Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP on Video

If the traditional documentary—one with carefully scripted voiceovers and thought-provoking insight—is your cup of tea, FIGHT BACK, FIGHT AIDS: 15 YEARS OF ACT UP ON VIDEO might best be kept for a rainy day. That’s because it’s an actual recapturing of queer history, offering neither narrator nor scandal. Yet it is a documentary because it captures our memories of our friends and lovers who fought for our political rights regarding what used to be our disease.

James Wentzy’s in-your-face FIGHT BACK, FIGHT AIDS is a compilation of live footage documenting the first ACT UP meeting in 1987 on New York City’s Wall Street and continues to 2002. Amateur video recording—at the demonstration level and from the private, behind-the-scenes meetings and training—reveals the astonishing camaraderie that united a politically enraged community, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Recognizable faces among the hundreds of ACT UP activists, timelessly captured over the 15 years of footage, are likely to be moving. Particularly noteworthy is seeing activist and author Vito Russo issue a speech equating AIDS to war then demanding to know how the two landscapes differ.

Whether or not your own political views are aligned with ACT UP’s today, this infinitely relevant political group taught us to fight back against government complacency, to protest the high costs of pharmaceutical drugs, and to simply ask others: Where is your rage?

FIGHT BACK, FIGHT AIDS: 15 YEARS OF ACT UP ON VIDEO dir James Wentzy
2002 USA 75 min video

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