

THE TIMES

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 2003

An edition of The Times serving eastern Lake County

6 SECTIONS, 42 PAGES

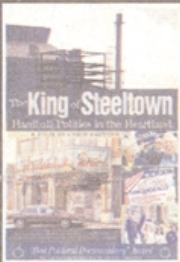
www.nwtimes.com

Newsstand: 50 cents

PASTRICK TRIBUTE FILM MAY HOLD A CLUE TO EAST CHICAGO SIDEWALK SCANDAL

THE KING OF STEELTOWN

THE SEQUEL COULD UNFOLD IN FEDERAL COURT



In 1999, Chris Sautter directed "The King of Steeltown," a documentary about Mayor Robert Pastrick's 1999 re-election campaign. A source close to the East Chicago sidewalk scandal investigation confirmed the film may contain evidence admissible at the trial.

"The King of Steeltown" still photos are courtesy of Sautter Films

BY BILL DOLAN
Times Staff Writer

EAST CHICAGO — Mayor Robert Pastrick was all smiles as the credits rolled in "King of Steeltown," a documentary film meant as a tribute to his 1999 re-election campaign.

Federal investigators now are hard at work producing its sequel, a courtroom drama in which Pastrick's administration and legacy lie shipwrecked on \$20 million in concrete sidewalks and other public improvements hurriedly approved and carried out in an alleged scheme to buy votes in that election four years ago.

"Steeltown," a cinema verite directed by expatriate Hoosier Chris Sautter, won best documentary at the New York International Independent Film Festival in 2001, but was never boffo at the box office.

However, it apparently achieved cult status with one local group.

"A while back, I received a call from one of the lawyers in the U.S. attorney's office about the sidewalk case," Sautter said.

See STEELTOWN, A5



JON L. HENDRICKS / THE TIMES

East Chicago Councilman Frank Kollintzas, right, walks Wednesday to the South Bend Federal Courthouse with his lawyers.



A welcome to East Chicago sign is displayed in "The King of Steeltown" film by expatriate Hoosier Chris Sautter.



JON L. HENDRICKS / THE TIMES

Parks foreman Joe Valdez walks Wednesday from the South Bend Federal Courthouse surrounded by family members.

Steeltown

Continued from A1

"The gentleman I spoke to said they had all seen the film. When I told him I was the only one authorized to sell copies and I had no record of selling to anyone in his office, he quickly ordered a copy."

The U.S. attorney's office has spearheaded a lengthy investigation that resulted earlier this month in federal fraud and conspiracy charges against six East Chicago officials.

Chris Balzer, a spokeswoman for the U.S. attorney's office, which will prosecute the six, said this week she hasn't seen the film.

However, a source close to the investigation confirmed investigators have seen the film and suggested it may contain admissible evidence at the trial, which could begin early next year.

Now available in DVD or VHS tape on the Sautter Films Web page, the 75-minute film can be examined frame by frame for any incriminating or exculpatory moments.

Cut to the scenes of precinct committeemen collecting money in envelopes or Noah Atterson Spann, convicted bribe-taker and co-chairman of Pastrick's campaign, brow-beating Pastrick supporters to get out the vote.

Or is evidence at the very feet of the players?

City Councilmen Frank Kollintzas, Joe De La Cruz and Adrian Santos; City Controller Eduardo Maldonado; City Engineer Pedro Porras; and parks foreman Joe Valdez have pleaded not guilty to charges they jackhammered to pieces a number of state laws to pave new sidewalks, driveways, and patios on public and private land in their rush to impress voters in the months before the 1999 Democratic primary.

The indictment alleges Kollintzas told an unidentified East Chicago business owner in April 1999 the city would

pay for paving its parking lot. Eventually, a city contractor poured \$100,000 worth of new concrete there, and Maldonado paid for it out of the city's public treasury.

The indictment alleges the business owner returned the favor by hosting a large party for various East Chicago elected officials.

In one scene of the film, Kollintzas and Pastrick are at an outdoor campaign rally in a parking lot that appears to be newly paved with concrete.

"When the deputy U.S. attorney called wanting out-takes or any shots prior to the rally ... I told him two things," Sautter said. "First there were no out-takes to speak of. I held nothing back in making this film."

"This thing was shot 'run and gun' style, so we had no second chance at shooting a given scene. Secondly, I told him that day was the only day I shot at that parking lot. It may have been repaved. But who can tell? I think you have to read a lot into that scene to reach that conclusion from the film."

"In my opinion, the only persuasive evidence that it had been paved would be testimony from the people doing the paving in East Chicago in 1999. They could tell you and their records could tell you what was paved and what wasn't."

"You really have to guess about that from watching the film, and I don't think you can count on getting a conviction in federal court on the basis of conjecture. It just looked like your standard grocery store parking lot to me."

Sautter worked as a political consultant for Pastrick and got unprecedented access into the workings of the campaign. He said in a 2001 interview that he got the idea for the documentary after talking with Kevin Pastrick about how his father's place in East Chicago political history should be preserved.

It foreshadowed not only

the coming sidewalk scandal, but also the absentee ballot fraud controversy that Councilman George Pabey used to nearly upset Robert Pastrick in last spring's primary.

It has sparked another grand jury investigation by Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter, which could target more than a hundred others in the Pastrick campaign machine.

