



# He has a HEART ON

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## Entertainment :: Television

### here! Documents 30 Years of the AIDS Epidemic

by Steve Weinstein  
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The on-demand service here! gives TV viewers a great reason to tune in with a new documentary about the history of AIDS in the United States. In less than 50 minutes, "30 Years from Here" gives a very powerful account of the epidemic, from the first cases up to the "cocktail."

Director Josh Rosenzweig tackled the seemingly impossible task of summing up such a huge subject in a shortened period. His solution was the present, not so much a parade of facts and figures, as more a feel for the way in which the disease

presented itself, spread, caused panic, created a support system, and affected those of us who lived through the 1980s and 1990s.

Rosenzweig decided to focus on New York City, which remained the epicenter of the pandemic in this country from its beginnings until very recently. New York also represents many of the key players and events of those years, including the formation of amFAR, Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT-UP.

The nine talking heads included represent a gamut, from the well-known (Larry Kramer), to powerful workers in the fight against the disease (GMHC Director Marjorie Hill), to a doctor and nurse working on the front lines, to ordinary people.

The result is a collage of impressions that gives the viewer a sense of the mystery, helplessness and terror of the early years; and how that transformed itself into activism, organization and, finally, political action.

How Rosenzweig managed to assemble the footage, conduct interviews, write the script and even provide the narration for the film is especially remarkable considering that he has a more-than-fulltime day job as the head of original programming at the network.

However, for him, this project was personal. "I forgot how much a part of my life it was," he said in a recent interview. "I grew up and came out in 1981-'82, so I literally lived with it from the beginning. So unintentionally, a lot of my voice went into the experience of what you see."

The project began as a tie-in with the Advocate (part of the same company as here!) planning a time-line for its Pride issue. "So I said, 'We'll just videoize the timeline and call it a day. As we started to work with the Advocate, it incorporated a lot more on a macro level."

Meanwhile, Rosenzweig had run into the director of "We Were Here," the documentary about people who lived through the epidemic in San Francisco. "When he told me about his film, I realized one of the big challenges was, how do you tell the story?" Rosenzweig

recalled. "I didn't know where to start, or what to include. We stayed away from pop culture. A lot more was my journey through it. I was involved with ACT-UP."

There were originally 18 interviews, and all of the interviews run to several hours, which gives here! itself an oral archive of the epidemic. What remains on the TV screen is a highly distilled portrait of an era. Of necessity, this means that many of the important details are left out. There's no discussion of how AIDS moved into the hemophiliac community, or how it affected the blood supply. You won't find a mention of the dual discovery of HIV in Washington and Paris.

Even so, it's powerful stuff. If you lived through it, it will bring back memories and probably make you start hating Ronald Reagan all over again. If you are too young to have been there, this will serve as an important primer of what happened and how the gay community responded.

"30 Years From Here" debuted on Nov. 25, but will be rerun continually throughout the month of December in conjunction with another fascinating AIDS documentary, "Heart of Broadway," about the organization Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. For more information, go to here!'s website.text

EDGE Editor-in-Chief Steve Weinstein has been a regular correspondent for the International Herald Tribune, the Advocate, the Village Voice and Out. He has been covering the AIDS crisis since the early '80s, when he began his career. He is the author of "The Q Guide to Fire Island" (Alyson, 2007).

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