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## DVD: Fog City Mavericks (2007)

**Film:** Excellent  
**DVD Transfer:** Excellent  
**DVD Extras :** n/a

**Label/Studio:** Anchor Bay / Starz Home Entertainment  
**Catalog #**  
**Region:** 1 (NTSC)

**Released:** April 8, 2008

**Genre:** Documentary / Film History

**Synopsis:** Profile of San Francisco's historical allure towards creative, independent-minded filmmakers.

**Directed by:** Gary Leva  
**Screenplay by:** Gary Leva  
**Music by:** various  
**Produced by:** Gary Leva

**Cast:** Carroll Ballard, Brad Bird, Chris Columbus, Francis Ford Coppola, Sofia Coppola, Clint Eastwood, Philip Kaufman, John Korty, John Lasseter, George Lucas, Walter Murch, Richard Schickel, Saul Zaentz, and Peter Coyote (narration).

**DVD Set Length:** 120 mins

**Colour**

**Languages:**

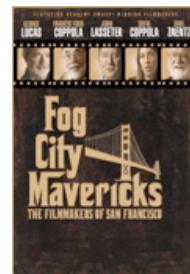
**Subtitles:**

**Special Features :**

3 On-air promo spots (:47 + 1:01 + :46)

**Comments :**

If there's a slight sense of the familiar after Gary Leva's documentary begins, it's probably because Leva directed the excellent chronicle of Francis Ford Coppola's American Zoetrope studios, **A Legacy of Filmmakers: The Early Years of American Zoetrope** (2004), which appeared as a bonus

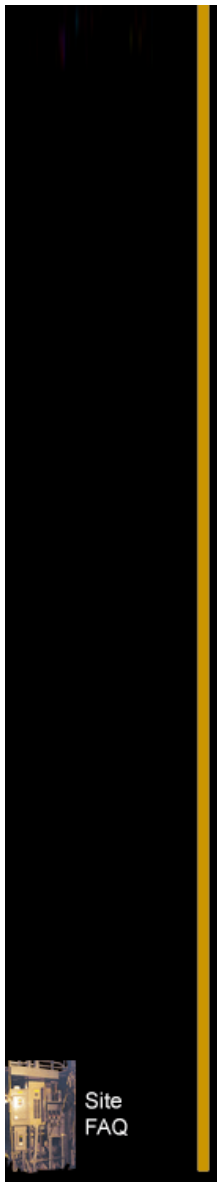


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feature on Warner Bros.' superb 2-disc set of **THX 1138** (1971).

Leva was also involved with Warner Bros.' recent 2-disc Stanley Kubrick special editions in 2007, but unlike the featurettes, **Fog City Mavericks**, released by Starz Home Entertainment, is a separate work that includes just a bit of the 2004 George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Coppola interviews (including some archival material of a less grayed Spielberg as well), but contains much new material that broadly profiles iconic, experimental, and contemporary filmmakers who find San Francisco's societal temperament conducive for moviemaking, and the ideal place to live free from the bureaucratic tentacles of major Hollywood studios and the constricting smog that tarnishes Los Angeles.

It's about a different quality of life and work, and it's about the filmmakers who regard themselves as outsiders, if not genuine independents whose involvement with the studios have been sporadic, and sometimes rare.

The doc's scope begins with a portrait of [Eadweard Muybridge](#) and his art bookstore, his panoramic stills of an urbanized San Francisco, and inventor of the [zoopraxiscope](#) which predated the film camera shutter (which made motion pictures possible). Leva showcases several generations of filmmakers who continue to work in and near the Bay City area, some enjoying spectacular success in self-styled working environments like Lucas' Skywalker Ranch, and the Pixar Studios.

Leva gives generous time to Lucas and Coppola, largely because American Zoetrope was originally established as an ambitious venue through which independent-minded filmmakers could answer Hollywood's need for youth-oriented works when its own attempts at popular entertainment (such as **Finian's Rainbow**) were floundering.

Coppola was the broker boy between the money men and the hippies, but after Lucas' **THX 1138**, the fledgling company's debut release, was quickly written off by Warner Bros. as a dud, the ex-film students had to struggle anew. Some succeeded, some didn't, but Coppola never lost touch with colleagues like Walter Murch or Carroll Ballard, and he sometimes shepherded a deal to kick start a career again or facilitate a directorial gig.

Coppola's American Zoetrope inspired Lucas to create his own creative ranch, and Apple's Steve Jobs did the same with Pixar. Leva has another chunky segment on Pixar's John Lasseter and Brad Bird as examples of the new generation, and also he flips back to veteran indie producer Saul Zaentz, who spent years running Fantasy Records before dipping into films as a total hands-on producer who nurtured and guided films from the script stage to exhibition, much in the way icons like Sam Spiegel (**The African Queen**) and Samuel Bronston (**El Cid**) made their impact during the late fifties and early sixties.

The best profile is of Zaentz, a benevolent producer who repeatedly risked everything to make films like **Amadeus** (1984) and **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest** (1975). Equally important are modest portraits of filmmakers like Ballard (**The Black Stallion**), John Korty (**The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman**), and Philip Kaufman (**The Right Stuff**).

The doc's final half hour feels a bit rushed (mostly due to the longer Lucas and Coppola portraits), but **Fog City Mavericks** is inspiring for its message of indie filmmakers succeeding, but one could say Leva's secondary (and very discreet) message is just as vital: it's good to be an outsider, but it's also important to keep ties to more successful colleagues, whose business acumen and carried relations with the Hollywood machine might give one's career an important nudge.

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