The protagonist of "Steeltown" is the unindicted Mayor Pastrick, who speaks fondly of his three decades in office, punches the air as he rallies supporters and beams before large groups of people herded into parking lots and recreation halls to shout "Four More Years!"

However, director Sautter's film also shows the Pastrick camp in crisis.

Challenger Stephen R. "Bob" Stiglich is running again for the second time in four years. He looks like easy pickings, but Stiglich has a surprise for the incumbent: He's got 2,000 absentee votes for himself in his back pocket before the polls even open.

Their fear becomes palpable on election day eve with rumors of voting-machine tampering. The mayor's son, Kevin, on election night, says, "I'm nervous. ... It's very frightening. I feel like they are trying to steal the election."

(Kevin Pastrick was indicted earlier this month in an unrelated case alleging he was involved in an illegal union pension-investment scheme.)

Pastrick had maintained himself in office since 1972 through public largesse, creating public jobs and free or low-cost city services, so his administration had no qualms, feds allege, when it pumped a modest public-improvement project full of steroids in the months leading to the election.

A number of scenes are of contractors breaking up what appear to be old sidewalks and pouring concrete into forms. The camera races down

row upon row of new concrete sidewalks and driveways.

In another scene, Kevin Pastrick jokes, "Yesterday, Stiglich was walking up and down the streets. (Someone) yelled out, 'How do you like the new sidewalks?'"

The backroom meetings reveal much of City Hall was put on war footing for the campaign.

Frank Alcala, Pastrick's police chief, arranges a police presence at polling places where Stiglich's supporters are most defiant.

Jim Fife, a longtime Pastrick confidant, shuffles through a stack of envelopes (he explains off camera each one contains \$1,000 to hire election workers and "to do whatever needs to be done") and hands one to Tony, a precinct committeeman.

Fife: "Tony, I don't have to tell you what to do. We need everything you've got 'til Tuesday (election day)."

Pastrick's supporters on the County Election Board threw out Stiglich's absentee ballots. Justin Murphy, an attorney and Pastrick supporter, said absentee votes were being bought by Stiglich's people, an allegation that never resulted in criminal charges.

The same allegations were made this year by a recount judge against Pastrick's campaign, leading to the current investigation by the prosecutor.

In 1999, absentee ballots didn't play a significant role. Pastrick's campaign got enough people to the polls to swamp Stiglich, who ruefully blames the sidewalk project for his downfall.

James Wieser, a lawyer and longtime political observer, laments, "I'm convinced the way they conduct elections in East Chicago, the way they vote, is a way of life and they don't see anything wrong with it. They think that is the way of the world. It's been that way forever."

There is no word on how the current sequel may end.

SIDEWALKS-FOR-VOTES INDICTMENTS

"I told them no. I knew what they were doing.
I knew it was wrong. They knew it was wrong, too."

East Chicago resident Sam Perez, on sidewalk and driveway work done in his neighborhood in 1999

Concrete evidence



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE DOWELL/POST-TRIBUNE
Sam Perez's driveway, a noticeably darker tone, is the same one that has been there since he moved to his East Chicago home about 20 years ago. His neighbors, all 13 other houses in this block of Stewart Court, have newer concrete driveways from 1999.

Putting up a Pastrick sign during the 1999 East Chicago election might have earned you a new sidewalk, or perhaps a tree removal, all at taxpayer expense.

EAST CHICAGO
Fourteen driveways divide the lawns around a small cul-de-sac in the quiet Prairie Park neighborhood near St. Catherine Hospital. Thirteen of those driveways are newly paved, with new concrete sidewalks on one end and new walkways at the other end.

By STEVE PATTERSON
POST-TRIBUNE
STAFF WRITER

Many of those new walkways continue up new concrete steps and others continue to new patios in the back. It's as if it was one continuous pour of concrete, from public sidewalks into private yards.

But there is no new driveway in front of Sam Perez's house. No chalk-colored walkway, no smooth patio in the back.

"I told them no," Perez said of contractors who busied themselves in 1999 in his neighborhood and others. "I knew what they were doing. I knew it was wrong. They knew it was wrong, too."

Four years after those new sidewalks, driveways, walkways and patios were poured, six city officials have been indicted.



Newer pavement continues from the sidewalk and includes a walkway that wraps around a house at 148th Street and Grassell Avenue.



INSIDE

Film chronicles East Chicago political structure
Political consultant Chris Sautter finds renewed interest in his 2001 documentary, "The King of Steeltown." Page A4

SIDEWALKS-FOR-VOTES INDICTMENTS

CONCRETE

Continued from Page A1

Three city councilmen — Frank Kollintzas, Joe DeLaCruz and Adrian Santos — and three city department heads — Edwardo Maldonado, Joe Valdez and Pedro Porras — were indicted for allegedly leading an effort to spend \$20 million in taxpayer money to get Mayor Robert Pastrick re-elected.

The indictment makes clear that in the months preceding the 1999 primary, a Pastrick sign in one's yard meant a new concrete driveway and, for some, maybe a tree removed.

Federal prosecutors say it was a scheme that benefitted only Pastrick and his allies.

But Perez, standing on his 40-year-old driveway, looks around his neighborhood and sees neighbors benefiting.

He could have had it, too, but he refused to give in.

