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New York Minutes

Memorable moments from a busy week in the Big Apple

12:49 a.m. June 19: *Village Voice* columnist Michael Musto bikes past me on Fifth Avenue. I'm on my way home from the True Colors Tour stop at Radio City Music Hall, where I just spent five hours among queer entertainment's finest: Margaret Cho, Rosie O'Donnell, Debbie Harry, Erasure, Dresden Dolls, Cazwell with Amanda Lepore. For a Human Rights Campaign benefit, the lineup was surprisingly diverse, uncensored and multigenerational—and the voice of Gen Y belonged to Portland's own The Gossip featuring world-famous, fat-positive, lungs-of-Janice-Joplin lead singer Beth Ditto, 26, who earned a standing ovation for her Radio City Music Hall debut. Right on!

1:42 p.m. June 19: The New York Assembly—led by prime sponsor Daniel O'Donnell, brother of Rosie—passes a bill to allow same-sex couples equal access to marriage by a bipartisan vote of 85-61. I feel the earth move.

8:18 p.m. June 19: The city's queer community center gets \$9 million in taxpayer-funded support. This same week, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announces that he's leaving the Republican Party. My kind of town.

2:36 p.m. June 21: It was 40 years ago today that the Summer of Love officially began. I celebrate the anniversary by checking out the Whitney Museum's psychedelia exhibit, filled with trippy music posters and light shows, enlightening Vietnam-era political documentaries and a multicolored padded room for chilling. I nestle onto a curved cushion and fish out my iPod to play The Rolling Stones' vastly appropriate "She's a Rainbow."

5:55 a.m. June 22: Damn, I didn't expect to be getting up this early while on vacation. But I didn't expect that I'd be asked to volunteer at an AIDS soup kitchen—an opportunity that I graciously accepted from the woman who was letting me crash at her place in Stuyvesant Town. A friend of a friend of the family who I hadn't met until arriving on her doorstep, Lydia never misses her Friday shift at God's Love We Deliver. My duties include "burping" the air out of soup containers and sealing main course trays with a "kah-joonk" contraption. I reward myself afterward with a sinfully moist "Tres Leches" at Doughnut Plant.

12:22 p.m. June 22: Lunch with my friend who just joined a convent. Long story.

6:15 p.m. June 22: Dinner in Brooklyn at Grimaldi's, one of the city's best pizzerias.

8 p.m. June 22: Fresh off her Best Actress win at the Tony Awards, Christine Ebersole takes the stage for *Grey Gardens*, based on the cult documentary of the same name about Jackie O's infamously wacky cousin and aunt. Ebersole stars as both of the spinsters—in Act 1, set in 1941, she plays Edith Bouvier Beale as an overbearing socialite mother, and in Act 2, set in 1973, she plays "Little" Edie Beale as a lonely eccentric. The musical's extreme "then and now" leap is powerfully effective in conveying the shattered dreams of these one-of-a-kind women. Each role allows Ebersole to ham it up—but with class, a balancing act that she has perfected. Quite a career move since her 1981-82 season on *Saturday Night Live!*

9:24 a.m. June 23: En route to the Jersey Shore to see our 92-year-old grandmother, my cousin (one of the coolest straight guys around) brainstorms with me about how to spice up dull Gay Pride parades. He



Jim's Closet
BY JIM RADOSTA

suggests a Goldilocks and the Three Bears float. I suspect it's been done before.

Better yet, he adds, how about a spoof of *The Transformers* with its own theme song: "Transvestites, more than meets the eye! Transvestites, dudes in disguise!"

I guess you had to be there.

10:39 p.m. June 23: I score the "godfather table" (back corner on a raised platform) at



Detail from Keith Haring's racy mural at NYC's queer community center.

G Lounge, a Chelsea hotspot filled with high-fashion eye candy. It's fun to ogle, but eventually I need to experience some Portland-esque diversity, so I suggest we head to the funkier East Village. Suffice it to say: Not everyone in my party is pleased.

1:19 p.m. June 24: Back on Fifth Avenue at my first-ever NYC Pride parade, I'm impressed with the diverse contingents of Argentinian, Uruguayan and Caribbean queens. Along comes a float blaring a token song from the "gay catalog," this particular one being "Finally" by CeCe Peniston. Only thing is it's actually being sung by Ms. Peniston herself. (Cue "small-town awe" facial expression here.)

Although the route seems packed, I later read in a *New York Observer* article that interest and funds are waning rapidly at NYC Pride (the article's clever title: "Goodbye, Mr. Chaps"). One of the interviewees cites a simple reason: "I live in New York, and it's sort of like every day is Gay Pride Parade.... I don't need this special day when I'm out of the closet."

Start spreading the news. ☺

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.