AMERICAN CINEMA PROJECT/New York Center For Visual History

"THE FILM SCHOOL GENERATION"
Host narration open
11/17/94
1:10

Hello, I'm John Lithgow. Welcome to American Cinema.

What do the directors of "Star Wars" and "Goodfellas" have in common?

They both went to film school. Yet when the filmmakers of this generation graduated in the Sixtie's, they had no plans to work for the studios. In fact, if Hollywood was on their minds at all, it was as an example of what they wanted to do differently.

The first feature of a filmmaker from USC named George Lucas had a title that read like a license plate, THX 1138. A film with striking imagery, it perplexed studio executives. He later made "Star Wars."

The first feature of a filmmaker from NYU named Martin Scorsese was picked up by an independent distributor who changed its title and put it in some local theatres. It didn't last long. He later made "Goodfellas."

Steven Spielberg. Francis Ford Coppola. Brian De Palma. Though their early work was not mainstream Hollywood, their later work would ultimately represent what Hollywood did best, with works like "E.T.," "The Godfather," and "The Untouchables," -- blockbusters.

We are going to look at a band of filmmakers who thought they could change the world, and they did... "The Film School Generation."

THE NEW YORK CENTER FOR VISUAL HISTORY
AMERICAN CINEMA PROJECT
THE FILM SCHOOL GENERATION
Continuity Script
10/21/94

CHYRON ROLL
OVER STAR FIELD

NARRATOR

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... Episode IV. A new hope. It is the end of the sixties, the beginning of a new decade. Hollywood and the old studio system is floundering, out of touch with the audiences who turn "Easy Rider" into a runaway surprise hit. Over the next few years a generation of young directors, sometimes called the movie brats, will come to power. They include Francis Coppola, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese, Brian De Palma, and Steven Spielberg, and they will make some of the most successful films of all time. They will create the phenomenon of the blockbuster movie.

FILM CLIP - MONTAGE

STAR WARS
APOCALPYSE NOW
JAWS
TAXI DRIVER
AMERICAN GRAFFITI

FILM CLIP - AMERICAN GRAFFITI:

Buddy look, the lady obviously doesn't want to....

Look, creep, you want a knuckle sandwich?

FILM CLIP - CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE THIRD KIND

NARRATOR

In the beginning, however, only two things distinguished them from old Hollywood. They have beards, and they almost all went to film school.

STEVEN SPIELBERG:
Director

I never went to film school. But when I went to Rice Hall one day to see a film festival of combined UCLA and USC student films, that's when I first saw George Lucas's work, THX 1138, the .. the short. And I met George that .. that day and I realized that there was an entire generation coming out of NYU, USC, and UCLA and I was kind of an orphan, abandoned in Long Beach, at a college that didn't really have a film program. So I even redoubled my efforts at that moment to .. to attend those two

universities. And .. and every time I went in with my application for transfer, they kept saying, no, your grades aren't high enough. Your .. and then I remember one teacher at USC said, you're probably going to Vietnam anyway.

GEORGE LUCAS:
Director

Well for me, when .. before I went to film school I was .. I was interested in maybe becoming an English major or becoming an anthropology student. I wanted to go to art school and become an illustrator. Those were the options that I was playing with. I didn't know very much about film at all. I was interested in photography and it was really out of my interest to become an illustrator. I ended up at USC film school. I didn't know anything about it. I thought, this might be interesting.

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE
LUCAS IN SCHOOL

LUCAS (VO)

I got in there and within a month I had discovered something that I loved, something that I was very good at.

LUCAS: I was learning the techniques of filmmaking and I learned them very fast in a period of 18 months. I learned about animation, about screenwriting, about directing, about camera, about editing. A whole range of .. of techniques and I learned it very fast.

FILM CLIP - THX 1138
ELECTRONIC LABYRINTH

LUCAS (VO)
And I think that was a real advantage because when I got into the film business I could get jobs as a cameraman, I could get jobs as an editor. I could work as a writer. And eventually I became a director.

JOHN MILIUS (VO)
George Lucas I remember did the first film. He spent his money and .. and did the first film in color. That was a big breakthrough, that somehow he'd gotten the Navy or somebody to process it.

JOHN MILIUS:
Director
He would take their money that they had and their allotment of film and try and make the longest possible film, which

was often just hideously boring. But they did achieve something, it was long.

FILM CLIP - MARCELLO I'M SO BORED

(over animation)

Feeling big never feels bad. Money, pictures and sex, it's the .. kind of the same, it's interchangeable. Sometimes I don't know whether it's sex and pictures that I'm working on, or pictures and sex. Cause I .. you know I just really don't know like .. you know. Well when you've got an interchangeable medium.....

STILL - COPPOLA

LYNDA MYLES:
Author

I think it's interesting that Coppola was .. who was the eldest of the group, went to UCLA, which was a film school noted for a more personal kind of cinema, as opposed to USC which was always seen much more as a .. a film school gearing people for .. for the industry.

MILIUS: Their films .. ours were trying to be you know, professional and imitative of Hollywood. Theirs always had beautiful naked girls running through graveyards. That was kind of a standard scene in any UCLA film.

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE

MILIUS (VO)
They were you know I guess you could say more left-wing, a little more far out. They used more powerful chemicals. And you know they smoked stronger things.

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE
UCLA film school students

MARTIN SCORSESE (VO)
The reason I went to New York film school is because I was living in New York. We were totally separated from the main part of the industry, which was California and Hollywood.