He refused to put a Pastrick sign in his yard.

"You know what's hard, what's really sad?" the retired steel worker asks.

"My taxes are going to go up because of all of this. And I'm going to be paying those higher taxes just like everybody else, but I didn't get anything done."

Their roles

The 72-count indictments issued nine days ago by U.S. Attorney Joseph Van Bokkelen leave many unanswered questions, but make clear the roles each of the defendants played.

Maldonado, the city controller, was the ringleader, the indictment states, ordering contractors to falsify invoices and finding a way to pay contractors while avoiding city record-keeping.

Kollintzas, DeLaCruz and Santos, the indictment states, went door to door, promising work would be done on private property for citizens who had a Pastrick political sign in their yard.

Porras gave orders to contractors, too. After "Official A" met with an East Chicago church official, Porras then told a contractor to renovate a church parking lot, which included asphalt and electrical work.

But the scenarios spelled out in the indictment make clear none of the officials was as entrenched in the scheme as Maldonado.

If convicted of all charges against him, the 34-year-old father of young children could spend his life in prison.

But the indictment also hints at the potential for future indictments, depending on how cooperative the defendants are with federal investigators.

There are at least three East Chicago officials and one Pastrick campaign official who are not named in the indictment but who clearly were intricately involved in the paving work.

East Chicago's "Official A," "Official B" and "Official C" are identified as meeting with church and business leaders, contractors and others, promising public money for work done on private property.

The indictment also says Maldonado appointed an unnamed Pastrick campaign

worker to supervise all paving work, but it also says "the campaign worker obtained lists for work to be completed on public and private property from the mayor's office in city hall."

Van Bokkelen won't reveal the identities of East Chicago "Official A," "Official B" and "Official C," nor will he comment on any direct involvement Pastrick had in the scam.

Pastrick is not commenting on the scandal, but just days before the indictments hit, he told the Post-Tribune he wouldn't be tarnished in the scandal.

"I don't condone it if people go off and do their own things and get in trouble," he said.

Names notably missing from the indictment include Pastrick; his special assistant, Tim Raykovich, who supervised the sidewalk work after the primary; and key Pastrick campaign aide Jimmy Fife.

Fife has not been seen in East Chicago for several months.

Also not mentioned in the indictment are George Weems and Frank Miskowski, who, together with Maldonado, make up the city's Board of Public Works, the contracting agency.

The State Board of Accounts says those three are personally responsible for \$2.5 million in private work done with public money — money Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter is responsible for recouping.

But according to responses filed by the city, none of the three board members claims any involvement in the scam.

While the Board of Public Works is responsible for all city contracting, the indictment indicates Maldonado broke from the board and contracted with firms on his own.

State audits show Calumet Concrete, H&Y Maintenance, A&A Enterprises, Ace Enterprises, Residential Construction Service and Dave's Tree Service did the illegal work.

But no business did more private work with public money than Calumet Concrete, owned by a Pastrick neighbor.

County voting records show Robert and Paul Velligan, listed as owner and registered agent for Calumet Concrete, live two houses away from Pastrick, in a small, unkempt house, along with four other adults, all of whom vote in East Chicago.

Promises made

There are equal parts shame and fear in the voices of citizens who had their private properties paved at taxpayer expense.

Shame of knowing they benefited from it and fear that if they speak up, they will face retaliation from those involved.

While most of the work done was concrete, the indictment mentions a church had an asphalt parking lot put in, along with electrical work, all at taxpayer expense.

That deal was set up by an unnamed city official and finalized by Porras, who is a member of East Chicago's Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church.

Asked about the still-new asphalt lot outside his church, the Rev. Juan Gonzalez, pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe, repeatedly said, "I don't want to talk about it," then hung up.

continued

SIDEWALKS-FOR-VOTES INDICTMENTS

continued



STEPHANIE DOWELL/POST-TRIBUNE
Concrete continues from the sidewalk all the way up a walkway to the front door and wraps around the house at 4206 Franklin in East Chicago.

A diocesan official said there is no record of the church having paid for the parking lot.

The indictment indicates some business owners were misled by those indicted, having been told the city "had a program that would allow East Chicago to pay for work on private property."

One business owner said politicians "offered to make things beautiful," and the indictment states one business got a concrete parking lot valued at \$100,000.

There are houses in the city that have more concrete wrapping the house than they have lawn and businesses that had concrete parking lots and aprons poured around their buildings, without even a break line between the public sidewalks and their private lots.

Some of those who benefited from the scam shut the door or hung up the phone when asked if they feel right about having accepted the free work, while others shrug and reply "everyone else got it."

Contractors tried putting in concrete around George Petrunich's house in the 4700 block of Grasselli Avenue, but he told them he didn't want it.

It's the only part of the block that didn't see new concrete.

"I didn't need it," Petrunich said. "(An East Chicago city councilman) told me he wanted to do it because he was going to get a cut of how many customers they got, but I told him I didn't want him wasting taxpayer money. My sidewalk was fine."

And that's the way Perez looks at his own driveway.

It's old, he admits, but there's nothing wrong with it.

It's cracked in spots, but so, too, are those newer driveways.

Across the street, he explains, a councilman's sister invited contractors into her home and cooked them breakfast, while the councilman campaigned, making concrete promises.

