

COMING TO A THEATER NEAR YOU

San Francisco Chronicle

David Lewis

May 31, 2013

Rebels With a Cause



Documentary

Directed and produced by Nancy Kelly

Edited and produced by Kenji Yamamoto

Not rated. 72 minutes.

THEY WERE UNPAID AND THEY WERE CRAZY. THEY WERE ...

REBELS WITH A CAUSE

HOW A BATTLE OVER LAND CHANGED
THE LANDSCAPE FOREVER.

AN AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY
BY NANCY KELLY AND KENJI YAMAMOTO

PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH KRCB NORTH BAY PUBLIC MEDIA
NARRATED BY FRANCES McDORMAND

"Rebels With a Cause," about the efforts to preserve open space in the Bay Area, is not a hard-hitting, the-world-is-ending environmental documentary. Instead, it's quite pleasant - an informative, feel-good history lesson that celebrates the natural treasures of the Bay Area. It's easy for us who live here to sometimes take for granted the spectacular park space that surrounds us, but back in the 1950s, developers in rapidly growing California were ready to swoop in and create suburban sprawl in what is now the Point Reyes National Seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The film, in entertaining, brisk fashion, takes us through decades of patchwork agreements that made (and still makes) the San Francisco Bay Area the environmental envy of the world: a teeming urban area that co-exists with its magnificent scenery. With the help of engaging interviews, excellent graphic maps and Lou Weinert's cinematography - his Bay Area landscape shots are beautiful - filmmakers Nancy Kelly and Kenji Yamamoto are able to translate what was essentially an incremental bureaucratic fight into cinematic terms. There are a few unfortunate animated sequences - did we really need cartoons to show us meetings? - but they won't detract from your enjoyment of the film. In the end, you'll probably more appreciate the area we call home - and grab your hiking (or bicycling) gear.

David Lewis is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer: E-mail: davidlewis@sfchronicle.com