MARTIN SCORSESE:
Director We always felt that the students on the West Coast, USC and UCLA, uh, in a funny way were ab .. this was our imagination,

may .. I think to a certain extent it may have been true too. They .. they .. they were out in the same city. They might have more of an ability to feed right into the industry. And to a certain extent, the type of films that were made by California students I think had .. they .. they looked better in a sense. They had .. they were slicker, but not in a bad way. I mean in a good way. They had more command of craft. Whereas in New York we were .. if we got an exposure we thought that was pretty good. I mean it was .. some .. if something came back on the film, it was great you know.

FILM CLIP - <u>WHO'S THAT KNOCKING AT MY DOOR?</u>

SCORSESE (VO)

Technique was not as important to us as what the film had to say.

BRIAN DE PALMA (VO)

We really were kind of making street movies. Marty was making movies about the Lower East Side, the Italians of the Lower East Side. We'd have seen all

these sort of 16-millimeter documentaries that had shown us things we'd never seen before.

BRIAN DE PALMA:
DIRECTOR

And in the combination of the .. all the crazy things going on in the theatre with Grotowksi and environmental theatre and interacting with the audiences and that kind of very strong black movement at the time, and anti-war movement. So all this stuff was sort of churning around in one's consciousness.

FILM CLIP - HI, MOM

DE PALMA (VO)

This whole new way of involving an audience in a kind of visceral way that they have never been involved before.

What's his real name?

How does he know.

Freeman. Martin Freeman. I know him.

My name is Zinn, Murray Zinn.

(OVERLAP)

Martin Freeman, where do you live, Martin?

I live up in Scarsdale.

(OVERLAP)

What do you mean Scarsdale? Come on Martin, what's this, huh?

(OVERLAP)

SCORSESE: And the only thing we could do was try to express ourselves on film the way that people around us were doing that. Uh, and might that .. we'd hoped of course that that would lead to making films in narrative cinema in America.

LUCAS: Definitely when we were in film school there was absolutely no chance at all of making it into the Hollywood film industry. And nobody even considered it. The most chance we had was maybe to become a ticket-taker at Disneyland.

MYLES: Well at the time, um, all these directors emerged, there was actually no way that they were going to be employed by Hollywood. Hollywood was very much a closed industry in those days. And the way in to theatrical filmmaking was via

STILL - Roger Corman

MYLES (VO)

Roger Corman. And Coppola was the first one obviously to work for him and later, Scorsese. Corman provided the model for the sort of independence they wanted.

GARY KURTZ:
Producer

His big advantage I think was his output deal that he had with American International and several television companies.

STILLS: Corman

KURTZ (VO)

Anything that he produced they would put on the air. It didn't matter what it was, um, as long as it was long enough. He realized more than anybody else working in the commercial industry at that time that there was a lot of talent amongst film students. They would work very inexpensively. And work very hard.

SCORSESE:

WHO'S THAT KNOCKING was shown in California, under a different title. The theatre manager didn't like the title, so he changed it. Which was a

good idea, I didn't like the title either. And .. Roger Corman saw it, or people that worked for Roger saw it. And Roger was always looking for .. new young talent coming out of universities or at .. out of anywhere in California or New York, whatever. And he offered me the sequel. He called it, the sequel to BLOODY MAMA, which was BOXCAR BERTHA.

STILLS -
Milius et al

MILIUS (VO)

The thing that applied real well from student filmmaking to that kind of filmmaking was to make what you had go as far as it was possible ...

MILIUS: ... to try and get it to look as much like a bigger film as possible. And to never sit there and say, I need more.

FILM CLIP - <u>DILLINGER</u>

I'd like to withdraw my entire account.

Your entire account?

Yes ma'am, the whole thing.

And your name?

John. John Dillinger.

All right, everybody, hold it right where you are, this is a robbery.

MILIUS: I look at it today and it looks real crude. But I didn't feel terribly constrained when I was doing it. The things that I liked and wanted to put into it ...

FILM CLIP - DILLINGER

MILIUS (VO)

... the sense of the land and the kind of folk tale told in a kind John Ford vista, that's all free, that's there.

ACTOR

Johnny.

MILIUS (VO, CONT'D)

You just have to be inspired by THE SEARCHERS or something else good to steal and I didn't need a big budget to do that.

WALTER MURCH:
Sound Designer In those days, that was the end of the Sixties, the studio system, which had had such force in the Thirties and Forties and had such difficulty in the

Fifties, was really nearing the end of its thrust. But it was still in place and still wielded a considerable amount of power and held things in a considerable inertia. So the option of 25-year-old kids who were interested in film was not as clear as it is today to get into the industry, because once .. once you got in, it was kind of unnerving how sclerotic it was.

PETER BISKIND:
Editor, *Premiere*

The studios were still turning out films like DARLING LILI and um, they did PAINT YOUR WAGON, where Clint Eastwood and Lee Marvin got to sing.

STILL: Julie Andrew
SOUND OF MUSIC

BISKIND (VO)

'Cause they were all trying to repeat the success of SOUND OF MUSIC and MY FAIR LADY, with little success. And a lot of the studios were close to bankruptcy.

PAUL SCHRADER:
Director

Some studios were put on the block. A number of executives lost their jobs.

And there was a real fear in the executive suites because they weren't at all sure what people wanted to see. Particularly what young people wanted to see.

STILLS: EASY RIDER

BISKIND (VO)

EASY RIDER came along in 1969, cost $500,000 dollars. Made by nobodies. Dope, unhappy ending, hippies, long-hairs. I mean it cleaned up, it was a huge hit. And it was really a revolution.

