

# STONEWALL UPRISING

A film by Kate Davis and David Heilbroner

82 minutes, Color, HDCAM, 16:9, 2010  
Stereo Sound



First Run Features  
630 Ninth Avenue, Suite 1213  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 243-0600/Fax (212) 989-7649  
email: [Info@firstrunfeatures.com](mailto:Info@firstrunfeatures.com)

[www.firstrunfeatures.com](http://www.firstrunfeatures.com)

## PRAISE FOR *STONEWALL UPRISING*

**Critic's Pick!** "Valuable! The most thorough exploration...of what came to be known as gay pride."  
- Stephen Holden, [The New York Times](#)

"Gripping...Fresh and fascinating! When the [riot] happens we feel its necessity in our bones."  
- Owen Gleiberman, [Entertainment Weekly](#)

Critics' Pick! "Riveting, powerful!" - [New York Magazine](#)

"Astounding...startling! The sense of elation can still be felt." - Ronnie Scheib, [Variety](#)

"PICK FOR THE WEEK! Kate Davis and David Heilbroner's taut documentary compellingly evokes the "Rosa Parks moment" of the gay-rights movement." -TIME Magazine

"Essential...masterful...pitch-perfect!" - Arthur Ryel-Lindsey, [Slant Magazine](#)

"Outstanding, emotionally and visually rich documentary... delivers plenty of fascinating archival material."  
Doris Toumarkine, [Film Journal International](#)

A-! "Gripping! Allows us to experience a landmark civil rights event in a fresh and fascinating way."  
- Owen Gleiberman, [Entertainment Weekly](#)

"a passionate and compassionate reconstruction...gracefully telescopes a lot of information"  
- Carrie Rickey, [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

"A wealth of archive footage and eye-witness interviews. I laughed, I cried, I loved it!"  
- Tim Macavoy, [Inside Movies](#) (UK)

"Vitaly important, fascinating."-Frank Scheck, [Hollywood Reporter](#)

"Make(s) chillingly clear how oppressive and downright dangerous life was for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people at that time." -Kevin Thomas, [Los Angeles Times](#)

"Important, superb ...*Stonewall Uprising*' is first and foremost about people. Politics and history and sexuality are there, too, but they're subsidiary to the human stories the documentary tells."-Mark Feeny, [The Boston Globe](#)

"Essential." -Gary M. Kramer, [Gay City News](#)

"Eye-opening ... Young people, in particular, having grown up in a world where being gay is not that big of a deal, may well be stunned at the bad old days." -Stan Hall, [The Oregonian](#)

"Conveys volumes of information briskly and efficiently within its superbly constructed framework. *Stonewall Uprising* is an important film and a valuable document, but also an entertaining and vibrant look at a powerful moment in our recent history."-Jason Bailey, [DVD Talk](#)

"For LGBT history novices and experts alike, this film makes an impact. The documentary's combination of historical context, firsthand accounts of events, and photographs from the 1960s makes for a fascinating retrospective of this momentous event." -Carly Dahlen, [Ology](#)

"The viewer actually feels as if he or she is reliving all the events that led up to and included the two-night uprising." -Allyn Sterling, [Spectrum Culture](#)

"Gripping and informative." -Kenneth R. Morefield, [Imorefilmblog](#)

"praiseworthy documentary...will enjoy a long afterlife" -Elgy Gillespie, [Culture Vulture](#)

"the best gay documentary film ever...cinematic triumph...superlative film"  
-George Holdgrafer, [Lavender Magazine](#)

## STONEWALL UPRISING

"It was the Rosa Parks moment," says one man. June 28, 1969: NYC police raid a Greenwich Village Mafia-run gay bar, The Stonewall Inn. For the first time, patrons refuse to be led into paddy wagons, setting off a 3-day riot that launches the Gay Rights Movement. Told by Stonewall patrons, Village Voice reporters and the cop who led the raid, STONEWALL UPRISING compellingly recalls the bad old days when psychoanalysts equated homosexuality with mental illness and advised aversion therapy, and even lobotomies; public service announcements warned youngsters against predatory homosexuals; and police entrapment was rampant.

