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pride edition





# FANTE AND MINGO

By: Baron Logan

THE  
BIG COMBO

Go Google "Film Noir." At the top right of the Wikipedia article, you'll see the image chosen to represent the subject of "Film Noir:" a photo of two silhouetted figures staring at each other across a foggy expanse. This is from the final scene of *The Big Combo* (1955), one of the finest (and last) films of the noir cycle, and one often cited at the visual peak of the movement.

It also happens to have some of the most prominent queer characters of any film from this period.

They are two hitmen named Fante and Mingo, played by Lee Van Cleef (The "Bad," in *The Good, The Bad, And the Ugly*) and Earl Holliman, respectively. They are essentially side characters in the film, but ones who add a great deal of heart and humor. They share a hotel room together, and sleep side by side in twin beds, looking like any other married couple in this time of film history still dominated by the Production Code. Later, while hiding out in a hotel basement after pulling a job, Mingo complains that "He can't swallow any more Salami," after being encouraged by his partner to eat. Fante then drops the incredible statement that "The cops are going to be looking for us in every closet."

It turns out that none of this was coincidence. Decades later, film noir expert Eddie Muller interviewed Holliman, who played Mingo, and the subject of the pair's sexuality came up. Holliman explained that he and Van Cleef played the bedroom scene with one wearing the top half and the other wearing the bottom half of the same pair of pajamas. (In the final cut, it's almost impossible to tell.) Further, he was shocked that anyone would notice the homosexual undertones of the characters. He and Van Cleef apparently played it this way as just an inside joke.

I think there is more to it than that. Holliman himself was gay, something that he kept secret throughout essentially his entire career. Playing a gay man on screen, even one (thinly) veiled, had to have been cathartic. Towards the movie's climax, the evil Mr. Brown betrays our hitmen and tries to blow them up, killing Fante but only wounding Mingo. The authorities urge Mingo to turn rat on Mr. Brown, compelling him to "Do it for Fante!" Mingo is an emotional wreck after the death of his partner, screaming "Don't leave me Fante!," before eventually telling the cops how to find Mr. Brown.

Ultimately, Earl Holliman got to play a gay man onscreen, one who even gets to avenge the death of his lover, even if he didn't get to be out in real life. The two figures staring at each other through the fog in that iconic image from *The Big Combo* aren't Fante and Mingo, but they might as well be. They are two men who stand out despite an obscuring fog, and whose bond is obvious to even the most casual of viewers.

Muller, Eddie. "Commentary." 2018. *The Big Combo*. Arrow Academy.

Duncan, Paul, and Jürgen Müller. *Film Noir*. Ko In: Taschen, 2014.

## On Derek Jarman and Community.

Written By Jackson Spiner.

Derek Jarman died 40 years ago this past February, leaving behind a legacy of unabashedly queer, radical filmmaking. Challenging audiences from the onset of his directorial career, Jarman's first film, *Sebastiane* (1976), is a softcore exploration of homoeroticism in Ancient Greece, spoken entirely in Latin. The first film of its kind, Jarman required audiences to interact with queer desire if they were to engage in the historical achievement that the film boasts. This pushing of boundaries was a staple of Jarman's films, as was an emphasis on self reflection, which invited audiences to explore the artist's interiority alongside his art. Unlike many who died of AIDS, Jarman lived for seven years after his initial diagnosis and consistently beat the infections that plagued him during that time. This allows for a unique exploration of his final films, all of which were made with an understanding of their finality. These four feature films can be seen as both self-portraits and self-eulogies, as he reflects on his career, life, and community.

*The Garden* (1990), Jarman's first film made after his diagnosis, is a modern adaptation of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, with a gay male couple in the place of Christ, as they are tortured and ostracized by society. Meant to be his last film, Jarman acknowledges that, "I felt elegiac making it, I built a garden and then sat there wondering whether I would be there next year to enjoy it" (Jarman, At Your Own Risk). Because of this, one can look at *The Garden* as an unmoored distillation of Jarman's core beliefs, made with haste and little compromise. Rather than centering one queer man as the stand-in for Jesus Christ, Jarman centers a queer relationship, underscoring his belief that queer love and community is next to godliness. While they are ostracized, tortured, and crucified, the two never waver in their love for one another.