"A lot of people knew it was wrong," Perez said. "But they had a chance to get something for free and they took it. I wanted no part of it."

Reporter Steve Patterson can be reached at 648-3105 or spatterson@post-trib.com.

Film about E.C. race draws new interest

■ Filmmaker saw concrete scandal project as it was unfolding.

By STEVE PATTERSON

Post-Tribune staff writer

An unprecedented look inside the East Chicago political machine.

That's what "The King of Steeltown" provides, looking into the 1999 showdown between incumbent Mayor Robert Pastrick and his former rival Stephen Stiglich.

The 75-minute documentary goes inside a political race that was so heated it has since resulted in six federal indictments.

Since those indictments were handed down nine days ago, there has been renewed interest in the film, released in 2001.

The film provides a look at the city-funded paving work on private property, which led to the indictments.

It includes comments on the work from local political insiders, including Post-Tribune editorial writer Rich James.

Filmmaker Chris Sautter, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney and political consultant, said he wanted to go inside one of America's last political machines, never expecting that indictments would come four years later as a direct result of actions in that 1999 race.

"We had a unique perspective," Sautter said. "We saw some of it (illegal sidewalk work) up close."

Sautter, who had developed campaign commercials for Pastrick in 1995, admits he didn't embark on the project in hopes of exposing anything.

"It was really just to portray a political culture that is something of an anachronism, and I think the film suc-

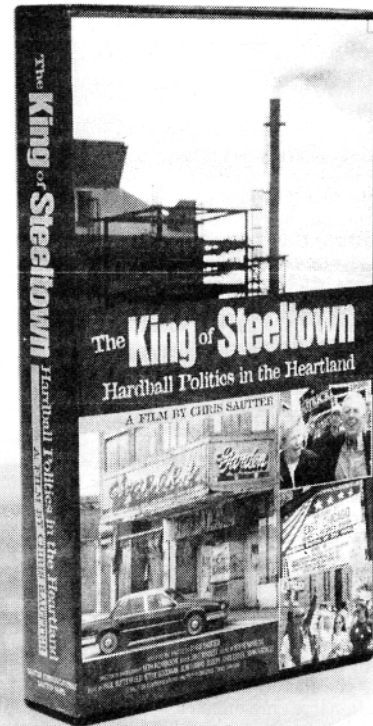


"It was no surprise when I heard about the indictments, but it would have been a surprise if there hadn't been any indictments. ... The machine is embodied in the person. It'll be around as long as he's around."

— Chris Sautter

About the film

For online information:
www.thekingofsteeltown.com



ceeded in showing that.

"It wasn't about showing criminal conduct," he adds, "it was about hardball politics."

The film, Sautter admits, "had become something of a political cult classic," with showings at college political science courses across the country.

Sautter will be showing the film Nov. 13 at Indiana University.

Sautter said he was aware of the grand jury investigation that looked into the paving work.

"It was no surprise when I heard about the indictments, but it would have been a surprise if there hadn't been any indictments," he said.

Still, he says, there is nothing

in the film that hints that indictments were inevitable.

"Still, in retrospect, I think the mayor regrets having given me the kind of access he did," Sautter said.

Despite the unflattering portrayal of the Pastrick machine and the city, Pastrick hired Sautter in 1999 and 2003, to produce campaign commercials.

Asked about what kind of impact he thinks the indictments will have on Pastrick's political machine, Sautter doesn't hesitate to respond.

"The machine is embodied in the person," he said. "It'll be around as long as he's around."

Reporter Steve Patterson can be reached at 648-3105 or spatterson@post-trib.com.

Style

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2002

THE WASHINGTON POST

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2002 **C3**

THE RELIABLE SOURCE

By Lloyd Grove

Backing a Winner

■ Democratic media consultant **Chris Sautter** is a lawyer by training but a filmmaker at heart. His award-winning documentary about the political machine in East Chicago, Ind., "The King of Steeltown," will be shown tonight at Visions Cinema. "It's definitely an extracurricular activity," said Sautter, a recount specialist who worked on **Al Gore's** Florida battle after the presidential election.

He spent \$75,000—mostly his own money with a little help from friends—to make this movie about East Chicago Mayor **Robert Pastrick's** seventh reelection campaign in 1999. "I joke that it was taken out of my kids' college fund."

Sautter told us: "Some time ago I had wanted to do a documentary. . . . I think that explains why I was willing to jump into this project without any financial backing.



COURTESY CHRIS SAUTTER

Political strategist Chris Sautter.

Because this particular political figure is not well known outside of the area, I'm not sure one *could* find funding for this project." Pastrick's campaign "may be one of the last examples of what we call machine politics, and so for me it was an opportunity to capture that before it faded from the scene."

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

A2 • WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2001 • THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

INSIDER



John Strauss

East Chicago race 'stars' in documentary

There aren't many politicians left like East Chicago Mayor Robert Pastrick. They know this already in East Chicago, where the State Board of Accounts last month spanked Pastrick's administration for a 1999 election-year sidewalk-replacement plan.

The city paid not only for sidewalks, it turned out, but for patios, porches and other concrete work for private citizens as Pastrick headed for a grudge-match primary fight with fellow Democrat Stephen Stiglich. A lawyer for the city has said the money came from casino revenues and shouldn't have been considered "public" funds.

