

# Studio Responsibility Index

2021

## From the desk of the President & CEO, Sarah Kate Ellis

In 2013, GLAAD created the *Studio Responsibility Index (SRI)* to track lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) inclusion in major studio films and to drive acceptance and meaningful LGBTQ inclusion. To date, we've seen and felt the great impact our TV research has had and its continued impact, driving creators and industry executives to do more and better. After several years of issuing this study, progress presented itself with the release of outstanding movies like *Love, Simon*, *Blockers*, and *Rocketman* hitting big screens in recent years, and we remain hopeful with the announcements of upcoming queer-inclusive movies originally set for theatrical distribution in 2020 and beyond. But no one could have predicted the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, and the ways it would uniquely disrupt and halt the theatrical distribution business these past sixteen months.

Our last SRI projected at least ten films scheduled for a 2020 theatrical release which were confirmed to include LGBTQ characters, storylines, and themes. Of those ten, and because of forced theater closure, only three films were theatrically distributed in 2020 in the U.S. – *The New Mutants* (Walt Disney Studios), *Birds of Prey* (Warner Bros.), and *The Broken Hearts Gallery* (Sony Pictures). Then the distribution strategy got creative. Other films were sold to and distributed by streaming services - *Happiest Season* on Hulu, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* coming this summer to Amazon Prime, were delayed to 2021 or later (*Chaos Walking*, *In the Heights*, *Eternals*, *Jungle Cruise*), or were released in 2020 through video on demand (*The Craft: Legacy*) rather than theatrically. Given the publicly confirmed details about inclusive LGBTQ characters, it is clear that 2020 was set to be a game changing year for a variety of queer stories at the box office. And then, COVID closures, delays, and increased expenses happened to the world and to the industry.

Due to the unpredictability and the uncontrollable changes and adjustments in the film industry, for this year's study, GLAAD has chosen to suspend individual grades for the studio distributors rather than applying what has been our standard grading scale. But make no mistake – this is in no way a pass or permission slip for Hollywood to relax or regress. Though the path forward continues to evolve, we remain vigilant and focused on our work to preserve and to persevere advancing new, groundbreaking LGBTQ stories in the coming years with our studio partners.

The film industry as a whole – and theatrical distribution in particular – is experiencing unprecedented change as the pandemic forced a new paradigm for cinema releases. We are seeing experiments with the shrinking of exclusive

theatrical release windows and studios are testing different release models and patterns.

We know for sure the immense power of the theatrical experience. Data proves that audiences crave the return to theaters for that communal experience after more than a year of isolation. Nielsen reports that 63 percent of Americans say they are “very or somewhat” eager to go to a movie theater as soon as possible within three months of COVID restrictions being lifted. May polling from movie ticket company Fandango found that 96% of 4,000 users surveyed plan to see “multiple movies” in theaters this summer with 87% listing “going to the movies” as the top slot in their summer plans. And, an April poll from Morning Consult/*The Hollywood Reporter* found that over 50 percent of respondents would likely purchase a film ticket within a month of their resident state meeting and complying with federal health guidelines to open theaters. In some instances, we even see the biggest TV hits of 2021, like the Marvel Cinematic Universe and its TV series expansions, are also being driven by stories began or continuing in their theatrical counterparts.

However, we must also recognize the reality of evolving consumer desires. A February Morning Consult/*The Hollywood Reporter* poll found a staggering 90 percent of respondents who subscribe to HBO Max said they would be more likely to purchase a subscription to a streaming service if it included newly released films the same day they are in theaters for no extra cost, and 64 percent of people who were not HBO Max subscribers said the same.

As national and international theatrical markets continue to revive and as we experience shifts towards a world with COVID-19 vaccinations rolling out across the globe, no one can be certain just how the theatrical model may change and how those changes may impact the industry long-term.

**What is certain is film and TV content remain America's widest cultural export - reflecting our culture while also shaping culture through nuanced and inclusive storytelling – and that entertainment must deliver stories which reflect the audience watching, including LGBTQ people.**

This is a great time of transformation for Hollywood – challenged to redefine business lines and practices during a global pandemic, driven by an increased demand from consumers hungry for new content, and rocked by the rightful reckoning and pressure for these studios to create more meaningful substantive change in representing and investing in marginalized communities. This transformation

represents a great opportunity to swiftly accelerate acceptance of LGBTQ stories, break new ground, and invest in queer and trans talent and stories in an unprecedented way. Hollywood and the business of storytelling must be more nimble, more creative, more open than ever before.

This year's SRI makes it clear, there remains significant work to be done in mainstream film releases to ensure that tomorrow's releases include us all – no matter the means of distribution nor platform.

In our previous edition of the SRI, GLAAD challenged the industry to ensure that within the next two years, half of all LGBTQ characters tracked are to be people of color after several years of decreases. While we saw a significant growth this year (up to 40 percent or eight of 20 LGBTQ characters from 34 percent), even in this year's smaller number of releases, the studios have not yet met GLAAD's challenge or returned to their high of 57 percent LGBTQ people of color from our 2017 study. Last year, GLAAD also began to track LGBTQ characters who have a disability. This year shows an unacceptable and complete absence – a drop from the single character counted in the previous study.

More disappointing, there is a complete absence of stories of LGBTQ characters living with HIV, a group which still faces incredibly high levels of stigma and discrimination. Today, approximately 1.2 million Americans live with HIV. And their stories must be told, heard and seen. GLAAD and Gilead Sciences' *The State of HIV Stigma* survey found nearly 9 in 10 Americans believe "there is still stigma around HIV," and 88% agree that "people are quick to judge those with HIV." We've seen how culture can change when stories have a face, most notably with Billy Porter recently sharing his experience of living with HIV and receiving incredible waves of support. At the time of publication, the only upcoming film publicly announced from the eight studio distributors tracked which includes a character living with HIV is an adaptation of the Rock Hudson biography *All That Heaven Allows* at Universal Pictures with out director Greg Berlanti attached – though there has not been any recent news on the project. While we hope to see this project advance, it is clear that there are so many more stories to tell and so many more films needing to get made and seen.

In the past year, GLAAD challenged the TV industry to introduce new regular and recurring LGBTQ characters living with HIV in order to combat stigma. Now we are similarly challenging Hollywood studios. GLAAD is calling on the distributors tracked in this report to urgently prioritize active development and theatrical release in coming years of stories featuring LGBTQ characters living with HIV.

Our challenge – today and every day – is to continue driving, working, and collaborating with creators, executives, and studios to ensure the entertainment on our screens reflects the world in which we live and the audiences

who consume it. An audience who is changing, fast.

**A Gallup poll released in February 2021 showed that at least 15.9 percent of Gen Z Americans (born 1997 to 2002) self-identify as part of the LGBTQ community – that is 1 in 6 adult members of Gen Z, people aged 19 to 24 in 2021.**

Not only does this quick growth in LGBTQ people who are feeling more empowered to live authentically represent a significant consumer and audience base who must be considered, they also represent a new generation of employees and creatives who will be entering all industries. If studios and production companies wish to remain relevant and perceived as best-in-class prospective employers, they need to be prepared for this group.

GLAAD is here to be a resource and partner that innovates and collaborates with creatives to create culture change and impactful stories every day. Our GLAAD Media Institute serves as a valued resource to content creators, network and studio executives, brands and advertisers – through our advocacy and media training, actionable research, consultation services, elevating LGBTQ stories in media, and setting the authentic narrative for our community. Together, we'll advance and continue to move the needle forward for LGBTQ representation and inclusion in film.

Thank you for supporting our work and for your commitment to achieving 100 percent acceptance. Let's get to work – there's lots to get done.



*Sarah Kate Ellis*

**Sarah Kate Ellis,**  
President & CEO, GLAAD

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

In the 2018 SRI, GLAAD challenged the studios to ensure that 20 percent of annual major studio releases were LGBTQ-inclusive by 2021, and 50 percent inclusive by 2024. In 2020, that goal was reached and surpassed, with 22.7 (10 of 44) of the films from the eight major studios being LGBTQ-inclusive. Six studios achieved this 20 percent goal individually: Sony Pictures with 20 percent, United Artists Releasing and Warner Bros. at 25 percent, Paramount at 33 percent, Walt Disney Studios at 40 percent and STX Films coming in at 50 percent.

- There was an **increase in the percentage of films with LGBTQ characters in 2020**, up to 22.7 percent from last year's 18.6. However, this must be taken with a grain of salt within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacting theatrical distribution, as there were only 44 films released as opposed to the previous report's 118 from the same studios. While this record-high percentage is exciting, there must be consistent growth as the number of films theatrically released by the studios begins to rise again.
- **The percentage of LGBTQ characters of color also increased** after GLAAD introduced a call for growth in last year's study. Again, this must be taken in context of the limited film pool caused by the pandemic, given that there were only 20 LGBTQ characters in the 2020 releases, as opposed to the 50 LGBTQ characters of 2019. Of those 20 characters, 40 percent (eight) were characters of color and 11 were white. One LGBTQ character was non-human in appearance.
- Once again, **there were zero transgender or non-binary characters in any theatrical releases from a major studio**. This remains one of the more glaring ways mainstream studios continue to lag behind other forms of entertainment media. This is the fourth year in a row without any trans characters counted in this report.
- There was a significant **increase in screen time for LGBTQ characters**. Of the ten LGBTQ-inclusive films released, eight (80 percent) included LGBTQ characters with over 10 minutes of screen time. This represents 10 (50 percent) of the 20 LGBTQ characters. This is a noteworthy increase from the previous two reports where more than half of LGBTQ characters clocked less than three minutes of screen time. The second most populous group was those LGBTQ characters who clocked under one minute of screen time with six of 20 or 30 percent.

## 2020 OVERALL FINDINGS, BY STUDIO DISTRIBUTOR IN U.S.

---

### Lionsgate



3 TOTAL FILMS / 0 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS

### Paramount Pictures

33% 

6 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS

### Sony Pictures Entertainment

20% 

10 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS

### STX Films

50% 

2 TOTAL FILMS / 1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM

### United Artists Releasing

25% 

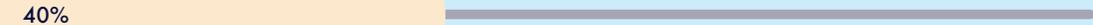
4 TOTAL FILMS / 1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM

### Universal Pictures

10% 

10 TOTAL FILMS / 1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM

### Walt Disney Studios

40% 

5 TOTAL FILMS / 2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS

### Warner Bros.

25% 

4 TOTAL FILMS / 1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS

# Table of Contents

From The Office of President & CEO, Sarah Kate Ellis	2
Executive Summary	4
From the Desk of the Director of Entertainment Research & Analysis	8
Methodology	10
The Vito Russo Test	11
Overview of Findings	12
Observations and Recommendations	14

Lionsgate	16
<i>Roadside Attractions</i>	17
Paramount Pictures	18
Sony Pictures	21
<i>Sony Pictures Classics</i>	23
STX Films	24
United Artists Releasing	26
Universal Pictures	28
<i>Focus Features</i>	30
Walt Disney Studios	31
<i>Searchlight Pictures</i>	33
Warner Bros.	34
Streaming Video on Demand Distributors	37
Additional Film Distributors	40
Acknowledgements	43

## FROM THE DESK OF DIRECTOR OF ENTERTAINMENT RESEARCH & ANALYSIS, MEGAN TOWNSEND

Storytelling is the cornerstone of our society – we learn by sharing our experiences, connecting with each other, telling our life stories, and learning about the wider world around ourselves and how to interact with our environments. Popular media is the most impactful tool we use to share those stories on a global scale.

The importance of entertainment and the human need for entertainment-as-connection has become even more apparent since the COVID-19 pandemic changed all our lives last year. As billions faced isolation in quarantine and lockdowns around the world, we turned to TV, movies, videogames and other media in droves to get through the past year and a half. Nielsen’s “Total Audience” study (March 2021) reported that in the third quarter of 2020, U.S. adults aged 18 or older spend almost five hours per day –or just over 33 hours per week– on video on live and time-shifted TV or on TV-connected devices. Fandom.com’s “State of Fandom 2020” study reported that audiences are looking to media for connection now more than ever. Those who say they use entertainment to connect grew 80 percent year-over-year (to 36 percent).