A treasure-trove of archival footage gives life to this all-too-recent reality, a time when Mike Wallace announced on a 1966 CBS Reports: "The average homosexual, if there be such, is promiscuous. He is not interested in, nor capable of, a lasting relationship like that of a heterosexual marriage." At the height of this oppression, the cops raid Stonewall, triggering nights of pandemonium with tear gas, billy clubs and a small army of tactical police. The rest is history.

[Courtesy of Film Forum]

### FILMMAKER CO-BIOGRAPHY

Kate Davis and David Heilbroner have been producing award-winning documentaries for 15 years. They co-directed STONEWALL UPRISING (2010), the first non-fiction film to tell the story of the Stonewall riots by the participants. Their film, *Scopes: The Battle Over America's Soul* (History Channel, 2006), was part of *Ten Days Which Unexpectedly Changed America*, which won the Emmy® for Best Non Fiction Series in 2006. *Jockey* (HBO, 2004), was nominated for 3 Emmys® and won the Emmy® Award for Best Non-Fiction Directing. *Pucker Up: The Fine Art of Whistling* (2004), was broadcast worldwide and had a limited US theatrical release. They also produced *Diagnosis Bipolar* (2010) and *Plastic Disasters* (2006) for HBO, and numerous social justice films including *Anti-Gay Hate Crimes* (A&E Networks, 1998) and *Transgender Revolution* (A&E Networks, 1999).

Davis directed and produced *Southern Comfort*, which portrayed the life of a male transsexual. The Emmy-nominated film won over 25 awards, including the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival (2001), Best Documentary Feature at the Florida Film Festival, San Francisco International Film Festival and Hot Docs in Toronto, First Prize at the Seattle Film Festival, the Grierson Award for Best International Documentary and the Special Audience Award at the Berlin Film Festival.

Davis' *Girltalk*, (1988) about three Boston street kids, was released theatrically and broadcast on PBS, ARTE (France), and Ch.4 (UK). She worked as an editor on Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning*, Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* and Robert Stone's *American Babylon*.

David Heilbroner, is a former Manhattan prosecutor and author who has been making documentary films for more than ten years. He was Senior Producer for *Crime Stories*, a series for Court TV (1999), and directed/produced *Transgender Revolution*, *Life After Death Row*, *The Dark Side of Parole*, *Anti-Gay Hate Crimes*, and *Untying the Straightjacket*, (A&E Networks). As an author, Heilbroner wrote the critically acclaimed non-fiction books, [Rough Justice](#) and [Death Benefit](#) (which was made into a feature film for USA Pictures starring Carrie Snodgress) and has written widely on law and crime.