BISKIND: These old guys in the studios had not the foggiest idea of why this film was so successful, or what was going on and all they knew was that there was a guy named ...

STILL - Dennis Hopper

BISKIND (VO)

... Dennis Hopper who directed it. So they grabbed onto the directors as saviors.

SCORSESE: Although that's a film that's not .. I wasn't part of that culture, uh, but it

did open a lot of doors for many people in California. And .. at the same time, giving you the chance behind the camera and almost a deification of the director.

FILM CLIP - RAIN PEOPLE

Rain people are people made of rain. And when they cry they disappear all together, cause they cry themselves away.

NARRATOR

One such deified director was Francis Coppola. Coppola's dream was to own his own studio, to be called American Zoetrope.

FILM CLIP - RAIN PEOPLE

Where did you hear about the rain people?

I don't remember.

Were they in a story someone told you?

No, it's true.

Did you ever see them?

MURCH (VO)

Francis wrote a script that involved a cross-country journey. It was supposed to be kind of an existential leap into the unknown. In fact they wound up in Nebraska. And we said, if we can do this in Nebraska, there's no reason that we'd have to be in Hollywood.

MURCH: And it was within three or four months after that that .. Francis had made the decision to set up American Zoetrope in San Francisco.

FRED ROOS: Producer

Francis wanted to own everything that .. that he needed to make a film. He wanted to own the cameras, own the .. the lights and sound ... own the editing machine, and .. the building. He didn't want to have to answer to anybody. He wanted to be able to mount a movie two days after he thought of it, if he .. if he wanted to. Um, that grew to a bigger version of that, later in the Seventies, where he came back to Hollywood and bought this studio, ...

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE
Coppola & Michael
Powell walking around
Zoetrope Studio

ROOS (VO)

... this physical old studio. And that was the second incarnation of his .. of his Zoetrope dream.

COPPOLA (in clip)

Every time I've seen a studio in different travels, you know, Ardmore in Ireland and my first impulse is to want to immediately buy it and bring a lot of people there you know and (OVERLAP) start it going again. But .. there are a lot of forces today that .. that work against that.

POWELL (in clip)

I'm all for studio based pictures anyway.

TERI GARR (VO)

I felt like we were in that play, GYPSY, and that you know, he was our mother. And whenever these people came in that were .. had the money, like the investors from some shopping mall in Indiana, he'd say, ...

TERI GARR:
Actor

... dress up real nice kids and do the scene for them. And see, here's what I'm doing, this is what I have and give us some money. And um, they .. then they did. And then he'd spend it all. But he had .. he had many more ideas. He said, eventually we're all going to be owners in this. You know, that we're going to put you under contract and .. and see that in the parking lot right there, we're going to put a beautiful commissary with a glass roof. And his dreams just .. his imagination just was going on and on and on, to stuff that it wasn't really relevant to making the movie. But he had this wonderful idea for the artists and .. it .. it just never works.

SPIELBERG:

In a way, Francis attempted to be all of our godfathers. You know, to this day he calls me, Stevie. Little Stevie Spielberg. You know I .. I love it, but only he calls me that. But he .. but he would always sort of have us sitting at

his feet listening to .. the way movies should be made, because Francis of our entire group, he was actually a generation before mine, but Francis was the first young guy ever to make it.

FILM CLIP - THX 1138

MURCH (VO)

Francis had signed a development deal with Warner Brothers. So the first film that Zoetrope produced under this agreement was THX 1138, which George had made at film school, at USC. The challenge was to take a student film, which was 20 minutes long and expand it ...

MURCH: ... into a feature, with a story that had a beginning, middle and an end, and yet had something of that crazy .. futuristic vision that THX had.

LUCAS: The truth of it is I was very involved in nonlinear filmmaking and non-story, non-character driven scenarios. And I felt this was a chance to sort of push the envelope, to do the kinds of films that I had been doing in film school and do it on a grander scale.

MURCH: We kept saying that this is not a film about the future, it's a film from the future.

FILM CLIP - THX 1138

MURCH (VO)
So there are things in the film that are mysterious, that we don't bother to explain because in the future, everyone would understand this.

MURCH: But you know it still has a car chase.

FILM CLIP - THX 1138

MURCH: It still has a romance. It .. has an escape.

FILM CLIP - THX 1138

LUCAS (VO)
When I made THX, I knew it was going to be controversial in terms of what the studio wanted. Um, I .. they .. they gave me the chance to make the movie. They didn't really understand it. It was the opportunity of a lifetime. And I even said to Francis, I said, I'm never going to get a chance to make a movie like this again, I'm really going to go all the way with this. And if it destroys my career, I guess that's

what's going to happen, but I'm going to .. I'll never get this shot again. So I took it.

SCORSESE: This was the time to make it, if there was any time at all, this was going to be it. So there was a great deal of urgency about that. And .. a lot of energy. We did everything and anything you know to get .. to get in there.

FILM CLIP - MEAN STREETS:

Pain in hell has two sides, the kind you can touch with your hand, the kind you can feel in your heart, your soul, the spiritual side. And you know, the worst of the two is the spiritual.

JONATHAN TAPLIN (VO)

Marty knew every setup ...

JONATHAN TAPLIN: Producer ... every shot, and he had it all drawn out so he could literally show his cameraman exactly in pictures how the shot would look.

FILM CLIP - MEAN STREETS

TAPLIN (VO)

We were doing 27, 28 setups a day, which is phenomenal. He had thought out almost every single tracking shot and it became his signature. And we just left the camera on the dolly all the time. So you know every move had a little bit of choreography. Marty today is much calmer than he was then. I mean Marty was about to burst at any minute in 1973.