There were other colorful elements in the primary, including alleged payoffs to some absentee voters and suspected voter machine tampering that led to the arrest of two people the night before the election.

So it's no surprise that Indiana University graduate and political consultant Chris Sautter picked the race as the subject for his documentary, *The King of Steeltown: Hardball Politics in the Heartland*.

The behind-the-scenes film, along the lines of *The War Room* about President Clinton, won "Best Political Documentary" recently at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival.

It was shown for the first time in the state Tuesday night at the Indiana Historical Society theater.

Sautter admires Pastrick as an old-style, precinct-level politician, and he worked for the eight-term mayor in Pastrick's 1995 and 1999 campaigns. Still, the film, which Sautter hopes to sell to a cable network for national distribution, isn't exactly an idealized portrait.

In one scene, Pastrick whips up a rally of city employees, turning them against a reporter from *The Times of Northwest Indiana* who is covering the event.

"It was both electrifying and in some ways a little frightening," Sautter recalls.

"The film captures the good and the bad. And there is quite a bit of good there, if you appreciate strong leadership. In these times, people are appreciating that kind of leadership more and more.

"He definitely gets things done."

CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS

A CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY INC. PUBLICATION

MEDIA MIX

HARDBALL POLITICS, THE DOCUMENTARY

Last fall, political consultant Chris Sautter was strategizing amid the drama of the tumultuous post-election recount. This year he's creating a drama of his own. Democrat Sautter, who acted as Al Gore's recount adviser in 2000, had his first film featured on the opening night of the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival last month.

On May 4, 1999, a Democratic primary election for mayor in the City of East Chicago, Indiana was held.

The contest featured a re-match between 28-year incumbent Robert A. Pastrick and his long-time rival Stephen R. Stiglich.



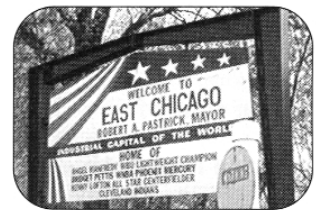
The documentary, titled "The King of Steeltown: Hardball Politics in the Heartland," is a 75-minute documentary about the 1999 Democratic mayoral primary in East Chicago, Indiana, between incumbent Robert Pastrick and his longtime rival Stephen Stiglich.

"Steeltown" details the vanishing machine politics of a decaying rust-belt town. Pastrick won the nomination for an eighth four-year term using an army of both paid and volunteer supporters and an aggressive campaign on the issue of sidewalk repair. Following its showing at the festival in Los Angeles, it was heralded by film critic Mark Olsen as one of the best in this year's festival. He noted that "Sautter has a finely honed feel for the fading machinery of old-school party politics."

Sautter says the film is a good way to preserve a political culture — machine politics — that is vanishing. Ironically, it is disappearing due to the rapid influx of political consultants to the scene such as Sautter himself. Instead of hiring local guns, politicians are more often hiring consultants from all over the country.

Sautter hopes the documentary — which is in the style of the Clinton election saga "The War Room" — gets picked up by an independent cable channel.

He is also working on a screenplay about Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.



Screen

Continued from B3

E.C.'s 'hardball politics' hit the big screen

Documentary on city's 1999 mayoral campaign gaining critical raves.

The year was 1999 and Robert Pastrick was on top of his game. In a couple of months, he would be re-elected as mayor of East Chicago for an unprecedented eighth term, his political machine churning on all pistons since he was first elected to office in 1955.

Attending a rally before the upcoming heated primary against Stephen R. Stiglich was Chris Sautter, a graduate of Mishawaka Penn High School who had worked as a consultant for Pastrick in 1995 and 1999.

There Sautter stood watching the silver-haired 72-year-old play the crowd like Frank Sinatra would at a dinner party.

Sautter then was struck with an idea after talking with Pastrick's son, Kevin, who made an off-the-cuff comment during the rally that his father's political legacy should be preserved.

What soon followed was Sautter's documentary, "The King of Steeltown: Hardball Politics in the Heartland."

The documentary about that 1999 mayoral race has gained critical praise after a July viewing in Los Angeles. Showings in Washington, D.C., and New York City soon followed. The film won best documentary from the New York International Independent Film Festival and was screened on opening night last month.

"He is a dynamic politician," Sautter said of his former boss. "Obviously, he's been very successful. There are moments in the film when he is very charismatic. The film shows pretty much



everything. ... I'm not sure it has changed any minds, and it wasn't intended in that way. It's not an expose. It's essentially a slice of life."

The film, only a hiccup in Pastrick's long political career, is narrated through the action of the characters, namely the mayoral candidates.

See SCREEN, B4

Sautter said he shot film for about eight to 10 days, attending both Pastrick and Stiglich political functions in the days leading up to the primary.

"Some of the things that were said couldn't be scripted," Sautter said with a laugh. "It was so original and in some ways humorous."

Sautter owns a communications company based in Washington, D.C., where he advises candidates who run for office. He might be most well known as Al Gore's chief recount advisor during last year's controversial presidential election.

Sautter's political experience gave him a keen eye when making the film.

"East Chicago politics are probably more like politics of the 1950s and 1960s than contemporary politics, probably because politics haven't been taken over by people like me," he said. "I think consultants haven't taken over East Chicago campaigns as they have others."