**STONEWALL UPRISING CREDITS**

**WRITTEN BY**  
David Heilbroner

**BASED ON**  
*Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*  
by David Carter

**DIRECTED BY**  
Kate Davis  
David Heilbroner

---

**EDITED BY**  
Kate Davis

**PRODUCED BY**  
Kate Davis  
David Heilbroner

**FILMED BY**  
Buddy Squires

**MUSIC COMPOSED BY**  
Gary Lionelli

**ASSOCIATE PRODUCER AND ADVISOR**  
Eric Marcus

**RECREATION STILL PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Heather Gude

**ADDITIONAL CAMERA**  
Kate Davis

**ADDITIONAL STILL PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Eric Marcus

**SOUND RECORDIST**  
David Heilbroner

**CAMERA ASSISTANT**  
Kitama Seeger Jackson

**ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**  
Dana Kirchoff  
Michael Dolan

**CONSULTANT**  
David Carter

**ARCHIVAL ADVISOR**  
Katherine Linton

**TECHNICAL ADVISORS**  
Chris Mara  
Franco Sacchi

**ANIMATION**

Tim D'Amico

**ADDITIONAL ANIMATION AND EFFECTS**

Jorge Garcia-Spitz  
Quentin Heilbroner  
Chris Mara

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS**

Alexis Charizopolis  
Charles Harris

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Obie Benz

**TRANSCRIPTIONS**

Alexis Charizopolis  
Katrina Heilbroner  
Alexandra Meryash Nikolchev

**POST PRODUCTION FACILITY**

PostWorks NY

**POST PRODUCTION PRODUCER**

Mike Ashburn

**ON-LINE EDITORS**

Mike Nuget  
Andy Frielingsdorf

**COLORIST**

Ira Schweitzer

**SOUND DESIGN**

Ira Spiegel

**ASSISTANT SOUND EDITOR**

Daniel Fulton

**RE-RECORDING MIXER**

Tom Efinger

**AUDIO MIX ASSISTANT**

Jeff Seelye

**AUDIO MIX FACILITY**

Dig It Audio, Inc.

**REENACTMENT ACTORS**

Paul Bosche  
John DiGiacomo  
Dana Gaiser  
Noah Goldman  
J. Michael Grey  
David Huggins  
Louis Mandelbaum  
Leroy S. Mobley  
Samual Murkofsky  
Alfredo del Rio

**CASTING**

Heather Gude  
Georgie Castle

**ARCHIVAL STILL AND MOTION IMAGES COURTESY OF**

ABC News VideoSource  
BBC Motion Gallery  
Martin Boyce  
David Carter  
Corbis Images  
Daily News  
Danny Garvin  
GettyImages  
Pennebaker Hegedus Films  
Historic Films  
Jerry Hoose  
ITN Source  
Giles Kotcher  
Bettye Lane  
Tommy Lanigan-Schmidt  
Linton Media  
MacDonald & Associates  
National Archives and Records Administration  
NBC News Archives  
New York Public Library  
New York LGBT Center Archives  
John O'Brien  
Oddball Film and Video  
Suzanne Poli  
Producer's Library  
Fred Sargeant  
Wolfson Florida Moving Image Archives  
Lilli M. Vincenz  
WPA Film Library

**THANKS TO**

David Alpert  
American Airlines  
Marc Aubin  
Martha Babcock  
Sophie Cabott Black  
Dan Bodner  
Hugh Bush  
Tom Caruso  
Colonial House  
Doug Cramer  
Liz Davis  
Joe DeCola  
Marjorie Duffield  
Evan Eames  
Barak Goodman  
Ellen Goosenberg  
Geordie, Liam and Theo Gude  
Amber Hall  
Jeremiah Hawkins  
Robin Haueter  
In the Life  
Judith Kuchar  
Alan Lechner  
Lester Senior Housing Community, Jewish Community Housing Corporation  
Frank Kameny

Barney Karpfinger  
Geoff Kole  
Judy Laster  
Susan Liberti  
Dan Martino  
Ellinor Mitchell  
Daniel Pine  
John Scagliotti  
Urban Stages  
John van Hoesen  
Seymour Wishman  
The Laramie Project Cast at The Calhoun School  
The Underground Lounge  
Trevor

**FOR  
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

**POST PRODUCTION**

Vanessa Ezersky  
Glenn Fukushima  
Greg Shea

**SERIES DESIGNER**

Alison Kennedy

**ON-LINE EDITORS**

Spencer Gentry  
Mark Steele

**SOUND MIX**

John Jenkins

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Nancy Sherman

**WEB**

Molly Jacobs

**LEGAL**

Jay Fialkov  
Janice Flood  
Maureen Jordan  
Scott Kardel

**PROJECT ADMINISTRATION**

Susana Fernandes  
Pamela Gaudio  
Tory Starr  
Patricia Yusah

**MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Sean Cleary  
Jen Holmes  
Patrick Ramirez

**PROJECT MANAGER**

Lauren Prestileo

**SERIES MANAGER**

James E. Dunford

**COORDINATING PRODUCER**

Susan Mottau

**SENIOR EDITOR**

Paul Taylor

**SERIES PRODUCER**

Susan Bellows

**SENIOR PRODUCER**

Sharon Grimberg

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Mark Samels

A Q-Ball Productions film for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

(c) 2010

WGBH Educational Foundation

All rights reserved.