SCORSESE: I didn't even think the film was going to be released. I just got the money to make it. I thought these guys, it was great, they gave me the money and maybe some day they'll be showing it. I said, I doubt if this picture's going to get on the screen.

FILM CLIP - MEAN STREETS:

DE NIRO

Now I borrowed money all over this neighborhood, left and right, from everybody and I never paid 'em back, so I can't borrow no money

from nobody, no more, right? So who does that leave me to borrow money from, but you?

TAPLIN: We went over to Warner's at lunchtime and it was in a little screening room. And uh, there was an executive there named, John Calley, who is really in a lot of ways responsible for a lot of interesting pictures that got made at that time.

FILM CLIP - MEAN STREETS:

DE NIRO

I borrow money from you because you're the only jerk-off around here that I can borrow money from without paying 'em back, right?

TAPLIN: And about ten minutes into the screening, this waiter comes in with a tray of food. Literally right in the middle of the picture. And says, who's got the tuna on rye? And Marty is just dying. They're .. you know they're not watching the picture, they're trying to

figure out their lunch order. And you know this was just typical Hollywood arrogance.

FILM CLIP - MEAN STREETS:

DE NIRO

Come on, come on, come on. Come on, come on. Fuckface.

TAPLIN: And Calley comes and sits down next to me and we were both dying. And he says, this is the best movie I've seen all year, but I have to take a leak. Do you mind stopping it? And .. and .. where's the button? Where's the.... And so he went back and then we started. We finished the movie and he got up and he said, we're buying this movie.

SCORSESE: As soon as the film came out, as soon as the film was released, it was released around the same time as AMERICAN GRAFFITI. And George .. George Lucas's picture. And of course our picture a few weeks later went into the ground, you know, buried forever to a certain extent, except that you know .. and then

it came out of .. you know, on television and things like that. People, there's still a .. I still .. people still stop me in the street about it.

STILLS: AMERICAN GRAFFITI

SCORSESE (VO)

But .. but AMERICAN GRAFFITI is .. it was the overall across the board, a real American memory, nostalgic piece.

NARRATOR

George Lucas' "American Graffiti" was a massive surprise hit. It cost less than a million dollars, and earned over 55 million.

MURCH: Any time a film comes along that is different, there is a risk. The risk is nobody's going to get it, or the other risk, which is .. the good side is, the studio is kind of behind the curve and this film is in advance of the curve. They're where the audience is and it was a surprise. Well I think that .. that's what happened with GRAFFITI. It .. the

audience was more ready for the film than Universal in 1973 thought they were.

STILLS: AMERICAN GRAFFITI

LUCAS: It was an exercise in learning the craft of storytelling and the craft of character development. But even then I pushed the envelope very far and it was so far out that the studios again, didn't like it. They didn't want to do it. They said, this is just a musical montage, it doesn't mean anything. But it was a straight and as conservative as I could get at that time.

MURCH: When you read the script of ...

FILM CLIP - AMERICAN GRAFFITI

MURCH (VO)

... GRAFFITI, at the top of every scene was the usual things. "Exterior--parking lot, Mel's." But then there would be the name of a song that George was playing when he wrote the scene.

AUDIO - "SIXTEEN CANDLES"

MURCH (VO)

The problem was that this was for every scene in the film, which is 45 scenes, which meant 45 songs. Up till that point, no film had ever contemplated anything like that.

MURCH: We developed something for sound that photography has always had, which is depth of field. Meaning, there are things in the front that are well lit and in focus and there are things in the background that are less well lit and out of focus.

FILM CLIP - AMERICAN GRAFFITI

KURTZ (VO)

We knew we had to approach it in a semi-documentary style.

KURTZ: So for instance at places like Mel's drive-in, what we really did was go around and change the light bulbs into photo floods and replace the neon with new neon. We'd had .. most of the neon had gone. And that was really the lighting style. With a little bit of movie lighting kind of thrown in where

necessary to .. to boost it up. But 80 percent of the lighting was .. was real.

FILM CLIP - AMERICAN GRAFFITI

KURTZ (VO)

Inside the cars, we used a slight booster lighting of minimal kind to bring up a .. slightly above the ambient light.

LUCAS (VO)

Well I was basically a documentary filmmaker from the streets. AMERICAN GRAFFITI was a kind of a documentary film in a dramatic context.

LUCAS: I was actually in film school in the Sixties, in .. in 1965, 1966. It was the beginning of all of the youth movements that were going on around the world. And the film departments were no different. We felt that we were going to take over the world, that we were going to make real change and that things were going to be different from the way they were.

KURTZ: I think what happened sort of in the mid-Sixties was it was the decline of the major studios, the rise of the

independent filmmaker. And a sort of change in the intellectual attitude of college students in America, especially. That those students that always wanted to write the great American novel, changed into those that wanted to make the great American movie.

GARR: Well the people that I was hanging out with at the time would go and see films like ...

STILL: <u>400 BLOWS</u>

GARR (VO)

... THE 400 BLOWS and we all just went, what the hell is that? I mean that's a whole new feeling. And it leaves you stunned when you leave the theatre.

GARR: And how can we make people in Hollywood that are making movies like those Elvis Presley movies, that are making a lot of money, come around to do movies like that? And .. and I think eventually it all .. it melded together. A little left turn here and a little right turn there and finally, I mean, people listened.

MYLES: Well I think actually they were all influenced by the New Wave. I mean the range of influences on them is actually quite vast. I mean Milius discovered Kurosawa, when he was surfing in Hawaii. Um, in fact, DePalma in the late Sixties was talking about wanting to be the American Godard. Um, I think Truffaut, Antonioni.