The past year has seen a variety of changes and creative experiments from studios on how to release a film beyond just the box office and changes to the long-accepted 90-day window. We’ll continue to see these experiments play out with many films already announced to favor a hybrid day-and-date release or a shortened theatrical window – at least for the calendar year. But there remains a deep passion and a bigger meaning to the communal moviegoing experience. As vaccines become more

widespread in the U.S., audiences are excited for a return to “normal.”

- Nielsen reports that 63 percent of Americans say they are “very or somewhat” eager to go to a movie theater within three months of COVID restrictions being lifted.
- Polling from movie ticket company Fandango found that 96% of 4,000 users surveyed plan to see “multiple movies” in theaters this summer with 87% listing “going to the movies” as the top slot in their summer plans.
- An April poll from Morning Consult/*The Hollywood Reporter* found that 51-53 percent of respondents would likely purchase a film ticket within a month of a state meeting federal regulations to open, combined with increased sanitization and staggered seating policies.

It will take time to see the long-term impacts of how the entertainment industry and the theatrical business change in response to COVID and the continuing growth and proliferation of streaming services owned by the studios. One thing remains certain: it is essential that the stories Hollywood exports include LGBTQ people, and are reflecting the full diversity of our community and experiences. We know that #RepresentationMatters, and getting to know, see, hear from, and connect with LGBTQ people through entertainment continues to be a pathway to greater understanding and acceptance.

### HERE’S THE PROOF:

- GLAAD and Procter & Gamble last May launched the first “LGBTQ Inclusion in Advertising and Media” study, a survey measuring the attitudes of non-LGBTQ Americans to exposure of LGBTQ people and images in the media. The survey found audiences are comfortable with seeing LGBTQ characters in films (76 percent of non-LGBTQ respondents), and the findings showed that seeing LGBTQ characters in media is related to greater acceptance of the community. Simply stated, representation does drive cultural change and accelerates acceptance.
- Respondents who had been exposed to LGBTQ images in media within the past three months reported far higher percentages of increased acceptance of LGBTQ people in recent years compared to those who had not seen an LGBTQ image in media in the past three months. This ranges from an 11-percentage point difference for non-binary people (41 percent became more accepting in recent years and had seen images in past three months versus 30 percent who had not been exposed to images in the past three months) and transgender people (44 to 33 percent), a 13-percentage point difference for gays and lesbians (48 vs 35 percent), and a 14 point difference regarding bisexual people (45 to 31 percent).
- In June 2020, GLAAD teamed with Netflix for a survey polling over 6,000 adults in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru on the impact of inclusive TV and film. A majority of respondents (68 percent) said they had watched a show or film that gave them a better understanding of the LGBTQ community, and 73 percent of non-LGBTQ respondents reported seeing LGBTQ characters and stories on-screen made them feel more comfortable with LGBTQ people. Among LGBTQ respondents, 87 percent feel that film and TV more accurately reflect the LGBTQ community now than just two years ago; showing that change is moving quickly, though respondents specifically highlighted a need for improvement with more storylines featuring LGBTQ parents and families among others. This is particularly noteworthy as 75 percent of LGBTQ respondents reported feeling that entertainment has helped their family to better understand the community. A 2015 *Variety* survey found that 38 percent of people polled cited LGBTQ characters as a “key influence” in their support for the community. All these findings continue to align with studies dating back to the 1990s that have persistently proven that inclusive entertainment and news media have a significant effect on viewers’ perceptions of the LGBTQ community and accelerating acceptance.

Telling meaningful LGBTQ stories is not just the right thing to do, it's also just smart business. Our roadmap to success is found in the numbers.

LGBTQ people are a significant audience. GLAAD and The Harris Poll's *Accelerating Acceptance* report shows that 20 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34 and 12 percent aged 35-51 identify as LGBTQ. Twelve percent of Americans 18-34 identify as transgender or gender non-conforming. A majority of these age groups would also call themselves allies – 63 percent of Americans 18-34 and 53 percent of Americans 35-51. We've seen similar findings substantiated across multiple demographics as well; the University of Chicago's *GenForward Survey* found that one in five Latinx millennials identify as LGBTQ. *The General Social Survey* from NORC at the University of Chicago has shown that young people are increasingly identifying as bisexual+ and the most notable growth is among young Black women, with 23 percent of Black women 18-34 in America identifying as bisexual in 2018.

Nielsen's *State of the LGBTQ Moviegoer* report explicitly states, "studios and theaters alike can bolster box office sales by [...] tailoring their promotions and offerings to LGBT moviegoers' entertainment needs." Nielsen found that queer audiences are 22 percent more likely to see a new theatrical release more than once compared to straight audiences at three out of every 10 surveyed respondents. The same study additionally reported that LGBTQ audiences are also meaningful long-term customers with respondents being nine percent more likely than non-LGBTQ audiences to purchase a film on DVD, Blu-Ray or Digital and 22 percent more likely to have a streaming service subscription. According to a 2020



Nielsen report, LGBTQ audiences were across the board more likely to have used each of five streaming services tracked than the total population in the past seven days (Amazon Prime, HBO Now, Hulu, Netflix, YouTube Free, YouTube Paid).

LGBTQ audiences are also more likely to generate social media buzz and word of mouth recommendations. Forty-nine percent of all LGBTQ moviegoers said they texted, tweeted, or otherwise posted about a film the same day they saw it as compared to 34 percent of straight audiences, per Nielsen. In 2020, Nielsen reported that LGBTQ users are nearly two times more likely to be heavy social media users than the total population, and were 80% more likely to have used Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter in the last month than the general population.

The top five genres among LGBTQ audiences are Horror, Sci-Fi or Fantasy, Romance, Drama, and Graphic Novels/Comics per Nielsen. A 2016 study found LGBTQ buying power in the U.S. alone to be \$917 Billion, with recent estimates showing further growth. Nielsen reports that LGBTQ households spend seven percent more per year than the average household and makes 10 percent more shopping trips to retail locations in a year. LGBTQ fans across books, movies, and music spend at least six percent more than the average fan of each of those entertainment types.

Studios must acknowledge these trends, paying particular attention to promoting and advertising titles that include LGBTQ characters, and informing audiences as to why they should consistently and loyally purchase movie tickets and spread the word. Prioritizing creating the same type of consumer goods and purchasing experiences as other non-inclusive films in their slates provides even greater opportunity for representation and inclusion. Harnessing the power and passion of LGBTQ audiences with meaningful stories and characters can only benefit studio's bottom lines.

GLAAD works every day to educate, support, and challenge networks, studios, and creators to ensure fair, accurate, and inclusive LGBTQ representations in media. In this changing world, we remain vigilant and relentlessly focused on the work to be done.

## MEGAN TOWNSEND

Director of Entertainment Research  
& Analysis, GLAAD Media Institute

GLAAD

# Methodology

This report's typical methodology is to focus its analysis on the eight film studios that tally the highest annual theatrical grosses from films released in that calendar year. Due to the unique disruption to theatrical releases in the U.S. in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, GLAAD chose to center its analysis on the eight film studios that had the highest theatrical grosses from films released in 2019 as the last standard full year, as reported by the box office database Box Office Mojo. Those eight are:

- Lionsgate
- Paramount Pictures
- Sony Pictures
- STX Films
- United Artists Releasing
- Universal Pictures
- The Walt Disney Studios
- Warner Bros.

This report examines films that were distributed theatrically during the 2020 calendar year (January 1 to December 31) in the United States under the official studio banners and imprints as reported by Box Office Mojo, the studios, and other relevant entertainment reporting sources. In last year's study, GLAAD expanded its quantified tally of major studios to include STX Films and United Artists Releasing. GLAAD did not include in this tally any theatrical re-releases and special events such as filmed live events in this count. Films distributed by these studios' "art house" divisions were analyzed separately and not part of the parent studio's final assessment. The total number of films released by major studios that met our criteria is 44.

GLAAD separately analyzed the films released under four smaller studio imprints, often 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 that of their major studio counterparts. These distinctions were best defined by the reporting of Box Office Mojo and other relevant entertainment industry databases. The total number of films that met our criteria is 21.

These "art house" divisions include:

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

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

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, language was not quantified for this report. Additionally, each film was assigned to one of five genre categories:

- Comedy
- Drama
- Family
- Fantasy/Sci-Fi/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 instance of films that straddled genres, categories were determined based on the predominant genre suggested by both the film and its marketing campaigns.

We recognize that not all audiences will agree with some of the films determined to be LGBTQ-inclusive and vice versa. GLAAD's methodology is anchored by categorizing characters as LGBTQ based on what is presented on screen as part of the film and/or through wide and commonly held cultural knowledge of a real-life figure.

Based on the overall quantity, quality, and diversity of LGBTQ representation in the studio's slate of films, a grade would typically be assigned to each major studio: Excellent, Good, Insufficient, Poor, or Failing. Please note, prior to the 2017 report, GLAAD assigned studios scores on a four-point scale of Excellent, Good, Adequate, or Failing.

Due to the never-before-seen unique disruption to theatrical distribution in 2020 by the COVID-19 global pandemic, GLAAD will not be issuing traditional grades to the studios in this year's study, but rather, all studios will receive a rating of "Not Applicable" recorded in the place of a traditional grade. GLAAD plans to resume its grading scale in the next study.

# 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 in 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 the bedrock for analysis of early LGBTQ portrayals in Hollywood film. These criteria can help filmmakers create more multidimensional characters while providing a barometer for LGBTQ film representation. This test represents an expectation and standard, providing a roadmap for

a greater number of mainstream Hollywood films to reach and ultimately exceed.

More films need to include substantial LGBTQ characters that pass this simple test. However, as several of the films tracked this year prove, passing this test does not guarantee that a film is free of problems, offensive in its portrayals or tropes. Some examples of films which have passed the test, but which still contain offensive content include previous releases *Zoolander 2*, *Hazlo Como Hombre*, *CHiPS* and this year's *The Gentlemen*. All of these films included LGBTQ characters tied to the film's plot, but whose stories were objectionable. Passing the Vito Russo Test is a first step, rather than the finish line.

