



The Iron Ministry

A film by J. P. Sniadecki
An Icarus Films Release

"The best film about China in the twenty-first century that I've seen to date was made by an American, J.P. Sniadecki." —Artforum

"Buy the ticket; take the ride."
—The Hollywood Reporter

"A formally controlled look at the range of classes [and] implied changes wrought by China's economic boom." —Variety

Official Selection, New York Film Festival
Jury Award, Ann Arbor Film Festival
Jury Award, Camden International Film Festival
Official Selection, Locarno Film Festival
Official Selection, Viennale
Official Selection, International Film Festival of Rotterdam

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LOGLINE

Filmed over three years on what will soon be the world's largest railway network, THE IRON MINISTRY traces the vast interiors of a country on the move: flesh and metal, clangs and squeals, light and dark, and language and gesture.

SYNOPSIS

Filmed over three years on China's railways, THE IRON MINISTRY traces the vast interiors of a country on the move: flesh and metal, clangs and squeals, light and dark, language and gesture. Scores of rail journeys come together into one, capturing the thrills and anxieties of social and technological transformation. THE IRON MINISTRY immerses audiences in fleeting relationships and uneasy encounters between humans and machines on what will soon be the world's largest railway network.

SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS

New York Film Festival
Jury Award, Ann Arbor Film Festival
Jury Award, Camden International Film Festival
Golden Leopard Nominee, Locarno International Film Festival
San Francisco International Film Festival
International Film Festival of Rotterdam
Edinburgh International Film Festival
Vancouver International Film Festival
American Film Institute
Portland International Film Festival
Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival
Zagreb Human Rights Film Festival
Chicago International Film Festival
San Diego Asian Film Festival
Harvard Film Archive
DocLisboa
Viennale
CPH:DOX
RIDM

IN THE PRESS

"[T]he best film about China in the twenty-first century that I've seen to date—was made by an American, J.P. Sniadecki, known for his work with Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab. Following *People's Park* (2012) and *Yumen* (2013), both documentaries on contemporary China that Sniadecki co-directed, *The Iron Ministry* compiles three years of footage shot during rides on China's extensive railway system. A cow stomach is sliced into edible bits; a man puffs on a bamboo cigar-holder between compartments; the filthy floor is lined with cigarette butts and sleeping human bodies; a precocious little boy sarcastically encourages the crowd to piss and shit in the aisles." — Travis Jeppesen, [Artforum](#)

"The train has always been a major metaphor for change, but here there is an especially interesting sense of ambiguity...The danger of hurtling to modernity is always present, rattling along the ever-lengthening tracks." —Daniel Walber, [NonFics](#)

"His approach is paradoxically both self-effacing and nosy, displaying an insatiable curiosity about the apparently mundane textures of the train's interiors as well as its passengers... Occasionally the sheer velocity of vehicular motion sees the image excitingly blur into chaos, like fleeting, avant-garde shorts that effortlessly conjure the dazzlingly abstract out of the quotidian and the concrete." —Neil Young, [The Hollywood Reporter](#)

"Sniadecki offers a formally controlled look at the range of classes, the implied changes wrought by China's economic boom, and the interactions particular to train travel. Refreshingly, Sniadecki allows the film—or rather, some passengers—to engage in politics, from the rights of minorities to economic pressures. While cerebral in intent and planning, the pic doesn't feel overly straitjacketed by theory and offers unexpected moments of amusement." —Jay Weissberg, [Variety](#)

"The real focus of *The Iron Ministry* isn't the train but the world zipping past it." —Eric Kohn, [Indiewire](#)

"Shot over three years of riding the rails throughout all parts of China, but edited to seem like it's one fluid trip, J.P. Sniadecki's *The Iron Ministry* starts off as a collection of these interior impressions, establishing atmosphere, sound, image, and also the smells – of garbage, meat, sweat, and ever-present cigarettes." —Mark Peranson, [Festival del Film Locarno](#)

FILM CREDITS

Image / Sound / Edit: J.P. Sniadecki

Co-Producers: Joshua Neves and J.P. Sniadecki

Sound Design and Mix: Ernst Karel

Translation: *"The best film about China in the twenty-first century that I've seen to date was made by an American, J.P. Sniadecki."* —Artforum

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Official Selection, International Film Festival of Rotterdam J.P. Sniadecki, Xu Man,
Mo Yunxuan, Li Jie, Zhu Rikun

2014 / HD video / Color / 5.1 surround sound / 83 minutes

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<http://www.theironministry.com/>



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