



# At Long Last...

## The complicated history of LGBTQ+ representation in film

Cinderella and Prince Charming, Jim and Pam, Jack and Rose. All couples we know and love, ones we've grown up with. The media we consume as we are developing plays a very large part in how our views are shaped. Depictions of the LGBTQ+ community have a long and oftentimes complicated history. If we were to look back at "classic" Hollywood, you would be hard-pressed to find any that feature queer characters. The reason why is no secret at all. The first Gay Rights Organization wouldn't be created until 1951. Up until 1971, being gay was viewed as a mental illness. Americans had walked on the moon before they came to this realization.

Although it was amoral and risqué to have openly gay characters in media, there is no shortage of queer coded villains sprinkled throughout all our favorite movies. The stereotypical behaviors of a gay man or a lesbian woman would be ones often portrayed by the villain in hopes to make them even more laughable and unlikable. Whether they were made to be the butt of the joke or added to the plot purely for the viewer to dislike them, it in no way was the representation the community deserved. The Hay's code was introduced in 1934 and was enforced until 1968. This code prohibited positive depictions of queerness among other things. The keyword is positive. Nothing deterred filmmakers from openly mocking the community.

Many can argue that we have come a long way in terms of representation for the LGBTQ+ community in mainstream media. However, the work has just begun. For many in the LGBTQ+ community, coming out can be seen as an important step in claiming their sexual identities. Therefore, we must create an environment in which the media young people consume not only shows them what it looks like to be in a healthy queer relationship but also maintains representation that does not push harmful stereotypes and agendas that may deter youth from feeling comfortable with who they are.

More times than not, the so-called representation is watered down to a one-liner or a forgettable filler scene. Meanwhile, the directors are praising themselves for being so inclusive in their filmmaking. What's needed is more than a moment, but that is hard in a world where certain people fume over just that small instance, or where organizations pull funding over just a one-liner. If you are going to praise yourself for queer representation, commit to the action and don't tiptoe around disturbing your conservative funders.

In many ways, media can be seen as propaganda and it is no question that propaganda is a powerful thing. Anti-LGBTQ+ messages have been something looked over in our society for way too long. We can no longer allow this to happen. Visibility must be demanded for people falling on any part of that spectrum. It can seem like film and media in America are taking steps towards the better but once you take your eyes off the screen and back into the real world you will behold a grimmer sight. It took until 2015 for gay marriage to be legalized in the United States. In many other countries, the idea of that is still a distant fantasy. In 2017 under the presidency of Donald Trump, Transgender people were banned from serving their country. As of 2021, we are still seeing a rise in hate crimes against those of the LGBTQ+ community. Things can change for the better though but for this to happen we as a whole need to look at how we view Queer people and how we choose to portray that lifestyle for the world to see. Love is love is love is love. It's about time the world opens its eyes to this idea. In a time with so much strife, hate, and fear why should we shame those who choose to love.



**The Maltese Falcon**  
1941

For all the Hay's Code hoped to ban, it didn't completely erase homosexuality on screen, it just made it harder to pin point. The Maltese Falcon got around this by portraying its cold hearted villain Joel Cairo with stereotypical behaviors often attributed to gay men.

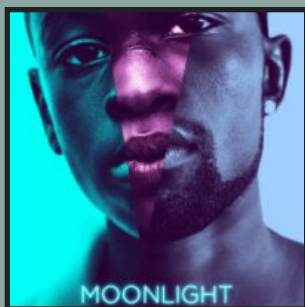


**Rocky Horror Picture Show**  
1971

This film tells the story of two female teachers who get accused of sharing a sexual relationship. One of the women, who is actually a lesbian, meets a most unfortunate end. This gave viewers a queer character to feel sympathetic for which was rare at the time.

This encompasses the idea of 'queer camp' like no other movie at the time. This musical broke through all boundaries of heteronormativity. One of our main characters, Dr. Frank-N-Furter is a pansexual trans scientist. Over the years the film has become a cult classic.

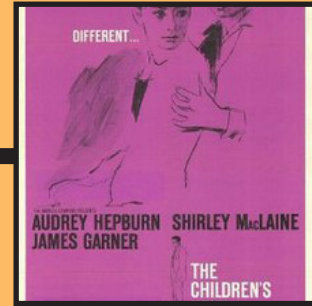
This movie follows the tale of a married man who realizes he's gay and starts to fall for another man. This is seen as the first mainstream Hollywood film to give audiences a gay role model, and portray homosexuality in a positive way.



**Moonlight**  
2016

Moonlight tells the story of a young black gay man growing into his identity. It made history when it won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2017. Not only is it the first LGBTQ+ movie to win the award, but also the first with an all black cast.

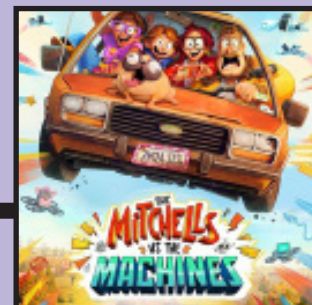
This movie brings an LGBTQ+ character into mainstream children's media. The main character Katie is queer and struggles with her parents over this issue.



**The Children's Hour**  
1961



**Making Love**  
1982



**The Mitchells vs. the Machines**  
2021