

# THE REAL DEAL

## MAGAZINE

### Q&A: "16 Acres" filmmakers on the WTC project's many stakeholders

New documentary provides "historical survey" of the rebuilding of Ground Zero

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By Katherine Clarke

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A still of the World Trade Center site from the film

A new documentary, "16 Acres" — it premiered at the Zurich Film Festival, and is showing through Thursday at New York's Quad Cinemas — explores the story behind well-publicized delays at the World Trade Center site. It also looks at the sometimes-clashing agendas of the project's private developer, Larry Silverstein and other stakeholders in the site's progress. Silverstein Properties' Janno Lieber, Governor George Pataki, former Port Authority executive director Chris Ward and Mayor Michael Bloomberg figure prominently in the film. *The Real Deal* recently spoke with film's director, Richard Hankin, as well as its writer and co-producer Matt Kapp and its producer Mike Marcucci.

#### How long did the process take and what were the specific challenges?

**Marcucci:** It took 2.5 years. There are a lot of parts to the story, and the greatest challenge was to choose which were most important to tell.

**Hankin:** One challenge was sorting through an enormous amount of archival material. We screened literally thousands of hours of footage from many sources and then had to select the footage that we thought best supported our story.

#### How did you convince the major players to be a part of the project? Were they very willing on the whole?

**Kapp:** There was definitely a Rashomon aspect to it, given the extent to which the key players saw things differently.

#### Can you talk about how you tried to remain fair in your portrayal of the characters involved?

**Marcucci:** We presented many perspectives, and let viewers judge. It was often a challenge keeping an open mind to some hardened public perceptions of the story and characters. All characters tried hard to do the right thing from their own point of view.

**Kapp:** The idea was to tell the story as a "historical survey" completely objectively and without any narration so it could be a blank canvas on which viewers can draw their own conclusions. And we hope it will provoke true New York-style discussions and debates about our beloved city and its future.

#### What were the biggest surprises along the way?

**Marcucci:** Although the story is born out of tragedy, there are moments of humorous irony as the ten years roll out.

**Hankin:** I think viewers are surprised by the extent of the political theater that was involved in the process. With political theater comes absurdity and humor, which people are definitely not expecting out of this kind of story.

#### What are the big takeaways from the film?

**Hankin:** I think one of the big takeaways is that democracy is messy and requires an enormous amount of patience, but in the end it works.

#### How is the film different from other documentaries that have come out on the World Trade Center?

**Marcucci:** Our film is not about 9/11; it is about 9/12. The majority of documentaries focus on the day itself and the tragic loss of life. Our perspective is the unknown political story.