While *The Garden* is Jarman's unfiltered manifesto, his final film, *Blue*, seems carefully planned and poignant in comparison, every moment placed with intentionality and purpose. The film utilizes a vibrant soundscape set over an unmovng frame of the color blue, coming in at a tight 79 minutes. In this time, the color blue fills not only the screen but the auditory narrative of the film, anthropomorphized as a beautiful butterfly soaring through the clear sky, the mountains traversed by Marco Polo, and the lesions on a gay man's skin. Jarman tells his personal story within the blue haze, seen through daydream and memories, with no distinction between the two. The final words spoken in *Blue* are the names of Jarman's loved ones who had died of AIDS, making this his last statement as an artist. He ends his career by eulogizing each of these men as his friends, his lovers, and his community. By closing *Blue* with the names of his fallen comrades, Jarman emphasizes the vitality of the queer community, as it endures beyond death in memory and art.

Instagram:  
@and\_\_Jackson

# BASIL DEARDEN

ANY MALE PERSON  
WHO, IN PUBLIC  
OR PRIVATE,  
COMMITS, OR IS A PARTY TO  
THE COMMISSION OF, OR PROCURES,  
OR ATTEMPTS TO PROCURE

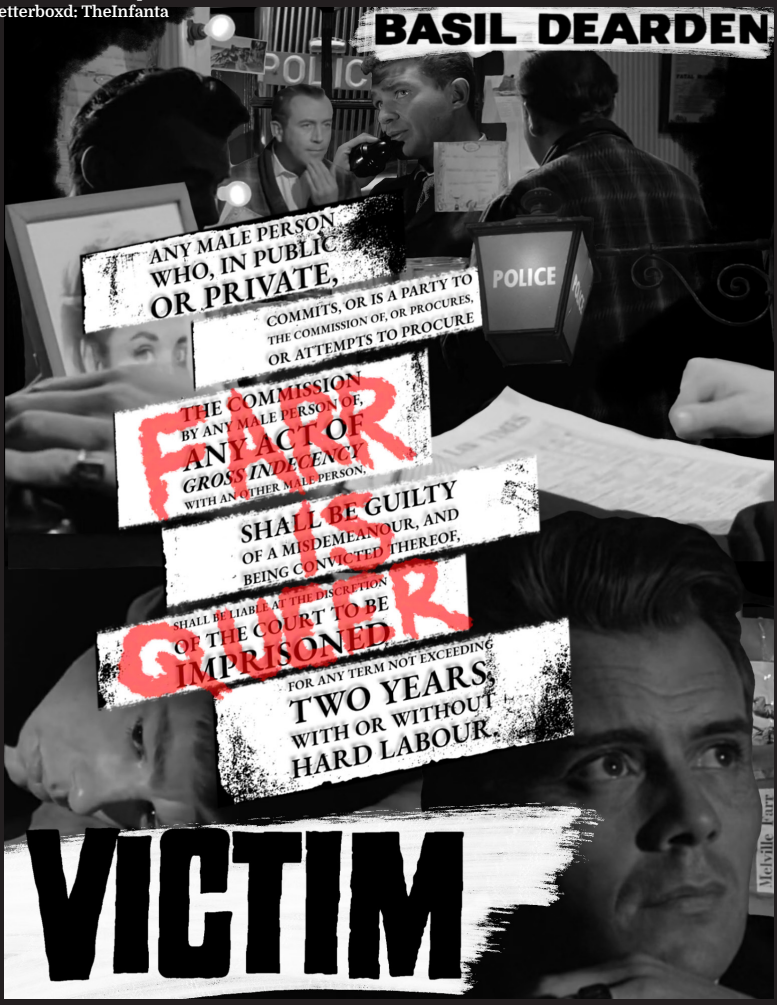
THE COMMISSION  
BY ANY MALE PERSON OF,  
**F** ANY ACT OF  
**R** GROSS INDECENCY  
WITH AN OTHER MALE PERSON.

SHALL BE GUILTY  
OF A MISDEMEANOUR, AND  
BEING CONVICTED THEREOF,

SHALL BE LIABLE AT THE DISCRETION  
**G** OF THE COURT TO BE  
**R** IMPRISONED

FOR ANY TERM NOT EXCEEDING  
**TWO YEARS,**  
WITH OR WITHOUT  
HARD LABOUR.

# VICTIM



# OBLIVIOUS EMPATHY

By @Cinematic\_Life on X / cduffy on Letterboxd

As a budding cinephile at the dawn of the millennium, I was blessed to live in a town with an independent arthouse theater where I got to see rep screenings of classics like *Casablanca* alongside first-run foreign and independent films like *Run Lola Run*.

