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Festival Program

> [NY, NY - Documentary]



FIGHT BACK, FIGHT AIDS: 15 YEARS OF ACT UP

[FIGHT]

Director: James Wentzy

U.S.A.

2002

75 min

Color



Screening Schedule

Wed, May 7 / 4:00pm

Integrated Studios

\$10.00

WAIT LIST

Sat, May 10 / 4:15pm

Tribeca Film Center

\$10.00

WAIT LIST

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It wasn't until nearly 1987 that public perception about AIDS being a disease of homosexual men started to ever-so-slowly shift, and if it weren't for the militant (and often controversial) activism of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, perceptions might not have shifted for much longer. This insightful compilation documentary recounts the group's 15-year history and shows how it has grown in scope and sophistication without losing sight of its activist ideals.

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In March 1987, the first AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) event took place on Wall Street. In the 15 years since the protest that shut down the world's financial center, ACT UP has been at the forefront of public awareness. Their demonstrations, die-ins, political funerals, marches, and speeches were key in propelling issues related to HIV/AIDS into major political and international topics. ACT UP member and AIDS video activist James Wentzy has constructed a vivid compilation documentary with *Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP*. The powerful clips depict the multiple bold events that ACT UP has staged, including: the inspiring First ACT UP action on Wall Street protesting

the profiteering of the pharmaceutical companies that made AIDS-related drugs; National Nine Days of Rage, in which more than 50 ACT UP chapters congregated on the New York state capital to protest AIDS policies (or the lack thereof) involving IV drug use, homophobia, people of color, women, prison programs, and children with AIDS; and intense coverage of political funerals of ACT UP and affinity group The Marys, which included carrying an open coffin from Washington Square to the New York Republican Party headquarters on West 43rd Street, as well as an open casket political funeral in front of the White House. With fierce images and speeches, including many poignant ones by film historian and ACT UP pioneer Vito Russo, *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* is a dynamic alternative historical record of the queer political landscape, HIV/AIDS, and AIDS activist video. – David Kwok | Tribeca Film Festival Programmer |

< [Director's Bio](#)

James Wentzy

James Wentzy was born October 21, 1952, in Brookings, South Dakota, and has lived in New York City since 1976. He has been a member of ACT UP New York since 1990. As a producer/ director for DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activists) since 1991, he has documented more than 700 hours of videotape and edited more than 160 video documentary programs for a 30-minute weekly series telecast in New York City entitled AIDS Community Television, which documents community responses to the AIDS crisis. Wentzy is also a video archivist for the Estate Project's AIDS Activist Video Preservation Project for the New York Public Library. *Fight Back, Fight AIDS* is his first feature-length documentary. He is HIV positive.



> [Director's Statement](#)

"Over the span of its 15-year history, ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) has helped to transform the nation's consciousness about HIV/AIDS, and made activism a vital part of the AIDS political landscape. Comprehensively documented by media activists and video collectives, the bold strategies, media savvy, and decidedly queer wit of ACT UP remains a fresh source of inspiration to today's artists and activists through the invaluable trove of images sampled in this dynamic program of AIDS activist video."

- written by *Ioannis Mookas* for *MIX 2002*

[< Cast And Credits](#)

Producer: James Wentzy

Archival Documentary Video Footage: Catherine Gund, Julie Clark, John Schabel, Tim McCarthy, Andrew Chang, Elaine Angelopoulos, Tony Arena, Dean Lance, James Wentzy

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Print Source and Press Contact

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Distributor Source *to be announced soon*