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

**2020** 90% (9 OF 10) OR 20% OF 44 TOTAL FILMS



**2019** 73% (16 OF 22) OR 14% OF 118 TOTAL FILMS



**2018** 65% (13 OF 20) OR 12% OF 110 TOTAL FILMS



**2017** 64% (9 OF 14) OR 8% OF 109 TOTAL FILMS



**2016** 39% (9 OF 23) OR 7% OF 125 TOTAL FILMS



**2015** 36% (8 OF 22) OR 6% OF 126 TOTAL FILMS



**2014** 55% (11 OF 20) OR 10% OF 114 TOTAL FILMS



**2013** 41% (7 OF 17) OR 7% OF 102 TOTAL FILMS



**2012** 43% (6 OF 14) OR 6% OF 101 TOTAL FILMS



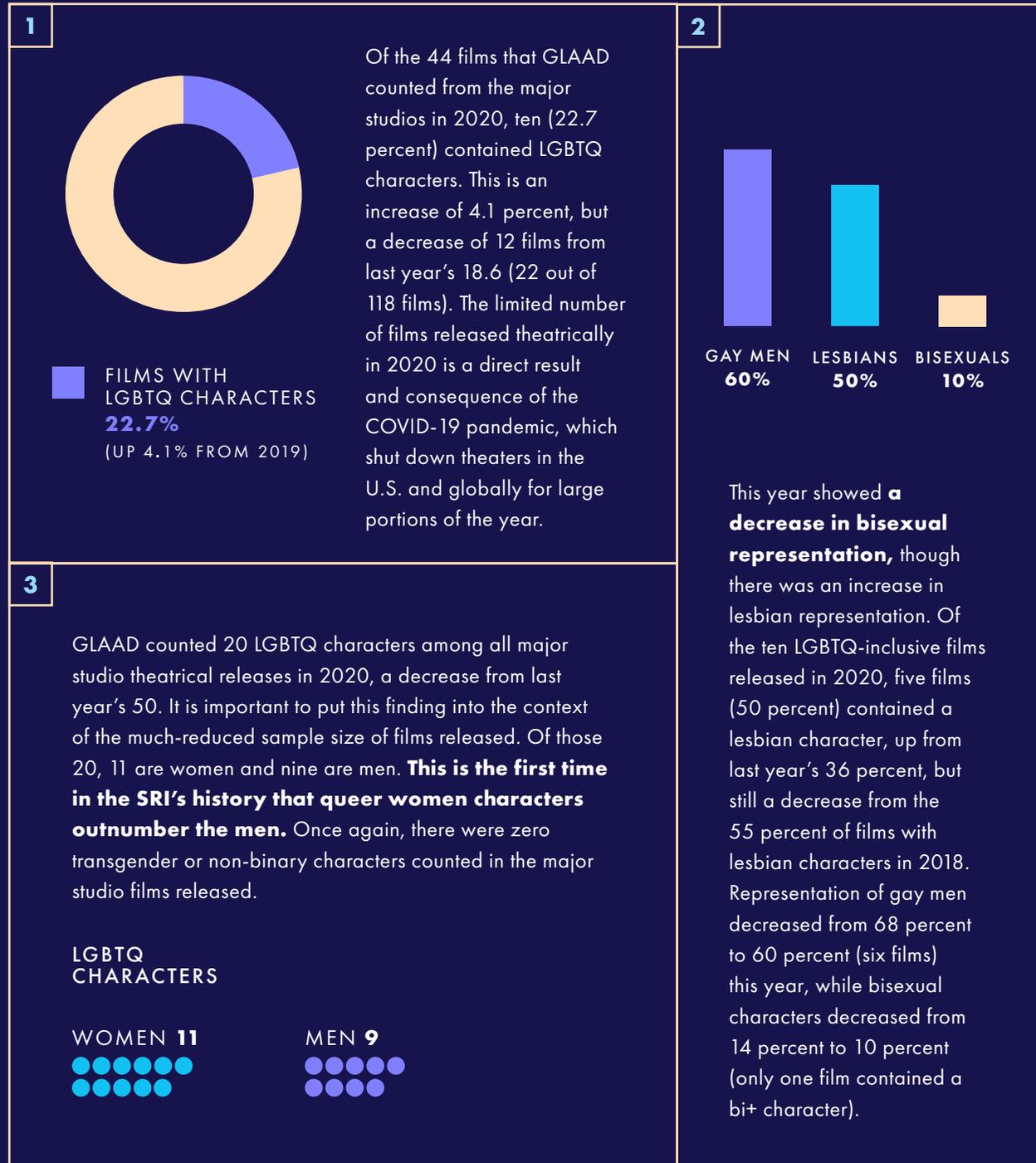
### For a film to pass the Vito Russo Test, the following must be true:

- 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

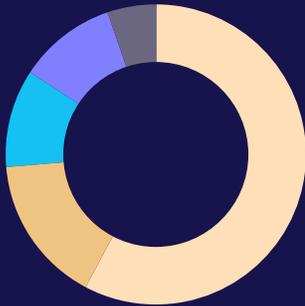
*(i.e. they are comprised of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight/cisgender characters from one another).*

- 3 The LGBTQ character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect, meaning they are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline. The character must matter.

# Overview Of Findings



4



	WHITE LGBTQ CHARACTERS <b>55%</b>
	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER LGBTQ CHARACTERS <b>15%</b>
	LATINX LGBTQ CHARACTERS <b>10%</b>
	BLACK LGBTQ CHARACTERS <b>10%</b>
	INDIGENOUS LGBTQ CHARACTERS <b>5%</b>

**The racial diversity of LGBTQ characters saw a welcome increase this year.** Of the 20 LGBTQ characters counted, 40 percent (eight characters) were characters of color, an increase of six percent from 2019, though a decrease of nine characters. This is still 17 percent lower than the record high of 57 percent characters of color in 2017. Of the 20 LGBTQ characters, 11 (55 percent) were white, three (15 percent) were Asian-Pacific Islander, two (10 percent) were Black, two (10 percent) were Latinx, and one (five percent) was Indigenous. One character (five percent) was a non-human alien in *Onward*.

5

GLAAD began counting characters with disabilities in our last *Studio Responsibility Index*, and only found one character. Of the 20 LGBTQ characters in this report, GLAAD found zero LGBTQ characters with a disability.

6

This year, comedy was the most inclusive genre by percentage, with four of eight films (50 percent) being LGBTQ-inclusive, while genre films (action/sci-fi/fantasy/horror) had the most LGBTQ-inclusive films (five) of any genre.



COMEDY  
8 TOTAL /  
4 INCLUSIVE (50%)



GENRE  
23 TOTAL /  
5 INCLUSIVE (22%)



FAMILY  
6 TOTAL /  
1 INCLUSIVE (17%)



DRAMA  
7 TOTAL /  
0 INCLUSIVE (0%)



DOCUMENTARY  
0 TOTAL /  
0 INCLUSIVE (0%)

7

Among the studios, STX has the highest percentage of inclusive films at 50 percent (one out of two), while Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures and Walt Disney Studios had the highest number of LGBTQ-inclusive films with two each.

**2 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS:**  
WALT DISNEY STUDIOS (5 TOTAL/40%)  
PARAMOUNT (6 TOTAL/33%)  
SONY (10 TOTAL/20%)

**1 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILM:**  
STX FILMS (2 TOTAL, 50%)  
UNITED ARTISTS (4 TOTAL, 25%)  
WARNER BROS. (4 TOTAL, 25%)  
UNIVERSAL (10 TOTAL, 10%)

**0 LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE FILMS:**  
LIONSGATE (3 TOTAL)

Separately, GLAAD examined the film releases of four smaller, affiliated studios - Focus Features, Roadside Attractions, Searchlight Pictures, and Sony Pictures Classics - to build a comparison between content released by the mainstream parent studios and that of their perceived "art house" studio labels. Of the 21 films released under those "art house" imprints in 2020, GLAAD found four to be LGBTQ-inclusive (19 percent). This is a five-percentage point decrease of last year's 24 percent (eight out of 34).

# Observations & Recommendations

**GLAAD OFFERS THE FOLLOWING INSIGHTS ON HOW STUDIOS CAN BOTH IMPROVE DEPICTIONS OF LGBTQ CHARACTERS AND STOP REPEATING MISTAKES.**

One repeated issue that GLAAD has called out in several editions of this report is the lack of screen time for LGBTQ characters in mainstream films. In each of the last two years, more than half of LGBTQ characters appeared for less than three minutes of total screen time in scenes that audiences could have entirely missed. In a surprising change, this year saw a majority of LGBTQ characters clocking more than ten minutes of screen time at 10 of the 20 (50 percent) LGBTQ characters. Six of 20 or 30 percent tallied under one minute. While some films like *The New Mutants*, *Freaky*, *Fantasy Island*, and *The Broken Hearts Gallery* used that expanded screen time to tell more developed or nuanced queer stories, often with more than one queer character, more time did not equate to quality across the board. While it was a welcome change to finally have canon confirmation of Harley Quinn's bisexuality in *Birds of Prey*, the confirmation moment was incredibly quick and there were no further allusions in the rest of the film – a missed opportunity, as a good chunk of her story was focused on her life after breaking up with long-term boyfriend, The Joker. *The Gentlemen* and *Buddy Games* both clocked more than ten minutes but were entirely offensive in their handling of their gay characters. There remains a huge opportunity existing in the spectrum between these models for meaningful LGBTQ storytelling - and for unambiguously marketing and promoting those movies.

**GLAAD recorded zero transgender characters in the 44 major studio films released in 2020 – this is a finding consistent with the previous three years of this report.**

Factually, that is zero transgender characters across a total of almost 400 film releases tracked by this report since January 2017. The last transgender character GLAAD counted was an offensive caricature in the 2016 film *Zoolander 2*, a non-binary model named All portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch. In that same time, TV has seen amazing progress in telling transgender stories and empowering trans writers and actors to lead those efforts with FX's history making *Pose*, television's first trans superhero on The CW's *Supergirl*, Brian Michael Smith's historic casting on FOX's *9-1-1: Lone Star*, and more. While recent years did include transgender and/or non-binary actors in a handful of major releases, none of those films established those characters as transgender or non-binary within the film's world. For this report, GLAAD did not count those characters in its tally based on what was on screen, in the same way that LGB characters are not tallied unless their story is made clear on screen. We are pleased to see trans actors being cast in roles that are not explicitly written as transgender and hope to see this continue. We also hope to see more films which explicitly tell the stories of transgender characters, representation that is crucial to understanding discrimination and liberating trans people. Polls show that approximately 20 percent of Americans say they personally know someone who is transgender, compared to nearly 90 percent who know someone who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual. We'd like to see film catch up to TV in leading change and accelerating acceptance by sharing and uplifting the experiences of trans people. GLAAD and 5050by2020's *TRANSform Hollywood*, a free, in-depth digital guide offering tips and best practices for collaborating with trans storytellers and fostering a more trans-inclusive production environment, is a first step trusted and proven resource available for productions beginning this work. GLAAD is also available as a resource, as well as a connection to find amazing transgender storytellers and actors to hire. Creators should also screen *Disclosure*, a new and Certified Fresh documentary available on Netflix, which explores and contextualizes the last 100 years of trans representation in TV and film and the impact of those stereotypical portrayals on how society views trans people and how trans people view themselves. It is essential viewing for everyone, but especially anyone creating stories with transgender characters.

**This year, only a single major studio release film counted in GLAAD’s report included a bisexual character (*Harley Quinn*, *Birds of Prey*).**

This is a decrease from the previous year when three films included a bi+ character – a finding equal to the report before it. Bi+ people make up the majority of the queer community at 52 percent per UCLA’s The Williams Institute. Though Harley is undisputedly the lead and title character of her film, the movie is far from a significant bisexual story and the wonderful romance with Poison Ivy playing out in the GLAAD Media Award-nominated animated series, *Harley Quinn*. Also in the superhero world, once again the *Wonder Woman* sequel made the choice not to depict *Wonder Woman*’s bisexuality from the comics in her film counterpart. The continued minimalization and erasure of bi+ stories have a real impact on bisexual+ people who are less likely to be out of the closet than gays or lesbians and report higher levels of minority stresses. Hollywood has an opportunity to lead and drive cultural change by better reflecting reality, which includes telling compelling stories about fully developed bisexual+ characters and ending portrayals which cause active harm.

**GLAAD counted only one inclusive film in the animated and family film genre (*Pixar’s Onward*), down from two in the previous year.**

Queer content in this category lags behind the boom happening in all-ages television in recent years. In a finding consistent with the previous year their screen time was very minor. *Onward*’s Officer Spector (voiced by out actress Lena Waithe) clocked under two minutes of screen time, though the character did notably set up the penultimate police chase of the two leads. Though this was a nice moment of casual inclusion, as the character made a nod to her girlfriend affirming that queer “people” exist in all families and all worlds, studios should learn from the successes of queer and trans representation in television with LGBTQ characters in significant roles on series including *Arthur* (PBS), *She-Ra and The Princesses of Power* and *Kipo and the Age of the Wonderbeasts* on Netflix, *Steven Universe* on Cartoon Network, Disney’s *The Owl House* and more. So much so that GLAAD recently introduced a second GLAAD Media Awards category in the Kids and Family genre to recognize inclusive content for younger audiences. LGBTQ families and parents are part of the world and should be integral to movies they see with their families. And LGBTQ youth, who are coming out at younger ages as cultural acceptance continues to grow, deserve to see age-appropriate, positive, affirming, and truthful representations of themselves in film. The small moments seen in studio films must become bigger, significant moments with meaningful LGBTQ characters and stories.