I cannot honestly recall the thought process that lead to what I am about to tell you (perhaps it's as simple as wanting someone else to pay for the tickets?) but in early 2000, I thought it was a good idea to take my Mexican-American grandparents to see Pedro Almodóvar's *All About My Mother*.

I'd gone to see *Life Is Beautiful* with them years prior so we were no strangers to seeing foreign films together, but pretty much as soon as Manuela got to Barcelona, I realized that this was a completely different ball of wax.

Had the film opened with trans characters, sex workers, and a pregnant nun, I don't think my grandparents would have made it to the end. But by the time those elements came into play, the film already had its hooks in them and they watched the whole thing. And they loved it.

Looking back, it was likely the themes of grief and loss that kept them in their seats. Less than a decade prior, they had lost my uncle Gary to cancer in his late 30's. And while you couldn't detect it outwardly, that loss was always just under the surface with them. It lived with them every day.

That Roger Ebert quote about film being an "empathy machine" has been used to the point of parody, but that doesn't make it any less true. My grandparents' empathy with the cisgendered Manuela's grieving for Esteban built a bridge of compassion that extended to the myriad societal outcasts populating Almodóvar's film. All without them even being aware it was happening. Such is the power of Cinema.





\$1.00

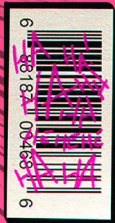
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NO. 420  
APRIL

# THE PEOPLE'S

# Joker

BANG!



"The People's Joker" by Kino Finnegan. @kinofinnart on Instagram



Velvet Goldmine

By @SongsOfInfinityon  
Letterboxd



By @cicada.town on  
Instagram



By @iluvimagery on  
Instagram



"True Pride"



"Embrace"



"No Rain on Our Parade"

By @shotbyparker

My photos are inspired by the documentary *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* (2022), and more specifically, Nan Goldin's 1985 35mm slideshow and photo book, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. This documentary and photo book explores Nan Goldin's film photography of her impassioned and unapologetic queer friend group and community through the AIDS crisis in the vibrant 1970s and 80s NYC and New England. As a queer man who had just recently come out, this documentary (and subsequently the photo book), really hit close to home on the importance of preserving identity. Inspired by Goldin's photographic pursuit of channeling the queer experience, my three photographs are documents of my first ever time at a pride parade, during the summer after I came out. The double exposure taken on my 35mm film camera at my small New England town's pride parade (titled: No rain on our parade!), and the two digital photos taken at the Boston Pride Parade attempt to capture me embracing my own identity, through the loving embrace of the LGBTQ+ community

# QUEERNESS AS CONSTRUCTED FROM HORROR MOVIE QUOTES

BY @JWFINNEGAN ON INSTAGRAM // @FINNEYFLAME ON TWITTER

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SCARY MOVIE?

I MEAN, YOU SEEM TO BE PRETTY DEEP INTO THAT BODY-ART STUFF.

THIS IS A PUZZLE, TOO. BUT WE'RE CAUGHT IN THE PUZZLE.

THE ONLY REASON WE'VE SURVIVED AT ALL IS BECAUSE WE OPERATE IN TOTAL ISOLATION.

I'M NOT SETTling IN ANYWHERE. ANYWHERE ELSE.

I'M GOING HOME TODAY.

I'M NOT FROM AROUND HERE, BUT I WAS HOPING TO MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS.

WHERE EVERYONE GETS A SECOND CHANCE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS MY LIFE. WHATEVER YOU SAY I BELIEVE.

I JUST WANNA HEAR YOU SAY IT. WE DON'T DESERVE THE IMPOSSIBLE.

WHEN ATTACKED YOUR BLOOD WILL TRY AND SURVIVE.

WE SURVIVE.

LET ME LIGHT YOU A FIRE.

BECAUSE YOU WERE HOME. YOU ANSWERED THE DOOR.

HOW ABOUT THIS: WE DRIVE DOWN THAT ROAD, GET SOME MORE BEER, AND DOWN TO THE BEACH. IF I MAKE IT THROUGH THE DAY.

SOME THINGS HAVE TO BE ENDURED. TAKE IT FROM ME.

THERE WILL BE PEACE, SOMEDAY. SILENCE WILL FALL.

IT HASN'T REACHED ME YET BUT IT'S ON ITS WAY.

THEY SAY THE REAL FEAR WITH THESE RIDES COMES FROM THE FEELING OF HAVING NO CONTROL.

HOME. ITS IMPACT, I CAN FEEL IT. IT'S LIKE A VORTEX.