---



Movie Review

**The New York Times**

## **Stonewall Uprising**

[NYT Critics' Pick](#)

### **June 28, 1969: Turning Point in Gay Rights History**

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

Published: June 16, 2010

“The average homosexual, if there be such, is promiscuous. He is not interested in, nor capable of, a lasting relationship like that of a heterosexual marriage.”

So declared Mike Wallace in authoritative voice-of-God tones in “The Homosexuals,” a tawdry, sensationalist 1966 “CBS Reports,” excerpted in Kate Davis and David Heilbroner’s valuable film, “Stonewall Uprising.” Funny how yesterday’s conventional wisdom can become today’s embarrassment.

The most thorough documentary exploration of the three days of unrest beginning June 28, 1969, when patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a seedy Mafia-operated gay bar in Greenwich Village, turned on the police after a routine raid, “Stonewall Uprising” methodically ticks off the forms of oppression visited on gays and lesbians in the days before the gay rights movement.

“Before Stonewall there was no such thing as coming out or being out,” says Eric Marcus, the author of “Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian & Gay Equal Rights.” “People talk about being in and out now; there was no out, there was just in.”

At the time of the riots, homosexuality was illegal in every state except Illinois. Before the laws were changed, one commentator observes, gay bars offered the same kind of social haven for an oppressed minority as black churches in the South before the civil rights movement.

The cultural demonizing of gay men in public service films depicted them as at best, psychologically damaged and at worst, ruthless sexual predators. Lesbians were nearly invisible.

The same “CBS Reports” peddled the medical opinion, since discredited, that homosexuality was determined in the first three years of life. The movie has ominous vintage footage of electroshock aversion therapy being administered, accompanied by the suggestion that it might be a promising cure for what was widely regarded as a mental illness. The most unsettling historical tidbit concerns the treatment of homosexual patients at a mental hospital in Atascadero, Calif., where some were injected with a drug that simulated drowning, a process that one commentator describes as “chemical waterboarding.”

It is a sad indication of the marginalization of homosexuality in the late 1960s that media coverage of the Stonewall riots was mostly after the fact. And even then it was cursory and often condescending. Because so little photographic documentation exists of the unrest, the film relies mostly on eyewitnesses, including Seymour Pine, the now-retired police officer who led the initial raid of six officers and who describes it as “a real war.” The details of the raid are reconstructed by several who were present, including Howard Smith and Lucian Truscott IV, journalists for The Village Voice whose offices were nearby. The film focuses on the first night of the unrest.

As one rioter remembers: “All of a sudden the police faced something they had never seen before. Gay people were never supposed to be threats to police officers. They were supposed to be weak men, limp-wristed, not able to do anything. And here they were lifting things up and fighting them and attacking them and beating them.” It was the first stirring of what came to be known as gay pride.

“This was the Rosa Parks moment, the time that gay people stood up and said no,” Mr. Truscott recalls. “And once that happened, the whole house of cards that was the system of oppression of gay people started to crumble.”

## Film Review: Stonewall Uprising

**Outstanding, emotionally and visually rich documentary about the spontaneous 1969 Stonewall Inn riots that gave birth to and fueled the gay-rights movement comes out contemporaneously with the annual late-June global gay-pride celebrations that followed Stonewall.**

June 16, 2010

-By Doris Toumarkine

Yes, a number of previous documentaries (*Before Stonewall*, *After Stonewall*, *Gay Sex in the 70s*, etc.) have referenced the historic Stonewall event, but none has so clearly focused on the uprisings themselves. *Stonewall Uprising*, while recalling the decades of pre-Stonewall gay oppression and the liberating, even euphoric Stonewall aftermath as homosexuality became more accepted and respected, provides a vivid look into the club itself and what went on in its Greenwich Village neighborhood over those three historic days.

