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Full of Pride at the parade

by Cynthia Laird

San Francisco's 35th annual LGBT Pride Parade Sunday, June 26 brought out an amazing array of colorful floats, bicycle and motorcycle riders, politicians, and marching contingents as hundreds of thousands of people lined Market Street to view one of the world's largest expressions of freedom.

The weekend festival at Civic Center Plaza also saw record crowds, according to Pride officials, who estimated overall turnout at around 1 million.

"It went really, really well," Pride board President Joey Cain told the *Bay Area Reporter* on Monday. He added that it appeared to him that the crowd along Market Street seemed larger than last year, and attributed that in part to cooler weather.

"The overcast weather brings more people out," he said.

Later in the day on Sunday, as the weather cleared, Cain said that beverage sales were brisk. A portion of those sales generates revenue for numerous nonprofit community groups, along with a portion of the gate



Paradegoers enjoy the show.

RICK GUNTER

A marcher shows off a rainbow of balloons during Sunday's Pride Parade.

Pride

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donations.

"They sold more than last year," Cain said of his conversations with beverage vendors.

Another indication of increased attendance was in gate collections, which were also up over last year. "We took in \$30,000 more this year, for a total of \$104,000," Cain said.

A sampling of area residents who attended Saturday and Sunday Pride festivities showed most people were upbeat.

"Who knew that this many people would ever come out and celebrate being gay? This is my first time and I just can't believe it," said Jason Anders of Fremont.

Some even brought their parents. "It really means a lot to me that my parents came this year," said Richard Schrader of Berkeley. "They're both Republicans and I thought for sure they'd say no when I asked."

Joe Castel of Los Angeles said he makes a special effort to attend San Francisco's Pride events. "No other city can compare to San Francisco's Pride."

There were some Christian fundamentalist protesters along the parade route, which drew puzzlement from a parade-goer. "I just don't understand how people could have a problem with love," said Carolyn Rogers of San Francisco.

Cain said that sponsorships for this year's parade were way up. And that wasn't lost on city resident Jim Ferris.

"It's funny to think how it's come full circle – 25 years ago these were marches for equality," he said. "Today, they're a celebration of diversity. There's still a po-



Always a colorful sight: Drag queens on parade!

litical aspect, but every other float is sponsored by Absolut."

And politics was very much in evidence at Sunday's parade. From the many openly gay politicians who marched – Supervisors Tom Ammiano and Bevan Dufty; state legislators Carole Migden, Mark Leno, and John Laird; city Treasurer Jose Cisneros – to straight allies – District Attorney Kamala Harris, City Attorney Dennis Herrera, and Mayor Gavin Newsom – the parade showed the clout of the LGBT community.

There was one hitch, however. According to the members of the Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club, who marched with Ammiano, KRON 4, which was broadcasting the first two hours of the parade live, cut to a commercial

just as Ammiano's contingent was going past the cameras. Some Milk Club members perceived that as a slight to Ammiano, who was rejected by the station as one of the broadcast co-anchors when station officials deemed him "too political."

"Opting to take in San Francisco's 35th annual LGBT Pride Parade from the convenience of my living room couch, I was absolutely stunned when the coverage returned from commercial break to announce that Supervisor Ammiano had just gone by with the Harvey Milk Club in tow," Rick Galbreath wrote in a letter posted on sanfranciscosentinel.com. "How convenient. The snub is now complete."

Members of the Milk Club



JANE PHILIPSEN/CHRONICLE

Engaging in some friendly spanking at the Dyke March.



CHRIS ALBERICI/CHRONICLE

The scene in the Castro at around midnight on Pink Saturday.

who marched with Ammiano and carried placards critical of KRON's decision.

Milk Club Vice President Saskia Trill reported on leftinsf.com that a KRON staffer "came running up to the car and told the folks to take down the signs. The marchers refused. KRON apparently thinks that the live TV-eight-second-Janet-Jackson-boob-delay is a license to edit live TV, since they cut to commercial."

Neither Pat Patton, KRON's vice president of programming, nor producer Javier Valencia returned calls seeking comment.

Other marches

Pride events started Friday, June 24 with the second annual Transgender March. The event began with a rally and performances in Dolores Park. A crowd estimated between 3,400 and 5,200 people attended the event, according to organizer Sam Davis.

The Viragos – featuring guitarist/vocalist Shawna Virago – rocked the stage, as did the legendary dyke punk band Tribe 8, which reunited for the event. Hip-hop artist MC Katastrophe – acknowledging that it can be difficult for transsexuals to maintain a place in the queer community – thanked organizers of trans-related events for fostering an understanding and providing space for a diverse mix of voices and opinions. Politicians, including Leno and Harris, made speeches in support of the community and pledged to continue to fight for transgender equality.

"It was a thoroughly fantastic experience and our messages of respect and equality for transgender people and people of all genders were communicated crystal clear," said Davis. "It was beautiful



Jane Philomena Crichton

Organizers called the second annual Trans March a success.

and heart-warming and powerful and political all at the same time. I think we're really reaching a critical mass as a gender movement, and it's much bigger than just here; this is not an isolated event."

On Saturday, June 25, an estimated 50,000 women, transgenders, and genderqueers filled Dolores Park for the annual Dyke March, which included an afternoon of performances and political speeches.

"Stand together and know that our unity is under attack," said Dyke March committee member Tina D'Elia during the keynote address. "We cannot sit on the fence; the fence is on fire too – genocide, rape, the trafficking of women and children, U.S. imperialism, domestic violence, breast

cancer, ecocide, AIDS, homelessness, white supremacy, male supremacy, anti-immigrant violence, lack of health care – the fence is on fire too."

A diverse crowd of all ages and backgrounds – dressed in costumes, or sometimes, not dressed much at all – spilled out into the street at 7 p.m. to march through the Mission District and into the Castro's Pink Saturday street party. Supporters cheered from the sidelines while neighborhood residents took advantage of their window views to cheer the crowd from above. ▼

Zak Szymanski and Tyson Gillfillan contributed to this report.

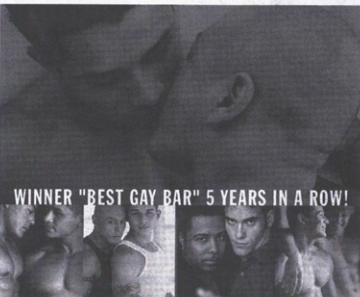


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