THAT'S THE ONE GOOD THING ABOUT WHERE I COME FROM, YOU CAN SEE THE WHOLE DAMN MILKY WAY AT NIGHT.

I ALWAYS TOLD THEM "I DON'T CARE HOW IT SOUNDS. I WANT TO LEAVE THIS MINUTE.

YOU CAN BRING BACK MY THINGS WHEN YOU GO."

WE'RE NOT OKAY. WE'RE THE OPPOSITE OF OKAY. BUT WE HAVE EACH OTHER.

BE THANKFUL. THOSE THINGS ARE TERRIFYING.

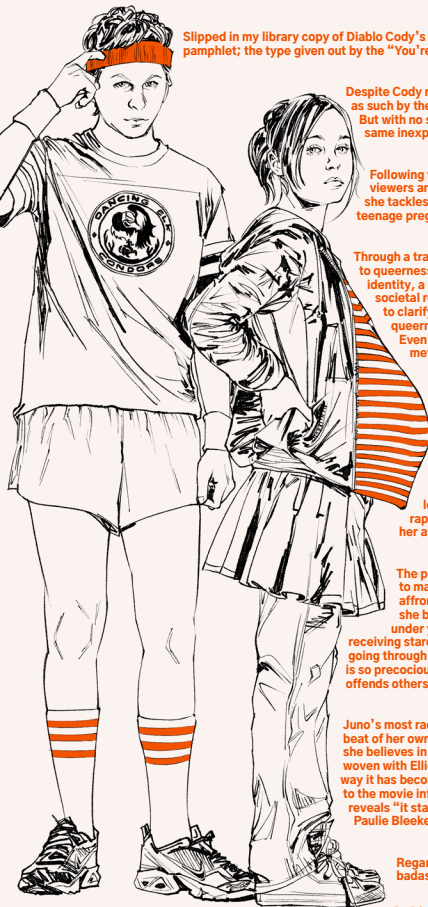
THIS SHIP HAS PASSED BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR UNIVERSE, OF REALITY.

YOU BUILT THIS FUCKING SHIP. 'TIS FINE WORK. THANK YOU. I CAN HEAR HER—THE UNIVERSE.

SHE SAYS WE'VE GOT SUCH SIGHTS TO SHOW YOU

# “I Don’t Know What Kind of Girl I Am”

by Jen McLean (@jenni.flower)



Slipped in my library copy of Diablo Cody's 2005 memoir “Candy Girl,” I came across a “Gay is Sin” pamphlet; the type given out by the “You’re Going to Hell!” sign holders waiting on a corner to berate you.

Despite Cody recounting no explicitly queer interactions it was still received as such by the homophobe who must’ve checked the book out before me. But with no shared derogation in my supposition, I would also assign the same inexplicable queerness to her 2009 screenplay “Juno.”

Following the coolly unbothered journey of 16 year old Juno MacGuff, viewers are given a guidebook for weirdos and the unorthodox alike as she tackles incredible transformation physically and internally by that of teenage pregnancy.

Through a trans lens, teen pregnancy relates a good metaphorical deal to queerness and transformation alike. Both can heavily inform one’s identity, a physical change (of varying degrees), and violate general societal roles. Driven by an innate sense of self possession, Juno aims to clarify her resistance to norms as integral for her image; in turn, queerness regularly holds an intrinsically rebellious connotation. Even more, it is a rebellion within oneself, leaving a person metamorphosed.

In “Juno Was Always a Trans Movie,” Robin Gow explores themes of transness in the film, prior even to Elliot Page’s coming out in 2020. Gow reinforces that even though on the “surface (Juno) seems to be heterosexuals all the way down” it still is a haven for trans embodiment. Comparable in execution, Juno telling her parents she was pregnant is incredibly similar to a traditional queer “coming out.” As she “can’t help the ways this will change how her loved ones see her,” Juno finds it unavoidable to confront her rapidly changing state, recognizing that how her parents will see her after this new information is entirely out of her control.

The physical transformation provided by pregnancy is lifechanging to many, as well as gender affirming body modifications. Juno is affronted with increased scrutiny the further into her pregnancy as she breaks down to Bleeker “at least you don’t have the evidence under your sweater.” After months of constantly receiving stares and scrutiny from her peers and authorities. Her body going through a major change for something most people did not agree with is so precociously radical in its gentle disruption. It’s affirming to her, yet offends others.

