

2018

Studio
Responsibility
Index

Hollywood is at a tipping point.

The past year has seen the rise of the Time's Up and #MeToo movements, which have transformed the conversation in the industry and among the movie-going public, and are driving change behind the scenes and in the media. On screen, record-breaking films like *Black Panther* and *Wonder Woman* prove that not only does inclusion make for great stories – inclusion is good for the bottom line. It is time for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) stories to be included in this conversation and in this movement.

GLAAD is calling on the seven major film studios to make sure that 20% of annual major studio releases include LGBTQ characters by 2021, and that 50% of films include LGBTQ characters by 2024. This is the first step in creating a barometer that will move them from a "Poor" or "Failing" rating, to a "Good" or "Excellent" one.

According to the MPAA's most recent THEME report, in the U.S. and Canada people aged 18-39 made up 38 percent of the "frequent moviegoer" audience in 2017 – meaning they went to the cinema once a month or more. Meanwhile, GLAAD's own *Accelerating Acceptance* report shows that 20 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34 and 12 percent aged 35-51 identify as LGBTQ. If Hollywood wants to remain relevant with these audiences and keep them buying tickets, they must create stories that are reflective of the world LGBTQ people and our friends and family know. This needs to take place in the major studio releases that play in wide release all over the country – and indeed, all around the world - as well as in the indie films that have long been home to stand out queer and trans stories like *Moonlight*, *Call Me By Your Name*, and *A Fantastic Woman*.

We have started to see some welcome progress in 2018 – major studio films like teen rom-com *Love, Simon* (Fox 2000), sci-fi action *Annihilation* (Paramount), and raunchy teen comedy *Blockers* (Universal) all opened in thousands of theaters across the country and included central queer characters who have agency over their own stories. The protagonists do not simply exist as prop devices for someone else's development. However, you would not know this from what GLAAD's *SRI* found for films released during the 2017 calendar year: there was a significant drop from the previous year (2016), representing a tie for the lowest number and the lowest percentage ever of LGBTQ-inclusive films amongst all mainstream releases since GLAAD began tracking in 2012. Only 14 major studio releases in 2017 had LGBTQ characters. Of those 14, only 9 passed GLAAD's Vito Russo Test.

This inconsistency from year-to-year, even sometimes within a single year across a studio's slate, is something we have noted in several editions of this report. We cannot let these signs of improvement be a blip in the radar; we need real and sustained progress, and GLAAD is a resource to the industry in making that change. Our GLAAD Media Institute is driving a culture revolution through research, consulting, and training to help creators and industry leaders be better prepared to produce compelling, entertaining LGBTQ characters that do not reinforce harmful and outdated stereotypes. (Call us, we're happy to help!)

Films like *Love, Simon* have helped accelerate acceptance around the world with many outlets covering the stories of LGBTQ young people who were inspired and empowered to come out after seeing the movie. This is the unique power of entertainment – to change hearts and minds by sharing our stories, and helping people find understanding and common experiences with people who may not be exactly like them.

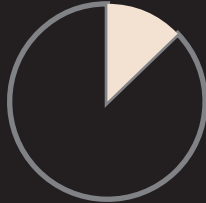
There are many exciting LGBTQ-inclusive projects that have already been announced as heading into development, and the studios have many opportunities ahead in their already scheduled slates for authentic and meaningful LGBTQ representation. The lifecycle of a film is long, and the next two to three years are critical, as we will begin to see more films hitting theaters that were greenlit following the beginning of GLAAD's *SRI* tracking. GLAAD will be holding dedicated pressure on studios to fulfill their social responsibility for LGBTQ inclusion, and we are here as a resource to help them achieve their goals.

We hope that next year's report is able to paint a more promising picture than GLAAD's 2017 findings. While the films mentioned above are impressive, three films are still only a small percentage of the total. With this report and future editions of the *SRI*, GLAAD will continue to hold Hollywood accountable for the stories they are – or more notably, are not – telling.

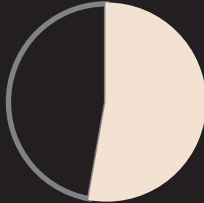


Sarah Kate Ellis
President & CEO, GLAAD

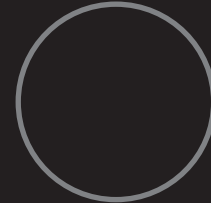
KEY CONCLUSIONS



There was a **significant decrease in the number of LGBTQ-inclusive films distributed by major studios** in 2017 – down to 14 from 23 the previous year. This is a tie for the fewest number of inclusive releases since GLAAD began tracking in 2012 and represents the lowest percentage ever of LGBTQ-inclusive films of all mainstream releases (12.8 percent).



While the number of queer characters dropped substantially year over year, there was a **welcome increase in racial diversity of LGBTQ characters following the previous two years of decreases**. In 2017, the majority of LGBTQ characters were people of color (57 percent, 16 of 28). However, there were no Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ characters in major studio releases in 2017.



Film continues to lag far behind other forms of media when it comes to nearly every type of inclusion of underrepresented voices – but one glaring way that mainstream film fails to be inclusive is the **complete lack of transgender characters in major studio releases in 2017**. (The subsidiary label Sony Pictures Classics distributed the history making, Oscar-winning Chilean drama *A Fantastic Woman*.)

2017 OVERALL FINDINGS, BY STUDIO

20th Century Fox	14 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS	RATING / INSUFFICIENT ★★☆☆☆
Lionsgate	19 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS	RATING / FAILING ★☆☆☆☆
Paramount	11 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS	RATING / POOR ★★☆☆☆
Sony	25 TOTAL FILMS / 1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM	RATING / POOR ★★☆☆☆
Universal	14 TOTAL FILMS / 4 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS	RATING / INSUFFICIENT ★★☆☆☆
Walt Disney	8 TOTAL FILMS / 1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM	RATING / POOR ★★☆☆☆
Warner Brothers	18 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS	RATING / FAILING ★☆☆☆☆

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Methodology

For this report, GLAAD focused its analysis on the seven film studios that had the highest theatrical grosses from films released in 2017, as reported by the box office database Box Office Mojo. Those seven are:

- 20th Century Fox
- Lionsgate Entertainment
- Paramount Pictures
- Sony Pictures
- Universal Pictures
- The Walt Disney Studios
- Warner Brothers

This report examines films that were distributed theatrically during the 2017 calendar year (January 1 to December 31) under the official studio banners and imprints. Films distributed by these studio's "art house" divisions (such as Fox Searchlight) were analyzed separately and not part of the parent studio's final tally or grade. The total number of films released by major studios that fell within the research parameters is 109.

GLAAD separately analyzed the films released under four smaller studio imprints that are sometimes referred to as "art house" divisions. This was done to compare the quantity and quality of LGBTQ representations in these studios' releases directly to parent companies. These specialty films are typically distributed and marketed to a much smaller audience than their major studio counterparts. These distinctions were informed in part by the box office reporting of Box Office Mojo and other entertainment industry databases. The total number of films that fell within the research parameters is 40. These divisions include:

- Focus Features
- Fox Searchlight
- Roadside Attractions
- Sony Pictures Classics

Each film was researched and reviewed for inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ) characters. The total number of LGBTQ characters was recorded for each film, as well as each character's race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

The films were also reviewed for the presence of general LGBTQ content and anti-LGBTQ language or "humor," though because such content must be considered in context, the language was not quantified for this report.

Additionally, each film was assigned to one of five genre categories:

- Comedy
- Drama
- Family
- Fantasy/science fiction/action
- Documentary

The family category included animated and children's films rated PG and under. The category of fantasy/science fiction/action also included horror films and action films not rooted in reality rated PG-13 and above. In the case of films that straddled genre lines, categories were assigned based on the predominant genre suggested by both the film and its marketing campaigns.

Based on the overall quantity, quality, and diversity of LGBTQ representation, a grade was then assigned to each studio: Excellent, Good, Insufficient, Poor, or Failing.

We must also recognize that some of the films counted here as LGBTQ-inclusive will not necessarily be seen as such by everyone, and vice versa. Every year GLAAD finds characters that must be subjectively interpreted to be understood as LGBTQ, require external confirmation of the filmmakers' intentions, or rely on pre-existing knowledge of source material or a public figure on whom a character is based.

While in past GLAAD has often counted these characters, our methodology is now shifting to only count characters as LGBTQ based on what is presented on screen as part of the film, or through wide and commonly-held cultural knowledge of a figure.

Note: Prior to the 2017 report, GLAAD assigned studios scores on a four point scale of Excellent, Good, Adequate, or Failing.

The Vito Russo Test

Taking inspiration from the “Bechdel Test,” which examines the way women characters are portrayed and situated within a narrative, GLAAD developed its own set of criteria to analyze how LGBTQ characters are included within a film. The Vito Russo Test takes its name from celebrated film historian and GLAAD co-founder Vito Russo, whose book *The Celluloid Closet* remains a foundational analysis of LGBTQ portrayals in Hollywood film. These criteria can help guide filmmakers to create more multidimensional characters while also providing a barometer for representation on a wide scale. **This test represents a minimum standard GLAAD expects a greater number of mainstream Hollywood films to reach in the future.**

More films need to include substantial LGBTQ characters that pass this simple test. However, as several of the films tracked prove, passing this test in no way guarantees that a film is not problematic or offensive in its portrayal of LGBTQ people.

1 The film contains a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer.

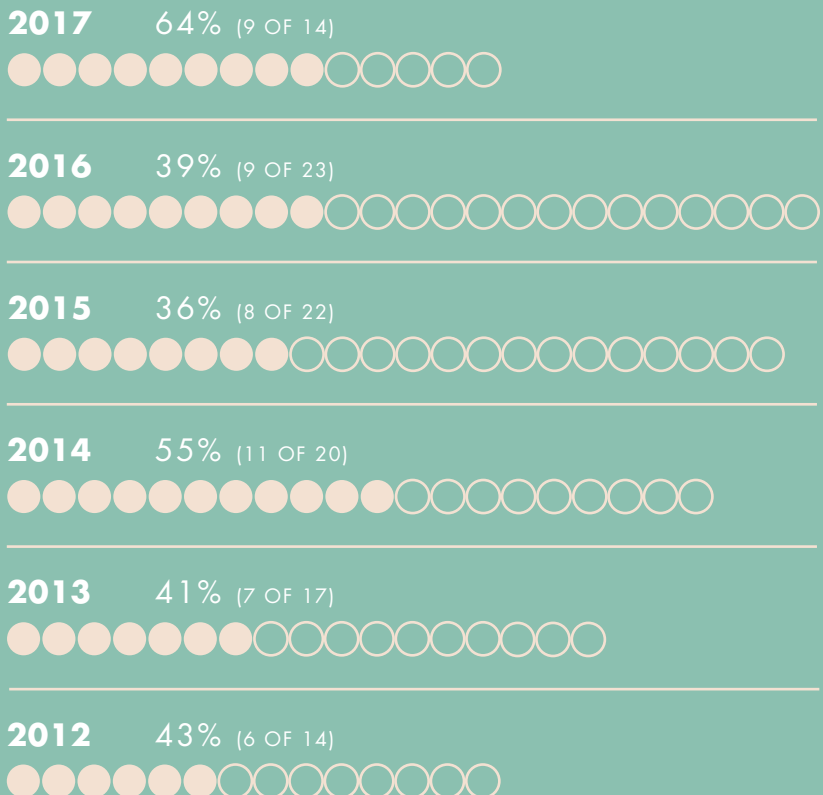
2 That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity.

i.e. They are comprised of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight/non-transgender characters from one another

3 That character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect.


i.e. They are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline. The character must matter.

