

March on Washington videos on parade

Three videos currently on the market show the diversity, not only of the gay and lesbian community, but also of production values and quality.

B Y M E G G R A C E

1987 March On Washington Video Tape
(Gay Cable Network, \$39.95).

Part Of The USA (Gerard Video, Inc., \$29.95).

The Historic March On Washington (Lifestyle Update Productions, \$19.95).

I regret missing what quite possibly was the most exciting lesbian and gay event of the century: the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, on October 11, 1987. 850,000

Video

lesbians and gay men turned out for a march and rally that surpassed the New York City and San Francisco pride marches combined. Two days later 650 gay men and lesbians were arrested on the steps of the United States Supreme Court in a nonviolent protest against that court's decision in the *Hardwick v. Bowers* case. Two thousand lesbian and gay couples celebrated their relationships in a public ceremony. The Names Project — a quilt of memorials for people who have died of AIDS — took up the length of two football fields when sewn together. And these are only the highlights of that five-day takeover of our nation's capital.

Because I missed this major event, I was eager to view the videos that have appeared on the market. I discovered three: *1987 March On Washington Video Tape* (GCN), *Part Of The USA* (GVI), and *The Historic March On Washington* (Lifestyle Update Productions).

I viewed GCN's video at an event sponsored by the Lesbian Community Project. I was disappointed in both the content and the quality. Low quality was soon apparent in this 60-minute tape. Footage of a variety show at the DAR Constitution Hall was dark, and persons were difficult to discern. It also was the first I had heard of a variety show being part of the weekend's events. Like many of the lesbians viewing the tape, I got the feeling that lesbians had apparently decided not to go to Washington, D.C. Where were we? Certainly not in this video — not until the civil disobedience at the Supreme Court.

My major complaint with Gay Cable Network's production is the lack of representation of the people who I know were there: fags and dykes, white and Asian, thin and fat. And what about the S and M contingent?

"Diversity, pride and sheer joy" is the best way I can sum up GVI's video, *Part Of The*

USA. Right from the start the viewer is transported to Washington, D.C., and placed amidst the whole experience: the vibrant, high energy of Sistah Boom, a rocking dyke percussion group; the somber intensity at the reading of 27,000 names of people who have died of AIDS; and a flag of green and yellow stripes topped by a star in a lavender triangle waving in gay ol' pride.

Part Of The USA is only 30 minutes long, but it far exceeds in quality what on the outside may seem a lack of quantity. One of my favorite

images is a group of men and women in the march singing. "We are proud, we are gay, we are in the PTA." And of course I felt shock and satisfaction when Whoopi Goldberg, speaking from the stage, said, "How long is it gonna take before people get smart [about the need for AIDS research and funding] . . . people with educations, senators, congressmen and the fucking president!" I hope he heard you, Whoopi. He *needs* a good jolt.

Part Of The USA is a fine production with quality editing: it is also the only one of the three endorsed by the Executive Committee of the March. A contribution of 50 cents is made to the Executive Committee and \$1 to AIDS organizations with each video sold.

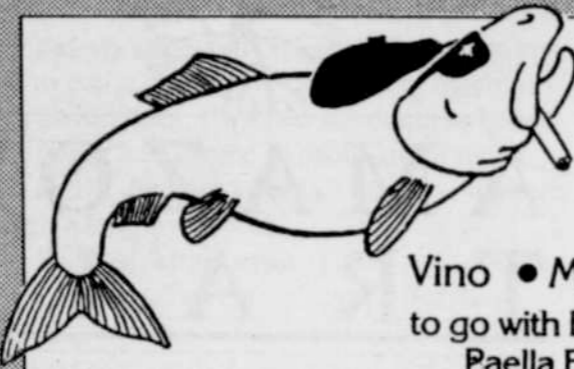
The video by Lifestyle Update Productions consists of 60 minutes of home movies. While the producers covered all the events and shot some great footage of thousands of happy queers, I was not excited or captivated by the

final product. The video is narrated by Los Angeles cable reporter Melinda Tremaglio, whose staccato speech detracts from the events she is reporting. Covering the civil disobedience at the Supreme Court, she spoke in an intense whisper — as if announcing a golf tournament.

The background music is familiar but hardly appropriate. Footage of a protester being dragged by her handcuffed arms is backed up by trumpets playing a stirring "Yankee Doodle Dandy." There's more footage of protesters being arrested to the tune of "The Star Spangled Banner," specifically "... land of the free and the home of the brave." The irony, alas, is lost in the melodrama.

All the events are covered in this video, and there are some touching moments at the quilt, yet it is slow-moving and uninspired. The potential was there to make a fine production, but flawed editing leaves the viewer bored. •

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