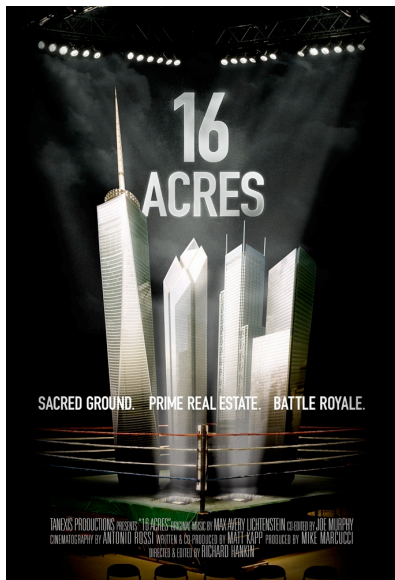


THE Hollywood REPORTER



The Bottom Line

This alternately amusing and heartbreaking documentary coherently chronicles the endless process of rebuilding Ground Zero.

Director

Richard Hankin

16 Acres: Film Review

12:09 PM PST 11/16/2012 by Frank Scheck

Richard Hankin's documentary chronicles the decades-plus efforts to redevelop the Ground Zero site.

The comedy of errors surrounding the 11 years (and counting) efforts to rebuild the devastated Ground Zero site would be funny if it weren't so tragic. Filmmaker **Richard Hankin** manages to encompass both aspects in *16 Acres*, his strikingly coherent documentary chronicling the tortured process.

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Steven Spielberg's 'Rising: Rebuilding Ground Zero': Constructing One World Trade Center (Exclusive Video) »

Featuring candid interviews with many of the principals involved — including former New York governor **George Pataki**, much vilified real-estate developer **Larry Silverstein**, architects **Daniel Libeskind** and **Michael Arad**, Mayor **Michael Bloomberg** and various officials of such key agencies as the Port Authority and Lower Manhattan Development Corporation — the film even-handedly lets them have their say without excessive editorializing. Offering frequently acerbic outsider comments are architecture critic **Philip Nobel** and *Esquire* writer **Scott Raab**, while **Rosaleen Taloon**, the sister of a firefighter who died at the site, provides movingly personal viewpoints.

As is made all too clear as the film goes on, the conflicting interests involved resulted in a morass of delays and false starts that have dragged on for over a decade, stifling the hopes of those hoping that the site would be quickly redeveloped as a sign of defiance towards the terrorists. The initial designs were universally derided — “Tear up these plans, they look like Albany,” one participant remembers commenting — while a worldwide architectural competition quickly devolved into what one interview subject describes as a “bloodsport.”

The design created by Libeskind, who had an emotionally appealing backstory as the son of Polish immigrants and Holocaust survivors, was the initial pick. But it was vetoed by the site's leaseholder Silverstein on the basis that he had never before designed a skyscraper. And so it went, as the plans were endlessly debated even while Silverstein was fighting in court to have the destruction of the World Trade Center ruled as two separate incidents so as to double his insurance payments.

One of the painful comic elements in the story is the much ballyhooed unveiling of a “cornerstone” for the new tower, an empty symbolic gesture since such buildings don't actually have cornerstones.

Its opening credits ironically accompanied by **Bob Dylan's** “Everything is Broken,” *16 Acres* is a heartbreak illustration of that song's cynically relevant theme.