

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 B. 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.

