

The Transom

BY SPENCER MORGAN

Movie Mamas Flock to Ricki's Flick! Lake Swells With Pride Over Her Crunchy Women's Health Care Doc

"I feel like this film is very much my third baby, and it's crowning right now, and I'm pushing!" cried former talk-show tootsie and original Tracy Turnblad **Ricki Lake**, referring to the new documentary *The Business of Being Born*, which she executive-produced and will screen on Wednesday, Jan. 9, at the IFC Center with host **Rosie O'Donnell**. Actress-moms **Keri Russell** and **Mariska Hargitay** are expected.

The moviemaking experience, Ms. Lake said by phone from Los Angeles, where she lives, "was an opportunity for me to say something beyond 'Here comes the new hoochie mama of the year!'" She herself has two children, ages 10 and 6, the first of which she delivered in a "birthing center" in New York. "Looking back, I felt like, 'Well, I didn't really need to be induced, and I didn't need that drug they gave me,'" she said. "It seemed like there was a cascade of intervention."

The second child arrived "in my apartment in the West Village," Ms. Lake said, with the help of a midwife. "It was really hard to get paid back by insurance companies. Everything is sort of stacked against you! I felt like I could be an advocate. The process of birth... it's an amazing opportunity for women to be empowered. And connected and changed."



Directed by **Abby Epstein**, *Business* does not advocate one method of birth. "This movie is about choice," Ms. Lake insisted. "We're not anti-hospital, anti-doctor, anti-anything." But, she pointed out, the United States' "maternal and infant death rate is appalling considering we're the richest country in world. Our numbers really suck."

The IFC screening will benefit the New Space for Women's Health, a "green" birthing center scheduled to open in midtown by 2010, on whose board Ms. Lake will sit. "A huge, huge coup for women," she crowed. "It makes me want another baby in New York City!"

Though she said that was unlikely, "I'm a single mom," said Ms. Lake, 39, who split from illustrator **Rob Sussman** in 2003. "I guess it could happen if I fall madly in love tomorrow. I love being pregnant but it's soooo hard raising children." Tell us about it, sister! "But I never say never."

Ms. Lake still occasionally acts—she starred in the 2006 indie film *Park* with **Billy Baldwin**—but said her new role is the best yet. "I spoke at the U.N. recently, which was really cool."

—Meredith Bryan