The uprising, spontaneous and unplanned, began early on June 28, 1969, with yet another New York City police raid on yet another Mafia-run gay bar in the Village. But this time—and for the first time—the patrons had had enough and refused to be led into the police paddy wagons. No one knows why this night was different, but footage conveying the anti-gay, pre-Stonewall climate suggests why resistance was inevitable.

*Stonewall Uprising* delivers plenty of fascinating archival material, including Mike Wallace's offensive commentary for an anti-gay, mid-'60s CBS report, so-called educational films damning homosexuality, and footage of raids, arrests, entrapment and harassment of Village gays and drag queens. Also on view in the interest of context: agitprop clips of heterosexual family life of the '50s and '60s, gays getting "therapeutic" shock treatment, and pronouncements from outspoken anti-gay shrink Dr. Charles Socarides.

After anger over such treatment and depictions finally exploded beginning that early morning of June 28, the news media gave very scant coverage. Fortunately, the *Village Voice* offices were just down the street and ace reporters Howard Smith and Lucian Truscott IV rushed to the scene. They, gay-rights leaders and activists, Stonewall habitués and even a former NYC morals squad cop named Seymour Pine who led the raid are among the film's many committed talking heads who help bring the event and its social climate alive. Notes Pine: "You know they broke the law, but what kind of law was that?"

Also making the uprising more vivid are seamless reenactments, as skillfully interwoven as those in the Oscar-winning doc [Man on Wire](#), that are hard to distinguish from the abundant archival material. Voice reporter Smith, among others, conveys what it was like to be trapped at the Stonewall, as those rioting outside kept the police at bay while making captives of those inside.

*Stonewall Uprising* is also rich in flashbacks of Greenwich Village as the proverbial destination for gays, artists, misfits and dreamers. In its mini-history of the pre-Stonewall Village as a gay ghetto, the film touches upon the good, the bad and the icky. The ongoing oppression and harassment pushed gays to the far west of the Village, a free-for-all, ad-hoc party site for anonymous sexual encounters among the greasy trucks and rotting piers.

The doc chronicles the repressive social milieu and legal minefield to which gays were subjected. What comes across is how similar the gay-rights movement was to the civil-rights battles, a point made by former New York mayor Ed Koch. Even the prejudices, propaganda and policies that assured oppression and marginalization shared similarities. And the revolutions and resolutions had common origins: so many people galvanized by just being so fed up with so much injustice.

*Stonewall Uprising* also interestingly makes clear that humor—at the core of the drag phenomenon—mingled with the anger and resentment, so that there was little brutality to the uprising and even a built-in appeal. Over the three days, pro-gay crowds and sympathizers grew, as did the movement that led to the first gay-pride march a year later and to the global June celebration of pride that continues today.

ADVOCATE.COM – June 16, 2010 – interview with Kate by Brandon Voss  
[http://www.advocate.com/Arts\\_and\\_Entertainment/Film/Stonewall\\_Riot\\_Girl/](http://www.advocate.com/Arts_and_Entertainment/Film/Stonewall_Riot_Girl/)

Posted on Advocate.com June 16, 2010 02:17:30 PM

## Stonewall Riot Girl



With husband and filmmaking partner David Heilbroner, celebrated documentarian Kate Davis tackles the ugly truth about the Stonewall riots in *Stonewall Uprising*. Why? Just ask her ex-girlfriend.

[By Brandon Voss](#)

On June 28, 1969, an outraged gay mob resisted a police raid of the Stonewall Inn and ignited the modern gay rights movement. Directed by Kate Davis and husband David Heilbroner, *Stonewall Uprising*, which opens June 16 in New York City before a summer release in more than 25 cities, is the first documentary that tells the story through interviews with actual riot participants and regular patrons of the Greenwich Village gay bar. Based on David Carter's book *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* and produced for the PBS *American Experience* series, *Stonewall Uprising* also marks the sixth collaboration of the Emmy-winning filmmakers, whose credits include *Southern Comfort*, which documented the final year of a female-to-male transsexual and earned the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance. From a Stonewall Inn barstool in June 2010, Davis speaks to *The Advocate* about her long kinship with the LGBT community.

