

Gay Rom-Coms: The Final Frontier?

Kevin Jackson / The BlackSphere, Article by Lawrence Johnson, February 20, 2023



Despite how it appears, America is still America.

The same country that has made apologies for its wrongs and sought to make restitution whenever and wherever possible. With mistakes made that haunt us, decisions that taunt us, and challenges that keep us working to improve on our improvements- we continually strive to be better than we were yesterday.

We are also a country by and large with a moral compass. As such, there are still some taboos that remain; things we are innately against. Those things that occupy an area equivalent to crossing a moral Rubicon. One of those things is the homosexual lifestyle.

While many of us have, over time, accepted it as a part of the society that we live in as well as part of the 'new normal', being gay is still not recognized as a societal norm. When we hear of a daughter or son of a family friend getting married, we don't think same-sex. Likewise, when discovering a male co-worker has a date, our first question is usually, "What's her name," rather than, "What's he like?" Truth be told, just because the existence or relevance of something is accepted, that does not make it normal.

2022 was a banner year for Hollywood and the LGBTQIA++@# community. With gay-themed shows like *Queer As Folk*, *Will & Grace*, and *Modern Family* in its repertoire, the 'alphabet' community was secure in its ability to forever influence pop and media culture. That being said, if ever there was a year that sent the message to LGBTQ Hollywood execs that American society had yet to consider the gay lifestyle normal- it was 2022.

Enter the Rom-Com

A romantic comedy (or rom-com) is defined as "a movie or play that deals with love in a light, humorous way."

Since 1934's "It Happened One Night" with Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable, this genre of film has become the subject of girl's night's-out and date nights for nearly 100 years. In 2022, Universal Pictures decided to put all of their \$22 Million promotional eggs into an LGBTQ basket called, "Bros." This film was one of the first gay rom-coms by a major studio, featuring an openly LGBTQ cast.

The plot: two gay men in Manhattan who avoid commitment but are drawn to each other. Despite the \$22M investment, 'Bros' brought in a paltry \$14M- not even quite enough to recoup their losses.

Of course, every excuse was made for 'Bros' lack of success, from "theatrical live-action comedies have struggled for years," to "It lacked bankable movie stars," which both border on the absurd. After all, "Leon: The Professional," "Rocky," and "Cloverfield" were all films that crushed at the box office with virtually unknown leads, and 2022's "The Lost City," "Jackass Forever," and "Bullet Train" were all financial successes as well.

Barring the excuses, National Review's Bethel McGrew's article 'Homophobic Weirdos' Don't Explain the Failure of 'Bros' explains it this way: "Universal's Bros was supposed to be a game-changer, the first big-tent theatrical gay comedy in film history," Bethel writes. "Aggressively marketed as "a gay movie for straights," it has turned out to attract neither gays nor straights, with a meager \$4.8 million opening weekend.

The Blame Game

Naturally, in [Director] Eichner's world, it's all the straights' fault. The actor took to Twitter to denounce the "homophobic weirdos" who, mysteriously, weren't compelled to seek out a cinema where they could watch him put Luke Macfarlane's entire fist in his mouth on the big screen. (Still kinkier action was lost in the edits, we are told.)

Meanwhile, critical reviews from the few writers he hasn't bribed for puff pieces are spelling out the obvious: Gay or straight, one does not simply drop a starless, Judd Apatow-produced rom-com in spooky season, in theaters, in 2022, and expect it to be a hit. He can't half-mimic the oeuvre of When Harry Met Sally while utterly subverting its substance. Consider: When Harry and Sally finally "do it," it's the turning point of their movie. Why? Because something has changed. Something has shifted under their feet. And though they can't say it out loud, they both understand they can't go back. It's forward or nothing. This is the essence of the romantic dance between man and woman. It is unique, and it is irreplaceable."

While much of America does not operate in cultural traditions, we are yet steeped in American traditions, nonetheless. We generally desire the American dream. Most of us dream of our own home. We dream of meeting Mr. or Mrs. Right. We dream of a spouse to marry and have children with. With that in mind, we want to see films and shows that reveal the best outcome of those aspirations.

There is plenty of blame to go around when a movie is bad or has a sub-standard performance, the least of which considered is "it's just a bad movie". It also must be considered that sometimes you simply, "miss your guess," by only giving the people what you think they want. Of the many TV shows cancelled in 2022, nearly 20 of them were LGBTQ-themed. This should beg the question: Is America open to accepting LGBTQIA+++@# \$ as 100% normal?

Part 2 will reveal that even our children are also considered fair game by the alphabet clique.

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