STILLS:
THE CONVERSATION
BLOW-UP

MYLES (VO)
I mean if, look at .. from .. THE CONVERSATION, I mean BLOWUP's an obvious influence. So I think they absorbed a lot of influences from world cinema.

SCORSESE: The first and foremost were .. were Hollywood films. That was the main thing, because I grew up experiencing those.

MILIUS: Ford and Hawks.

SPIELBERG: Victor Fleming.

DE PALMA: Hitchcock and -

SPIELBERG: Welles.

SCORSESE: British films.

MILIUS: David Lean.

DE PALMA: Godard and the New Wave.

MILIUS: Godard.

SCORSESE: Truffaut and Godard.

SCHRADER: Godard and Truffaut and Louis Malle.

MILIUS: I liked Philippe de Broca

SPIELBERG: Michael Curtiz.

SCORSESE: Francesco Rossi and there was the first Bertolucci films.

MILIUS: Antonioni.

SCHRADER: Visconti.

DE PALMA: Pennebaker, Leacock.

SCORSESE: Shirley Clark.

DE PALMA: The Maysles.

SCORSESE: John Cassavetes.

FILM CLIP - <u>WHO'S THAT KNOCKING AT MY DOOR</u>

BISKIND (VO)

Well all these kids were steeped in old Hollywood movies, you know, the movies of John Ford and Howard Hawks and particularly in Hitchcock.

BISKIND: The films were filled with homages to one director or another, and to one film or another. And often entire films, particularly in the work of Brian

DePalma became reworkings of, in DePalma's case, of Hitchcock's films.

FILM CLIP - SISTERS:

The bride. Hey, now you know you're not supposed to cut the cake until you make a wish and blow out the candles.

DE PALMA: Well I was very interested in that period of my career of learning how to express things as clearly in film images as possible. And may directors of course drawn to Hitchcock. So I patterned something on very much like PSYCHO and then created ways of .. of characters observing each other and following each other and learning all the .. specific Hitchcock vocabulary.

FILM CLIP - SISTERS

DE PALMA: What is cinema and how do you express things in purely cinematic terms without trying to use other forms to basically, me talking to the camera.

FILM CLIP - SISTERS

SISKIND: I think it did become a limitation and .. and even somebody like DePalma would say later in the Eighties, after he worked off of some strong scripts, like SCARFACE and UNTOUCHABLES and CASUALTIES OF WAR, he, I think eventually realized that he needed a stronger grounding in script than he had recognized, you know, five years, ten years earlier.

MYLES: It's boring when every film student or that .. most of the .. the audience that was audience (INAUD) was semi-literate, just sit watching a film and saying, oh ...

STILL: PSYCHO
JOHN WAYNE

MYLES (VO)
... that's the shot sequence from PSYCHO, or that's .. the discovery of the burnt homestead from THE SEARCHERS. I mean it's not interesting.

MYLES: And I think again, if you .. if you were analyze in fact all the films this group had made, the films that are most interesting I think are the ones that

are most personal, not the ones that are borrowings, but the ones that are actually rooted much more in .. in their own experience. Um, and I think for example with Milius, I think his best film is .. was BIG WEDNESDAY, which is absolutely rooted in the time that he was a .. a surfer in Hawaii and in California.

FILM CLIP - BIG WEDNESDAY

MYLES (VO)

Obviously you can talk about BIG WEDNESDAY in terms of Ford, this sense of mythologizing the past. But it's totally imbued with his own past and his own experience.

FILM CLIP - BIG WEDNESDAY

JOHN MILIUS: It was a very, very important film only at the time because that was a part of my youth. And I thought that that's what a filmmaker should do is explore sort of personal things that you know.

SCHRADER: It was a cliche that everybody has one good story in them, which is the story

.. their .. the story of their life. And when you are starting out, that's .. those are the stories you .. you write about. Uh, and .. and I .. and I think that was considered to be you know the proper thing to do. You know that's .. that's what .. that's what socially responsible people did. He would address your life and your issues.

FILM CLIP - TAXI DRIVER

DE NIRO (VO)

Only this has followed me my whole life. Everywhere. In bars and cars, sidewalks, stores, everywhere. There's no escape and he dies a lonely man.

BISKIND: At the beginning of the Seventies when the studios had absolutely no idea of what to make, if a director came in with a project and said, this project's going to make money, the studio is not going to say no. And so suddenly directors who .. these kids who had been taught in film school that the essence of directing was self-expression got to

make their movies for the first time. It had really never happened before. You could never make a movie like ...

STILL: TAXI DRIVER

BISKIND (VO)

... TAXI DRIVER. I mean it was amazing that TAXI DRIVER got made within the system.

SCHRADER: I and Scorsese and De Niro each had some success in other films. And so then it got to the point where Columbia said, well look if everyone is saying somebody else should make it, why don't we make it? You know, the price is right. It's low. We'll take the chance. So the difference is that even though that was hard, you .. the studios did make those films.

FILM CLIP - TAXI DRIVER:

DE NIRO

You make the move. It's your move.

BISKIND: You know, outside of whatever charisma De .. De Niro has...

FILM CLIP - TAXI DRIVER:

You talking to me?

BISKIND: I can't think of anybody less sympathetic than Travis Bickle.

FILM CLIP - TAXI DRIVER:

Are you talking to me?

BISKIND: You'd cross the street to get away from this guy.

FILM CLIP - TAXI DRIVER:

Then who the hell are else are you talking to? You talking to me?