**While it is wonderful to see increased inclusion of LGBTQ characters in films from the major studios, it is worth noting that much of this inclusion is still in the midbudget films rather than major tentpoles.**

The disruption to U.S. theatrical operations since March 2020 from the COVID-19 pandemic caused several LGBTQ-inclusive films planned for theatrical release to be delayed or moved to streaming, either with a streaming service owned by the studio themselves or sold to a streaming service or another on-demand video provider. This report tracks releases by distributor, meaning that if those films were distributed by a digital platform in the U.S. – like *Happiest Season* and *The Craft: Legacy*, both originally slated as Sony theatrical releases prior to COVID – those films are not part of this year’s count of the studio who may have produced or initially acquired the work. Acknowledging the studios need to survive this global pandemic, many of these midbudget projects were sold to bring in cash while theaters were closed, while larger budget tentpoles were held for summer/fall 2021 and beyond. As the industry examines different release and distribution patterns and models, we hope to see LGBTQ characters included in all genres and at all budget levels. GLAAD will remain a committed partner.

# LIONSGATE

Lionsgate Entertainment

## Summary of 2020 Findings

<b>3</b>	films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
<b>0</b>	total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
<b>0%</b>	percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
<b>0</b>	number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

## Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	2020		
	2019	Insufficient	
	2018	Failing	
	2017	Failing	
	2016	Failing	
	2015	Adequate	
	2014	Adequate	
	2013	Adequate	
N/A	2012	Not Tracked	

In 1997, Lionsgate was founded by Frank Giustra. In its almost 25 years, Lionsgate has produced and distributed major blockbusters including the *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *John Wick* franchises, and is the parent company of studios including Summit Entertainment and Pantelion, which focuses on films for a Latinx audience.

The first film Lionsgate released was 1997's *The Pillow Book*, in which Ewan McGregor plays a bisexual man. Other LGBTQ-inclusive films from the studio include *Gods and Monsters* (1998), *But I'm a Cheerleader!* and *Urbania* (2000), *Lost and Delirious* and *All Over the Guy* (2001), *Happy Endings* (2005), *Precious* (2009), *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012), *American Ultra*, *Freeheld* (2015), *Un Padre No Tan Padre* (2017), and *Bombshell* (2019).

## Las Píldoras de mi Novio (My Boyfriend's Meds)

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 350 THEATERS

VITO RUSSO TEST: FAIL

This romantic comedy follows advertising executive Jess who brings a new man she's interested in as her guest to a company retreat to an island. Once they reach the island, her love interest realizes his medications were lost in travel and the trip becomes chaotic as he begins to show symptoms of various disorders. The retreat group includes Jess' friend Megan. It appears that Megan may have a woman attending the retreat with her. Though some sources classified the guest as Megan's girlfriend, the two are never seen in any kind of moment that implies they might be a couple or any verbal confirmation from Megan herself. As such, GLAAD did not count either character in its tally.

## Opportunities Ahead

Lionsgate is attached and planning to adapt the GLAAD Media Award-winning graphic novel *Memetic* into a feature film. The horror graphic novel, from out bi writer James Tynion IV, follows a meme that turns people into killers as it spreads across the internet. Protagonist Aaron realizes he is immune because he is colorblind, and he and his boyfriend Ryan try to find a way to save themselves and their loved ones. A queer lead in a horror film is a very exciting thing to see, especially given that Aaron also represents the disabled community, and more stories like *Memetic* deserve the feature adaptation treatment.

Lionsgate has several opportunities for trans and non-binary character and storyline inclusion in upcoming films. There are two *John Wick* sequels set for future release, which provide an opportunity for Asia Kate Dillon's character of The Adjudicator to return and to explicitly be written and acknowledged in the film as non-binary. Additionally, Hari Nef, an actress who is trans, has been cast in gaming film *1Up*, alongside queer actress Ruby Rose. It is unclear if their characters will share their identities, but it can be an opportunity to tell the stories of communities who often aren't front and center. Also, in the gaming world, Lionsgate is set to adapt video game *Borderlands* into a feature film. The popular game franchise has included various LGBTQ characters over the years, including Athena, Sir Hammerlock, and more; those characters should be included in the film adaptation as well.

Out filmmaker Joey Soloway is still tapped to direct *Ride*, a biopic of astronaut Sally Ride, who was in a relationship with another woman, Tam, for decades. The film presents an opportunity to delve into that relationship and explore more about Ride's personal identity, as well as her incredible achievements. Lionsgate is set to produce an adaptation of popular novel *The Night Circus*, by Erin Morgenstern, which includes queer characters Chandresh and Tsukiko, who are both people of color. Though neither are leads, having these characters remain in the film adaptation is essential, and doing so would be an important declaration and affirmation that queer people of color belong in this fantastical world.

# Roadside Attractions

## Summary of 2020 Findings

**4** films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints

**1** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

**25%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

Founded by Howard Cohen and Eric d'Arbeloff in 2003, Roadside Attractions specializes largely in independent films. Lionsgate bought a portion of the company in 2007. Notable LGBTQ-inclusive films previously released by the studio include *I Love You Phillip Morris* (2010), *Dear White People*, *The Skeleton Twins* (2014), *Hello, My Name is Doris* (2016), *Whitney* (2018), and *Judy* (2019).

## Hope Gap

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE:  
132 THEATERS



This British drama centers on a man (Edward) announcing he's leaving his wife (Grace) after almost three decades of marriage, and how both they and their son Jamie deal with the dissolution of the marriage. Toward the end of the film, after Grace moves beyond her initial heartbreak, she begins volunteering at a hotline, helping others who need someone to speak with. She meets a fellow volunteer whose boyfriend has left him and the two bond over their similar experiences. Later as a result of her discussion with this newfound friend, Grace asks Jamie if he's gay, and though he's not, it's clear that Grace would support him if he was. Though it was a very small inclusion, it was nice that Grace found a friend in this gay man and that she would love her son no matter his sexual orientation.



# Paramount Pictures

Billy Porter as Barrett, *Like a Boss*

## Summary of 2020 Findings



## Studio Rating Over Time



Paramount Pictures was formed in 1916 when the Famous Players Film Company (founded in 1912) merged with two others. The Viacom Network acquired Paramount in 1994 and Viacom then re-merged with CBS in 2019, making Paramount currently sit under the ViacomCBS banner. Paramount became the first major studio to sign a multi-picture film deal with streaming giant Netflix in November 2018. However, in the future, several of Paramount’s films will stream on the recently rebranded Paramount+, ViacomCBS’s own streaming platform.

Paramount is known for big budget franchises such as *Indiana Jones*, *Transformers*, and *Mission: Impossible*. Starting in the mid-nineties, Paramount released several LGBTQ-themed or LGBTQ-inclusive films including *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).

In 1997, Paramount released the groundbreaking comedy *In and Out*, which received substantial press for a kiss between Kevin Kline and Tom Selleck. The film was wildly successful at the box office and joins *The Talented Mr. Ripley* among the top 10 highest grossing LGBTQ films. Paramount released *Star Trek: Beyond* in 2016, the third film in the new *Star Trek* franchise, which showed Hikaru Sulu with his husband and daughter. The inclusion of a gay man of color in such a large and recognizable franchise was a step in the right direction for representation. In 2019, Paramount released *Rocketman*, a biopic of famed singer Elton John, which fully delves into his life as gay man and icon.



## Buddy Games

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 401 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: FAIL

This outrageous comedy follows a group of men who each year gather and play extreme games until one of the friends is crowned the champion for that year. The way these men interact with each other is primarily through using gross-out humor, involving feces, semen, testicles, and the like. There are also a few jokes scattered throughout about the guys laughing at the idea of two of them kissing or one of them going down on the other. These jokes, along with the general aggressive masculinity presented in the movie, feels extremely outdated and is not even funny.

One of the friends who partakes in the game is named Zane. He doesn't get as much of a backstory as the more central characters, but the audience finds out that he owns a tanning business, works out a lot, and makes several comments about other men. Over the course of the film, he references how much he likes Mark Wahlberg, shows a tattoo he has of Zac Efron, references knowing the taste of semen, and other aside comments that show in a very stereotypical way that he is gay, though he also mentions several times that he "scores with the ladies." At the end of the film, he comes out to another friend in the group, who responds that he knows, and they move on. While it is nice that Zane being gay is accepted by his friends, the character of Zane himself is built on nothing except lazy jokes about his sexual orientation.



## Like A Boss

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 3,078 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

*Like A Boss* follows two best friends who own a small cosmetics company and have to figure out how to move forward after a bad deal leads to their business being stolen from them. Billy Porter plays Barrett, one of the two employees of the makeup company and a close friend of the film's leads. After the business is taken over by a cutthroat executive, the owners are forced to fire Barrett, but ultimately re-hire him in the film's third act when they are able to launch a new cosmetics brand. The film also includes a short appearance from a drag queen emcee at a karaoke night. While Barrett is primarily seen in the context of the lead's friendship with him rather than as a character with his own development and story, Barrett is still significant and a respected character who drives the plot forward. The film leads realize how they have failed their friendship and how far they've gotten caught up in the drama when they make the decision to fire him to move their business forward rather than prioritizing their friend's wellbeing. It should be noted that the film would have done better to leave a recurring joke about a woman having a penis on the cutting room floor.

Barrett's character is a good example of casual inclusion, featuring an explicitly LGBTQ character in a film that is not otherwise focused on LGBTQ themes. It is also important to note that the production chose to hire an out actor, Billy Porter, to bring this character to life. Studio's slates should continue to include both films with this type of LGBTQ inclusion as part of an ensemble – just as we are in the real world – as well as stories specifically led by LGBTQ characters and/or which are centrally focused on LGBTQ themes and experiences.

## Opportunities Ahead

Paramount has announced an adaptation of the stage musical *Spamalot*, which features the character of Lancelot as gay and gave him a love interest in the character of Prince Herbert, with the two marrying at the end of the show. Though the story of the stage show is a bit dated, Lancelot's orientation and relationship should be included and updated for this new adaptation.

Paramount has announced an adaptation of best-selling author Angie Thomas' young adult novel *On the Come Up*, which follows a teen girl who becomes an overnight rap star. The book includes Sonny, who is gay and a close friend of the protagonist, as well as his love interest Milez. These characters should remain in the film adaptation.

There have been talks of a variety of new *Star Trek* films at Paramount since 2016's *Star Trek: Beyond*, which introduced Sulu's husband and child, confirming he was gay. The newest announced *Star Trek* film has hired *Star Trek: Discovery*'s Kalinda Vasquez to write the script. *Discovery* itself includes multiple queer and trans characters, and Vasquez's attachment presents a perfect opportunity for that same inclusion to translate onto the big screen, though the movie plot details are being kept under wraps. Paramount is also adapting popular Nickelodeon animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* into a feature animated film. The spinoff series *The Legend of Korra* confirmed the romantic relationship between Korra and her girlfriend Asami which has since continued across new comic and graphic novels. This film would be a great opportunity to move this beloved character and relationship to the big screen.



# Sony Pictures

Phillipa Soo as Nadine, Geraldine Viswanathan as Lucy, and Molly Gordon as Amanda, *The Broken Hearts Gallery*

## Summary of 2020 Findings

- 10** films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
- 2** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
- 20%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
- 2** number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

## Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	2020	
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Poor
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Insufficient
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Poor
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Adequate
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Good
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Adequate

Founded in 1918 as Cohn-Brant-Cohn Film Sales, the film studio was renamed Columbia Pictures in 1924. It gained prominence starting in the '20s due to its association with Frank Capra and producing some of the biggest films and stars of the classic Hollywood era. In the '80s, the studio was momentarily acquired by Coca-Cola and launched TriStar pictures. Columbia/TriStar was briefly its own entity, before Sony purchased it in 1989. Sony releases films from its many imprints including Columbia, Tristar, Sony Pictures Animation, Screen Gems, and Affirm. In April of this year, Sony entered into multiyear deals with both Netflix and The Walt Disney Company to host films on their streaming platforms (Disney+, Hulu) following their theatrical runs.