% OF LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS THAT PASSED THE VITO RUSSO TEST, BY YEAR



Overview of Findings

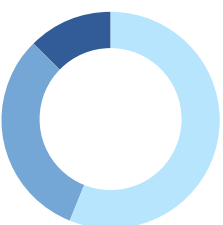
1



■ FILMS WITH LGBTQ CHARACTERS
12.8% (DOWN 5.6% FROM 2016)

Of the 109 film releases GLAAD counted from the major studios in 2017, **14 (12.8 percent) contained characters identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer.** This is a significant decrease of 5.6 percentage points and down nine films from the previous year's 18.4 percent (23 of 125 films). While part of this drop may be due to increased rigorous methodology, it was also an overall bleak year for inclusion in major studio film.


2



- GAY MEN 64%
- LESBIANS 36%
- BISEXUALS 14%

Gay men remain the most represented in film by far with 64 percent of the inclusive films featuring gay men characters, while lesbian representation has remained steady and bisexual representation slightly increased. There were **zero transgender-inclusive films** from the major studios in 2017.

3




- LGBTQ CHARACTERS — MEN 71%
- LGBTQ CHARACTERS — WOMEN 29%

GLAAD tallied **28 total LGBTQ characters** among all mainstream releases in 2017, down from 70 in 2016 and 47 in 2015. It is important to note that 14 of the characters counted in 2016 were part of a single musical number in Universal Pictures' *PopStar: Never Stop Never Stopping*, which misleadingly inflated the numbers that year. **Men again outnumber women characters by more than two to one.** There were no transgender or non-binary characters counted in mainstream releases this year.

Gay men remain the most represented in film by far with 64 percent of the inclusive films featuring gay men characters, while lesbian representation has remained steady and bisexual representation slightly increased. There were **zero transgender-inclusive films** from the major studios in 2017.

4



- WHITE LGBTQ CHARACTERS 43%
- BLACK LGBTQ CHARACTERS 28.5%
- LATINX LGBTQ CHARACTERS 28.5%

The **racial diversity of LGBTQ characters actually saw a welcome increase** in films tracked in 2016 after two straight years of dramatic drops. In 2017, 57 percent of LGBTQ characters were people of color, compared to 20 percent in films released in 2016 and 25.5 percent in 2015. Of the 28 LGBTQ characters counted, 12 were white (43 percent), eight were Black/African American (28.5 percent), and eight were Latinx (28.5 percent). There were zero Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ characters, or any other race/ethnicity.

5

For the first time since GLAAD began this report, **comedy is no longer the genre with the most LGBTQ-inclusive films from major studios.**

- ★ GENRE 47 TOTAL / 6 INCLUSIVE (13%)
- 😊 COMEDY 20 TOTAL / 5 INCLUSIVE (25%)
- 😞 DRAMA 24 TOTAL / 2 INCLUSIVE (8%)
- 👨‍👩‍👧 FAMILY 16 TOTAL / 1 INCLUSIVE (6%)
- 🎬 DOCUMENTARY 2 TOTAL / 0 INCLUSIVE (0%)

6

4 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS
UNIVERSAL (14 TOTAL / 29%)

2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS
PARAMOUNT (11 TOTAL / 18%)
FOX (14 TOTAL / 14%)
LIONSGATE (19 TOTAL / 11%)
WARNER BROTHERS (18 TOTAL / 11%)

1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM
DISNEY (8 TOTAL / 13%)
SONY (25 TOTAL / 4%)

Universal Pictures was by far the most LGBTQ-inclusive of all the major studios tracked in this year's report, literally doubling the number of inclusive films of most other studios.

GLAAD also examined the film releases of four smaller, affiliated studios (Focus Features, Fox Searchlight, Roadside Attractions, and Sony Pictures Classics) to draw a comparison between content released by the mainstream studios and perceived "art house" divisions. Of the 40 films released under those studio imprints in 2017, we found 11 to be LGBTQ-inclusive (28 percent). This is up from 17 percent (seven of 41) of films from the same divisions found to be inclusive in 2016. In 2015, GLAAD found 22 percent (10 of 46) of films from these indie distributors to be inclusive, which was a welcome increase from the first year of counting these studios when we counted only 10.6 percent (five of 47).

Observations & Recommendations

THOUGH WE would like to see more films pass the Vito Russo Test, several of the films tracked this year and through the history of this report prove that passing does not mean that the film's portrayal of LGBTQ people is not also problematic or offensive. Here are some additional recommendations GLAAD has for how studios can both improve depictions of LGBTQ characters and stop repeating offensive mistakes.

No studios were rated “Good” this year, and none have ever received an “Excellent” rating.

Last year, GLAAD introduced an expanded five-tier grading system that holds the studios to a higher standard to reflect the quantity and quality of LGBTQ representation we are seeing in other forms of entertainment media. This year, three studios received “Poor” ratings for their 2017 slates [Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures, Walt Disney Studios] and two others received “Failing” ratings [Lionsgate Entertainment, Warner Brothers Studios]. Universal Pictures and 20th Century Fox are the only studios to be rated as “Insufficient.”

Studios must do better to include more LGBTQ characters, and construct those stories in a way that is directly tied to the film’s plot.

LGBTQ characters in mainstream films are still minor – in screen time and in substance. This has been a consistent problem every year since GLAAD began tracking LGBTQ characters in Hollywood releases six years ago. Of the 14 inclusive films distributed by major studios in 2017, seven (50 percent) included less than five minutes of screen time for their LGBTQ characters, with the majority of those falling under three minutes. Many of these characters were included as plot devices in service of other more central characters or as part of a joke rather than as actual characters with agency and stories of their own. This brevity and lack of impact, unfortunately, remains the standard for LGBTQ inclusion in major studio films.

Far too often, LGBTQ characters and stories are relegated to subtext, and it is left up to the audience to interpret or read into a character as being queer.

Audiences may not realize they are seeing an LGBTQ character unless they have outside knowledge of a real figure, have consumed source material for an adaptation, or have read external press confirmations. This is not enough. GLAAD updated its report methodology this year to explain our focus in on-screen representation. Our stories deserve to be seen on screen just as much as everyone else’s, not hidden away or left to guess work, but boldly and fully shown.

Comic book films must reflect the diversity of their source material.

There are so many LGBTQ heroes in comics – enough for GLAAD to up its Outstanding Comic Book award category from five to ten nominees to reflect the quality and quantity of what we are seeing – that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to ignore that LGBTQ people remain almost completely shut out of Hollywood’s big budget comic films. There have been several films in recent years that have erased a character’s queer identity as they moved from page to screen. In 2017, Marvel’s *Thor: Ragnarok* and DC’s *Wonder Woman* both included characters who are queer in the source material, but did not include any on screen confirmation of their identities. This must change going forward.

Filmmakers should work to reflect the full diversity of our community, and include the long-sidelined stories of those living at the intersections of many identities.

After two straight years of significant decreases, the racial diversity of LGBTQ characters saw a welcome uptick this year. In 2017, 57 percent of LGBTQ characters were people of color, compared to 20 percent in films released in 2016 and 25.5 percent in 2015. However, there were zero Asian Pacific Islander LGBTQ characters, or any other race/ethnicity. The racial diversity of LGBTQ characters remains a problem across all forms of media, and this remains an area we’d like to see Hollywood as a whole improve in going forward. We’d also like to see inclusion of LGBTQ characters with disabilities.

GLAAD did not count a single transgender character across the 109 films distributed by major studios in 2017.

One area where Hollywood film most notably falls behind other forms of media is the complete lack of transgender characters. On the indie side, however, 2017 included the release of the history-making and Oscar-winning Chilean drama *A Fantastic Woman* from Sony Pictures Classics. The film followed Marina, played by Daniela Vega, a transgender woman who is coping with the death of her partner, Orlando. This marked the first time a film has won an Oscar with a trans actor playing a trans character; it was also Chile’s first film to win in the Best Foreign Language Film category.



DEMIAN BICHR AS CARL LOPE, ALIEN: COVENANT

20th Century Fox

FOUNDED IN 1915 BY WILLIAM

Fox, the studio was originally the Fox Film Corporation before merging with Twentieth Century Pictures in 1935. Fox was bought by Rupert Murdoch in 1985, which made it a part of News Corporation, before the film studio came under parent company 21st Century Fox. In December 2017, the Walt Disney Company announced its proposed acquisition of 21st Century Fox's film studio, as well as several other divisions of the company. The deal is expected to close in 2019, dependent on regulatory approval. Fox is known for blockbusters such as *Avatar*, *Star Wars*, and *Independence Day*.

In terms of LGBTQ representation, Fox has had its ups and downs, but it did introduce two of the earliest depictions of transgender characters in the films *Myra Breckinridge* (1970) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Other LGBTQ-inclusive films from Fox include *Making Love* (1982), still one of the most realistic gay love stories to come out of a major studio, as well as *Silkwood* (1983), *The Object of My Affection* (1998), *The Family Stone* (2005), and *Independence Day: Resurgence* (2016).

Summary of 2017 Findings

- 14** films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints
- 2** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
- 14%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
- 2** number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	2017 Insufficient
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	2016 Poor
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	2015 Adequate
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	2014 Adequate
★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	2013 Adequate
★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	2012 Failing

Alien: Covenant

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,772 theaters

Alien: Covenant included husbands Lope and Hallet, members of the crew of the U.S.S. Covenant which is en route to colonize a new planet. The couple likely were known only to fans who searched out the short prologue film, *The Last Supper*, which more clearly established their relationship and included a kiss between the two. More general audiences probably had no idea the men were a couple until after Hallet died and the camera zooms in on their clasped hands, their wedding rings pressed together, as Lope whispers "my love." Lope himself, and nearly the entirety of the crew, later dies. The film squeaked by in passing the Vito Russo Test as Lope's death sets up the film's finale, meaning that were he removed from the film, the plot would have been significantly altered.

It is disappointing that the gay couple's relationship was only made clear after death given the graphic sexual talk between straight couples and their repeated use of "my wife" to refer to their partners. The small confirmation of their relationship did not have nearly the same impact on the audience as it would have if the prologue had been included in the film itself. Still, the inclusion of these characters in a major sci-fi action franchise, which opened in over 3,700 theaters, is a positive development. We hope this small step will lead to more substantial depictions of LGBTQ characters in the future.

Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,529 theaters

Based on the popular book series, *Captain Underpants* follows best friends and fourth grade class pranksters George and Harold as they accidentally turn their principal into the superhero Captain Underpants. In the twelfth and final book of the series, there is a flash-forward to the future, where the audience learns that Harold is married to a man and he and his husband have adopted two children. While the flash forward did not occur in this film, the ending did leave open the possibility of a sequel film. Hopefully, a future installment of the franchise will include Old Harold and his husband.

Kingsman: The Golden Circle

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,038 theaters

This sequel to the popular British spy-action movie *Kingsman* takes the action to America where the Kingsman work with the American

Statesman to bring down drug kingpin, Poppy. One of the captives that Poppy holds is iconic out gay singer Elton John, playing himself. Though at first it seems to be just a fun celebrity cameo, Elton is actually instrumental in getting the heroes, Eggsy and Harry, in place to defeat Poppy. Of all the celebrities the film could have used in this stunt casting, it was a nice touch that their choice was one of the most iconic gay figures of this era. However, if this franchise continues, it would be nice to see queer characters in more than just cameo roles.

Snatched

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,511 theaters

Snatched included "platonic best friends," Barb and Ruth, who are vacationing together, and meet the lead characters at the Ecuadorian resort where they are all staying. The two have a background in security. Ruth shares that Barb used to be in special ops, and is now mute after cutting out her own tongue post-retirement so she could never be tortured for information. The film's implication is that the two are a committed couple, up until the "platonic best friend" line. We wish *Snatched* would have just gone all the way and let them be a couple.