BISKIND: Plus it ends with this unprecedented carnage, which is extraordinary, even now. I mean if you watch the .. I watched the film a few months ago and it's still like probably one of the most violent scenes in American cinema.

FILM CLIP - TAXI DRIVER:

BISKIND: Any studio in their right mind would be mad to make a film like that and yet the film did very well. Only in the Seventies.

TAPLIN: I would differentiate a lot between what Marty was doing and what I was doing and ...

STILL: Lucas and Spielberg

TAPLIN (VO)

... say, what George Lucas was doing and Steven Spielberg was doing. Because ...

TAPLIN: ... George and Steven really came from a very kind of populist, middle American point of view and wanted to make movies that would move everybody. And Marty wanted to make movies that moved himself.

MYLES: I think there's another contradiction in all this, which is that when you look at a director like Coppola, who's committed in all sorts of ways to .. in his own work and through Zoetrope, through the work of others, to making personal cinema, I think it's actually ...

STILL: Copola

MYLES (VO)

... arguable that his so-called commercial movies like THE GODFATHER, are of a more personal nature than his so-called art movies.

FILM CLIP - <u>THE GODFATHER</u>:

BRANDO

We've known each other many years, but this is the first time you ever came to me for counsel and for help. I can't remember the last time that you invited me to your house for a cup of coffee, even though my wife is godmother to your only child. But let's be frank here. You never wanted my friendship. And you were afraid to be in my debt.

AL RUDDY:
Producer

The first couple of days of Brando, I remember getting a call from Bob, saying, well is .. are we going to subtitle this? Cause you know Marlon talking like this and we didn't .. we didn't know what the hell he was saying. On top which, the opening scene where he was petting the cat. The opening where he's petting the cat was a cat that was laying around the studio. And so the cat started purring and all you heard was the cat purring and Brando mumbling something. And they start freaking out.

FILM CLIP - THE GODFATHER

RUDDY (VO)

And it was dark. And it was very unsettling to people on the West Coast.

I believe in America. America has made my fortune.

RUDDY: When we were mixing the movie, he asked Bob Evans and I, he said, is this movie does over $60 million dollars will you guys buy me a .. a car? A Mercedes? We all .. both said, absolutely, if $60 million dollars, we'll buy you a Mercedes. The day the movie did $60 million and one dollar, I got a call from the president of Mercedes-Benz of North America, who wanted to substantiate that in fact I was going to pay half for a special car that Mr. Coppola had ordered. And I said, had ordered? He said, we're only going to build three next year, he said. One for Franco, one for the Pope and one for Mr. Coppola. Those cost like $70,000 dollars.

STILL: THE GODFATHER

NARRATOR

In January 1973, with box office earnings of over 80 million dollars, "The Godfather" became the biggest grossing film of all time.

TAPLIN: Francis and George Lucas and Steven Spielberg did become the dominant force in Hollywood for a number of years. And still are the dominant force in Hollywood within one way or another. Um, it was a generation that .. that had its finger on some very specific pulse. But I'd even differentiate Francis from Lucas and Spielberg who really were just you know kind of tapped in to the American psyche.

SCORSESE: With Spielberg you see it was a different thing. He .. he comes from television. And we .. we met in the early Seventies. But he was a very different kind of person.

SPIELBERG: When I turned 19, I made a movie in 35-millimeter called, AMBLIN. And that movie was seen by the then head of T.V. at Universal studios, Sid Sheinberg(?), who is now head of the studio. And he saw the film, was impressed, asked me to come to .. to his office to meet him. And he sort of bedazzled me with offering me this seven-year term contract. And uh, attempted to put me to work directing professional television shows.

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE

Bill, step back this much.

SPIELBERG (VO)

If I did learn one thing from T.V., it taught me to think quickly on my feet. To .. to prepare, to plan, to know what I want to do when I get to work in the morning so that I can accomplish the .. the job.

SPIELBERG: And T.V. for me wasn't an art form, it was a job. I .. actually because of television didn't know for a while there whether or not I wanted to continue making film, because I felt that it was

like working in a sweatshop. And I wasn't getting any of that stimulation, that gratification that I even got making 8-millimeter war movies when I was twelve years old. And I .. I didn't have that passion, because television sort of smothered the passion. It's only when I got into feature films, actually when I got into T.V. movies and made ...

FILM CLIP - DUEL:

SPIELBERG (VO)

... DUEL that I kind of rediscovered the .. the fun about making films.

And what's your name, sir?

David Mann.

How do you spell that please?

M-a-n-n. That's two n's.

I'd like to report a truck driver that's been endangering my life.

Your name again?

David Mann.

SPIELBERG (VO)

DUEL was a film that was discovered in theatres overseas.

SPIELBERG: And um, I remember taking my first trip to Europe. I'd never been over .. never been out of the U.S. before. And going to Europe for the first time to do publicity for DUEL and discovering a lot of people out there who loved movies. I'm talking about the journalists, the writers, loved movies. Cherished films. Much more than I ever sensed that the American journalists loved and cherished pictures. But it was .. I .. I was .. you know sort of .. sort of idealized and idolized and lionized. And I felt wonderful about that and I said to myself, gee, there really is a .. a generation overseas that loves movies with a passion.

DAVID BROWN: Producer He once mentioned to me that he liked to make .. there were films and there were movies. And he liked to do films. Never knowing he would become the biggest moviemaker of all time.

FILM CLIP - <u>JAWS</u>:

That's a 20-footer.