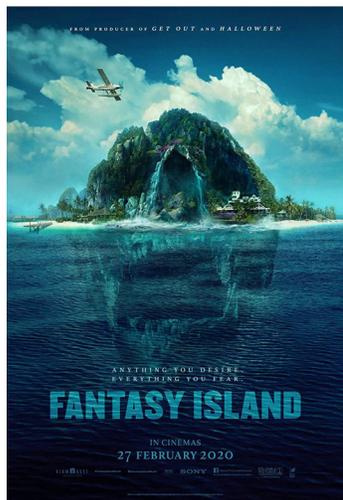
Sony Pictures has an inconsistent track record when it comes to LGBTQ-inclusive films. A political thriller from 1962, *Advise and Consent*, included a subplot where a Senate chairman is blackmailed over an affair he had with another man, before dying by suicide. TriStar's *Basic Instinct* (1992) faced opposition from LGBTQ groups, including GLAAD, for its defamatory depiction of lesbian and bisexual women. Other inclusive films from Sony Columbia include *Philadelphia* (1993), *Threesome* (1994), and *As Good as it Gets* (1997). In more recent years, parent company Sony Pictures has released *Rent* (2005), *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* (2013), *Rough Night* (2017), and *The Girl in the Spider's Web* (2018).



## The Broken Hearts Gallery

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 2,204 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

This romcom follows Lucy, a 20-something in Brooklyn who creates an art gallery where people can leave mementos from previous relationships. Phillipa Soo plays Nadine, one of Lucy's two best friends and an out lesbian. Throughout the film, the audience also sees several women that Nadine dates. The group of museum visitors who leave trinkets also includes queer people, with one woman ranting against the girl who broke her heart and a gay man who shares a touching story about a bottle of champagne he donates to the gallery that was meant to be shared with his late fiancé. *The Broken Hearts Gallery* creates a world that feels in line with the actual world – including multiple LGBTQ characters across levels of storytelling.



## Fantasy Island

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 2,784 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

This horror film serves as a prequel to the 1970s TV series of the same name, and follows a group of people who travel to a mysterious island to have their fantasies fulfilled but get more than they bargained for. Two of these characters - brothers Brax and J.D. - are both interested in a fantasy of lavish partying. When they are provided with a scene of several scantily clad women, J.D. clarifies that Brax is gay. Brax is then brought into a room with scantily clad men. Later, the audience learns that part of the reason the brothers are so close is because J.D. supported Brax when their parents rejected Brax after he came out.

Though there are a few tone-deaf moments - Brax's sexuality mostly involves objectifying other men – overall, the film treated Brax with the same respect as any straight character. The final twist of the film involves Brax staying at the island indefinitely so his brother can go out into the world. It's implied that Brax becomes a character from the 1970s TV series, and should there be any film sequel, he would be a central part of it.

## The Kid Detective

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 865 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: FAIL

This film follows Abe, a former child detective who is still working as an investigator though his reputation has been sullied. In the beginning of the film, Abe mentions being hired to find out if someone was gay. Later, when the current case he's working leads him to a teenager named Billy, the audience learns the previous case referenced had been about Billy's father. When Billy and Abe get into a confrontation, Abe uses the comeback, "Well, your dad's gay." Presented as a running joke, it's unfortunate and disheartening that this gay character, never seen on screen, exists as a punchline, and then is outed to his own son in an act of spite so a straight person can win an argument.

## Opportunities Ahead

Many of Sony's announced LGBTQ-inclusive films from the previous year's study were sold to streamers and other video on demand services in the past year, including *Happiest Season*, which went on to break streaming viewing records for Hulu, *The Craft: Legacy*, and the upcoming new *Cinderella* which features Billy Porter as Fab G, an updated take on the fairy godmother.

In 2022, Sony will be releasing *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*, a biopic of legendary singer Whitney Houston. Fans have often speculated that Houston was in a romantic relationship with Robyn Crawford, who wrote about their relationship in her own 2019 memoir. Hopefully, this film will delve into the relationship between Houston and Crawford with the respect it well deserves. The third in the *Spider-Man* series, *No Way Home*, is set for a December 2021 release. While neither of the first two films have included LGBTQ characters, there is an opportunity here to make Peter Parker's schoolmates reflect the reality of a Queens, NY high school which would include queer students.

Out singer and former \*NSYNC band member Lance Bass will be working with *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* creator Rachel Bloom on a film based on a true story following two girls who are superfans of the boy band and follow their summer tour. Given that the film is from Bass, hopefully it will feature Bass himself and perhaps further LGBTQ characters. In 2018, Sony announced that it will be working with bisexual singer Halsey to create a film based on their life. Though there haven't been any further developments announced, this project following Halsey's life – who has always been outspoken about their identity – would be a notable step forward for major studios to tell a meaningful bisexual story.



# Sony Pictures Classics

## Summary of 2020 Findings

**4** films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints

**1** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films

**25%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

Sony Pictures Classics (SPC), founded in 1992, is the independent film division of Sony Pictures Entertainment, which acquires, produces, and distributes independent narrative films and documentaries. The studio has released several high-profile LGBTQ films since its launch including *My Life in Pink* (1997); *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); *Kill Your Darlings* (2013); Pedro Almodóvar's *I'm So Excited!* (2013); *Love Is Strange* (2014); *Grandma* (2015); *The Meddler* (2016); GLAAD Media Award winners *Call Me By Your Name* and *A Fantastic Woman* (2017); *Pain and Glory* (2019) and more.

## Greed

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 596 THEATERS

*Greed* follows the events leading up to wealthy fashion mogul Richard McCreadie's Gladiator-themed 60th birthday party in Greece. The film is told from the point of view of a journalist, Nick, who is hired to help ghostwrite "Greedy McCreadie's" memoirs, though he becomes increasingly conflicted as he is confronted by the shady and unethical business and personal dealings of this rich and influential group. Richard's daughter, Lily, shows up for the party with her boyfriend Fabian and the camera crew for her reality series. Later in the film, the audience sees Fabian kissing another man and he ultimately comes out on their reality show, causing Lily to storm off in tears. Out actor Stephen Fry also makes a cameo as himself.



# STX Films

Hugh Grant as Fletcher, *The Gentlemen*

## Summary of 2020 Findings

<b>2</b>	films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
<b>1</b>	total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
<b>50%</b>	percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
<b>1</b>	number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

## Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	<b>2020</b>	
★☆☆☆☆	<b>2019</b>	Failing
N/A	<b>2018</b>	Not Tracked
N/A	<b>2017</b>	Not Tracked
N/A	<b>2016</b>	Not Tracked
N/A	<b>2015</b>	Not Tracked
N/A	<b>2014</b>	Not Tracked
N/A	<b>2013</b>	Not Tracked
N/A	<b>2012</b>	Not Tracked

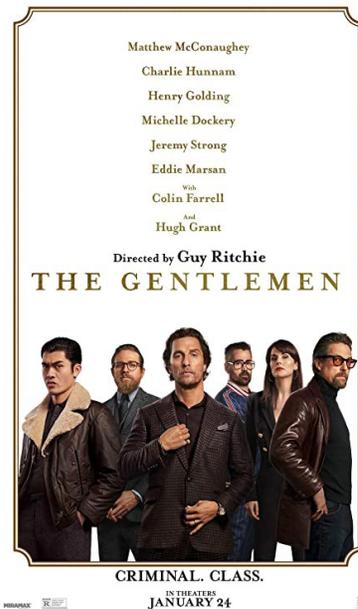
Founded in 2014 by Robert Simonds and Bill McGlashan, STX Entertainment produces, finances, markets and distributes mid-budget films of all genres, as well as TV, live events, and VR. In July 2020, STX completed its merger with Indian studio Eros International. Known for wide-release original films with famous stars attached, some notable STX films of the past few years include *The Gift* (2015), *Edge of Seventeen* (2016), *Molly's Game* (2018) and *Hustlers* (2019). The studio has not released many LGBTQ-inclusive movies since its founding, but there is potential for real growth in this aspect.

## The Gentlemen

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 2,165 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

This crime comedy follows a kingpin who plans to retire and sell his drug empire, and the group of drug dealers and criminals in London who are all scheming to take over. Fletcher, an opportunistic and conniving private investigator, is hired by the tabloids to find out more about the kingpin's business and his ties to the aristocracy. Fletcher then becomes the film's narrator; he has packaged his findings into a screenplay that he intends to either use for blackmail against the kingpin or to sell to a studio. While many reviews of the film rightfully called out the overt racism and anti-Semitism of the film, particularly in Fletcher's narration, not as many called attention to the homophobia in the film and tired clichés about gay men. Fletcher is painted as a predatory gay man; his queerness is primarily used as comic relief as he flirts with the henchman he is blackmailing. The film's ending implies that Fletcher is going to be killed by the man as he gets in a cab and realizes the henchman is the driver.

Hollywood has a long history of making queer-coded and gay characters the villain of a story. Though none of the characters of this film are good guys, the repeated gags around Fletcher and the choice to make a direct connection between Fletcher's being gay and his criminal or bad actions felt like something out of an earlier decade. While it is possible to create a well-crafted, interesting and engaging story where a queer character is a villain, this particular story would have been better eliminated entirely.



## Opportunities Ahead

Though there have not been many new projects currently slated from the company publicly, STX has an opportunity to continue to make films that include nuanced and interesting LGBTQ characters that reach a wide audience. One of the projects the studio has in the works is *Bad Moms' Moms*, a film that follows the mothers of the mothers of the *Bad Moms* films. In the original *Bad Moms*, Carla was portrayed as bisexual, though the storyline left something to be desired as it fell into outdated tropes and stereotypes about bi people. Ideally, in this sequel, Carla's character and her queer identity could be better developed and fleshed out.



# United Artists Releasing

Josh Whitehouse as Randy, Mario Revolori as Sticky, and Mae Whitman as Jack, *Valley Girl*

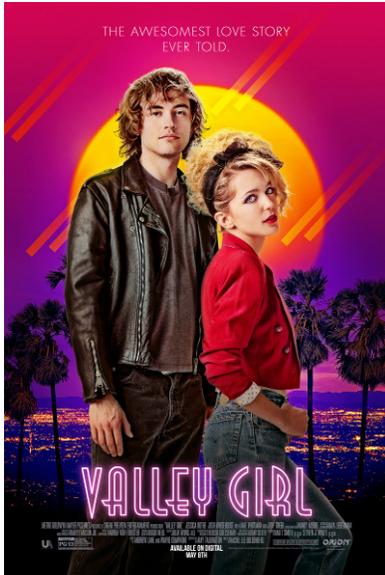
## Summary of 2020 Findings

- 4** films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
- 1** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
- 25%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
- 1** number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

## Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	2020	
★★★★★	2019	Insufficient
N/A	2018	Not Tracked
N/A	2017	Not Tracked
N/A	2016	Not Tracked
N/A	2015	Not Tracked
N/A	2014	Not Tracked
N/A	2013	Not Tracked
N/A	2012	Not Tracked

United Artists Releasing (UAR) is a distribution venture between Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Annapurna Pictures, and MGM’s Orion Pictures that aims to release 10-14 films each year. The company was founded as Mirror in December 2017 and rebranded in February 2019 as United Artists Releasing on the 100th anniversary of the founding of United Artists. In May, Amazon announced that it would acquire MGM for \$8.45 billion. It is still unclear when the deal will officially close and what impact sitting under Amazon will have on MGM’s future releases. Current MGM chairman Michael de Luca told *The New York Times*, “There is theatrical in our near future, there will be theatrical after the deal closes. There will always be theatrical at MGM.” The distributor will be competing with the traditional major studios and streamers by combining their slates and following a similar calendar and wide release roll out. UAR, as it now stands, is a distributor for a collective of studios with a back catalog of LGBTQ-inclusive releases, including GLAAD Media Award nominee *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women* (2017) from Annapurna, and GLAAD Media Award nominee *God’s Own Country* (2017), *Every Day*, and *Anna and the Apocalypse* (2018) from Orion, and 2019’s GLAAD Media Award-winning comedy *Booksmart*.