Pastrick said his only regret about the documentary was that Sautter didn't portray East Chicago in a positive light, but Sautter's take on region politics was accurate.

"We have grass-roots organizations here," Pastrick said. "We've always believed that contacting people and being involved with people is the best way to get support politically and whatever else you're trying to do in the community."

"I think the genuineness of the people is refreshing," Sautter said. "There's nothing contrived. It's real. I think a lot of people see campaigns as contrived these days. I really think the appeal is the authenticity of people on both sides."

There are no current plans to show the film in Northwest Indiana.



Robert Pastrick
Mayor of East Chicago



Chris Sautter
began working on his film to document Robert Pastrick's political legacy.

WASHINGTON CityPaper

Hard Drive



In the mid-'90s, Chris Sautter tried to make a documentary about James "Yank" Rachell, a blues musician who'd had a roller-coaster career. But Sautter's funding fell through, and he had to put the project on the back burner. When Rachell died soon after, at 88, Sautter lost the chance to tell the singer's story. And he promised himself he wouldn't miss another

great filmmaking opportunity.

Not long after, the son of East Chicago, Ind., Mayor Robert Pastrick asked Sautter—who runs his own Washington-based political media consulting firm—if the filmmaker could broker a book about his father's legendary political career. Sautter said no: He offered to make a movie instead.

The tough 1999 primary pitted the elder Pastrick—a charismatic machine politician who'd been mayor since the '70s—against his longtime political and personal rival, fellow Democrat Stephen Stiglich, for control of the demographically diverse, economically challenged former steel town that lies just east of Chicago. Sautter, 52, had gotten to know the city somewhat from his years as an adviser, aide, and lawyer for Democratic politicians in the state. Still, the opportunity to view the campaign from behind the camera proved to be an eye-opener. "This was a city race that was won on the ground, unlike most races today, which are so dependent on television," he says. "It's clearly a throwback to another era, when patronage and jobs were the driving force in local campaigns."

Sautter's favorite scene in *The King of Steeltown: Hardball Politics in the Heartland* is a rally during which Pastrick pumps up a crowd of city workers who support him. As a politico, Sautter admires the old-fashioned tactics that prevail in East Chicago—but he is also aware of their corrosiveness: "Clearly, I don't think vote-buying—or at least the suggestion of vote-buying, which was discussed by people in East Chicago as if it were routine—is anything a democracy ought to be proud of," he says.

The movie received favorable reviews when it was screened in July at a Los Angeles preview of the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival, which officially begins this weekend in Manhattan. It was also featured in Washington last month at the Georgetown Independent Film Festival.

Perhaps the most important screening took place in mid-August, when Sautter showed the film to Pastrick and his supporters. After some nail-biting on his part, he says, the crowd applauded the film when the credits rolled. "Periodically, there's talk of the U.S. attorney investigating corruption in East Chicago, so that may have been on [Pastrick's] mind," Sautter says. "I got a sense that he was relieved by the result. But I still felt a little like Joe Pesci in *My Cousin Vinny*: I wanted to get out of town before anybody changed their mind."

—Louis Jacobson

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Hoosier politics makes it to big screen

August 19, 2001

Friends of political consultant **Chris Sautter** warned him of the risks of making a movie exposing East Chicago's rough-and-tumble political world.

But the native Hoosier wanted to capture the old-fashioned machine politics that is being overtaken by political consultants (such as himself), and he thought the 1999 Democratic mayoral contest between incumbent **Bob Pastrick** and archrival **Stephen Stiglich** was the perfect subject.

The result was a 75-minute documentary, *The Kind of Steeltown: Hardball Politics in the Heartland*, which has been shown at film festivals in Los Angeles and Washington.

Sautter screened the film first for Pastrick and his family and was relieved when they applauded at the end. (The movie depicts Pastrick winning the Democratic nomination for an eighth four-year term by using an army of city workers, paid and volunteer supporters, and an aggressive sidewalk repair campaign.)

Despite the positive reception from the Pastrick family, Sautter said he still felt like **Joe Pesci** at the end of the movie *My Cousin Vinny*.

"I wanted to get the hell out of town before they changed their mind," he said.

Reviews at the Los Angeles screening were so good that the film is being shown on opening night of the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival on Sept. 8. Sautter hopes his work may also get picked up by an independent cable channel.

That still may not make Pastrick as famous as **Richard Daley**, **Boss Tweed** and other well-known political bosses. But then again, he may not need the publicity, according to one supporter quoted in the documentary.

"I was in Indianapolis and they asked about him," the voter says. "So he's known all over."



Tuesday, Aug. 14, 2001

“King of Steeltown” Plays in Washington: As a Democratic campaign consultant, Chris Sautter said he often witnessed stories that would make a good movie. Now he has acted on that thought. Sautter’s documentary about the 1999 East Chicago Democratic mayoral primary between incumbent Robert Pastrick and challenger Stephen Stiglich was featured at the Georgetown Independent Film Festival on Sunday. The 75-minute film, “The King of Steeltown,” was shot in cinema verité style, a la “The War Room,” a chronicle of the 1992 presidential campaign of then-Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton. Sautter, the producer and director, created a paean to old-school machine politics through his depiction of rough-and-tumble northwest Indiana electioneering. Figures like Pastrick and former Chicago Mayor Richard Daley are fading from the political scene as consultants and advertising dominate modern campaigns. “My motivation was to present a certain type of politics that we don’t see anymore,” Sautter said in a discussion with the Georgetown audience. “The King of Steeltown,” which has premiered in Los Angeles, is slated for a screening at the New York Independent Film Festival this fall. Sautter serves as media consultant for Democratic candidate Jill Long Thompson.

