

## Opinion: Bisexual Cowboys in Love

*Brokeback Mountain* and the Bi-Tragedy Genre

By Amy Andre

*Brokeback Mountain* is not a movie about gay people, and there are no gay people in it. There. I said it. Despite what you may have read in the many reviews that have come out about this new feature film, *Brokeback Mountain* is a bisexual picture. Why can't film reviewers say the word "bisexual" when they see lead characters in sexual and romantic relationships with both men and women? I am unaware of a single review of *Brokeback* calling the leads what they are—a sad statement on the invisibility of bisexual experience and the level of biphobia in both the mainstream and gay media.



Now for the best thing about *Brokeback Mountain*: Jake Gyllenhaal plays a bottom. I hope I didn't spoil the surprise for anyone, but I should be upfront—the promise of a hot sex scene between him and Heath Ledger is what brought this bi writer to the theater in the first place. I was not disappointed.

The film tells the story of a couple of teenage ranch-hands, played by Gyllenhaal (as Jack Twist) and Ledger (as Ennis Del Mar), who, in 1963, find themselves tending sheep together for the summer. Two young men, a few dogs, and about 10,000 sheep on a mountain range, and you've got the makings of a fine bisexual cowboy flick. They're rugged types, and their connection is intensely physical, with lots of roughhousing around the campfire. But their love builds slowly, and the remainder of the film meanders over the course of their next twenty years.

Both are bi, both are married to women, both are fathers—to varying degrees of success—and they share and struggle with the cloying homophobia that blankets their lives. A warning for the weepy: this ain't no happy-ending movie.

I like movies where bisexuals come out to each other together and fall in love, because these tend to be so few and far between; the most recent example would be 2002's lovely romantic comedy, *Kissing Jessica Stein*. Most movies with bi characters paint a stereotypical picture: the unlucky, unsuspecting, hetero or gay person falls for the bisexual bon vivant, and all hell breaks loose. The bi love interest is usually deceptive (*Mulholland Drive*), over-sexed (*Sex Monster*), unfaithful (*High Art*), and fickle (*Three of Hearts*), and might even be a serial killer, like Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*. In other words, the bisexual is always the cause of the conflict in the film.

But *Brokeback Mountain* is different. Neither of the two leads, by virtue of their shared orientation, are out to wrong each other; they're in it together and conflicted over what to do. They cannot come out to anyone else and so try, somewhat successfully, to hide their love for each other.

So what's wrong? Why was I liking, but not loving, this movie? After all, it had beautiful cinematography, talented actors, and a unique plot. What more could a bi movie-lover want?

For a movie based on a short story, this film sure dragged on. The supporting characters, were two-dimensional and boring. And it was repetitive: How many times can you have the same argument with your lover? How many times can you give a doleful look as your lover tells you it's never meant to be? I wanted to shout at the screen: move on, guys! Find new boyfriends, or pack up and go to San Francisco together. Enough of this tortured soul crap.

Someday, I'd like to see a bisexual movie that's not about heartbreak, lost love, or wasted romance. What do you say, Hollywood? Will you bring us a feature film with a bisexual who's not confused or upset, and where the source of conflict comes from anything else besides sexuality? I'll be the first one standing in line, ticket in hand...

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