## Valley Girl

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 36 THEATERS

VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

This remake of the 1983 comedy of the same name is a jukebox musical set in the 80s, following a love story between valley girl Julie and L.A. punk Randy. One of Randy's best friends is Jack, a girl who plays in his band, his confidant, and she is also a lesbian. During the song in which she is introduced, she eyes up and then kisses another girl, and makes it clear later on that she isn't interested in men. Later during a party in the valley, a party guest calls Jack a slur and she punches him in the face, starting a fight with back up from Randy. At the same party, Jack makes a pass at one of Julie's friends and the school "queen bee" named Karen. While she initially appears disinterested and uncomfortable, once Karen is later redeemed she approaches Jack at the school's prom and the two share a moment together on the dancefloor. Had the film developed the scene further, it could have been a hint at a romance between the two, but as it currently stands, the moment read more as Karen becoming a better and more accepting person.

Overall, it was great to see one of the major characters in this film as a lesbian living her life, though it would have been exciting to see her get her own romance as well and further exploration of an out lesbian punk teen in the 1980s.

## Opportunities Ahead

A very exciting upcoming release from United Artists Releasing is *What If?*, the directorial debut of out actor Billy Porter, from a script that was featured on the 2019 edition of *The GLAAD List*, a collaboration between GLAAD and script hosting and evaluation site The Black List. The coming-of-age story follows a blooming relationship between Khal, a straight man, and Kelsa, a trans woman, during their senior year of high school. This is the kind of film - a modern LGBTQ love story - that more major studios should be making and reaching audiences that have not seen themselves in a story like this before.

UAR will also be releasing a biopic of iconic jazz singer and Rat Pack member Sammy Davis Jr. Reports have cited that Davis Jr. was said to have had relationships with men as well as women over the course of his life. UAR is also making a third *Legally Blonde* film written by Mindy Kaling and Dan Goor, both of whom have included prominent queer characters in their television projects. The first *Legally Blonde* featured a gay character whose reveal as gay was treated as a plot twist. A more modern sequel would be smart to include a leading and more up to date LGBTQ character.



Celeste O'Connor as Nyla, Vince Vaughn as Millie, and Misha Osherovich as Josh, *Freaky*

### Summary of 2020 Findings

<b>10</b>	films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
<b>1</b>	total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
<b>10%</b>	percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
<b>1</b>	number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

### Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	2020	
★★★★★	2019	Insufficient
★★★★★	2018	Good
★★★★★	2017	Insufficient
★★★★★	2016	Insufficient
★★★★★	2015	Adequate
★★★★★	2014	Adequate
★★★★★	2013	Adequate
★★★★★	2012	Adequate

Universal Pictures was founded in 1912, making it one of the oldest surviving film studios in the country. In 2004, Universal merged with NBC, and shortly after, the new NBCUniversal was purchased by Comcast in 2011. In 2016, Universal acquired DreamWorks Animation from 20th Century Fox, and released their first film under that umbrella in February 2019. Universal often focuses on mass appeal films with previous releases including *Jaws*, *E.T.*, the *Bourne* series, and the ongoing *Fast and the Furious* franchise.

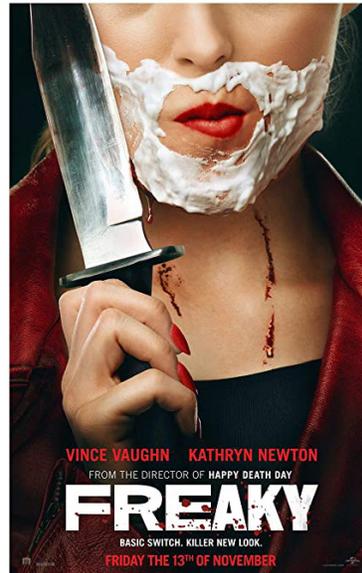
It was not until the 1990s that Universal began to release LGBTQ-inclusive films. Even then, the 1991 adaptation of *Fried Green Tomatoes* removed the majority of its lesbian content found in the novel. LGBTQ representation in Universal films has had its many highs and lows, including films such as *To 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* (2016), *Blockers* (2018), and *Last Christmas* and *Good Boys* (2019).

## Freaky

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 2,472 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

*Freaky* is a slasher comedy which centers on Millie, a teen girl who accidentally switches bodies with a middle-aged man who is a serial killer. She turns to her two best friends, Josh and Nyla, to find out what happened and to determine how to fix it. Josh is out and vocal about being gay from the beginning of the movie and he has a central role in the film – working with Millie and Nyla to research the cause of the switch and, ultimately, helps Millie find and detain the killer to change back into her body. Horror films have become a surprise genre for solid queer inclusion from major studios in recent years of this study, as *Freaky* follows the examples of *Happy Death Day 2 U*, *Fantasy Island*, *Truth or Dare* and others.

Other films which have included body swaps across genders have leaned into making a joke out of the world's reactions to the people who are swapped. Previous editions of this study have specifically made a point of speaking on the issue of portraying what visually looks like a queer romance for laughs or as a gross-out moment in other films. While the film poster leaned into some of these tropes with a teenage girl using a knife to scrape off a shaving foam beard, *Freaky* largely avoided those issues within the film itself by instead providing commentary on how the killer realizes he is beyond suspicion as a teenage girl and Millie shares how she has a new sense of confidence and strength from how people in the world reacted to her as a man. Millie and her crush Booker share their first kiss while she is in the killer's body, and the moment came across very sweet, as opposed to Booker displaying any homophobia about his crush being in a man's body. One moment worth eliminating was a scene where a closeted jock forcibly kisses Josh at the school dance, as three other jocks attempt to assault the killer in Millie's body. Josh pushes the other boy away and calls him out for forcing the kiss on him. That boy is murdered alongside the other jocks shortly thereafter.



## Opportunities Ahead

A date has finally been announced for *Bros.*, the gay romantic comedy from out writer and star Billy Eichner and produced by Judd Apatow, which will be hitting theaters in August of 2022. The film follows two men who attempt a monogamous relationship despite both of their commitment issues. Universal will also be releasing *Talent* which centers on a struggling songwriter played by Cynthia Erivo with a screenplay by out writer Lena Waithe. Though no LGBTQ characters have yet been announced, this film represents a great opportunity for inclusion.

Out filmmaker Greg Berlanti is attached to direct *All That Heaven Allows*, a biopic of Rock Hudson, which follows the closeted Hollywood star who tragically died of AIDS-related complications in 1985.

The acclaimed Broadway musical *Dear Evan Hansen* will be adapted for the big screen for release on September 24. Though the musical itself was not LGBTQ-inclusive, the follow up novel included LGBTQ characters, and the film could and should do the same. The core cast includes out actors Ben Platt, Amandla Stenberg, and Nik Dodani. Universal has also been in talks about moving forward with a third *Mamma Mia* film. The first two films included gay character Harry, but have yet to give him a significant male romantic interest or develop any story on how his queerness has shaped his experience. This sequel could be a perfect opportunity to do so.





# Walt Disney Studios

Maisie Williams as Rahne Sinclair and Blu Hunt as Dani Moonstar, *The New Mutants*

## Summary of 2020 Findings

<b>5</b>	films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
<b>2</b>	total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
<b>40%</b>	percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
<b>2</b>	number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

## Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	2020	
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2019	Poor
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2018	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2017	Poor
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2016	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2015	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2014	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2013	Adequate
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2012	Failing

One of the largest and most profitable studios in the world, Walt Disney is also the most recognizable with a massive global brand expanding beyond just films. The company produces under several imprints including Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios, DisneyNature, Pixar Animation Studios, Lucasfilm, Marvel Studios, and Touchstone Pictures. In March of 2019, the Walt Disney Studios officially acquired 21st Century Fox, along with select other Fox film and television properties in a \$71.3 billion dollar deal. When the acquisition was complete, Disney took ownership of several film assets under 21st including 20th Century Fox, 20th Century Fox Animation, Fox Studios Australia, and Fox Searchlight, and shuttered other studios including Fox 2000 and Blue Sky Animation. In January 2020, Disney renamed the studio from 20th Century Fox to 20th Century Studios and distributes those films under Walt Disney Studios. Fox Searchlight was renamed to Searchlight Pictures and operates as an indie distribution unit as a subsidiary of Disney. Disney launched their streaming service Disney+ in November 2019, and since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, has been experimenting with film releases on the service in lieu of or alongside theatrical release.

Walt Disney Studios has a weak history when it comes to LGBTQ inclusion compared to other studios tracked in this report. Touchstone Pictures has released some 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 love for another man. The film never received an official release in Japan due to protests, and was released in the U.S. under Warner Bros. Some of Disney's past inclusive films include *Delivery Man* (2013), *Muppets Most Wanted* (2014), and *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). 20th Century's previous LGBTQ-inclusive releases include *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *Making Love* (1982), *Silkwood* (1983), *The Object of My Affection* (1998), *The Family Stone* (2005), *Independence Day: Resurgence* (2016), and *Love, Simon* (2018).

## The New Mutants

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 2,754 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

This long-delayed X-Men spinoff crosses genres as a mix of teen horror and superhero film. The movie centers on five teens with mutant powers who are trapped in a hospital by a mysterious doctor. The new team that forms includes Rahne/Wolfsbane, a Scottish girl who can turn into a wolf who struggles to reconcile her powers and strict religious upbringing, and Dani/Mirage, an Indigenous girl who can create illusions based on people's deepest fears and desires.

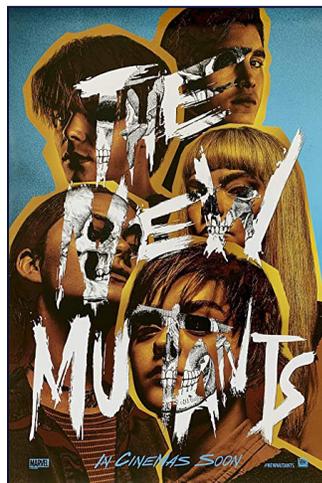
Rahne and Dani form a romantic relationship, described as the "spine and focus" of the film and the girl's character development by director Josh Boone. Rahne saves Dani when she plans to attempt death by suicide after realizing they are unable to escape the hospital. In the film's climax, Dani is knocked unconscious and her powers manifest a monstrous bear based on her own fear which then ravages the hospital. Rahne protects Dani's body while attempting to reach her subconscious to wake her up as the other teens fight Dani's fear. Ultimately, Dani is able to confront and overcome her fear and the team leave the hospital together for the nearest town – Dani and Rahne hand in hand.

Rahne and Dani's relationship was a welcome addition and update from the comics. When so many superhero films have straightwashed LGBTQ heroes when jumping from page to the big screen, it is refreshing and encouraging to see this relationship added which drove so much of the film's plot.

## Onward

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 4,310 THEATERS  
VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

*Onward* follows two elf brothers, Ian and Barley, who set out on a quest to retrieve a magical artifact which will allow them to temporarily bring their father back to life. On their quest, they get pulled over by two cops for driving erratically, one of whom is a cyclops named Spector voiced by out actress Lena Waithe. Ian casts a spell to appear to them as his mother's boyfriend who is a police officer. During their conversation, Ian in his disguised form pretends the driving issues come from stress over bonding with "his girlfriend's kids" and being in a rush to meet up with them. Spector commiserates and replies, "It's not easy being a new parent—my girlfriend's daughter got me pulling my hair out, okay?" Spector becomes suspicious after the boys drive away and calls it in, ultimately acting as the impetus to the police chase which sets up the film's climax. The scene was reportedly censored in some other countries with language changed to "my sister's daughter" and "my partner's daughter." While the film just barely passes the Vito Russo Test as the penultimate chase would not have happened without Spector's intervention, the moment remains incredibly minor - particularly when juxtaposed against the wave of press ahead of release. Disney's films must do more to create meaningful inclusion moving forward.