***The Advocate:* I must admit that I didn't expect a husband-and-wife filmmaking team to be behind a documentary on the Stonewall riots. What about the subject appealed to you?**

*Kate Davis:* Well, David and I have both been making films on LGBT subjects, civil rights, and equality issues in general for about 15 years, like *Anti-Gay Hate Crimes* and *Transgender Revolution* for A&E. But I've been fighting the fight since I was in high school in the late '70s. I've never identified as straight, nor am I gay; I'm just attracted to who I'm attracted to. Why did I care enough about the subject to actually politicize these feelings? I guess I felt repressed myself — that sense from a young age that a girl's supposed to act a certain way and a boy's supposed to act a certain way. I actually took my girlfriend to the senior prom, and I wore a full tux.

**How did that go over?**

Now it's a regular scandal, but back then there was just a dumbfounded reaction. The administration didn't even know how to shut down the prom because they were so shocked. They'd never seen such a thing. Although the Stonewall riots had happened in '69, I wasn't really aware of it at 16, 17, and gay issues just weren't talked about at my high school, even in the late '70s.

**Was your sexuality a struggle?**

Yes, because I liked girls as well as boys, and there wasn't a place for that. I did form a gay rights committee in the yearbook, which was then banned by the administration, but it was a fake group anyway because nobody was out. Frankly, I chose the smartest, shiniest stars of my class, who all presented as straight, and they were all

willing on principle to be a part of this gay rights committee that was phantom, just to make the point that we could have and should have really existed.

**Was your husband, David, always interested in gay rights, or did you introduce him to those issues?**

He's always been comfortable with gay people — some of his closest friends are gay — so there's never been a boundary or distance between him and gay issues. But I don't think it's a totally random coincidence that we would end up making films about gay and transgender rights even though we're not squarely in those communities, because sometimes it takes a little bit of distance and perspective.

**Had you read David Carter's book about Stonewall before PBS approached you to make the film?**

No. Like many people, I thought I knew everything about the Stonewall riots, but I found that there's a lot to the story that most people don't know.

**What did you learn about the riots that most surprised or horrified you?**

We didn't really think it would be the case going in — and this became increasingly important as we did our research and looked at archival material — but we realized that the riots could only be understood by understanding the context of the time. It was a really dark, medieval time, though we're talking only 40 years ago. I was shocked, for example, by the laws of the time and how the main institutions dehumanized gay people to the point where lobotomies and shock therapy were routinely performed. You would've thought that a city like New York, especially in the Village, was a refuge for gay people during this period of free love and the birth of the social revolution, but the gay bars were essentially illegal, Mafia-run, and the NYPD was particularly strict, cracking down on gays all the time. Police went as far as dressing up in drag to entrap gay people and throw them in jail. It was terrifying.

**Of the many gay men and women you interviewed for the film, whose personal story touched you the most?**

Everybody's did in its way. Danny Garvin was so scared of coming out in the Navy that he tried to slit his wrists. Martin Boyce talks about never wanting to tell his mother, who was in a wheelchair, because it would've broken her heart, and how he spent his childhood trying to imitate straight people. Virginia Apuzzo, who has gone on to be a real force in gay rights, went to a convent because she was so torn up inside and wondered if she was doomed to go to hell.

**You also spoke to the NYPD officer who led the Stonewall raid, but your most controversial interview subject might be former New York City councilman and mayor Ed Koch.**

Yes, he will not be everybody's friend, but I'll tell you why we have Ed Koch. It's not a film about his often very questionable political actions at the time — he was on record for supporting crackdowns — so it wasn't a *Frost/Nixon* situation where we were out to get Ed Koch. In my mind, it was important to get him to legitimize the claims we're making in the film that the New York government and police force were really out to get gay people, and Ed Koch admits that was the case.

