Time Warp

It’s like AIDS never happened

July 1, 1998

Time’s 1996 Man of the Year, Dr. David Ho, made the guest list for the mag’s gaga gala at Radio City Music Hall in March, but neither he nor AIDS made the cut in Time’s hyper-hyped 75th-anniversary issue. The 200 pager inked the word AIDS only once (in a reprint of a 1985 letter from author Graham Greene: “I agree that we must preserve a sense of proportion and not panic over the spread of AIDS”). Odder was Time’s ecstatic ’80s section, titled “Comeback” and tagged: “Reagan won. Wall Street won. By the end of the ’80s, the West had won.” Perhaps. But in the world we inhabit, many lost—lovers, friends, lives.

Leave it to the ever-feisty Larry Kramer to call Time out: “How can you write a history of the last 75 years and not talk about AIDS?” The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation also barked a harsh rebuke. “Time’s silence on AIDS is startling,” said its executive director, Joan M. Garry. “The disease has transformed the world in countless ways.” Kramer finally coaxed an apology out of Barrett Seaman, the 75th issue’s principal editor, during a radio broadcast. Seaman allowed that AIDS had “slipped through the cracks,” and said, “With all due respect, we had 3,800 issues to go through.” Among the earth-shattering ’80s events that didn’t slip through: Superman turns 50, and Liz Taylor divorces.

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