Juno’s most radical trait is her authenticity to herself. She marches by the beat of her own drum, sparks motion in the lives around her, and does what she believes in even if it isn’t met with positive reception. The character is woven with Elliot Page and Diablo Cody’s intrinsic resilience, and along the way it has become a beacon for those “refusing linearity.” The opening lines to the movie informs you that this journey is unorthodox as Juno MacGuff reveals “it started with a chair” which led to her conceptual encounter with Paulee Bleeker.

Regardless, if Juno comes across as queer or not to you, it’s badass, sweet, and just plain fun for everyone!

Art by Jesse C. (@candycolorclown)

Gow, Robin. “Juno Was Always a Trans Movie.” MAYDAY, 29 Dec. 2020, maydaymagazine.com/juno-was-always-a-trans-movie-by-robin-gow/. Accessed 1 June 2024.

301/302

By: Aut

So, has their loneliness ended?

I remember pausing the screen to have a moment to fully feel the weight of these words.

My heart ached from all the pressure, unrelentingly tight.

These were women whose being was bound in desires that were not their own, their needs and wants subsumed by others. Men using societal expectations to validate their mistreatment of these women, each feeling as if they were owed something due to their gender alone. Pictures of loyal, dutiful wives and quiet, submissive girls suspended in the mind, shrouding tortured existences underneath. Promises of safety, comfort, and love for meeting expectations exposed as lies, instead leading to agony in isolation.

Does love exist?

Although distanced from the places that harmed them later on, it is clear that these women are still choked by the tethers of gender and sexuality, their desires frustrated by their refusal to ingest others' expectations wholeheartedly. The psychological effects of their mistreatment remain- they cannot easily escape the patriarchal norms that provided the foundation for their oppression. While both women tried to find a way to free themselves from their suffering, one sees how their coping mechanisms reflect the internalization of the values that subjugated them in the first place.

How can you find love?

Song-hee's usage of food to show love for- and thus, hopefully, receive love in return from- others makes her ignorant of how this focus on consumption further develops Yoon-hee's feelings of hollowness. She wants to be seen and desired so fervently that she cannot fathom Yoon-Hee's rejection of those very things. Yoon-Hee's avoidance is not of distaste, but her wish to retreat from a world that has hurt and seeks to possess her. She repels and expels that which she cannot control, taking ownership of what is left of her body. Their failure to find solid and solace is not malicious on either part, but rather due to their inability to bridge the gap made by society.

What does it mean to be loved?

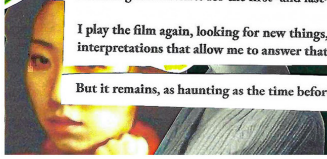
However one views the act of Song-hee consuming Yoon-hee's body, it is clear that this is not the most horrific act of cannibalism we have witnessed. Their sense of self had been steadily consumed over the years- desires carved away, flesh savored, nearly swallowed whole until they dragged themselves away from the maws of their oppressors. Yoon-hee's final choice may not have been an act of triumph, but it was an offering of pleasure that Song-hee and she had been waiting for all their lives.

Realizing their desires for the first- and last- time.

I play the film again, looking for new things, lingering on different moments, trying various interpretations that allow me to answer that final question.

But it remains, as haunting as the time before.

So, has their loneliness ended?



# Naked Lunch: The Interzone of Queer Guilt

By Travis Brunner (@xbruno\_sauce)

In 1991, David Cronenberg did what many thought to be impossible and released the film *Naked Lunch*, an adaptation of the highly controversial novel by William S. Burroughs. Many artists, including Frank Zappa, had tried to adapt *Naked Lunch*, but none were up to the task and it never came to fruition. While a literal adaptation of the source material would be difficult due to its nonsensical lack of structure, Cronenberg took the project in an interesting direction. Ultimately, he was fascinated by the events of Burroughs' life and drew a lot of influence from his second novel, *Queer*.

*Queer* is a detailed account of Burroughs' exploits following the accidental murder of his wife, Joan Vollner. The two of them were at a party with several guests when he drunkenly attempted to shoot a glass off of her head with his pistol. Tragically, he missed and shot her dead between the eyes. Terrified of having to prove his innocence, he ran away to Mexico, where he was arrested and served a two year sentence for manslaughter. He went on to have many sexual partners all across Mexico and North America, but this behavior wasn't new for Burroughs. During his marriage, it was normal practice for him to see other men on the side whenever he could. However, following Joan's death, he seemed to distance himself from women entirely and preferred male company. Some speculate that he could no longer look at another woman due his own guilt, but no one can say for sure.