ROLL CALL POLITICS

SHOP TALK

By Rachel Van Dongen

Inside the Consultant's Studio. Veteran Democratic political consultant **Chris Sautter's** documentary about the 1999 mayoral race in East Chicago, Ind., will get a Washington audience this weekend.

"The King of Steeltown: Hardball Politics in the Heartland" debuted to positive reviews in Los Angeles and has been accepted for the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival in September.

Inside-the-Beltway political junkies will get their own chance to view the 75-minute documentary, which took two years and \$50,000 to complete (most from Sautter's own pockets, but with a little help from his friends). The film was nearly finished, said Sautter, a specialist in election recounts, when he was forced to tend to another real-life political drama — rushing to Florida to spearhead Gore's presidential recount team.

The film will be shown during the first Georgetown Film Festival at 11 a.m. on Sunday at the Festival Theater at 3 Blues Alley.

It documents the race between two Democrats vying to preside over a city that has declined with the health of the steel industry: longtime incumbent Mayor **Bob Pastrick** and his nemesis, **Stephen Stiglich**.

Sautter, who produced and directed the independent film, said he chose East Chicago because of its reputation for down-and-dirty political campaigns.

"Having spent so much time in the Bloody 8th, I have come to appreciate hardball politics, and I had been hearing about East Chicago for some time," he said. "You couldn't script some of the things that were said in this film," he joked.

Sautter doesn't plan to give up his day job for the director's chair anytime soon. But he and his brother, **Craig**, author of "Inside the Wigwam," a history of Chicago presidential elections, already have a draft script for a feature film about the life and times of Chicago Mayor **Richard Daley (D)**.

"We're not quite there yet," Sautter said of his new cinema project.

Sauttering About Hollywood

By Emily Goodin

Consultant **Chris Sautter** has a new gig — filmmaker. He's recently produced "The King of Steeltown," a documentary about the Democratic 1999 mayoral primary in East Chicago, Ind. Sautter said he got his inspiration from being a Midwest native and working on campaigns in the area. "I'm a consultant. I've worked in the area and I always thought this would be a fascinating subject," Sautter said.

"It's really a throw back to the era of the first Mayor Daley in Chicago. Chicago has always been notorious in the Midwest for its hardball politics," Sautter said. "The King — the guy that is mayor — is **Robert Pastrick** and he's been mayor for three decades. And he was being challenged by his longtime rival **Stephen Stiglich**, who had become the Lake County Chair a few years before, succeeding Pastrick, who had held it for 25 years."

Sautter describes the film as a look at "a political culture that is vanishing from the scene and I thought this would be a good way to preserve that. And also provide a little entertainment. It's offbeat and humorous. You know, one thing that I've observed in my years as a consultant is that as consultants increasingly take over campaigns, we're losing some of the old time characters that used to dominate political campaigns for years and years."

Sautter's name is familiar among Democratic faithful as one of **Al Gore**'s point men on the Florida recount.

"In some ways I wish I'd had a camera crew there," Sautter said. "The King of Steeltown" premiered at New York's Independent Film Festival, and a positive review in *LA Weekly* brought some Hollywood attention to the piece. So much attention, in fact, Sautter now hopes to make a film — not a documentary — on former Chicago Mayor **Richard Daley**. "That's sort of a logical next step," he said. He's got a script draft and is hoping to get it into development. "The positive reaction I got out of 'The King of Steeltown' down in L.A. sort of encouraged me to bring out this idea I had been working on for a while...but we're a long way off on that," Sautter said. And his dream actor to play Daley: "**DeNiro** would probably be great. I don't know if he would have any interest. Certainly someone who projects that way would be great."

But currently Sautter's still helping Dems get elected. He's working on "a couple of small projects" for this fall. And he's also working on former Rep. **Jill Long Thompson**'s quest for Indiana's 2nd congressional seat. She first went to Congress in 1989, taking **Dan Quayle**'s old seat. Sautter said she's now "in a different district, in a much more favorable district" thanks to redistricting. And he's hoping to arrange a D.C. screening for "The King of Steeltown" soon.



\$2.95
NEWSPAPER

TUESDAY
JULY 24, 2001

VARIETY.COM

L O S A N G E L E S ■ N E W Y O R K

JUST FOR VARIETY

ARMY ARCHERD

SHOWBIZAND POLITIX — or, rather politix and showbiz: Attorney Chris Sautter, who won fame as Al Gore's recount adviser at the Florida countdown and has been known in national political circles as "The King of Chads," had a successful showing of his "The King of Steeltown" a political expose, at the N.Y. Intl. Independent Film & Video Festival. The pic, which he directed, wrote, produced and financed, screened in L.A. at the Laemmle Music Hall. Now Sautter's readying a dramatic feature — not a documentary — on the life of Richard Joseph Daley, who was elected mayor of Chicago for six terms, from 1955-1976 (he died in office, Dec. 20, 1976); he served longer than any other person as Chicago's mayor ...