**Why does your film make no mention of the prevalent myth regarding Judy Garland's death and funeral as a possible catalyst for the riots?**

We asked every single participant about Judy Garland, and we would've included it if anybody had said it was fire on the match, but no one did. As a matter of fact, one person interviewed in the film was actually at Judy Garland's funeral, and even he said, "Look, we were street kids. We loved her, but there was a larger anger at play here."

**Was your ultimate goal to make a film with mainstream crossover appeal, or were you content to document gay history primarily for gay audiences?**

I believe it can reach everybody on different levels. It's been very gratifying at various festival screenings to see how many gay people, older and younger, have been amazed at how little they knew about the riots or the laws in place at the time. For some, it's a nostalgic way to remember their childhood, both the pain and the humor that was used as a defense. But like *Milk*, if I may be so bold to use that as an example, this film is a good story, an important story, and it should become a much firmer part of American history. I hope this film educates and inspires people to see that while the battle isn't over, we've clearly come a long way. So part of our larger goal was to help make gay history American history. Why isn't this being taught in our schools? It should be up there with Rosa Parks. Gay youth, even if they're focused on the gay marriage debate, may not really know where we came from. One kid said to me, "Oh, I think I've heard of Stonehenge."

## Revisiting people, places at dawn of gay rights movement



An image from 1969 shows the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Sheridan Square. "Stonewall Uprising" documents the police raid of the popular gay bar that year. (Larry Morris/The New York Times/File)

By [Mark Feeney](#)

Globe Staff / June 18, 2010 ★★★★★

**STONEWALL UPRISING** Directed by: Kate Davis and David Heilbroner

A popular gay bar in the West Village, the Stonewall wasn't exactly a landmark. "A toilet" a former patron calls it in "Stonewall Uprising." Yet that raid set off a series of violent demonstrations that marked the birth of the gay-rights movement. "This was the Rosa Parks moment," another participant says, "the time that gay people stood up and said, 'No.' "

Kate Davis and David Heilbroner's riveting documentary looks at more than just the Stonewall riots. It provides a context for them, offering a highly evocative sense of gay life in the decade or so before Stonewall. That life was largely invisible to the general public. When it did get noticed, it was universally condemned and persecuted. The filmmakers weave together modern-day interviews with gay activists, old photographs, period footage, and excerpts from hilarious/gruesome educational films with titles like "Boys Be Aware" and "Perversion for Profit." "Notice how Albert delicately pats his hair and adjusts his collar," sagely observes the narrator of a 1950s Columbia University educational film. "His movements are not characteristic of a real boy." Real boys don't adjust? It's like "Mystery Science Theater" without the robots.

Davis did the superb editing job, weaving together these disparate materials to give the documentary a terrific sense of pace and texture. Gary Lionelli's rich and varied score further draws in the viewer. Another documentary on gay rights opens today, "8: The Mormon Proposition." Its comparative thinness makes one appreciate all the more just how much artistry has gone into making "Stonewall Uprising."

The most important decision Davis and Heilbroner made wasn't artistic, per se. It was selecting the interview subjects they did. They range from a former head of the Mattachine Society, the first gay-rights advocacy group, to a drag queen and two Village Voice reporters who were at the riots. All are impressively articulate and speak with great feeling about their experiences.

It's indicative of the filmmakers' attention to detail that they make a point of including childhood or teenage photos of each of their major interview subjects. More than just a framing device, the pictures underscore the passage of time (can this society really once have been that ignorant and intolerant?). More important, they remind us that "Stonewall Uprising" is first and foremost about people. Politics and history and sexuality are there, too, but they're subsidiary to the human stories the documentary tells.

Mark Feeney can be reached at [mfeeney@globe.com](mailto:mfeeney@globe.com). ■