Opportunities Ahead

This November, Fox is set to finally release the long-delayed biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* about Queen lead singer Freddie Mercury, who passed away of complications related to AIDS in 1991 at the age of 45. Mercury is considered to be one of the greatest performers ever; this biopic has the opportunity to make a powerful impact by fully exploring his queer identity, long-term relationship with Jim Hutton, and HIV and AIDS diagnosis. Beyond that, Fox has announced the *X-Men* movie *The New Mutants* coming in 2019. According to the director, Karma, the lesbian character who was the first recruit and eventual leader of the New Mutants, will not appear in the film but will likely be introduced in possible future sequels. This is disappointing, especially as there may be slate changes in the coming years if the Disney and Fox deal goes through, meaning that future sequels may never come to fruition. Two other *X-Men* films are set for 2019, *X-Men: Dark Phoenix* and *Gambit*. Psylocke and Iceman have appeared in past films in the franchise and could return, though their respective bisexual and gay identities have not been included on screen. This must change going forward.

Fox Searchlight

SUBSIDIARY OF 20TH CENTURY FOX

FOX SEARCHLIGHT

Pictures, created in 1994, is a subsidiary of 20th Century Fox and specializes in the release and distribution of independent and foreign films in the United States, as well as horror films and dramedies. Fox Searchlight Pictures is responsible for the release of several LGBTQ-inclusive and Academy Award-winning and nominated films, including *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), about the murder of transgender man Brandon Teena, and *Kinsey* (2004), a biopic of the famed sex researcher.

Summary of 2017 Findings

11

films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

3

total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

27%

percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

Battle of the Sexes

Widest theatrical release: 1,822 theaters

This biopic follows the infamous 1973 tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs. The film also showed the personal lives of the two tennis players, and focused on the newfound romantic relationship between Billie Jean and her hairdresser, Marilyn. During the time in which the film is set, Billie Jean was still married to a man and very much in the closet, having to hide her relationship and her sexuality. Team costume designer Ted continually provides emotional support for Billie Jean and gives her an inspiring speech at the end of the movie, about how change is coming, and one day they will be able to live freely and proudly out. It is important that *Battle of the Sexes* did not erase the sexuality of someone who is now known as a lesbian icon, and further, showed her in a loving relationship with a bisexual woman. Many of the queer stories that make it to the big screen still center on the experiences of gay men, and *Battle of the Sexes* was a refreshing change we would like to see more of. The film earned a GLAAD Media Award nomination for Outstanding Film – Wide Release.

My Cousin Rachel

Widest theatrical releases: 531 theaters

This British drama, based on the 1951 novel of the same name, centers on a torrid romance between Phillip and Rachel, the wife of his late cousin. Phillip is initially suspicious of Rachel, then falls in love with her, then becomes suspicious and accusatory once more. At one point, he fears Rachel is having an affair with her Italian companion, Enrico. However, when family friends investigate Enrico, they find “he is more Greek than Italian,” meaning that he is romantically interested in men. While Enrico’s sexuality is more of a plot twist than anything meaningful, it is notable that in this period piece, no one seemed to judge Enrico for being attracted to men.

The Shape of Water

Widest theatrical release: 2,341 theaters

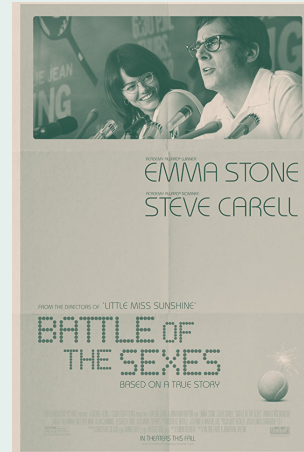
Romantic fantasy film *The Shape of Water* tells the story of a mute woman, Elisa, who works in a government lab in the early 1960s, and ends up falling in love with a mysterious sea creature who is being held there for testing. Her neighbor and close friend, Giles, decides to help Elisa on her quest to free the creature from the lab. Giles is a gay, out-of-work artist, whose only real friend is Elisa. Midway through the film, he unsuccessfully hits on a young man working at a pie shop, who immediately recoils. The man’s reaction is paired with his racist commentary towards a Black customer, and further illustrates to the audience how loathsome the waiter really is once he is not putting on his work façade.

Giles is a central character in the film – serving as the narrator in addition to his own story - and his plot feeds into the film’s themes of outcasts banding together. As so many films continue to leave LGBTQ stories relegated to subtext, it is worth celebrating that Giles was able to be out on screen and a point of entry for the audience who were called on to relate to the story of an older, gay man. *The Shape of Water* was an immense critical success, garnering four Oscars, including the coveted Best Picture. It was also a GLAAD Media Award nominee for Outstanding Film – Wide Release.

Wilson

Widest theatrical release: 311 theaters

This comedic drama follows the titular Wilson, a lonely neurotic man, as he reconnects with his ex-wife and discovers the daughter he never knew he had. The film includes several missteps including anti-gay jokes about prison rape, and a woman complaining about her husband leaving her because he’s “a big homo now.” When Wilson is searching for his ex, he shows a photo to a sex worker (credited as Sinnamon) asking if she has ever seen or heard of her. After she replies in the negative, he asks her for a blowjob. Roxy Wood, a trans woman, plays Sinnamon, but since there is no mention of the character herself being trans, GLAAD did not count Sinnamon in its tally.





2017
RATING



FAILING

Lionsgate Entertainment

ARTURO BARBA AND EDUARDO TANUS AS BILL AND MEMO, 'UN PADRE NO TAN PADRE'

STARTED IN 1997, LIONSGATE

is the newest of the studios tracked in GLAAD's report. Over two decades the studio has gone on to distribute major blockbusters, and acquired studios such as Summit Entertainment and Pantelion, which focuses on films for a Latinx audience.

Lionsgate started off with releasing the 1997 film *The Pillow Book*, in which Ewan McGregor plays a bisexual man. Other LGBTQ-inclusive films include, *Gods and Monsters* (1998), *But I'm a Cheerleader!* (2000), *Urbania* (2000), *Lost and Delirious* (2001), *All Over the Guy* (2001), *Happy Endings* (2005), *Precious* (2009), *Albert Nobbs* (2012), *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012), *American Ultra* (2015), and *Freeheld* (2015).

Summary of 2017 Findings

19 films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

2 total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

11% percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

2 number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time

★☆☆☆☆	2017 Failing
★☆☆☆☆	2016 Failing
★★☆☆☆	2015 Adequate
★★☆☆☆	2014 Adequate
★★☆☆☆	2013 Adequate
n/a	2012 not tracked

3 Idiotas

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 349 theaters

This movie did not include any LGBTQ characters, though several times throughout the film the characters make repeated transphobic jokes about a woman who appears more masculine. These kinds of punchlines rooted in misogynistic ideas of gender expression, femininity, and beauty further a dangerous cultural narrative that a person whose gender expression does not fit neatly in the binary ideas of masculine and feminine is a joke to be laughed at, and therefore less human.

Hazlo Como Hombre

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 382 theaters

The Spanish-language film *Hazlo Como Hombre* or *Do It Like an Hombre* feels like a film decades out of date. The entire plot centers on the gay panic of lead character Raúl after his best friend, Santiago, comes out as gay and breaks off his engagement to Raúl's sister. Raúl then spends nearly the entire film disgusted by his friend's orientation, obsessing over anal sex and the idea that his friend might be attracted to him (including several painfully drawn out "jokes" about rape and dropping the soap in the shower), and researching harmful so-called "conversion therapy" programs. By the film's end, Raúl finally says he accepts Santiago for who he is, but continues to use anti-gay slurs throughout.

The filmmakers likely had good intentions and hoped to make a point about bigotry existing everywhere, but acknowledging prejudice in a "humorous" way is not the same as actually challenging the idea or subverting an expectation in order to further progress. The film's script does nothing to make Raúl a complex character, and the audience is left to suffer through over an hour of homophobic diatribes. Overall, this movie contained so much anti-gay language and sentiment played for laughs, that Raúl coming around is barely consequential.

While this film did pass the Vito Russo Test by including an LGBTQ character who was significant to the plot and had the same sort of unique personality traits as non-LGBTQ characters, it does not stop the film from being incredibly offensive.

Latinx filmgoers are consistently an audience that oversamples at the box office in comparison to the population. If studios want to reap the rewards from those audiences buying tickets, they should keep a close eye on the message they are sending to young Latinx viewers about how "hilarious" it is to be homophobic.



Power Rangers

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,693 theaters

The *Power Rangers* film began a storyline with the Yellow Ranger, Trini, questioning her sexuality. In a scene when the Rangers are trying to get to know each other better, another Ranger asks if she is having “boyfriend problems” which she replies to sarcastically. The group then pauses and continues, “girlfriend problems?” Trini responds with a speech about how she has struggled with moving so much and never has a chance to go to know anyone, saying of her family, “They believe in labels. They’d like for me to, uh, dress differently. Talk more. Have the kind of friends they want me to have. It’s just, I don’t know how to tell them what’s really going on with me. And I’ve never said any of this out loud.”

It is refreshing to see the group moving on to the girlfriend question, thus acknowledging that queer people exist in the film’s world. While it is a small thing, it is still further than many films go – even today in 2018 – when many stop at the assumption of a straight relationship. As the film does not go much further into Trini’s story than this and the press materials suggest she is currently “questioning,” we did not count her character for the purposes of this report. We hope to see her story explored further if and when Lionsgate releases a sequel.

Un Padre No Tan Padre

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 312 theaters

Un Padre No Tan Padre or *From Dad to Worse* centers on Don Servando, an older man set in his ways who gets kicked out of his care facility for bad behavior (including homophobic remarks to his gay nurse, René) and has to move into his son’s communal housing. There, he meets a gay couple, Bill and Memo, whom he initially treats poorly. However, he later helps the two reconcile after a rough patch when Bill continues to hide their relationship from his parents, and Servando gives a touching toast at the couple’s wedding that makes up the emotional finale of the film. There is an additional gay character, Peter, who appears for a short time as a friend of Servando’s son. Unlike *Hazlo Como Hombre*, *Un Padre No Tan Padre* showed a man’s journey to acceptance in a genuine way, where he learned the error of his ways, and actively worked toward righting his wrongs without the extensive use of anti-gay slurs and gay panic.

Opportunities Ahead

A new franchise coming from Lionsgate in 2019 is Peter Jackson’s adaptation of *Chaos Walking*, a dystopian young adult trilogy. In the novels, two men, Ben and Cillian, raise protagonist Todd (Tom Holland) in a dystopian world with no women. Author Patrick Ness (BBC America’s *Class*) has confirmed that their relationship is a romantic one. Both these men are listed as cast in the film adaption (Demián Bichir, Kurt Sutter); their relationship should be a part of the story when it is translated into film. Given the cast and the director, this film is likely to be a commercial success, and it must not erase its queer storylines. Though Lionsgate has yet to announce any sequels, further *Power Rangers* films have the opportunity to explore Trini’s sexuality and backstory.

Roadside Attractions

SUBSIDIARY OF LIONSGATE

Roadside Attractions, founded in 2003 by Howard Cohen and Eric d'Arbeloff, specializes largely in independent films. In 2007, Lionsgate bought a portion of the company. Notable LGBTQ-inclusive films previously released by the studio include *I Love You Phillip Morris* (2010), *Albert Nobbs* (2012), *Dear White People*, *The Skeleton Twins* (2014), and *Hello, My Name is Doris* (2016).