Cronenberg decided that since Burroughs' life was so fascinating, there was no better way to tell this story than through the eyes of a fictionalized Burroughs. The character of Bill is an addict who escapes to the drug-induced world of "Interzone" following the accidental murder of his wife. This is where he struggles to face the demons of his own guilt and sexuality. Although Burroughs in real life was certainly queer, the film depicts him as having much more internal conflict about this. Bill's perception of the world around him is entirely subjective, created by his own mind. Therefore, whenever the theme of homosexuality comes into play, it's his own subconscious weaving the narrative.

The character of Kiki is a soft spoken, effeminate boy who exists in Bill's hallucination. I believe the way he introduces himself to Bill reveals a lot about his purpose.



*"Are you a f\*\*\*\*t?" he whispers from beside him at the bar.  
Bill sleepily replies, "Not by nature, no. I'm not. I wouldn't say f\*\*\*\*t. However, circumstances have forced me to consider the possibility."*





Judging from this interaction, it seems that Kiki is a manifestation of Bill's hidden lust for boys. It's as if his own mind is tempting him, handing him his ideal twink on a silver platter to see if he'll take a bite. At this point, it seems that he's lightly pondered his sexuality, but he's still unable to reach any sort of conclusion around it.

Bill spends most of his time in Interzone as an agent, employed by a living, insectoid typewriter. During his first interaction with the thing, it urges him to type the words: "Homosexuality is the best all-around cover that an agent has ever had." It moans in pleasure as he types, repeating "That is a great sentence. These are words to live by, Bill."

He grows visibly uncomfortable with this and leaves the room, quite literally running away from his gay thoughts. This part of the narrative could also be seen as an elaborate way to shift responsibility. His brain is attempting to justify acting on these impulses by making it a part of his "cover". This way, it's only something he's forced to participate in that's out of his control.

Bill is then introduced to the wealthy, effeminate Cloquet, who flirtatiously offers to treat him for a meal. While enjoying breakfast together, Bill almost immediately gets confronted by him about his sexuality.

"I've seen you around, but I had no idea you were queer," teases Cloquet.

With sadness in his voice, Bill replies, "I'll never forget the unspeakable horror that froze the lymph in my glands when the painful word seared my reeling brain. I was a homosexual." Although this painful backstory is technically a part of Bill's "cover", I believe that he's having a genuine moment of vulnerability. He's suddenly melted into his gay "character" and begun to recognize it as a part of himself.

He goes on to say, "I would have destroyed myself, but a wise old Queen; Bobo, we called her, told me I had a duty to bear my burden proudly for all to see."

This is possibly the most powerful statement of queer pride I've ever heard in a film. Even if Bill's story is a lie that holds an ulterior motive, the message behind it is real. His brain created an entire false world to explore his queerness, and this is the moment where he officially welcomes the truth. I believe David Cronenberg created an arc of queer acceptance in this film that was not only ahead of its time, but deserves far more recognition.



# frida zinema team picks



To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar (1995)

I absolutely adore any movie that is sweet or silly and To Wong Foo... has that in spades!! It's so joyous with such a big heart, and genuinely just such a great queer celebration thanks to such a great cast.

– Jen



The Children's Hour (1961)

A tragic story of repression and shame that demonstrates the consequences of intolerance: A visceral, empathetic depiction of lesbianism in the early 60s. (Watch if you want to cry)

– Haley



Fresh Kill (1994)

Cyberpunk meets Gregg Araki in this '90s lesbian "eco tehcn0 noia" piece of filmmaking. This film credited for coining the term "hacktivism" and it isn't even the coolest thing it does. Highly experimental, pulp, political, and arthouse fun, definitely seek this one out if any of what I said means anything to you, it's a treat!

– Jesse



Johnny Guitar (1954)

A classic rootin tootin western starring Joan Crawford with strong queer undertones. The title song is a banger you may have heard but the film is just as great and shouldn't be missed!

– Baron



The Servant (1963) is a dark, emotionally layered film focused on cross-class relationships and especially on the growing desire between a young man and his scheming manservant. Featuring a brilliant performance from closeted actor Dirk Bogarde, it's a must-watch of British queer cinema.

– Ellie



The Bride of Frankenstein (1935)

Outside of considering director James Whale's perspective as a gay man, the incredibly flirty Dr. Praetorius, or the inherent queerness latent in monster movies—the very character of The Bride is filled with as much queer reading as she is formaldehyde. I love her and this incredibly odd movie.

– Kino

