

## BIG BREAK

## Source Code

What does Chicago look like from inside a constantly exploding Metra train?



Jake, watch out!

By Michael Juliano April 4, 2011

*Chicago's **always** been a popular setting for popular entertainment. The Bundys lived here in Married... With Children, Wayne and Garth took on corporate America here in Wayne's World, and Kevin was totally left behind in the Windy City in Home Alone. But how does the city fare when it pops up in modern-day pop culture? The A.V. Club looks at the latest and weighs in on how everyone else sees what we see every day.*

**What we see:** Director Duncan Jones delivers a hi-tech thriller about covert military operations, identity changes, and alternate realities, but mostly Jake Gyllenhaal being repeatedly sent into the last eight minutes of a Metra passenger's life to alternatively beat up unsuspecting commuters and look all doe-eyed. Oh, and the train explodes, multiple times and from all different angles in varying degrees of slow motion.

**On this tour:** Helicopter shots of a sunny day by the river and lakefront in the Loop and Near North Side, along with a scene in an in-bloom Millennium Park, make the wait until proper springtime that much more painful. The 33rd Street entrance to the Illinois Institute Of Technology's campus also gets some good cameos, but unfortunately, most involve a train derailing and exploding in front of it. The real star is the Metra itself—or "Chicago Commuter Rail," according to the logo—which grabs plenty of screen time both inside and out. Also, the light at the end of the tunnel is apparently just the Bean, or at least that's what happens each time Gyllenhaal moves between bodies. Get to work on that one, conspiracy theorists.

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**Local standout:** The Metra's claustrophobic quarters prevent any local shout-outs, but there is a poster up in the station advertising Chicago's favorite T. Rex, the **Field Museum's** Sue.

**Da stereotypes:** They're more so disaster movie tropes than Chicago stereotypes—the wise guy, the greasy businessman, the suspiciously shifty guy, the arguing couple, the wary middle-aged woman, the awkward student—but that's pretty much the standard Metra commute anyway, except maybe with a little bit less group therapy. The movie does sorely miss two major types: the guy who plays music through his cell phone speaker and the guy who flips the seats and takes up two rows to himself.

**How we fare:** As a peace offering, the movie is front-loaded with aerial shots of downtown that capture just how beautiful the lakefront appears on a sunny spring day. But minutes later, a Metra train transforms into a fiery mess over and over again, so it's a bit tough to recover from that. When it's not busy blowing up, though, the familiar bi-level interior of the Metra ends up looking like the *USS Enterprise*. The normally weak and jerky sliding interior doors open with a brisk whoosh, and everything in the bathroom is satisfyingly button-operated. The trains also apparently have room for lots of secret crawl space and a locked up pistol that's easily obtained with a big flashlight and some elbow grease. Add to that a fresh coat of paint, some TVs, a car with scenic overhead windows, and an onboard Dunkin' Donuts, and *Source Code's* version of the Metra looks downright awesome.

Most films distort a city's real life layout (clearly with the lone intention of pissing off locals), but *Source Code* manages to pretty uniquely bungle its geography. Most of the movie takes place on a train; it's stuck on a track from point A to B, so you'd think it would be near impossible to screw that up. The onboard announcement destines the train for Union Station, but the aerial shots closer to the city show the train running along the Dan Ryan Expressway and blowing up in front of IIT. That places it on the Rock Island Line, which, unfortunately, terminates at LaSalle Station. Fair enough—that's just one route manipulation. But those proud of their public transportation nerdery will fume as the train later pulls into Grant Park instead (an onboard map that clearly shows the full CTA grid won't help either). Though the movie did shoot at stations like Downer's Grove and Orland Park, much of it was filmed in Montreal, which is most likely the setting for the fictional and prominently featured Glenbrook station. Really though, it doesn't even matter if the station is actually native when the name is spot-on suburban Chicago.

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Rich Tanguy

penultimate scene:

HQ: Look around the train, do you notice anything peculiar?

JJ: Nothing really... no wait, that bike isn't tied down.

HQ: (screams) That's a potential safety hazard, NOOOOOOO

\*explosion\*

04/04/2011 12:12 PM



Gregg G

Traffic

There was no traffic and no construction -- anywhere. Cars appeared to be going 65 mph everywhere. That is not the Chicago that I know!!!

04/08/2011 03:03 AM



Broan

Also

There was a nice helicopter shot of Hodgkins Quarry. Would be cool to see that in the Quarry cinema.

04/12/2011 06:35 PM

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