The Only Living Boy in New York

Widest theatrical release:
289 theaters

This drama included an incredibly brief appearance by Irwin, a closeted gay man who serves as an event date for Johanna, a woman who is being stalked by the leading man. Irwin appears for less than one minute and serves only as a plot device to set up a moment of the leading man jealously confronting Johanna, rather than anything related to being a real character with a story of his own.

Stronger

Widest theatrical release:
645 theaters

Based on a true story, *Stronger* follows Jeff Bauman, a Boston native who was critically injured at the finish line of the Boston Marathon during the 2013 bombings. Jeff works at Costco, and the audience learns his boss, Kevin, is gay after Jeff's friends make homophobic remarks and Jeff reprimands them. Kevin appears later in the film to speak with Jeff about provided health coverage and offer his support to Jim's family. The group accepts him, he even attends their barbecue later in the movie. Though he is only a small part of the film, it is refreshing to see that Kevin is developed beyond the one work scene and into a few moments of his own.

Summary of 2017 Findings

9

films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

2

total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

22%

percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases



2017
RATING



POOR

RUBY ROSE AS ADELE WOLFE, *XX: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE

Paramount Pictures

WITH ITS ORIGINS DATING BACK TO the founding of the Famous Players Film Company in 1912, Paramount Pictures was formed in 1916 when the company merged with two others. In 1994, Paramount was purchased by the Viacom Network, and it remains under that banner. Paramount is most known for big budget franchises such as *Indiana Jones*, *Transformers*, and *Mission Impossible*.

Paramount released several LGBTQ-themed or LGBTQ-inclusive films starting in the mid-nineties, which included *Home for the Holidays* (1995), *Clueless* (1995), *The Brady Bunch Movie* (1995), *Brain Candy* (1996), *Kiss Me Guido* (1997), *Election* (1999), *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999), *The Next Best Thing* (2000), and *The Hours* (2002). On the negative side, Paramount also recently released *Zoolander 2* (2016), which included transphobic jokes and harmful stereotypes about bisexual people.

One of the most significant LGBTQ films made by Paramount is the 1997 comedy *In and Out* which received substantial press for a kiss between Kevin Kline and Tom Selleck. The film was a hit at the box office, and joins *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *The Hours* (2002) as three of the top 10 highest grossing LGBTQ films per Box Office Mojo. In 2016, Paramount released *Star Trek: Beyond*, the third film in the new *Star Trek* franchise, which showed that the character Hikaru Sulu had a husband and daughter. The inclusion of a gay character of color in such large franchise was a huge step in the right direction for representation.

Summary of 2017 Findings

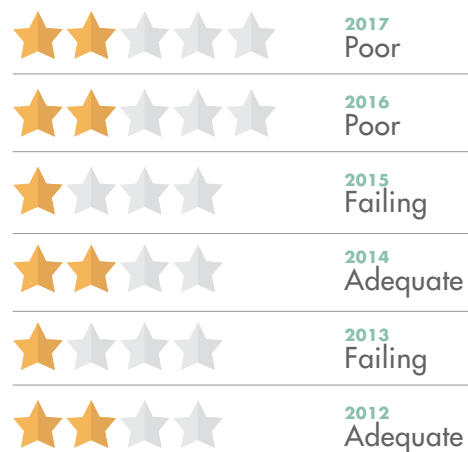
11 films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

2 total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

18% percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

1 number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time



Baywatch

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,647 theaters

One film that did not include any LGBTQ characters, but did include many jokes relying on gay panic for cheap laughs, is Paramount's widely panned *Baywatch*. The first meeting between the male leads, Matt and Mitch, includes a joke about Matt having a "mangina." The film continues with jokes about Matt's hair product being "100% semen based," how uncomfortable he was to ride on a jet ski behind Mitch while holding on to his waist, and an extended exchange at the morgue where Matt is tricked into touching the genitals of a dead man. Mitch takes a picture and threatens to post it online. Near the film's end, Matt envisions his female love interest kissing him as he is drowning. It turns out to be Mitch who is blowing air into his lungs, and Matt reacts with angry disgust. However, most audiences no longer find two guys kissing or touching to be inherently weird or worthy of laughter.

In another scene, Matt and Mitch decide to go undercover to infiltrate the kitchen of a resort. When they meet up, Mitch is dressed in a chef's outfit, while Matt – rather than wearing a matching uniform - is dressed as a woman (in what is possibly the restaurant's women's server uniform) for no apparent plot reason. The entire joke then becomes a visual gag based on a man dressed like a woman, furthering the idea that someone in a dress who looks masculine is just a joke to be laughed at.

Juvenile comedies tend to play to the lowest common denominator of what a studio believes an audience will find amusing. Creators – and executives – must learn that appealing to one demographic does not mean the project must belittle or insult another audience. *Baywatch* has received overwhelmingly negative reviews with an 18% rating on Rotten Tomatoes and flopped at the box office in its opening weekend. This might be a good time for the studio to reassess what type of content it stands behind before moving forward with a possible sequel, which producers spoke with press about. The film's poor box office and poorer word of mouth suggest that audiences get these jokes - they just do not find them funny anymore. Other comedies in this same genre – such as *Blockers* (2018) and *Neighbors 2* (2016) – managed to include queer characters without making them the punchline and saw box office success. The producers should look to their example.

Downsizing

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 2,668 theaters

This sci-fi drama follows the founder and residents of a new world where people are able to be shrunk down, and live in a seeming utopia where their wealth is increased as money is able to spread farther. Little Ronni, the first child to be "born small," appears in a few brief scenes and is described as a "dumb, good-looking Norwegian guy goes around the world having sex with everyone – women, men hermaphrodites, dogs, goats, monkeys – he'll be the first small baby to die of syphilis." Ronni himself has no agency and is never seen with any kind of love interest – he exists only as a plot device. It remains far too common for LGBTQ characters to be included only in service of another character's development, rather than as full and nuanced characters themselves.

Ghost in the Shell

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,440 theaters

While this adaptation of a famous manga (Japanese comic) of the same name has been extensively critiqued for its whitewashing of lead Mara Killian/Major Motoko Kusanagi, the film also cut a kiss between Major and a presumed sex worker that was included in one of the film's early trailers. As Major begins questioning her memories and humanity after her consciousness is uploaded to a synthetic body, she goes upstairs with a woman she meets on the streets. Major touches the woman's face, specifically caressing her lips, and asks how it feels. In the actual film, it does not go any further, but an earlier trailer included a kiss between the two. Overall, the scene had no real impact on the plot and GLAAD did not count either character in our final tally as the scene on-screen read more as Major trying to connect with the first available human rather than any romantic interest in the woman.

Transformers: The Last Knight

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,132 theaters

The fifth film of Paramount’s *Transformers* series included a throwaway joke about lesbians. In one scene, the leading lady Vivian is being questioned by her family on whether she has met a man, her aunt adds as she is flicking through newspaper personals, “or a woman. Women seeking women, here we go.” It is disappointing that the only references to queer people in this franchise are baseless jokes, especially given that in the IDW *Transformers: More Than Meets the Eye* comics, there are couples confirmed to be queer.

xXx: The Return of Xander Cage

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,651 theaters

While this Vin Diesel-fronted lowbrow action film is definitely outdated in its dialogue and treatment of women, it is significant that his team of mercenaries includes queer sniper Adele Wolff (played by out actor Ruby Rose). Adele gets the call to join Cage’s team while she is shooting tranquilizer darts at poachers in the African safari. Adele immediately hits on the woman overseeing their mission – though her lines, like the rest of the film, leave something to be desired in execution. She also has a moment with the group’s tech guru, Becky, after Becky compliments her weapon skills, saying that Adele really knows what she is “doing down there.” Adele coyly replies, “That’s what she said.”

It is disappointing that Adele never gets a real romantic moment, especially considering all the hookups between Cage and a variety of women. Still, when queer characters are so often relegated to subtext or included as plot devices in service of others, it remains noteworthy for a film to let a character be out on screen. We expect to see more studios take this step and move forward in future.

Most importantly, *xXx* performed spectacularly at the foreign box office, opening at number one in many markets, and more than half of the film’s total box office came from China. Studios that have tried to justify LGBTQ exclusion by citing fears of foreign returns should learn from this example.



Opportunities Ahead

Paramount has announced a film version of Nickelodeon series *The Loud House*, which earned a GLAAD Media Award nomination, set for 2020. The series includes interracial gay couple, Howard and Harold, as parents to one of the main characters, Clyde McBride, as well as Luna Loud, the rocker daughter of the titular family who has a crush on her close friend, Sam. Paramount should seize their opportunity here to break new ground – while television has recently become much more inclusive of LGBTQ characters in kids and family programming (so much so that GLAAD created a GLAAD Media Award category to recognize these outstanding projects), film continues to lag behind. Paramount recently announced two new *Star Trek* films in development. We hope to see Sulu’s story explored further after 2016’s *Beyond* included his husband and daughter.

2017
RATING



POOR

ILIANA GLAZER AND ZOE KRAVITZ AS
FRANKIE AND BLAIR, *ROUGH NIGHT*

Sony Pictures

ORIGINALLY FOUNDED IN 1918 AS

the Cohn-Brant-Cohn Film Sales in 1918, the studio was renamed Columbia Pictures in 1924. The studio gained prominence starting in the 20s due to its association with Frank Capra and ended up producing some of the biggest stars of the classic Hollywood era. In the 80s, the studio was acquired by Coca-Cola, where the company launch Tri-Star pictures, before Columbia/TriStar briefly became an entity, before being purchased by Sony in 1989.

Sony Pictures doesn't have the best track record when it comes to LGBTQ-inclusive films. A political thriller from 1962, *Advise and Consent*, included a subplot where a Senate chairman is blackmailed over an affair he had with another man, before committing suicide. With this plot it didn't exactly pave the way for LGBTQ cinema, much like Tri-Star's *Basic Instinct* (1992), which faced opposition from LGBTQ groups including GLAAD for its defamatory depiction of lesbian and bisexual women. Some of the more inclusive films from Sony Columbia include *Philadelphia* (1993), *Threesome* (1994), and *As Good as it Gets* (1997). In more recent years, Sony Pictures has released *Rent* (2005), *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* (2013), and *Sausage Party* (2016).

Summary of 2017 Findings

25 films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

1 total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

4% percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

1 number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time



2017
Poor



2016
Failing



2015
Adequate



2014
Failing



2013
Good



2012
Adequate

No Culpes al Karma

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 10 theaters

This Spanish-language film includes a montage of all the times when protagonist Sara has been unlucky in love; showing her with several men she had dated before making out with her close friend Inma when both were high. The moment is played as a joke and neither woman shows interest in women at any point in the rest of the film. For this reason, GLAAD did not count Sara or Inma in its final tally.

The film also includes mentions of a friend named Dani and her girlfriend Mer, but neither appear in an distinguishable way and neither Dani nor Mer are listed in the film's credits, so are not counted here. Though *No Culpes Al Karma* painted a world with queer people, it was disappointing that the idea of being queer was more a punchline than anything else.

Rough Night

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,162 theaters

Sony's comedy *Rough Night* follows a group of five adult friends who reunite for a bachelorette party. They believe they've accidentally killed a man, and drama and comedy ensues as the women try to deal with the aftermath. The film's core cast featured former college girlfriends Frankie and Blair who, over the course of the movie, realize they are still in love. They get back together in the film's climax, saying "I love you" and holding hands after being threatened at gun point. It is notable that their romance was given just as much screen time as their straight counterparts, and they got a happy ending and an onscreen kiss - something LGBTQ couples are often denied in film. It is also worth mentioning that the film avoided other problematic tropes we still see too often with queer women's stories. Their relationship is never played for the male gaze; they actually explicitly tell a man off for objectifying their relationship in an early scene.