## Opportunities Ahead

The slate for Phase Four and beyond of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) includes several films which will include LGBTQ superheroes. *Eternals*, set to be released November 5, 2021, will introduce gay hero Phastos as well as his husband and child. In March of 2022, Marvel will release *Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness* which will introduce America Chavez to the big screen. America in the comic books is a proud Latina lesbian and keeping that identity in the MCU is essential. *Thor: Love and Thunder* will be released in May 2022, and will continue to feature Valkyrie among the ensemble. While the last *Thor* film, *Ragnarok*, cut a scene that confirmed Valkyrie's bisexuality, actress Tessa Thompson has confirmed that the character's queer identity will be part of the story in this sequel and she will be searching for her queen as she takes over as the King of New Asgard. *Black Panther 2* is set to be released in July 2022 and has a chance to introduce Ayo's queerness as part of her story as a member of the Dora Milaje warriors. Ayo was recently featured in the Disney+ series *The Falcon and The Winter Soldier*, and it would make sense for her to have a larger role in the *Black Panther* sequel.

Other inclusive upcoming Disney releases include *Jungle Cruise*, set for a July 30, 2021 theatrical release as well as on Disney+ the same day for an additional fee. The movie's core trio includes the gay character McGregor, the younger brother of Dr. Lily Houghton who joins her on an adventure into the Amazon in this action-adventure film based on the Disney ride. Disney has been in talks to release a third *Deadpool* film, this time set in the MCU, and this would be an opportunity to have Negasonic Teenage Warhead and her girlfriend Yukio return in a larger role. This would also represent a chance to finally portray Deadpool as pansexual, which actor Ryan Reynolds has spoken on his interest in.

In February 2021, Disney shuttered the Blue Sky Studios Animation banner which it acquired when the company purchased Fox. With that label closed, the animated graphic novel adaptation of *Nimona*, which included a core queer romance, will no longer be moving forward under Disney. There is the possibility of the project moving to another studio at a future point in time. That same month, the movie-musical *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* was pulled from the slate by Disney shortly ahead of its planned February 26 theatrical release. In May 2021, Disney sold the distribution rights to the musical to Amazon Studios, it will be released September 17 on Prime Video with no word yet on if Amazon will release the film theatrically.

# Searchlight Pictures

## Summary of 2020 Findings

- 3** films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
- 0** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
- 0%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases

Searchlight Pictures, created in 1994, was a subsidiary of 20th Century Fox and known as Fox Searchlight until the Disney merger in 2019. The distributor is now known as Searchlight Pictures and still specializes in the release and distribution of independent and foreign films in the United States. Searchlight Pictures has been responsible for the release of several high-profile LGBTQ-inclusive films, including *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *Kinsey* (2004), *Battle of the Sexes*, *The Shape of Water* (2017), and *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* (2018).



# Warner Bros.

Rose Perez as Renee Montoya, Mary Elizabeth Winstead as Helena Bertinelli, Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn, Ella Jay Basco as Cassandra Cain, Jurnee Smollett as Dinah Lance, *Birds of Prey*

## Summary of 2020 Findings

- 4** films released theatrically in 2020 under studio & official imprints
- 1** total number of LGBTQ-inclusive films
- 25%** percent of LGBTQ-inclusive films of studio total releases
- 1** number of films that pass the Vito Russo Test

## Studio Rating Over Time

N/A	2020	
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2019	Poor
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2018	Insufficient
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2017	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2016	Poor
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2015	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2014	Good
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2013	Failing
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	2012	Adequate

Started by four Polish immigrant brothers as a movie theater business in the early 1900s, Warner Bros. became a production film studio in 1923. Warner Bros. has produced several classic films including *Casablanca*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Goodfellas* as well as the blockbuster *Harry Potter* franchise, and several DC Comics adaptations. In December 2020, Warner Bros. announced that for the 2021 year, they will simultaneously release all theatrical films on the WarnerMedia streaming service HBO Max for thirty days beginning on the day of its theatrical run.

One of Warner Bros.' most notable films, *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), included one of the earliest notable gay-coded characters in Sal Mineo's tragic character Plato. In the decades since, other LGBTQ inclusive films from the company include *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *The Color Purple* (1985), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997). Nearly all of those films were based on external source material that included LGBTQ characters. Warner Bros. has released inclusive films such as *Alexander* (2004), *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005), *V For Vendetta* (2005), and *J. Edgar* (2011). The studio's slate in recent years has included stand outs like *Tammy* (2014), *Storks* (2016), and *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), *Isn't It Romantic* (2019), as well as notable lows like *Get Hard* (2015), *Central Intelligence* (2016), and *CHiPs* (2017) all of which traffic heavily and unnecessarily in gay panic jokes and other cheap punchlines.

## Birds of Prey

(and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 4,236 THEATERS

VITO RUSSO TEST: PASS

*Birds of Prey* picks up several years after 2016's *Suicide Squad* shortly after Harley Quinn is dumped by Joker. After being targeted by crime lord Roman Sionis, Harley teams up with a group of women who become the Birds of Prey. The group includes Gotham Detective Renee Montoya, an out lesbian and cynical, alcoholic detective who is building a case against Sionis. There is also a minor role for Ellen Yee, Montoya's ex-girlfriend and the Gotham District Attorney. The two have a contentious relationship and it seems that Ellen may have reported her to the Commissioner for drinking on the job. The film's ending sets up a potential sequel or spinoff that would follow Montoya and the other women as the Birds of Prey team in their own line of films.

*Birds of Prey* also finally confirms Harley Quinn's bisexuality in the DCEU. In an animated telling of her backstory, a quick montage shows Harley's failed relationships and two of them are her with a man and then the audience sees her and a woman. Fans have speculated that the woman could be Poison Ivy, who is Harley's love interest in the comics and in the GLAAD Media Award-nominated animated series *Harley Quinn*. There are several more DC films planned with the character of Quinn, including the upcoming *Suicide Squad* sequel. Though the moment was so brief that some audiences may have missed it, hopefully future films will introduce Ivy and their romantic relationship – a move that Margot Robbie herself has said she is continually "pestering" the studio to do – and make Harley's queer identity a meaningful part of her life.

Many had speculated about a romance between Sionis and his enforcer Zsasz based on the queerbaiting and offensive stereotypes perpetuated in the film. The actors told *Variety* "there's a want and a need in there for sure" about the men's partnership and laughingly replied "more than likely, yes" when asked if they are gay. Based on the content of the film, GLAAD did not count these characters as gay in its tally.



## Wonder Woman 1984

WIDEST THEATRICAL RELEASE: 2,218 THEATERS

VITO RUSSO TEST: FAIL

This DC film is a sequel to 2017's *Wonder Woman* and jumps forward from the 1940s to 1984 as Diana aka Wonder Woman is now working at the Smithsonian. Diana and her co-worker Barbara are examining stolen antiquities when both make different wishes upon an item called the Dreamstone, with the often-overlooked Barbara wishing to become like Diana whom she envies. Even though some press outlets read the friendship between the two women and Barbara's interest and near obsession with Diana as indicative of romantic feelings, GLAAD did not count either character in its tally.

In recent runs of the comic, Diana was canonically bisexual, with writer Greg Rucka saying "the answer is obviously yes" that Diana has been in love and had serious relationships with women on Themyscira. In one issue, Diana discusses the love she left behind, an Amazon named Kasia. Wonder Woman's character and powers are grounded in truth, integrity and being forthright. Giving Diana agency to fully live her own truth and recognize all parts of herself as an out and proud bisexual woman would be in line with her ideals and make her a more well-rounded developed character. The announced third *Wonder Woman* film and the spinoff around the all-woman Amazon island of Themyscira should catch up to their comic book counterparts in including queer stories.

## Opportunities Ahead

There are several upcoming projects from the DC Extended Universe from Warner Bros. In August, they will release *The Suicide Squad*, which heavily features Harley Quinn, who has been confirmed to be bisexual in the comics, the *Harley Quinn* animated television series, and last year's *Birds of Prey*. Hopefully, in *The Suicide Squad*, Harley's queer identity and potential romances will continue to be developed. Additionally, Wonder Woman is set to return in a third *Wonder Woman* film. The movies have still not included her bisexuality, and this needs to be part of her story moving forward. Warner has greenlit both *Batgirl* and *Static Shock* for big screen adaptations. *Batgirl* provides an opportunity to introduce lesbian character Kate Kane and queer and trans character Alysia Yeoh, who are both heavily featured in the comics. In *Static Shock*, the protagonist Virgil's best friend is a gay teen named Rick who should also be included in the film adaptation. *Justice League Dark* is also in development at the studio which includes bisexual hero John Constantine, who can currently be seen on television in The CW's *Legends of Tomorrow*. The DC comics include many powerful and fascinating LGBTQ characters in their stories, and it is past time for the feature films to follow suit.

Other projects in the works from Warner Bros. include the fourth *Matrix* film from director Lana Wachowski, who is a trans woman. Though there is no outright LGBTQ content in the previous *Matrix* films, they have often been hailed as important media by the trans community and this sequel could include queer and trans characters within the film. Warner Bros. has a sequel in development to 2018's wildly successful *Crazy Rich Asians*, which featured gay character Oliver, whose role could be expanded. The studio has announced a new horror comedy film *The Parenting* from out director Craig Johnson, which is said to be an LGBTQ twist on the genre and in the vein of comedies like *Meet the Parents*. The adaptation of musical *The Color Purple* is still in the works and features queer lead Celie. Celie's queerness was minimized in the original film but given the Broadway musical's further explanation of her identity and romance, the film must follow suit. Warner Bros. released the film adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights* in June 2021. Though there were no LGBTQ characters in the stage musical, the characters of Carla and Daniela are a couple in the film.

Warner Bros. still has three films left to release in the announced five-film *Fantastic Beasts* series, with the third film in the saga currently set for a July 2022 release. At length, we have previously addressed the straight washing of Dumbledore and his relationship with Grindelwald in earlier editions of this report. In summer 2020, screenwriter and author JK Rowling tweeted several anti-trans statements and published a nearly 4,000-word essay that spread dangerous lies and misinformation about transgender people. Several notable *Potter* stars and fan organizations have spoken out against Rowling's hateful words. While Warner Bros. did release a general statement, they have failed to address the seriousness of her anti-trans activism, to challenge her anti-trans rhetoric, or commit to ending or amending their working relationship with her.

Streaming  
Video

&

Additional  
Distributors

---

## Streaming Video On Demand Distributors



### Amazon Prime Video

Amazon Prime Video has been distributing original content since 2013, and original films since 2018, several of which come from in-house studio, Amazon Studios. In 2020, Amazon released *Uncle Frank*, a GLAAD Media Award-winning film, from out filmmaker Alan Ball, which follows a gay man in the 1960s returning to his hometown after the death of his father with his partner and his niece. Last year, Amazon also released other films with LGBTQ characters in supporting roles, including *Selah and the Spades* where the lead of the Shakespearean teen drama was asexual; action comedy *My Spy* which featured a gay couple who were neighbors to the main character; and teen drama *Chemical Hearts*, which included a queer teen who was good friends with the protagonist and started a relationship with another girl.



