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● Pride '93: wheelchairs lead the annual march while Brockwell Park is entertained by Sonia, Army of Lovers, Dannii Minogue and East 17 (with Mr Gay UK)



Anything is possible

DAVID SMITH reports from Pride '93
Photos by BILL SHORT

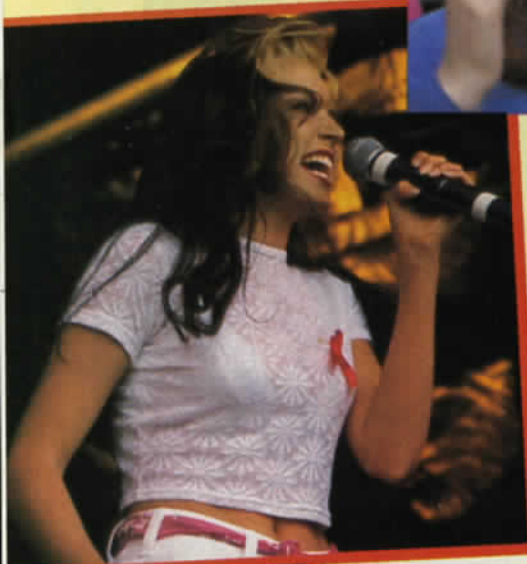
LONDON's Lesbian and Gay Pride launched itself firmly into the big league of the world's premier lesbian and gay events when an estimated 110,000 people attended the Pride '93 festival in Brockwell Park on June 19th. Washington, San Francisco, New York and Sydney still lead the way, but London is on the map. And with "Happy Pride" swiftly gaining currency as a new lesbian and gay festive day greeting, Pride now ranks alongside birthdays, Christmas and New Year in the pretended family calendar.

Up to 30,000 lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and friends had earlier joined the Pride march in central London. Without the organised European presence which made last year's EuroPride so special, the numbers seemed down and the mood more subdued. But – contrary to the knee-jerk assumptions of the media – this wasn't because of the threat of the serial killer. In fact, said Bill Walshe, press officer for the Pride Trust, the organisers of the march and festival, there seemed to be an added "sense of defiance" in the face of the unprecedented media attention the killer had provoked.

Whilst last year's festival was virtually ignored by the news media in this country, this year the events were reported, albeit in the context of the killer, on almost every television and radio station and in almost every newspaper in the country. Sky TV devoted a total of four hours of live air-time to the festival.

Though the Pride Trust had resisted the idea of an all-encom-

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● Baring all: rainbow warriors promoting the rainbow flag (top left), US armed forces veterans, Perry Watkins and Clifford Krapf (centre) and the fun-time crowds at the open-air concert



Anything is possible

passing campaigning theme for the march, OutRage, Stonewall and ACT UP all made their separate political messages clear. OutRage marched behind a banner demanding action to "Stop the violence against lesbians and gay men"; Stonewall marched with three veterans kicked out of the US armed forces for being lesbian or gay; and ACT UP called for a one-minute silence in memory of people who have died of Aids. On the march and in the park, the Terrence Higgins Trust, Gay Men Fighting Aids, the Health Education Authority and Crusaid found eager takers for their condom kits and safer sex information.

The green expanses and picturesque slopes of Brockwell Park proved once again to be the ideal setting for the afternoon's mix of music, fun and cultural diversity. Disco and cabaret marquees were full to bursting, the fun fair went down a storm, the Black Experience tent proved an enormous success once again, and the women's tent was overflowing. In fact, the whole festival has become so successful and so big, it could soon out-grow Brockwell Park, raising intriguing questions about the direction in which it will go. The possibilities, it seems, are endless.

The Pride Trust is hoping that its new strategy of raising funds by franchising out sections of the festival will pay off. It has avoided last year's deba-

cle when the organising committee had to declare itself bankrupt and the Trust announced at the end of the festival that even with the events of the day costing in excess of £160,000, it had at the very least broken even. Donations from festival-goers are expected to total around £20,000, five-times the size of last year's dismal collection.

The market area, franchised out to Conference and Marketing Associates, organisers of last November's Gay Lifestyle Exhibition, included more merchandise and information stalls than ever before, and the open stage line-up was hailed as the best ever.

Various introduced by drag superstars Yvette, Lily Savage and Regina Fong, who were compering throughout the day, *Eldorado* star Polly Perkins, US comedienne Lea Delaria, drag rock band RPLA, disco goddesses Sinitta, Hazell Dean and Danii Minogue, Merseyside's Eurovision disappointment Sonia, Sweden's outrageously camp Army of Lovers, the wickedly funny Julian Clary, teen dreams Big Fun and Walthamstow bad boys E17 all had the crowds calling for more. Dawn French didn't turn up. But stalwart gay icons, Jimmy Somerville and Boy George came closest to catching the mood of the day, with Jimmy's lament *For a friend* and George's *Do you really want to hurt me?* seeming especially poignant.

At the end of the day as the closing fireworks burst ecstatically against a dramatic sunset, giving a powerful focus to the mood of togetherness, power and excitement, it was left to surprise guests, The Shamen, to sum up a message of hope. "Whoever you may be, in the best of all possible worlds, nothing is impossible."

Snapshots of Pride:

'Happy Pride' is a new festive greeting swiftly gaining currency among members of pretended families

