PRIDE THOMAS E. KILDUFF

Multi-colored Dyke March

NEARLY A THOUSAND WOMEN SHOWED UP FOR FESTIVE AND ACTIVIST MARCH THROUGH BOSTON AND ON THE COMMON

"Kiss Me – I vote"
"Kiss Me – I'm Gay"
"Butches Are Hot"
"Racism is a Lesbian Issue"
"Fat Dykes are Beautiful"
"Think Queer"

These are just a few of the hand-marked messages on cardboard signs carried out of Boston Common on Friday evening, June 9 at around 7 p.m. Just shy of a thousand, mostly, women showed up at the victoriously independent annual Boston Dyke March of 2006.

It was 30-year-old Stacy's sixth year at the Boston Dyke March; a necessary pilgrimage to her now that she lives in New York. Stacy was saving some of her energy for the bigger parade the day after.

"I play trombone for the Lesbian and Gay Big Apple Marching Band," she says. "And we're playing and marching in the Boston Pride Parade."

A friend of hers, Danny, 35, lives in Jamaica Plain. In comparing today's more radical dyke parade cousin to the big, official Boston Pride Parade, Danny is honest.

"I have to admit I like the bigger Pride Parade better," she said. "It's the start of summer for me and I'll definitely be there watching."

While the Official Boston Pride Parade is lengthy, orderly and peopled by many, the Dyke March is messy, wild, irreverent and very sex-positive. At the Dyke March, plastic jugs double up as collection canisters and last minute percussion. At the Dyke March, people wear underwear on their heads and carry signs like, "The only Bush I trust is my own!" And the dyke march rolls along with a cacophony of whistles and drums and life-affirming chants like: "We're here, we're queer, we're fabulous, get used to it!"

Free to attend and register, the Dyke March still requires some resources to go forward. In fact, the women behind the dyke march have been rigorously raising money for the early June event.

"We had three fundraisers three weeks in a row last September," said Dyke March Organizer, Stephanie. "And we pulled in about a thousand dollars."

"We threw a queer prom at the Randolph Country Club, a speed dating event at Somerville's Toast," says fellow organizer, Amy "and then following the parade, we are having an after party at Toast."

"All ages [over 21], all genders and sexualities showed up and enjoyed the Prom in May," Stephanie said. "Some folks dressed up and some dressed down, and it really felt like people made the night the prom they wished they had when they were in school. I think the DM committee felt like we gave folks a chance to be silly and have fun and feel welcome at a "school event" that otherwise feels really restrictive for a lot of people."

"The Queer Prom was co-sponsored by Mad Femme Pride and was a smashing success," Amy said, "There were over 150 people there and just as many wonderful outfits! We crowned a prom king and queen, the decorations were amazing and the DJ was fantastic!"

While the Dyke March prides itself on its homespun and D.I.Y. (Do-It-Yourself) mentality, the organizers still depended on a few sponsors who stepped up to support the thrilling event. A few of the forward-thinking sponsors include: this paper, Boston Pride, Toast Lounge, Truth Serum Productions and the New England Leather Alliance.

Apart from being a seemingly wild affair, part of the Dyke March's mission rests on respect and inclusiveness.

"It is very important for us," Stephanie said, "that everyone feels welcome and involved to whatever extent they feel they want to be. We make decisions by consensus and try to give everyone the opportunity to give as much input as possible."

While the event is naturally geared toward women, we did find one cute gay boy who was willing to support his sisters.

Twenty-four-year-old, Chris Mason rode his bike to the event. He is the Assistant Canvas Director for Mass Equality. "I brought my Mass Equality poncho just in case," Mason said of Friday's foreboding clouds.

Rain or shine, boasted the Web site (www.bostondykemarch.com), the march would continue. Nothing was going to stop these girls after months of serious planning. In a way, the march is like a climax.

"There is also an unspoken rule that the Dyke March is meant to be FUN. It is a lot of hard work and can drive us all crazy at times," Stephanie says, "We all have different reasons for planning the March: meeting new friends and cute girls, giving New England queer women a space to feel included and free, giving queer women performers a venue to be heard, and honing our organizing skills. In the end though, we all do it because it is a lot of fun and want to plan a great event." •

(photos: Eric Hess)

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