Despite some small missteps with transactional hookups, the film was a pleasant surprise for the raunchy comedy genre. The inclusion of LGBTQ main characters – especially women – is almost unseen in mainstream film today. While our reports have repeatedly found comedies are the most likely film to include LGBTQ characters, they are often treated as a reductive punchline. *Rough Night* demonstrated that humor and inclusion can co-exist without playing into the outdated and harmful stereotypes that so many comedy films continue to rely on.

Spider-Man: Homecoming

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,348 theaters

Spider-Man: Homecoming (co-produced by Marvel), shows a different side to the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) as the film focuses on Peter Parker as a teenager and how he balances being an undercover superhero with school, friends, and his crush. The film has received praise for making a world more reflective of reality by introducing central characters of color in Peter's friend group at his Queens, New York high school. Sarah Finn, the MCU's casting director, said, "There's a lot more work to do. We still need to see Latino leads, Asian leads, women, women over a certain age, people with disabilities.... It does matter, and I hope this is just the beginning."

Finn is entirely correct that Hollywood desperately needs to include more stories focused on people of color, on women, on people of different ages and backgrounds, on people with disabilities. One thing she didn't mention is that major studio films – and comic book films in particular – are nearly completely lacking in LGBTQ characters.

Homecoming actually included a scene that seemed to set up for the introduction of a queer student at Peter's school. In the scene, Peter's love interest Liz is playing a game of "f*ck, marry, kill" listing the men of the Avengers with a boy and a girl friend of hers. The boy (J.J. Totah) responds, "But what about Spider-Man?" The film seemed to be setting up that they were playing the game together, but ultimately did not follow through on what could have been as simple as replying with anything that indicated his own interest in the male Avengers. As it stands, the sum total of LGBTQ representation that GLAAD has counted in the MCU films since the *SRI* began in 2012 are seconds-long cameos of out news anchor Thomas Roberts appearing as himself in *The Avengers* and *Iron Man 3*.



T2: Trainspotting

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 331 theaters

The sequel to the acclaimed dark comedy *Trainspotting*, *T2: Trainspotting* picks up two decades later as the group of addicts and criminals comes back together. Of the core four, the most violent is Frank Begbie, who breaks out of prison at the start of the film and is out for vengeance. Actor Robert Carlyle has claimed that he plays Begbie as gay, and that his violence comes from being closeted. In the film, Begbie shows no interest in men, and even though he cannot successfully have sex with his wife, that does not mean he is gay. Furthermore, this association between violence and being closeted is inaccurate and harmful to the LGBTQ community. GLAAD has not counted Begbie as a gay character.

Underworld: Blood Wars

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,070 theaters

The fifth film in the *Underworld* franchise, *Blood Wars* continues to follow a war of vampires versus lycans. Semira, one of the main villains on the vampire side, sends another vampire, Alexia, to spy on the lycans. In a series of twists, it is revealed that Alexia is having an affair with Marius, the leader of the lycans, but Semira knows of this betrayal and was using Alexia as well. When she reveals this to Alexia, Semira kisses Alexia on the lips and then slits her throat. The kiss is short, and utterly unromantic as neither woman seems to be enjoying herself. Both Semira and Alexia have relations with men in the film and show no attraction to women. For this reason, neither character was counted for this report.

Opportunities Ahead

The highly anticipated sequel to *Spider-Man: Homecoming* is scheduled for July 2019, and could include an opportunity for J.J. Totah's character to talk about his interest in men on-screen versus the assumed subtext of his lines in *Homecoming*. GLAAD's *Accelerating Acceptance* report finds that 20% of Americans aged 18-34 identify as LGBTQ – if Peter's school and peers are meant to reflect reality, the movie must include LGBTQ students. Sony will also be releasing *The Girl in the Spider's Web* this November, an adaptation of the fourth novel in Steig Larson's *Millennium* series, where main character Lisbeth Salander (Claire Foy) is bisexual. TriStar, under Sony, picked up romantic comedy *Happiest Season*, co-written and directed by out filmmaker and actress Clea DuVall. The film follows a woman who is planning on proposing to her girlfriend, but finds out the girlfriend is not out to her family. Hopefully, this will lead to more romantic comedies revolving around LGBTQ couples.

Sony Pictures Classics

SUBSIDIARY OF SONY PICTURES

FOUNDED IN 1992,

Sony Pictures Classics (SPC) is the independent arm of Sony Pictures Entertainment, which acquires, produces, and distributes independent films and documentaries. Among the many inclusive films SPC has released since its inception are *My Life in Pink* (1997) about a gender non-conforming child; *The Celluloid Closet* (1995), a documentary about LGBTQ representations in film based on the book with the same title written by Vito Russo (co-founder of GLAAD); the Alan Ginsberg-centered story *Kill Your Darlings* (2013); Pedro Almodovar's *I'm So Excited!* (2013); *Love Is Strange* (2014); *Grandma* (2015); *The Meddler* (2016), and more.

Summary of 2017 Findings

13

films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

5

total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

39%

percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

Call Me By Your Name

Widest theatrical release: 914 theaters

Based on the André Aciman novel of the same name, *Call Me By Your Name* is a 1980s, Italian-set romance between teenager Elio, and his father's graduate student, Oliver. The film shows a slow build romance culminating with the two admitting their feelings for each other and embarking on a sexual and romantic relationship for the rest of the summer. Elio also has a fling with a local girl, Marzia, whom he does not share the same emotional connection with, but is still sexually attracted to her.

There are two additional gay characters in the film, an older couple, Isaac and Mounir, who Elio lightly mocks due to their flamboyant nature when the men come to visit his parents. The film ends with Elio distraught with the news that Oliver is engaged to a woman. *Call Me By Your Name* received four Oscar nominations and one win, as well as a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film – Wide Release. Out gay director Luca Guadagnino is currently working on plans for a sequel film.

A Fantastic Woman (Una Mujer Fantástica)

Widest theatrical release: 190 theaters

The Chilean drama *A Fantastic Woman* or *Una Mujer Fantástica* stars transgender actress and singer Daniela Vega as Marina, a trans woman whose partner, Orlando, passes away. Throughout the film, the audience sees both Marina's grief and the discrimination she faces from Orlando's family and members of law enforcement, and how her strength and power shines through. *A Fantastic Woman* made history when it won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film, and it received the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film - Limited Release. In its native country of Chile, the film and Vega have made a significant impact on the ongoing legislative fight for transgender people to be able to legally change their name and gender on identity documents. This is proof that representation matters, and shows the true power and necessity of including LGBTQ people at the forefront of film.

The Leisure Seeker

Widest theatrical release: 353 theaters

Older couple John and Ella embark on a road trip in *The Leisure Seeker* to avoid the consequences of Alzheimer's and cancer, respectively. At one point, John goes missing and Ella recruits a man, Terry, whose cousin works at the campsite to help her. When she describes John as "tall and academic," Terry flirtily replies that is exactly his type.

At another point, Ella questions her son Will's possible relationship with his old friend, after she finds old vacation photos. Will ignores the question and pushes to know where Ella and John have gone. For the rest of the film, Will's sexuality is never brought up again, and it is left unclear whether Will is actually gay or if his mother just read into a friendship. As the storyline was so unresolved, GLAAD did not count Will in its tally.

Norman: The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer

Widest theatrical release: 373 theaters

This political drama includes a great moment of casual inclusion. The film follows the titular Norman as he tries to make connections to important people and connect them with each other. He is successful in the case of Eshel, a politician who ends up becoming the prime minister of Israel, but as his power and corruption increases, Eshel begins to shut Norman out. Norman later meets Alex, a lawyer, who, when Norman inquires about her personal life, mentions she is a lesbian and has a partner. Alex appears again later in the film as it's revealed that she is prosecuting Eshel, and wants to use Norman as an informant. Alex's sexuality is not the sole focus of her character, rather her story focuses primarily on her involvement with the law. In a political drama that easily could have left out any hint of a personal life for this character, it is noteworthy that the creators decided to include a queer character as part of the film's world. This is a good example of the type of character we'd like to see more films include – her queer identity is made clear on screen when she talks about her partner rather than left to subtext, but Alex is not defined solely by her orientation and has a unique story outside of just who she loves.

Novitiate

Widest theatrical release: 163 theaters

This 1960s-set drama focuses on a group of nuns during the time when the second Vatican council changed the rule and structure of convents. The film follows a young nun, Sister Cathleen, as she joins as a novitiate, and fears the very strict Reverend Mother. Throughout *Novitiate*, hints are dropped about young women who have had romantic or sexual relationships with each other. Toward the end of the film, Sister Cathleen fasts in an effort to feel closer to God, and then is nursed back to health by another Sister, Emmanuel. The two become very close and eventually have sex. Out of guilt, Cathleen confesses this to the Reverend Mother but refuses to name her partner. Emmanuel leaves the convent without a word, while Cathleen goes on to be confirmed as a nun. While many films have explored the intersection of religion and faith, these stories still tend to fall into the trope of positioning an LGBTQ identity and faith as in opposition to each other. There are many LGBTQ people who also hold deep faith beliefs – and many outstanding documentaries of real people advocating for LGBTQ inclusion because of their faith. We would like to see their stories included in scripted stories on screen, too.



2017
RATING

★★★

INSUFFICIENT

BETTY GABRIEL AS GEORGINA, GET OUT

Universal Pictures

OF ALL THE MAJOR FILM STUDIOS, Universal Pictures, founded in 1912, is the oldest. In 2004, Universal Pictures merged with NBC becoming NBCUniversal, which was acquired by Comcast in 2009. In August 2016, Universal completed purchasing DreamWorks Animation, which was previously a holding of 20th Century Fox. Universal will begin distributing DreamWorks films in 2019. Having long focused on mass appeal films, many of Universal's most classic films came from collaborations with director Steven Spielberg and included *Jaws*, *E.T.*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Schindler's List*.

Due to that focus on mass appeal, perhaps it is not surprising that it was not until the 1990s that any LGBTQ content began to appear in Universal films. The 1991 adaptation of *Fried Green Tomatoes* removed much of the source novel's lesbian content, though the 1994 comedic drama *Reality Bites* did feature a prominent gay character.

Universal's other inclusive films have also been a mixture of highs and lows, and include *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* (2007), *Bruno* (2009), *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* (2010), *Kick-Ass 2* (2013), *Riddick* (2013), *Legend* (2015), *Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising* and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2* (2016).

Summary of 2017 Findings

14 films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

4 total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

29% percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

1 number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time

★★★☆☆ 2017 Insufficient

★★★☆☆ 2016 Insufficient

★★☆☆☆ 2015 Adequate

★★☆☆☆ 2014 Adequate

★★☆☆☆ 2013 Adequate

★★☆☆☆ 2012 Adequate

Fifty Shades Darker

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,714 theaters

The second film in the *Fifty Shades* series, based on the bestselling books of the same name, *Fifty Shades Darker* continues to follow the torrid romance between Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele. In brief scenes with Christian at work, his colleague Ros is spotted in the background, she is also seen dancing with another woman at a masquerade held early on in the film. Toward the climax of the film, Christian and Ros get into a helicopter accident, but survive. Afterwards, he gives a speech, and when he acknowledges her, she is seen standing with another woman who puts her hand on her back comfortingly. It is nice to see that this financially successful franchise includes a Black lesbian couple, but we would like to see more from Ros and her partner than these few brief moments provided.