LOCAL

HOOSIER TIMES SUNDAY, JULY 22, 2001

Former Bloomington politico makes splash with film



MIKE LEONARD
Hoosier Times

The shouting television host named Chris Matthews may have appropriated the term "Hardball" for his television talk show, but former Bloomingtonian Chris Sautter probably knows as much about high-stakes politics as anyone.

It was Sautter who led 8th District Congressman Frank McCloskey's recount team through the minefields of the bitter recount process that ultimately resulted in the Bloomington Democrat's election by the U.S. House of Representatives in 1984.

Today Sautter is a Washington, D.C., political consultant and recount specialist. Whenever there is a recount looming, in any jurisdiction in the U.S., Democrats are likely to have Sautter on the ground quicker than an EMT to a car crash site.

The affable former Legal Services Organization attorney knows rough-and-tumble politics. He grew up, after all, in the Chicago suburbs during the long reign of Mayor Richard Daley.

It was, in fact, the Daley legacy that inspired Sautter to undertake an unusual endeavor in 1999 — filming for a documentary on the nationally obscure subject of the East Chicago Democratic mayoral primary.

"East Chicago has always been notorious for hardball politics," Sautter said last week from Los Angeles, where his recently completed work, *The King of Steeltown*, was screened at the West Coast presentation of the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival.

"It's really a throwback to the era of the first Mayor Daley in Chicago," Sautter said. "It's kind of like coming across a primitive culture in the South Pacific islands. There aren't too many places left where hardball politics are still practiced like this."

Though Mayor Robert A. Pastrick has held court over East Chicago for more than three decades, he faced what looked to be a formidable challenge in 1999 from Stephen Stiglich, who wrested control of the Lake County party chairmanship from Pastrick in 1997.

"Being Lake County, the Democratic primary is the real election," Sautter explained. "This looked to be like Ali-Frazier, two very tough guys going at it."

Sautter and his small film crew descended on East Chicago for the last 10 days before the primary, filming rallies, people on the street and strategy sessions.

He got some good stuff.

"There is a very contentious dispute, ironically, over absentee ballots, with allegations of vote-buying and so forth," the rookie filmmaker explained. "The documentary takes a really pretty much a cinema vérité approach. There's not a lot of narration. The action pretty well speaks for itself."

The King of Steeltown is pretty much a new commodity on the film festival circuit, but if its reception in Los Angeles is any indication, the documentary will gain some attention. *LA Weekly*, which is notoriously tough on new work, previewed the New York film festival by singling out Sautter's film.

It called the documentary a "definite stand-out" and said, "Sautter has a finely honed feel for the fading machinery of old-school party politics. It's just the sort of odd surprise that is the best one can hope for from this sort of lineup."

Sautter hopes for bigger and better notice, having been told that even the holy grail of independent filmmakers — the Sundance Film Festival — is a real possibility.

At 75 minutes, *The King of Steeltown* is longer than the standard PBS documentary. "They want 56 minutes and 40 seconds," Sautter explained. "At this point, I'm not willing to cut that much. But we'll see."

Compromises are inevitable in the film business, as Sautter already knows. "At least," he said, "the one good thing about doing your own film is you get to decide your own music. So, being a blues enthusiast, I had a ball. I got stuff in from my old friend, (the late Indianapolis blues mandolinist) Yank Rachell, Sleepy John Estes, Slim Harpo and Paul Butterfield.

"And it's not just that it's stuff I like. I think it's appropriate to use that good ol' Chicago blues in telling this story in East Chicago."

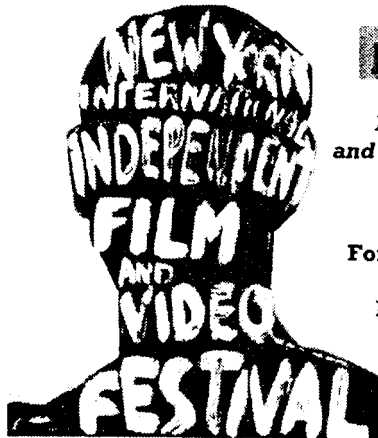
No Bloomington screening of the documentary has been scheduled, but Sautter said it's very likely he'll take advantage of the opportunity to return to town when he can arrange it.

Mike Leonard can be reached at (812) 331-4368 or by e-mail at leonard@heraldt.com.

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL

One definite standout is first-time filmmaker Chris Sautter's *The King of Steeltown*, a documentary on a Democratic mayoral primary in the decaying rust-belt town of East Chicago, Indiana. A longtime political consultant, Sautter has a finely honed feel for the facing machinery of old-school party politics.

— Mark Olsen



July 9th-22nd in LA

Featuring over 250 films
and videos at LAEMMLE MUSIC
HALL, SUNSET 5, and
CLARITY THEATER

For tickets and information call:
1-800-522-2891

For industry and press call:
212-387-0957

www.NYFILMVIDEO.com



CHRIS SAUTTER, a Wheaton native now an attorney/political adviser in Washington, has directed and produced a documentary, "The King of Steeltown," which deals with what went on behind the scenes during a heated mayoral primary in East Chicago.