SPIELBERG: I think with JAWS, because it came from a number one best-selling novel, that Universal gave a little more topspin to the advertising program. But .. but no more so than they gave to the other 12 films they had coming out that year. I know that we .. they didn't spend any more money on that film than .. they did on any other film in terms of publicity. Only after ...

FILM CLIP - JAWS

SPIELBERG (VO)

... JAWS was a hit the first week in theatres did Universal begin chasing the success with .. to keep the film in the awareness of the public.

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE

NARRATOR

It was the massive world-wide success of "Jaws" which put the idea of the blockbuster movie firmly on the map.

PETER BART (VO)

People didn't really talk about blockbusters that much in those days.

That was an idea that began to take shape in the early to mid-Seventies. The public doesn't realize that the .. the character, what makes the picture a blockbuster is the willingness of people to see it two or three times, like STAR WARS, or JAWS.

PETER BART:
Editor, *Variety*

There are not enough people who go to movies out there to make something a $100-200 million dollar picture unless it's .. you see it .. does that have an audience? So all of a sudden, by the mid-Seventies the movie industry was traumatized. The pot of gold began to take shape. And .. and studios began to say, aha, can't we open a picture in more theatres and .. and spend more money to advertize? And the whole interior dialogue in studios was distorted and I think corrupted irreparably.

FILM CLIP - <u>STAR WARS</u>

LUCAS:

I made STAR WARS. It was a very difficult film to make. And a lot of

problems involved. It was with very little money, very little time. I finished it, I showed it to my friends. They said, oh gee, George, I really feel sorry for you. This is too bad. Better luck next time. And then it became an even bigger hit. But I had absolutely no idea that it was going to be a blockbuster.

FILM CLIP - <u>STAR WARS</u>:

I have you now.

What?

Yahoo.

PAUL HIRSCH (VO)

It opened a year after the end of the Vietnam war. And I think the country had gone through such a trauma ...

PAUL HIRSCH:
Editor

... of being divided. The left against the right, the pro-war and anti-war had been at each other's throats for so many years and with such bitterness that they were, everyone, was looking for an opportunity to find something they could share in common and feel good about and unite around.

FILM CLIP - STAR WARS

HIRSCH (VO)

George told me that, what I'm really making here is sort of like a Disney ...

HIRSCH: ... movie. So he said, Disney films always make $16 million dollars. You could look at every picture they've ever released, they make $16 million dollars. This picture is costing around ten, so there's no way we're going to break even on the film. He says ...

HIRSCH (VO)

... but I think that with the merchandising of products related to the film, we may be able to break even.

FILM CLIP - ARCHIVE

BART (VO)

STAR WARS for the first time brought in the concept of .. that .. that a film represented a franchise. That every movie could be sold in all of its little parts. Um, there were products. There was product placement.

BART: Um, every movie became an industry unto itself. That was something that no one envisioned say in 1970.

MYLES: I can remember at the time of ...

STILL: CARRIE

MYLES (VO)

... CARRIE, which was a success, but not a blockbuster, ...

MYLES: ... that there was a sense with DePalma that he was .. he was obviously pleased by the response to the film. But frustrated that, I think, possibly because he thought the marketing hadn't been quite strong enough. That he thought CARRIE could have done more. And there was an extraordinary desire to .. to emulate the others and have this ...

STILL: Brian De Palma
and Kevin Costner

MYLES (VO)

... phenomenal success, which I suppose (INAUD) he .. he had later with THE UNTOUCHABLES.

DE PALMA (VO)

You can't really be that experimental or ...

DE PALMA: ... that odd or idiosyncratic or follow

your muse to some absurd end, if you're trying to open in a thousand theatres or two thousand theatres and you know do $30-$20 million dollars a weekend. So that's a bit of a problem. And once you get that fever in your blood, it's hard to get it out.

SCORSESE: Every time a studio chose to make a film with me, they had hoped that the film I'd make would be on the .. economic level let's say, the economics of it would become like THE GODFATHER, or like a JAWS. Although, my films are very, very different you know. And I .. I .. I be .. I kind of .. I didn't quite believe that. I just .. I just kind of .. I .. I kind of realized after doing ...

FILM CLIP: <u>NEW YORK, NEW YORK</u>

SCORSESE (VO)

... NEW YORK, NEW YORK that it wasn't going to be that way.

Did I tell you to have that baby?

Did I tell you to have that .. that

.. that goddam baby? No I didn't tell you, you had it. Now you have it, now keep it.

That's it, good, keep hitting me.

That's right. Go ahead, hit me.

That's right. You had it. Now you're crying when it gets tough?

Oh be quiet.

When it gets tough, you cry?

SCORSESE: And then the lifestyles sort of get a little crazy there too, where you start to really be .. you get into kind of a .. doing ten things at once and .. pouring your energy into places where it shouldn't go. Overdoing it in every level. And somehow you come out alive. I came out alive .. alive two years, but ...

FILM CLIP: NEW YORK, NEW YORK

SCORSESE (VO)

... the two years were quite .. quite horrendous.

BISKIND (VO)

The phenomenal amounts of .. of power

and .. you know this excess that was showered on some of them, you know ...

BISKIND: ... like Coppola, between 1972 ...

STILLS: PATTON, GODFATHER II, THE CONVERSATION

BISKIND (VO)

... and 1974, with his Oscar for PATTON, through GODFATHER I, through THE CONVERSATION, into GODFATHER II, was unbelievably successful. I mean I don't think anybody, even Spielberg, subsequently had a .. had that kind of intensity and incandescence for like a short .. for a two-year period. And the effects on someone's personality who has to live through that kind of thing is enormous you know. And then going off to make APOCALYPSE NOW in the jungle for two or three years, that tends to isolate a person.

