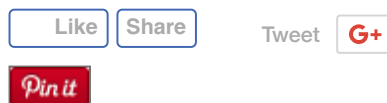


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## Film Review: United in Anger: A History of ACT UP

Those Wall Street occupiers could learn something from this superbly informative and moving documentary about a movement that really got the job done.

Jul 5, 2012



### Reviews



One of the most vibrant activist movements of the last century is featured in Jim Hubbard's *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*. The group was formed in 1987 as AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power in response to widespread governmental and corporate neglect of the disease that was ravaging the gay male population. A small group of committed gay men, activists to their very core, initially met to discuss this problem and that meeting burgeoned into a formidable movement

which, through its unyielding tenacity and ingenuity, really got things done.

It's a truly epic, sprawling tale, crowded with colorful, often combative characters and incident, employing a bewildering amount of documentary footage mixed with contemporary interviews. Hubbard, who began the project 25 years ago, interviewing ten original ACT UP members, admirably keeps his focus unwaveringly on ACT UP's mission to demand more expedient government approval of affordable drugs for those afflicted, throughout all the internecine conflicts and challenges which impacted the group through the years.

ACT UP hit Wall Street on March 24, 1987, the first demonstration of many to follow, which became more and more radical and effective. There was the shocking Die-In at St. Patrick's Cathedral (1989), the takeover of the CBS studio during a Dan Rather broadcast, the guerrilla attack on the FDA, and the Ashes Action (1992), in which the crowd threw the cremated remains of people, whom they claimed were murdered by government indifference, onto the White House lawn.

The film is a brilliantly edited, concise history that gains in momentum and thrills as it proceeds to the victories won by the group. It's a blessing that so many of ACT UP's original members still survive, largely through their own efforts, and here provide eloquent, insightful and passionate

witness to the tragedy and triumph. Hubbard generously gives them ample time to delineate their positions and tactics in the war for drugs, and what might have seemed a surfeit of didactic clinical information is instead deeply compelling.

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