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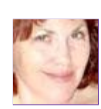
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LETTERS FROM A BROAD: Go Tell It on the Mountain

[1 March 2006]



by Kimberly Gadette
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Regarding the slow but steady rise of tolerance in the US, maybe it's not faith moving mountains... maybe it's the Mountain that's moving us.

To: The LGBT Global Community

Re: If It's Brokeback... Don't Fix It

Like Jack and Ennis might have said when they first started climbing to the top of Brokeback Mountain, "Things are looking up."

No matter how others may scoff about our weather, Southern California does have four seasons: a 10-month Spring/Summer, broken up by the seasons of Intermittent Moisture, Fire, and Award. With this Award Season, the latest gay-oriented crop of films is in full bloom, specifically Brokeback Mountain with Capote taking up the, um, rear.

But there's always been a substantial chasm between Hollywood's adoration of the gay-themed feature versus mainstream America's indifference. With awards flowing faster than hot popcorn exploding out of the concession stand's popcorn popper, one would think that the box office receipts would reflect an enormous success. But the gross monies made over the last 10 years tell a much different story.

Take Gods and Monsters which received the Oscar for Best Screenplay, and numerous acting awards for both Ian McKellen and Lynn Redgrave. The total box office revenue came in at \$6.4 million. This, as opposed to Star Wars, Episode III with a total of \$380 million. Hmmm. According to the faux research firm of The-Lord's-Prayer-On-the-Head-Of-A-Pin, Inc., the ratio of gross monies for Gods and Monsters vs. Star Wars III could best be expressed as one needle of one pine tree on the Rocky Mountain Range encompassing one Brokeback Mountain... versus planet Earth.

However, as of 29 January 2006, Brokeback Mountain has grossed \$51 million, already pulling far ahead of the total domestic box office figures for The Hours (\$41.6 million), Far From Heaven (\$15.8 million) and Boys Don't Cry (\$11.5 million). Not just making a buck for the producer, but coming in with the greatest number of Oscar nominations in this Academy Award year 2006, Brokeback Mountain bodes a sea change. Neither popular comedy nor musical, this intense little drama is not just being seen in the urban West and East. Suddenly people are going to the movie in Salt Lake City and Kansas. What are Mr. and Mrs. Middle America thinking?

As for the small screen, ever since Billy Crystal's Jodie Dallas started things going on Soap in 1977, there's been a slowly-evolving acceptance of mainstream gay characters. Not exactly the Johnstown Flood, but 30 years of white water beating a few boulders of bigotry to smithereens has made a difference. With spectacular ratings during the 2001 through 2005 seasons, Will & Grace ends its primetime run this spring with eight years under its designer-name belt. The baton is now being passed to such continuing shows as The L Word, Queer as Folk and the brand new Noah's Arc (an examination of four gay black men's lives and loves) via the freshman cable channel, Logo. Slowly but surely, the muddy television landscape is breaking up, revealing some sporadic patches of pale pink peeking through.

Here's an idea: With Brokeback Mountain doing so well, why not capitalize on its success? Especially with the departure of Will and Grace, how about a new primetime comedy with lots of stars singing, dancing and boot-scooting about? Brokeback, Jack! It could star the Toms (Cruise and Hanks), Madonna and Queen Latifah as two happy-go-lucky, same-sex couples livin' and a-lovin' on a mountaintop. Jim Carrey and Mike Myers could make occasional appearances as cross-dressing bro's in bras, with Bruce Willis as the homophobic gunslinger. And Harrison Ford could be someone's father, imparting words of Jedi wisdom to the gay, chosen few.

Never mind. Perhaps these glasses are erroneously rose-colored. Glaring right back at the LGBT community is the fact that eleven states vetoed gay marriage during the last election. However, Pat Robertson & Co. must be noticing that even with the same-sex marriage law intact, Massachusetts hasn't fallen into the Atlantic Ocean, as yet. Laws denoting civil unions/domestic partnerships are now in nine states, and on 20 January, a Baltimore, Maryland judge threw out a 33-year-old law banning gay marriage. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was Anna Nicole Smith. Heck, even George Bush's administration is still working over, sorry, working on the US Constitution.

Happily, it's not all about the USA. Aside from Canada, same-sex marriage is the law of the land in Spain, Netherlands and Belgium. On 26 January, the Czech parliament granted partial legal rights to gay couples. Even the Czech Republic? Wow. This brings new meaning to the phrase, "The Czech is in the male."

Back to those rose-colored glasses —what is needed is perspective. One hundred and 11 years ago, in 1895, Oscar Wilde was thrown in prison for sodomy, forced to do hard labor for two years. Between the contaminated food and unsanitary conditions, his health was ruined, and he died four years later. Contrast this to the current treatment of celebrities arrested on any sort of sex scandal. Hugh Grant, Paul Reubens, George Michael, Jeffrey Jones — not one among them has had to do any jail time. Instead, they are given probation and in some cases, their names are included on sex offender databases. No poisonous gruel. No hard labor. Sure, their behavior is decried in headlines jumping off of every tabloid in town, but at least they don't have to wear orange jumpsuits. (At least they don't have to wear those vile orange jumpsuits.)

This year's best picture or not, Brokeback Mountain just might be moving America toward a more tolerant point of view. Instead of faith moving mountains... maybe it's the Mountain that's moving us.

Unapologetically optimistic, The Broad

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