Get Out

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,143 theaters

In this deservedly critically acclaimed horror film, lead character Chris discovers that his girlfriend's family have been transplanting the brains of white people into Black bodies, leaving the consciousness of the person in the "sunken place" where they are powerless over their own bodies. Chris finds photos of his girlfriend Rose with other Black men, making it clear that he is not the first man she has entrapped, but surprisingly, the photos also include Rose and the family housekeeper, Georgina, in a pre-hypnosis selfie where Rose is hugging Georgina from behind.

While Georgina is a big part of the film, it is primarily as Rose's grandmother Marianne whose brain is in Georgina's body. She has clear moments of trying to fight the control and warn Chris of the danger he is in, but she is never able to entirely break free and regain agency of herself. In the end, Chris accidentally hits her with a car and then as he is attempting to drive her to the hospital, she awakens and attacks him for "ruining her house" in his escape. The car hits a tree, and she dies.

The film's presentation of the photo seems to be in line with the reveal of other love interests that Rose has brought home. GLAAD has counted Georgina – the actual character in the few moments where she is herself - as a lesbian character. Not to negate the film's brilliant commentary on race and cultural resonance, however, it is disappointing that Georgina met the same tragic end we have seen repeatedly for queer women.

Happy Death Day

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,535 theaters

Horror movie *Happy Death Day* follows sorority girl Tree on her birthday when she is killed, but she is then stuck in a time loop living the same day repeatedly until she can find her murderer. Each day then includes a confrontation with Tim, a boy she had one date with who asks why she never returned his text. At one point, Tree believes Tim may be the killer, so she spies on him only to discover he is watching gay porn. Later on, as Tim confronts her as he always does, Tree tells him he should just be himself and that "love is love." Tim is stunned. Though it was good to include queer people in this campus's world – and necessary to reflect reality, GLAAD's *Accelerating Acceptance* report found that 20% of Americans aged 18-34 identify as LGBTQ - it would have been nice to see Tim claim his own sexuality.

Pitch Perfect 3

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,468 theaters

The third and final film in the musical comedy *Pitch Perfect* franchise continues to follow the a capella group The Barden Bellas as they perform as one of the acts on a USO tour. Out lesbian character Cynthia Rose again returns. Though Cynthia Rose mentioned a fiancé in the previous film, she is nowhere to be found here, and Cynthia Rose is relegated to the sidelines for the majority of the film. Ultimately, she had no real impact on the plot of the film and her removal would not make any significant difference.

The film includes jokes about Chloe being attracted to her fellow Bella, Beca. There are references to "that one time" the girls were on top of each other, and an extended joke with Chloe accidentally grabbing Beca's breasts as the two hide. None of these jokes ever pay off with an actual romantic moment between the women.

Though it is good to see Cynthia Rose as a lesbian character included in this group of women, it is disappointing that there were more jokes in this franchise about queer women than actual storylines with them.

Split

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,373 theaters

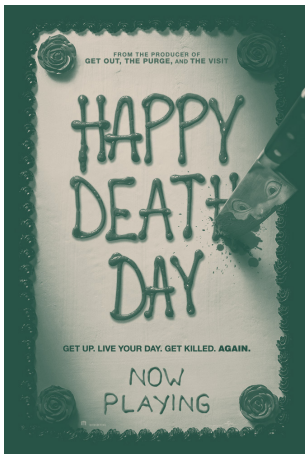
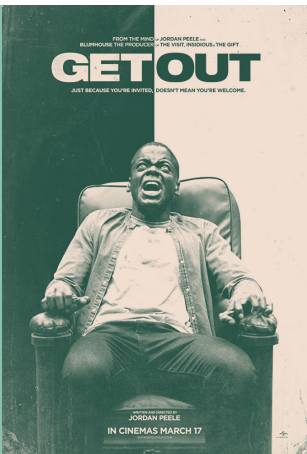
The newest thriller from M. Night Shyamalan follows Kevin, a man with 23 different personalities battling for dominance and his kidnapping of three teen girls. During this time, Kevin is in therapy as one of his most functioning personalities, Barry. While actor James McAvoy and some press outlets described Barry as gay, Barry never discusses his sexuality himself. Barry is a fashion designer with flamboyant mannerisms, but this alone does not define him as gay. Further, much of Barry's screen time turns out to be another personality, Dennis, who is pretending to be Barry. As Barry never talks about his sexual orientation and is never shown with a love interest, GLAAD did not count him in its tally.

The Snowman

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 1,815 theaters

This horror-mystery includes Jamie Clayton, an actress who is transgender, as Edda, the tech manager for the police station. The film does not give Edda much of a story outside of her work duties. Since nothing in the film identifies Edda as trans, GLAAD did not count Edda as a trans character. We hope to see more opportunity in future for trans actors to play transgender characters, bringing their own authenticity to those stories, as well as portraying characters who are not necessarily written to be trans.



Opportunities Ahead

This summer, Universal will release a sequel to the hit musical *Mamma Mia!* In the first film, Colin Firth's character, Harry, came out as gay. The sequel will feature many flashbacks, which include Harry as a young man when he met and dated Sophie's mother, as well as present day moments. We would like to see his story explored more, both in the past and in the present day scenes. Universal will also begin distributing DreamWorks films, starting with the final *How to Train Your Dragon* film, *The Hidden World*. In the second *How to Train Your Dragon* film, Gobber had a sly line which the director confirmed was him saying he was gay in outside press. In this third and final film, Gobber is set to return, and it would be a huge step forward to see him with a romantic interest.

CHARLIZE THERON AS LORRAINE BROUGHTON, ATOMIC BLONDE



Focus Features

SUBSIDIARY OF UNIVERSAL

FOCUS FEATURES

was established in 2002 when USA Films, Universal Focus, and Good Machine combined into a single company. Focus Features produces and distributes its own features, in addition to distributing foreign films, establishing an impressive record of accomplishment of critically acclaimed and popular LGBTQ-inclusive films that include *The Kids Are All Right* (2010), *Pariah* (2011), and *Milk* (2008). Its most commercially successful release to date is the 2006 drama *Brokeback Mountain*, adapted from the Annie Proulx novel about the romantic relationship between two men in 1960s Wyoming. In 2013, it released another prominent Oscar-nominated LGBTQ-inclusive film, *Dallas Buyers Club*, and followed it up with 2015's *The Danish Girl* which was also Oscar-nominated.

Summary of 2017 Findings

7

films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

1

total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

14%

percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

Atomic Blonde

Widest theatrical release: 3,326 theaters

This 1980s-set spy drama follows Lorraine Broughton, a top MI-6 agent who is sent to Berlin to investigate the murder of a fellow agent and recover a missing list containing dangerous confidential information. While in Berlin, she gets involved with a French spy named Delphine who is also there investigating. Though their relationship is overlaid with the knowledge that they are both liars, they do genuinely like each other and their scenes together seemed to be the only times in which Lorraine was at all human and vulnerable though she insists their relationship is not real. Ultimately, the double agent who was working to frame both Delphine and Lorraine murders Delphine. Lorraine does come across as genuinely regretful that she wasn't able to get to Delphine in time to help her get out of town, but she quickly moves on with her mission.

It is a welcome change that the creators attempted to include queer characters in this type of genre that does not often include them, but a clunky plot hampered their efforts. Further, the decision to employ the "Bury Your Gays" trope – and the objectification of Delphine in her final moments – was lamentable. This film exists in a larger culture as just one more in a long line of projects that include a violent death for queer women, often directly tied to their identity or relationships.



2017
RATING



POOR

JOSH GAD AS LEFOU, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Walt Disney Studios

ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST

profitable studios in the country, Walt Disney is also the most recognizable, with a massive global brand presence. Since *Snow White*, Disney's first feature film in 1937, the company has focused primarily on family entertainment. In December 2017, the Walt Disney Company announced their proposed acquisition of 21st Century Fox's film studio, as well as several other divisions of the company. The deal is expected to close in 2019, dependent on regulatory approval.

Walt Disney Studios has the weakest history when it comes to LGBTQ-inclusive films of all the studios tracked in this report. Touchstone Pictures has released a smattering of LGBTQ-inclusive films over the years including *Ed Wood* (1994), *Sweet Home Alabama* (2002), *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003), and *Kinky Boots* (2006). Lucasfilm produced the film *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, which told the story of gay Japanese writer Yukio Mishima, by combining his autobiography with parts of his fiction novels, which includes his secret love for another male peer. The film never got an official release in Japan due to conservative protests, and was released in the U.S. under Warner Brothers. Some of Disney's past inclusive films include *Delivery Man* (2013), Lady Gaga appearing as herself in *Muppets Most Wanted* (2014), and *Zootopia* (2016).

Summary of 2017 Findings

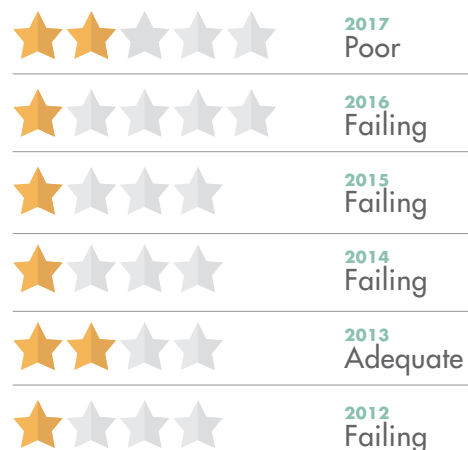
8 films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

1 total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

13% percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

1 number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time



Beauty and the Beast

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,210 theaters

Last year's live action remake of Disney's legendary *Beauty and the Beast* made box office records as the biggest March opening of all time and included a gay character in LeFou (Josh Gad). Though his happy ending may be only a small moment in the film, it remains a huge leap forward for the film industry which still is leaving LGBTQ people out of the story.

LeFou has slightly more development in this live action version than he did in the original animated movie. While he does spend the first half of the film as the foppish sidekick of Gaston who is completely enamored of him, it is made clear throughout that he feels uncomfortable with the villainous lengths Gaston is willing to go to. As the film's action packed ending approaches, LeFou finally confronts the fact that Gaston will never return his feelings and he does the right thing, teaming with Mrs. Potts to help protect the castle and its inhabitants from the rioting villagers. He tells her that he and Gaston are in a bad place, and she assures him he is "too good for him anyway," freeing LeFou to be able to move on and in the film's final number he shares a brief dance and glance with another man who seems to return his interest.

Kids see LGBTQ couples and families in their everyday lives – their moms and dads, their teachers and neighbors, their uncles, aunts, and beloved grandparents. Disney's decision to reflect that reality and bring this remake into the present day by including a gay character is a welcome (if small) sign of progress. We hope to see more studios take the same step – and explore further – in future.

Coco

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,987 theaters

Pixar's Oscar-winning animated film follows young musician Miguel as he accidentally stumbles into the Land of the Dead, and must get his family's blessing to leave. There, Miguel meets Hector, who is initially dressed in disguise as legendary bisexual artist Frida Kahlo in an attempt to sneak out to the human world. A skeletal version of Frida herself shows up later in the film while working on a performance art piece. Though Frida was bisexual, nothing in the film's fictional rendering reflected that reality. The situation is further confused as she is juxtaposed as a legend next to the fictional singer that Miguel has come to speak to, Ernesto de la Cruz. Given the lack of any on-screen confirmation of her identity and unique

situation as the lone real figure painted on to this fictionalized world, GLAAD did not count the character in its tally. Kahlo has an incredibly interesting life story, and we've love to see her life explored further in other projects

The out writer/co-director and out producer both spoke of the importance of representation during their Oscars speeches, and backstage when questioned about including LGBTQ characters in Pixar films said, "That's a dream [...] all of us would be very excited to have characters like that represented as a protagonist role." We also hope to see this in Disney films, especially as their television side has begun to introduce queer characters like Cyrus on Disney Channel's *Andi Mack* and included two moms in an episode of Disney Junior's *Doc McStuffins*.

Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,347 theaters

Marvel Studios' *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* director James Gunn was asked during the film's red carpet premiere if he would consider including a gay character in the franchise and he responded, "We might have already done that. I say watch the movie. Check it out. See what you think," hinting that there would be some kind of noticeable queer content in the film. After fans and critics struggled to find any LGBTQ characters, Gunn clarified, "You know, somebody asked me will there be any gay characters in Marvel movies, and what I meant was there's a lot of characters in the MCU and very few of them have we delved into what their sexualities are - whether it's gay or straight or bisexual. We don't really know. So, I imagine there are probably gay characters in the Marvel Universe, you know. We just don't know who they are yet." There is no discernible LGBTQ content in the film, but Gunn has already confirmed there will be a *Guardians 3*. This is a prime opportunity to include telepath Moondragon and her girlfriend Phyla-Vell in the new film. Both women had major roles in the source material for the MCU films.

Since beginning our *Studio Responsibility Index* five years ago, the sum total of representation that GLAAD has counted in Disney's Marvel films are seconds-long cameos of out news anchor Thomas Roberts appearing as himself in *The Avengers* (2012) and *Iron Man 3* (2013).

There are so many strong LGBTQ-inclusive comics that GLAAD extended the number of nominees in the GLAAD Media Awards' Outstanding Comic Book category from five to ten in recognition of the quantity and quality of stories we are seeing. On the television side,

superhero shows regularly include LGBTQ characters and have been a hit with fans. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to ignore that LGBTQ people remain almost completely shut out of Hollywood's big budget comic book films that have dominated the box office over the past several years.

Star Wars: The Last Jedi

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,232 theaters

The second film in the newest *Star Wars* trilogy, *The Last Jedi* follows new and returning characters in the rebellion against the dark side. One of the new characters introduced is Admiral Holdo, who is hinted at as being bisexual in the official *Star Wars* novels, but that storyline is not expanded upon nor really mentioned in the film. Additionally, several online outlets pointed out a moment between two male Porgs, Puffin-like creatures that live on an island in the film. The moment itself is a brief nuzzle, and is not an indication of the sexuality of these animals. The amount of coverage this moment garnered and the continued fervor around queer relationships by fans – and the other, more serious calls for this franchise to become more inclusive of diversity on all levels – shows how much hunger there is on the part of *Star Wars* fans to see themselves in this universe they love so much. It is not enough to limit these stories to the pages of expository novels that many fans will not find, LGBTQ stories deserve to be included on the big screen as well.

Thor: Ragnarok

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,080 theaters

The third and presumably final film - if Thor follows the examples of Iron Man and Captain America – in Thor's solo series, *Ragnarok* included two prominent characters who are bisexual and queer respectively in the Marvel source comics: Valkyrie and Korg. However, this film disappointingly did not include any references to their identities or love interests, and as such, audiences would have no clue they were seeing queer characters unless they had read outside press or the source material stories. As there were no in film references, GLAAD did not count either character in its final tally.

Valkyrie actor Tessa Thompson has told press that she played her character as queer and believed that her warrior sister who is killed in front of her in a flashback was Valkyrie's lover, thus explaining her deep drinking and grief. However, none of this is actually made canon in the film. Following Thompson's pitch of Valkyrie

as bisexual based on her character's on-page relationships, director Taika Waititi (who also played Korg) filmed a scene in which a woman was seen coming out of Valkyrie's bedroom, but ultimately the scene was cut so as not to "distract from the scene's vital exposition." While Thompson deserves praise for fighting for the inclusion of Valkyrie's bi identity – particularly as a new face to the MCU and in a position where she was presumably taking a risk as she could have been replaced – it is disappointing that Marvel chose to not explore Valkyrie's story or Korg's history.

In 2015, Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige was widely quoted as saying "there's no reason" they couldn't include an LGBTQ character in the MCU "in the next decade or sooner." Hopefully, it is sooner.

Opportunities Ahead

With the upcoming Marvel slate, there are plenty of opportunities to introduce LGBTQ characters into the films that are queer in the comics. The upcoming *Captain Marvel* could be an introduction to lesbian Latina superhero America Chavez who works closely with Captain Marvel in certain comics as teammates on the A-Force and Ultimates. America will be part of the animated digital series *Marvel Rising: Secret Warriors* this year, so it seems Marvel is investing in her in a big way. This would be the perfect opportunity to get her story out to a mass audience. The likely *Black Panther* sequel should include the romantic relationship between Dora Milaje members Ayo and Aneka. Their story was explored in the GLAAD Media Award-winning spin off *Black Panther: World of Wakanda* and the two – alongside Dora Milaje leader Okoye – are set for a summer three-issue miniseries. Hopefully this increased focus on them in Marvel pages will translate to the big screen. Further, if Valkyrie appears in the upcoming final *Avengers* movie, her bisexuality should actually be represented onscreen rather than left to subtext that is only caught by those looking for it.

2017
RATING



FAILING

JOHN DUFF AS DAVID, CHIPS

Warner Brothers

STARTED IN THE EARLY 1900s

by four Polish immigrant brothers as a simple movie theater business, following several decades of growth Warner Brothers Pictures was formally incorporated in 1923 as a full-fledged film studio. Over the years, Warner Brothers produced such classics as *Casablanca*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Goodfellas*, and *Blade Runner*.

One of Warner Brothers' most iconic films also contains one of the earliest and most celebrated gay-coded characters in mainstream American cinema: Sal Mineo's tragic Plato in 1955's *Rebel Without a Cause*. Over the subsequent years, there were other notable inclusive films released by Warner Brothers, including *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *The Color Purple* (1985), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997). Notably, nearly every one of those films was based on source material that included LGBTQ characters. More recently, Warner Brothers has also released inclusive films like *Alexander* (2004), *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005), *V For Vendetta* (2005), *J. Edgar* (2011), *Tammy* (2014), and *Storks* (2016).

Summary of 2017 Findings

18 films released theatrically in 2017 under studio & official imprints

2 total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

11% percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

1 number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

Studio Rating Over Time

★☆☆☆☆ 2017 Failing

★★☆☆☆ 2016 Poor

★☆☆☆☆ 2015 Failing

★★★★☆ 2014 Good

★☆☆☆☆ 2013 Failing

★★☆☆☆ 2012 Adequate

CHiPS

PASSES VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 2,464 theaters

This buddy comedy based on the television series of the same name reads as though the writers never made it past 1983, the year the *CHiPS* show ended, in its treatment of the gay characters it includes and its incessant gay panic jokes.

California Highway Patrol officers John and Ponch are investigating a case involving a fellow CHP agent, TJ, who died by suicide after a criminal threatened the life of a hostage (and TJ's boyfriend), David. John and Ponch discover that the two were a couple and trying to escape from their criminal boss, but were caught before they could get away. John and Ponch also work with another officer, Terry, whose only character trait involves ogling his fellow officers and their discomfort with him checking them out. The film just barely squeaks by in passing the Vito Russo Test as David's death is the catalyst for the investigation that sets up the movie and his removal would greatly affect the plot. All three characters – TJ, David, and Terry - have under a minute of screen time each. This film remains an example of a film that passes the test's low bar in actually including an important LGBTQ character, but the story beyond that is nevertheless offensive.

Much more than a minute is spent on the film's gay panic-exploiting punchlines. Ponch is routinely uncomfortable seeing other men shirtless, and seeing them hug each other. Though John calls him out repeatedly on his homophobia, it is to no effect, and John clearly does not mind this kind of language. "It's not cool to be homophobic, but I respect your right to be," he says in reaction to Ponch cringing at the idea of touching him. Midway through the film, Ponch accidentally falls face first into John's crotch and both men scream, disgusted. This kind of so-called humor continues through the whole movie.

These "jokes" are part of a trend that we are tired of seeing. They reinforce outdated ideals of masculinity and project the false idea that in order to appeal to one demographic, the film must insult another audience. The critical failure of *CHiPS* and low box office (compared to the success of more inclusive, less offensive films in the genre such as *Blockers* and *Neighbors 2*) should signal to studios that this type of "comedy" is outdated, offensive, and does not make sound business sense as an investment.

Everything, Everything

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 2,801 theaters

While *Everything, Everything* did not include any LGBTQ characters, in the source novel of the same name, the male lead's best friend was gay. It is disappointing that the adaptation chose to cut this character and his story.

Fist Fight

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 3,185 theaters

In an early scene of this raunchy comedy, English teacher Andy finds that someone has written "Mr. Dick Sucks English Class" on his chalkboard. He calls out the class, saying that this was a homophobic joke and asks, "How would Blake feel?" as the only gay kid in the class. It turns out that Blake was actually the student who made the joke, and his classmates cheer him on. Though it was a pleasant surprise that the gay character was not the punch line of the joke himself, he still was only included as part of a joke and never received any development or story.

The LEGO Batman Movie

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,088 theaters

The first spin-off of *The LEGO Movie* franchise, this film follows the LEGO versions of Batman, Robin, and company as they try to defeat the Joker's newest scheme to take over Gotham City. Throughout the film, there is a running gag that The Joker considers Batman to be his worst enemy, but the sentiment is not reciprocated. Much of their language echoes clichés about relationships to the point of Batman saying, "There is no us" when Joker questions him about his fighting other people, and Joker quipping, "I'm off the market" when he is tired of Batman running back to him. The joke of all this is never directed at the idea of two men being in a relationship, but more poking fun at the dynamics between superheroes and villains.

Also in this movie, Batman accidentally adopts Robin when he is Bruce Wayne. For a while, Robin thinks both Batman and Bruce are his two dads. Though he says nothing about a relationship between the two alter egos, he is very excited about having two dads. Though it would have been nice to see actual queer characters appear in the film - canonically bisexual heroes Wonder Woman, Poison Ivy, and Harley Quinn had very small roles though they are not included in the tally as there were no in-film references - it was good that the humor did not sink to the level of making fun of gay relationships.

Wonder Woman

FAILS VITO RUSSO TEST

Widest theatrical release: 4,165 theaters

Warner Brothers hit DC Comics film *Wonder Woman* won well-deserved critical acclaim, and has seen record-breaking success at the box office. The film follows Diana aka Wonder Woman, Princess of the Amazonian island Themyscira, as she grows up and leaves her home behind to protect humankind during World War I. While the movie makes coy references to the fact that the Amazons - an immortal group of women who have lived together in isolation for thousands of years - were involved in romantic relationships with each other, it never commits to having an actual queer character. In the comics' recent *Rebirth* run, writer Greg Rucka confirmed that Diana is canonically bisexual, saying, "the answer is obviously yes" that Diana has been in love and had serious relationships with women. In recent issues, she discusses the love she left behind, an Amazon named Kasia. While Rucka's run began after principal shooting for this film had already finished, we expect to see DC pull from this storyline as they work on the film's sequel.

Diana's character is grounded in the power of being truthful and forthright. Being an out and proud bi woman would be in line with her ideals to fully live her own truth and recognize all parts of herself. Portraying Diana as bi would also be a welcome sign of progress for comic book films. While LGBTQ characters have made huge strides on the pages of comics, very few have made the jump to the big screen. GLAAD Campus Ambassador Gianna Collier-Pitts launched a petition this past fall calling on Warner Brothers to let *Wonder Woman* be bisexual on screen in the sequel and associated DCEU appearances - currently over 10,000 fans have signed on to the ask.



