and moral shifts that accompany them. By 1989 they have left traditional opera and Mao behind and become the All-Star Rock'N'Breakdance Electronic Band, performing Cantopop and Michael Jackson to an increasingly dwindling—and increasingly unentertained—audience. Members fight, split up, leave and return, drained by continual run-ins with angry workers, hardheaded cops and corrupt politicians. They remain (says the song from which the film's title is taken) on a platform, waiting for a future that always lies "just around the bend." Director Jia Zhang Ke, whose *Xiao Wu* won the 1999 SKYY Prize, covers an entire decade's—and an entire nation's—transformation by focusing on one group of finely sketched, all-too-human characters. Touching, sometimes hilarious, *Platform* is essential viewing for anyone interested in China's history, the effects of global capitalism and—not least of all—great filmmaking.

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China's tumultuous 1980s are revisited in this finely sketched, touching and sometimes hilarious account of one provincial theater troupe dizzily moving from post-Cultural Revolution isolation to a consumer-age nightmare of bad perms and disco fever.

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- Written by Jia Zhang Ke. Photographed by Yu Lik-wai. With Wang Hong-wei, Zhao Tao, Liang Jing-dong, Yang Tian-yi. (155 mins,)