### HBO Max

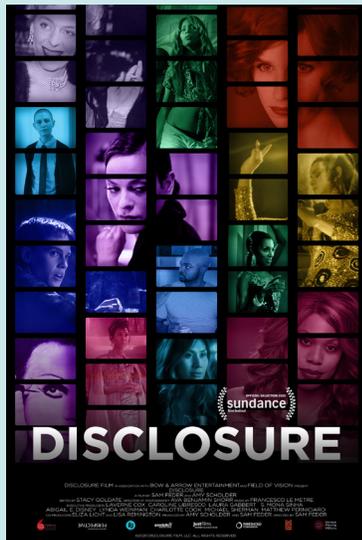
One of the newer streaming services, HBO Max is owned by parent company WarnerMedia and was launched in 2020. In addition to an extensive library, and hosting Warner Bros.' theatrical releases, HBO Max is releasing original films as well. In 2020, HBO Max released GLAAD Media Award nominee *La Layenda Negra* in conjunction with HBO Latino, the coming-of-age story of a queer Latinx teen who starts up a friendship with a more popular girl at school. HBO Max also released fellow nominee *Unpregnant*, a road trip comedy about a teen girl on a quest to get an abortion and her estranged best friend, who is also a lesbian.



### Hulu

Hulu has been releasing original films since the 2017 documentary *Batman and Bill*, and their content only increased in 2020, when the service handled several releases that were previously scheduled for theatrical distribution from major studios due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. One of these was Sony's *Happiest Season*, a lesbian Christmas film from out filmmaker Clea DuVall, which tells the story of a woman going to her girlfriend's home for the holidays only to find out that she's not out to her parents. The cast featured several queer actors including Kristen Stewart, Dan Levy, Victor Garber, Aubrey Plaza and more. The film received a GLAAD Media Award and broke viewership records for Hulu. *Happiest Season* had the best viewership for any original film on Hulu in its opening weekend and attracted more new subscribers to the service than any other previous title.

## Streaming Video On Demand Distributors



### Netflix

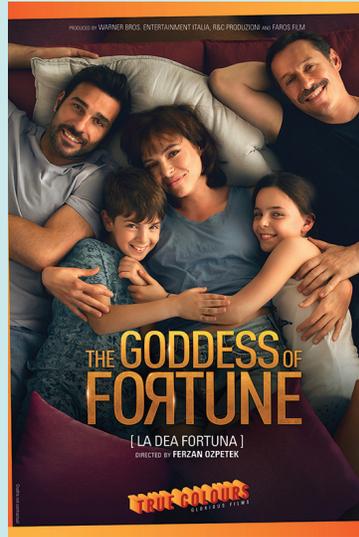
The streaming giant started distributing original films in 2015 with *Beasts of No Nation* and has been putting out movies ever since. In 2020, the streamer purchased and released several films which had been intended to be studio theatrical releases prior to the COVID pandemic shutting down theaters. Some LGBTQ-inclusive highlights from Netflix's past year were GLAAD Media Award recipient *The Boys in the Band*, an adaptation of the groundbreaking play about a group of gay men at a dinner party; *Alice Junior*, a Brazilian coming-of-age story about a transgender girl seeking her first kiss; *The Half of It*, a coming-of-age story about an Asian-American lesbian who finds herself writing letters to her crush under the guise of being her classmate; *The Life Ahead*, an Italian film about an older woman taking in a young boy and her friend, who is transgender, helps her care for him; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, which told the real life story of queer blues singer Ma Rainey; *The Old Guard*, an action film about a group of immortals including two men in a loving centuries-long relationship; *The Prom*, an adaptation of the Broadway musical of the same name about a small town teen girl who just wants to take her girlfriend to the prom and is helped in her mission by washed-out Broadway stars; and *Your Name Engraved Herein*, a Taiwanese film that follows two boys falling in love at a boarding school in the 1980s. Netflix also released several LGBTQ-inclusive documentaries, including the groundbreaking and GLAAD Media Award-winning documentary *Disclosure*, which explores the history of transgender representation in Hollywood. Other LGBTQ-inclusive documentaries from the streamer include *Mucho Mucho Amor*, *Circus of Books* and *A Secret Love*.

## Additional Film Distributors



### 1091 Media

1091 Media, the distribution company formerly known as The Orchard, has released several narrative films and documentaries both as The Orchard and as 1091 Media. LGBTQ-inclusive highlights of the past include 2017's *BPM (Beats per Minute)*, a film following French HIV and AIDS activists; *Thelma*, a thriller from Norway following a queer woman; 2018's *We The Animals*, a story of a young queer Latinx boy coming of age; and 2019's *Hurley*, following a famous racecar driver who came out as gay years later. In 2020, 1091 Media released *Seahorse*, a documentary that followed Freddy, a trans man who wanted to start a family and carried the baby himself. They also released *CRSHD*, a film following three college students attempting to hook up with their crushes, one of whom was a queer girl, Fiona, who successfully began a relationship with her crush Elise.



### Breaking Glass Pictures

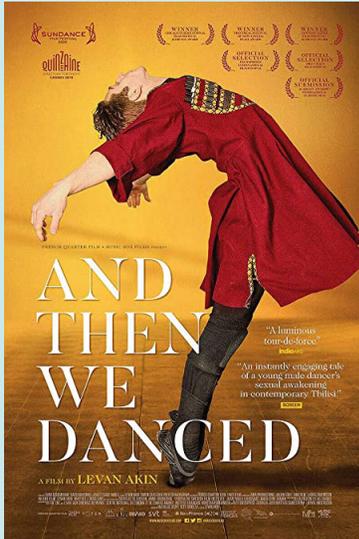
Founded in 2009, Breaking Glass Pictures distributes independent films both theatrically and on demand. Each year, they release several LGBTQ-inclusive films, including past films such as *Call Her Ganda* (2018), a documentary following the murder of a trans woman in the Philippines by a U.S. Marine; *Kanarie* (2019), the story of a young singer in South Africa who gets drafted into the military and discovers his identity as a queer man; and *Socrates* (2019), a film from Brazil about a queer teenager who must learn to live on his own. In 2020, Breaking Glass released *The Goddess of Fortune*, an Italian film about a gay couple who takes in their friend's kids when she is in the hospital and heal their relationship in the process. Other LGBTQ releases include *Song Lang*, *Rialto*, and *Kill the Monsters*.



### IFC Films

Since 1999, IFC films has been distributing independent film, including horror films from its branch IFC Midnight, and festival favorites under Sundance Selects. Some LGBTQ-inclusive films over the years from IFC include queer dramas *Weekend* (2011) and *Jenny's Wedding* (2015); *A Kid Like Jake*, a family drama from Silas Howard; and 2019's historical drama *Vita and Virginia*. In 2020, IFC films released *Summerland*, a drama following a woman who takes in a young boy and the act becomes a connection to romance with another woman from her past. IFC also released *How To Build a Girl*, which followed a woman coming of age and growing as a writer, and included her relationship her brother who is gay. The narrator of biopic *Tesla* ended up with another woman at the end of the film, and romance *Olympic Dreams* features a sizable role from out athlete Gus Kenworthy as himself.

## Additional Film Distributors



### Music Box Films

Specializing in independent and foreign film, Music Box Films has been releasing films in theaters and on demand since 2007. Past inclusive releases include the original Swedish-language version of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009) and its subsequent sequels, which features a bisexual lead, and the 2016 Emily Dickinson biopic *A Quiet Passion*. In 2020, Music Box released *And Then We Danced*, a film that follows a young Georgian dancer who develops feelings for another boy who is a dancer, while struggling with the masculinity of the traditional dance form itself.



### NEON

One of the newer distributors, NEON has been releasing acclaimed independent films since 2017. One of its biggest critical successes is the release of 2019's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, a French romance where a woman falls in love with the woman she has been commissioned to paint. In 2020, NEON released *Ammonite*, the story of a geologist in 19th century England who becomes a caretaker for a younger woman before they begin a romance.



### Samuel Goldwyn Film

Samuel Goldwyn Films, founded by the son of legendary producer Samuel Goldwyn, has been releasing independent art house film since 1998. Past LGBTQ-inclusive releases include GLAAD Media Award nominees *Saturday Church* (2018), following a queer Black teen in New York, finding chosen family in the queer and trans community; and *This is Not Berlin* (2019), which follows a queer Mexican teen discovering himself through Punk and New Wave music. In 2020, Samuel Goldwyn released *To the Stars*, a film set in the 1960s about a lonely girl who finds a friend in the queer new student; *Extracurricular*, a thriller centered on a group of high school students who plan a murder, one of whom is a lesbian; and *Triggered*, a horror film about a group of friends who are forced to be strapped to ticking time bombs. Unfortunately, all three of these films disappointingly share a common plot point: queer characters either dying or being presumed dead by the end of the film.

## Additional Film Distributors



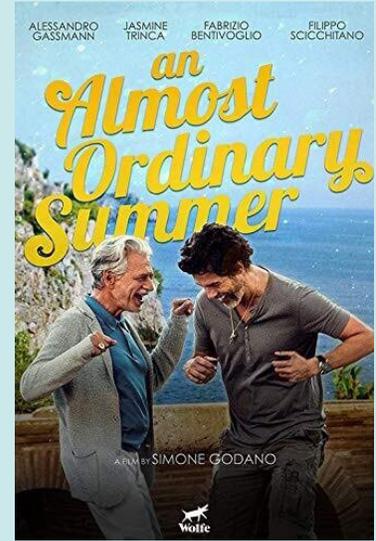
### Strand Releasing

Founded in 1989, Strand Releasing started as a distribution company specifically for LGBTQ films. They have since expanded their repertoire to release all kinds of films, but still release several LGBTQ-inclusive films each year. Inclusive films of the past include Gregg Araki's road trip drama *The Living End* (1992); romantic drama *Yossi and Jagger* (2002); and documentary *Mala Mala* (2014), exploring the queer and trans community in Puerto Rico. In 2020, Strand Releasing released *Monsoon*, a GLAAD Media Award nominee about a gay man returning to Vietnam after years away who falls in love with an artist he meets there. Strand also released *Straight Up*, a comedy following a gay man with OCD who strikes up a connection with a woman and questions his sexuality; and *José*, a Guatemalan drama following a young gay man who has to balance his commitments to his family and a new relationship.



### Vertical Entertainment

Founded in 2012, Vertical Entertainment distributes independent film in theaters and on demand. In 2016, Vertical released *Other People*, a GLAAD Media Award-winning film that followed a gay comedy writer taking care of his mother who was diagnosed with cancer. In 2020, Vertical released the GLAAD Media Award-nominated film *The True Adventures of Wolfboy*, a story about a teenage boy with wolf-like qualities who runs away from home and befriends a transgender girl who dreams of being a singer. Written by trans screenwriter Olivia Dufault, the film is the rare transition narrative from a transgender point of view. The studio also released *Human Capital*, a thriller that includes a teen boy coming out as gay.



### Wolfe Releasing

Wolfe Releasing has been distributing films since 1985, making it the oldest North American studio to exclusively distribute LGBTQ film. Past releases from Wolfe include 2004's *Brother to Brother*, a groundbreaking look at Black gay culture in the Harlem Renaissance; *Tomboy* (2011) which follows a French gender non-conforming child; and *Naz and Maalik* (2015), a coming-of-age story about two Black gay teenagers. In 2020, Wolfe released *An Almost Ordinary Summer*, which follows an older gay Italian couple who gather their families to tell them they are together. Wolfe also released *Good Kisser*, a film that follows a lesbian couple who seeks out a third person, only for problems to arise in their relationship.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **Megan Townsend – Researcher and author**

Director of Entertainment Research & Analysis

GLAAD Media Institute

mtownsend@glaad.org

### **Raina Deerwater – Researcher and author**

Entertainment Research & Analysis Manager

GLAAD Media Institute

rdeerwater@glaad.org

### **Nick Adams – Contributor**

Director of Transgender Representation

GLAAD Media Institute

nadams@glaad.org

### **Dustin Hood – Design and layout**

Senior Graphic Designer

dhood@glaad.org

## SPECIAL THANKS

**Jeremy Blacklow, Abdool Corlette, Brendan Davis,**

**Rich Ferraro, Spencer Harvey, Jess Lopez,**

**Gwendolyn Pointer, Anthony Allen Ramos**





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.

[GLAAD.org](https://www.glaad.org)



@GLAAD



COMPASS  
INITIATIVE®