

Jim Hubbard Case Study: Two Marches, 1991

1. Biography

[Jim Hubbard](#) is an experimental documentary filmmaker and archivist. After a summer film institute at Stanford in 1974, he rejected UCLA Film School, which he felt was too mainstream, and attended the San Francisco Art Institute. He co-founded the New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival (now known as [MIX](#)) in 1987. Beginning in 1992, he worked as the acting archivist at [Anthology Film Archives](#) and was involved with the National Moving Image Database (NAMID). He has also been active with other preservation and archiving efforts, including developing the [IMAP](#) Template and consulting for Channel 13. He is currently working on an [oral history of \(AIDS activist group\) ACT-UP](#) with MIX.

2. Background of the film

Jim was inspired to create [Two Marches](#) as an entry for the 1991 New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. Using footage from two gay marches on Washington DC, which he documented in 1979 and 1987, the 8-minute film contrasts the atmosphere of the two events. Instead of hearing the usual slogans and chants typical of a protest, the film juxtaposes silence and non-synchronous sound (from music LPs and CDs). Jim's hand processing of the film is another of its unique qualities. The film has been shown more than any of his other films and appeals to a wide audience. The 1979 march was not widely documented, making this rare footage historically valuable.

3. Production

In 1979, Jim filmed the gay march on Washington on Super-8 (on out-of-date AGFA stock) and created the 50-minute film [March On](#) (1981). To create a new work for the 1991 NY Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, he used excerpts from [March On](#) and footage from the 1987 gay march on Washington. In order to edit together the two marches ('87 film was shot on 16 mm reversal film), he blew up the Super 8 footage to 16 mm. For the soundtrack, Jim chose songs from LPs and CDs, which he transferred to cassette and sent to Magno Sound and Video for mag film transfer. The final print was processed at [Monaco Film Labs](#) in San Francisco, California.

Jim is one of the few filmmakers who has hand processed his own films. For the 16mm footage of the 1987 March, he used a small machine in a bathroom. At one point, he was having problems with the machine, with the result that some portions of the film came out overbleached from spending too much time in the bleach tank and others overexposed (from lying in developer). The original Super-8 footage of the 1979 March was processed in a small plastic tank specially designed for processing Super-8, made by Superior Bulk Film of Chicago using borrowed chemicals from a lab in Minneapolis that processed Kodachrome stills.

4. Media formats and ancillary materials.

The final product is a 16mm print (color/sound) - 8 minutes. Viewing copies are available on VHS, but the filmmaker prefers to show the film on 16mm, especially because the color processing does not come out as well on VHS. A reversal print was made from the editing of the source materials (1979 Super-8 and 1987 16mm reversal film) and a print was made with the magnetic sound track added. The filmmaker also retains outtakes on a reel and has various notes on aspects of production. During the production of the 1987 march footage, he maintained notes on each shot written on yellow legal pads.

5. Preservation issues

The filmmaker's system of storage includes: two boxes of prints (originals and negatives), and eight to ten boxes of outtake reels, held at Preferred Media in air conditioned storage. He also maintains notes and print materials related to production in a remote storage space. A selection of his films is housed in cold storage with the Jerome Hill collection in Pennsylvania, due to a fortunate inventory error. He regularly examines his film reels for signs of decay and has not noticed any degradation. So far, he is surprised and delighted to find that his unusual processing of the films has not made them any more prone to decay.

Jim would like to create DVD access copies of his films and intends to experiment with capturing the image off a screen and shooting it on DVCam. He would also like to make an optical negative of the film for preservation purposes as well as a new higher fidelity mix of the soundtrack from CDs. He is unsure whether an internegative exists. If it does not, he would like to have one made.

Canyon Cinema, Light Cone (Paris), and the Filmmakers' Coop are the distributors of his films.

6. Recommendations

"Film feels different from video... As long as the color can get transferred more or less intact, I'll be happy – but I haven't seen it yet." – Jim Hubbard

Jim has already put some thought into the preservation and archiving of his work. We would recommend that at least his master print of the film go into cold storage to prevent decay. We would also recommend that he verify if an internegative exists for Two Marches, and that he have one made, if none exists. He should follow through on his idea of making DVCam copies of the work, and possibly of the original march footage to create access copies. DVCam would also be a good way of creating an access copy that would retain the unusual color scale of the film better than VHS.