Opportunities Ahead

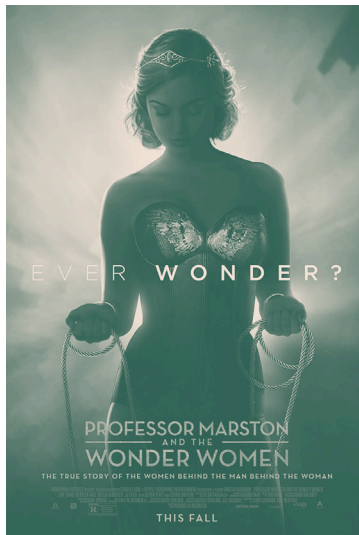
The upcoming *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* heavily features the character of Dumbledore fighting against the dark wizard Grindelwald. Author and screenwriter JK Rowling has said multiple times that Dumbledore is gay and was in love with Grindelwald. However, director David Yates has said Dumbledore will not be "explicitly gay" in this film. Though Rowling has expressed that in the five-film franchise their relationship will eventually be addressed, this erasure of Dumbledore's sexuality is glaring and reflects poorly on the franchise that has such a foundational message of love and acceptance of others.

Warner Brothers is also planning many more films as part of the DC Comics Extended Universe, a good number of which include *Wonder Woman*, whose bisexuality from the comics needs to be present in her on-screen counterpart's story. Additionally, there are a number of films set to star Harley Quinn, who is bisexual in several DC stories. In particular, the announced film *Gotham City Sirens* centers on Harley, Poison Ivy, and Catwoman; all of whom have had previous romantic relationships with women. We hope to see these films catch up to the steps that DC has already taken on the page.



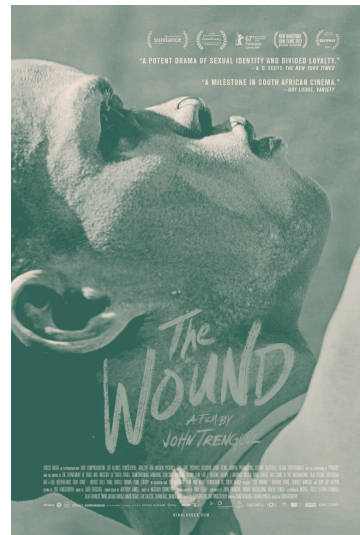
A24

Regarded as a powerhouse in independent cinema, A24 is known for producing a large body of respected work since its founding in 2012. Some of these films include *Obvious Child*, *Ex Machina* and *20th Century Women*. A24's second highest grossing film is GLAAD Media Award recipient *Moonlight* (2016), the coming-of-age story of a young Black queer man which was the first film with an LGBTQ lead, and the first with an all-Black cast, to win Best Picture at the Oscars. In 2017, the distributor released critically acclaimed and GLAAD Media Award-nominated *Lady Bird*, a story of a young woman growing up in Sacramento. The film also delves into the story of her gay classmate and his emotional journey as relates to his accepting himself and coming out to others.



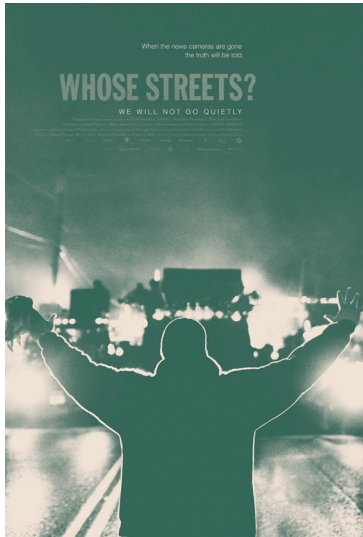
Annapurna Pictures

Founded as a production company by out lesbian producer Megan Ellison in 2011, the company expanded to distribution in 2017. One of the films released in Annapurna's first year as a distributor is out lesbian director Angela Robinson's *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women*, which follows the titular Professor Marston who created the original Wonder Woman. At the center of the movie is a polyamorous relationship between Marston, his wife Elizabeth, and their lover Olive. This relationship is portrayed as healthy and loving, and the two women went out to stay together and raise their children for decades after Marston's death. Polyamory is still rare to see in any form of media, but it is especially impressive how respectfully this film portrayed their relationship and also built each member of their triad out as a full and nuanced character. *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women* was nominated for the GLAAD Media Award in Outstanding Film - Wide Release. Annapurna's *Brad's Status* also included a gay character and his husband.



Kino Lorber

Formed in 2009 by Donald Krim and Richard Lorber, Kino Lorber combined the resources of Kino International, Lorber Films, and Alive Mind Cinema. Last year, the studio released GLAAD Media Award-nominated South African drama *The Wound*, which follows closeted men during the Xhosa initiation ritual, as well as the film *Tom of Finland*. Kino Lorber released three foreign films that had trans women in 2017, and though seeing trans people on screen is something we need more of, all of these films included on or off screen violence towards the trans women. In both the Thai film *Pop Aye* and Filipino film *The Woman Who Left*, the trans characters have experienced violence off-screen, and then are met with friendship by the respective protagonists. In France's period piece *Slack Bay*, it is revealed that the character of Billie is transgender when her boyfriend discovers her genitalia and then violently beats her. This repeated portrayal of trans women as tricking men does not exist in a vacuum – this trope furthers a dangerous cultural misconception which leads directly to violence against trans women who are being murdered in the U.S. at epidemic rates.



Magnolia Pictures

Founded in 2001, Magnolia specializes in foreign and independent releasing. Owned by Todd Wagner and Mark Cuban, Magnolia is a subsidiary of 2929 Entertainment. LGBTQ-inclusive films of the past includes 2014's *Life Partners*, 2015's *Tangerine*, and *The Handmaiden* (2016), a Korean lesbian romantic thriller. In 2017, the company released documentary *Whose Streets?* which followed the inception and growth of the Black Lives Matter movement. Two of the activists highlighted in the film were a queer couple who were raising their daughter in the world of activism. Magnolia also released *I Am Not Your Negro*, the documentary on legendary gay author and activist James Baldwin. Other LGBTQ-inclusive films released by Magnolia include indie films *I Love You Both*, *Person to Person*, and *Lemon*.



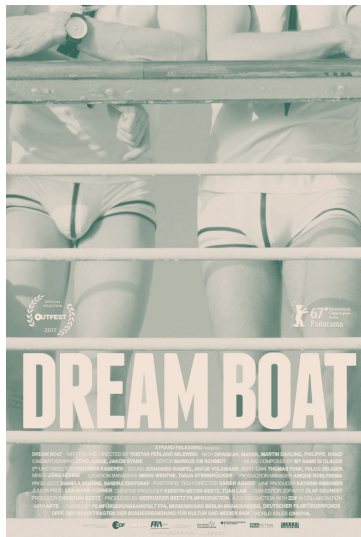
The Orchard

Originally founded as a music distribution company in 1997, The Orchard is now owned by Sony Music Entertainment, and started distributing theatrical releases in 2015. This year's releases included two GLAAD Media Award-nominated foreign films, *BPM (Beats per Minute)* and *Thelma*. The former tells the powerful and heartbreaking story of HIV and AIDS activists in Paris in the early '90s. In addition to being a portrait of the French division of ACT UP, *BPM* also contains a significant gay romance. *Thelma*, a Norwegian arthouse thriller, follows the titular Thelma as she leaves her conservative family to go to university, and discovers her feelings for another woman as well as the mysterious powers that accompany them. The Orchard also released documentary *Jeremiah Tower*, which profiled the famous out chef of the same name.



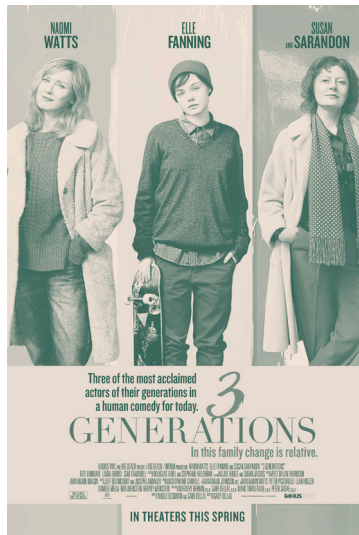
Orion Pictures

A notable distributor from the 1970s – '90s known for producing commercially and critically successful film, Orion Pictures went bankrupt in the late '90s and only recently came back as a film distributor. In 2017, their most successful release was England's *God's Own Country*, a romantic drama between an English sheep farmer in Yorkshire and a Romanian migrant worker. The film is critically acclaimed in England and the U.S., and was nominated for several BAFTAs as well as a GLAAD Media Award.



Strand Releasing

Strand's original focus when it was founded in 1989 was exclusively LGBTQ films. Now, it releases other films in addition to LGBTQ-inclusive movies, and is specifically focused on foreign film. Past highlights from Strand Releasing include 1992's *The Living End*, following two men on a perilous road trip; *Yossi and Jagger* (2002), a drama and romance between two Israeli officers, as well as 2013's sequel *Yossi*; *Mala Mala* (2014), which took a look at the drag and trans communities of Puerto Rico; and 2016's *Spa Night*, a story about a Korean-American teenager exploring his sexuality. A few of last year's LGBTQ-inclusive releases include *Dream Boat*, a documentary following a group of gay men on a gay cruise, *Lovesong*, a drama about two women whose friendship becomes romantic, and *A Woman, A Part* about an actress who reconnects with her lesbian former mentor.



The Weinstein Company

Launched in 2005, this distributor filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy following the dismissal of co-founder Harvey Weinstein. In May 2017, the company distributed the film *Three Generations*, a family drama about a transgender boy, his mother, and his lesbian grandmother and her partner. The film originally was set to be released with a baseless R rating that would limit the audiences able to see the film, but GLAAD pressured the MPAA and the rating was successfully changed to PG-13, allowing more families to see this story about a trans teen and his supportive family.



Wolfe Releasing

Founded in 1985, Wolfe Releasing is the oldest studio to exclusively release LGBTQ films in North America. It has released a large volume of queer film, some theatrically and some on demand. Presently the majority of its releases are direct to video and digital. Some highlights of Wolfe's past catalog include *Brother to Brother* (2004), which explores the gay culture of the Harlem Renaissance, *Tomboy* (2011), a film from France that follows a gender non-conforming child, and 2016's *Naz and Maalik* which revolves around a relationship between two Black Muslim teen boys. Some of 2017's LGBTQ releases include coming-of-age drama *Princess Cyd*, centering on a bisexual teen girl and her summer romance, and *Paris 5:59: Théo and Hugo*, a French film told in real time of the first two hours two men meet and have sex.

Acknowledgements

GLAAD's Entertainment Team includes several experts working across the organization to ensure inclusive, diverse, and accurate portrayals of the LGBTQ community in film, television, comics, video games, music, and other popular media.

GLAAD's subject media experts in English and Spanish-language entertainment work within The GLAAD Media Institute to accelerate acceptance through storytelling and providing media engagement training and actionable research to activists, community organizations, industry leaders, major businesses, and more. GLAAD's Director of Entertainment Media leverages GLAAD's work within the industry to advocate for fair and accurate portrayals, and the Director of Talent Engagement grows GLAAD's impact through partnerships with key influencers.

For journalists interested in speaking to a GLAAD spokesperson, please inquire at press@glaad.org. For those interested in scheduling a training with the GLAAD Media Institute, please visit glaad.org/institute.

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The **GLAAD Media Institute** provides training, consultation, and research to develop an army of social justice ambassadors for all marginalized communities to champion acceptance and amplify media impact.

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