MILIUS: To me that symbolizes the best of filmmaking and the biggest risk in that you take uh, a subject matter that's kind of taboo, you, you know get a script you believe in. And you get a

madman and say, here, take this money and go to some distant part of the world and see what you're going to come back with.

FILM CLIP - APOCALYPSE NOW:

Jeff, on the bow. Stand by please. Let's go.

MILIUS (VO)

But unless you take the .. the risk and say to somebody, like Francis, who's capable of doing something really great, here, go off and push the edges of the envelope, do the best you can and let's see what happens, you're not .. you're never going to make that kind of film.

SPIELBERG: Films cost more to make today than they ever did before. It means that the bigger ideas, the .. the .. the .. the .. if I ever wanted to do THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, like Cecil B. DeMille, that picture today is almost not affordable. You almost couldn't go off

and make a picture on the grand scale of THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH without spending between $65 and $85 million dollars. So yeah, the pressure's on. Every time you make a movie, even a small art film is costing $15 to $20 to $25 million dollars. So it's not easy anymore going back to the old days when you got more bang for your buck.

BISKIND: The amounts of money riding on a picture are so great that it tends to impede the creative process. You don't want to take those risks because you're afraid you're going to lose your shirt. I mean one film can kill a studio. And that was .. that .. essentially that's what destroyed the Seventies.

LUCAS: I found myself after STAR WARS, one, it was very difficult. I had no money, I was under a lot of pressure. I didn't like not having complete control over everything, which I did have on GRAFFITI and I did have on THX. I edited them, I photographed them, I wrote them. I .. I

did the whole thing. And I had control. And if anything went wrong, I just pushed the guy aside and said, here I'll .. I'll get the prop.

FILM CLIP - STAR WARS

LUCAS (VO)

When STAR WARS, I couldn't do that, it was way too big and I had to rely on a lot of other people. So after I finished STAR WARS I knew with the success of that that I had a chance to finish the saga, cause I had this three-part thing. Only I knew when I finished STAR WARS, I wouldn't have the energy and the control by directing it, because I was down there in the trenches trying to direct. There was too much stuff going on above me that would ...

LUCAS: ... sabotage the .. the effort. So I moved upstairs and I became an executive producer.

MILIUS: It was like the you know, other ideologies that failed you know, like Communism or something you know. I mean it's a great idea and you can believe in

it. It's very glorious to run up the steps of the Presidium bearing a red flag you know, but then the bureaucracy takes over. You know and in that case, the idea was that all of these young filmmakers were going to be able to express themselves. And they were going to have .. be filled with .. with great ideas that would change the world and give us great works of art. When in fact, these young filmmakers had no great ideas at all, or any ideas at all for the most part.

STILL: Milius

MILIUS (VO)
And you know only gave us greater explosions.

SCORSESE: And these days, it's a matter of yeah, the film should make money. You know, it really should. But if you feel it's not going to, if you feel it's not going to be .. make money like a GOOD FELLAS made money, which I didn't think would make money either, but it did, uh, or CAPE FEAR, then you have to be prepared

to cut your budget down, so the studio takes less of a risk and it's tough on me. Well I have to find, it's my problem ...

STILL: Scorsese

SCORSESE (VO)

... I have to find a way to get the picture made and be able to say what I want to say.

SCHRADER: I .. I felt then and .. and feel now that the important thing is to .. is to keep working and keep making interesting films. And even if that means working at lower budgets, or ...

STILL: Schrader

SCHRADER (VO)

... now, working for cable television, you know, so that's the important thing.

LUCAS: One opportunity has presented itself after another. And I've kind of moved along. I mean if you had asked me two years ago if I would be dir .. producing television shows, I would say, absolutely not. I never will go into television. And here I am doing ...

STILL: Lucas et al.

LUCAS (VO)

... television. I have no idea where my life is going to take me. I just .. whatever feels right is where I go to.

SPIELBERG: It was a golden age of filmmaking cause we were all single, ambitious, and we were in love with .. with film. And we're still in love with film, but we're no longer as ambitious and none of us are single. And I think once we started getting married and having kids, we began to fraction. And then we began to divide and we began to go into our own lives and our own lifestyles. When I had a family, I know that the amount of time I talked to George, Francis and Marty on the telephone was cut down in half. And as I went from one to five children, now we have to make a conscious effort to re-unionize and get together and .. and because now I'm sort of in my family, into my life in a kind of a .. more of a ...

STILL: Spielberg

SPIELBERG (VO)

... homey way. But when I was in my twenties and they were in their twenties, we all you know, we were kind of married to each other.

DE PALMA: As you get older, it's more you know, here we go again. The struggle's on. Am I going .. is the .. is the fish going to eat me, or am I going to eat the fish on this one? And there was some kind of camaraderie back then that .. and I guess you were not .. you .. you also felt immortal. The fish could never completely eat you. But as you get older, and you feel your feet and legs being ...

STILL: De Palma

DE PALMA (VO)

... bitten off, you begin to wonder are you going to survive this one?

SCHRADER: I still feel that I'm part of the Hollywood system because in the end, that .. that's the dynamo that generates all the money. And you know eventually

it filters down through and into independent films. But you have to respect the engine and the engine is the commercial film industry. I mean I remember once rather humorously having a conversation with George Lucas. And George was saying that he wasn't Hollywood because he lived up in Mill Valley. And I said, George, I hate to break it to you, but you are Hollywood.

END OF FILM SCHOOL GENERATION