



The straight dude's guide to 'Brokeback'

Our intrepid gay columnist has sage advice for his straight brethren

COMMENTARY

By Dave White

MSNBC contributor

Updated: 2:58 p.m. ET Dec. 12, 2005

You are a heterosexual man. And you have no personal beef with gay people. You're educated and fairly socially liberal and occasionally listen to NPR and you don't like to see anyone bashed or discriminated against. You're no homophobe. You're proud of yourself.

But your girlfriend/wife/common-law/female or whoever loves that adorable Jake Gyllenhaal has already stated her intentions. When it's her turn to pick the Saturday night date-movie, you're seeing "Brokeback Mountain."

"But I am a heterosexual man," you're thinking, "very, very, very, very straight." And you're kind of freaking out as the release date quickly approaches — and even the expression "release date" is making you kind of jittery. You're hoping to remind your female life partner that, while you feel gay people are very wonderful, colorful, witty additions to the human population and that Ellen sure is fun to watch dance in the credit card commercial and that Tom Hanks really deserved that Academy Award for whatever that movie was where he died at the end, that you are very, very, very, very straight and that it should exempt you from seeing Adorable Jake...um... do "it" with Heath Ledger. You really don't even want to know what "it" entails because you've lived this long without finding out. You're thinking the words "red-blooded," as in "I am a red-blooded American male, etc.," don't sound so retro anymore.

And yet, you're still going to see it whether you like it or not. This necessarily presents a dilemma: how to make her happy and endure your first gay-themed movie where guys actually make out on a very big screen right in front of your face? And that's where I come in. I'm a red-blooded American male homosexual movie critic who's already seen "Brokeback Mountain." And I could just tell you how great the film is, that it's really powerful and moving and all that, but that isn't what you want to hear. So I have some viewing tips for you, my straight brothers. I promise I'm only here to help...

1. Accept the fact that this is all your fault in the first place

You were the one who was all excited to take your ladyfriend to "Jarhead" anyway and when you got there and saw that it consisted of lot of AJ (how this article will refer to Adorable Jake from here on) running around all sweaty, muscular and shirtless in the desert, doing a sexy dance wearing nothing but a Santa Claus cap over his "area" and then simulating a big gay orgy with his fellow grunts, you were like, "When does the killing start in this movie?" while your woman thought, "Oh yes, more Santa Dancing please." You brought it on yourself.

2. Realize now that you have to shut up

You kind of have no idea how important it is for you to shut up. But it's crucial. I was recently at a press screening for another movie and I overheard four guys in the theater lobby talking about "Brokeback." They were resolute in their refusal to go see it and they couldn't stop loudly one-upping each other about how they had no interest, were not "curious," and were, in the words of the loudest guy in the group, "straight as that wall over there." Oh, the wall with poster for the Big Gay Cowboy Movie on it? That straight wall? Well here's something that everyone else now knows but that guy: he's probably gay. Being silent marks you as too cool to care about how other men

see you. It means you're comfortable and not freaked by your own naked shadow. Did Steve McQueen go around squawking about how straight-as-a-wall he was? No, he didn't. He was too busy being stoic and manly.

3. The good news — there's less than one minute of making out

It's about 130 minutes long and 129 of them are about Men Not Having Sex. So yes, maybe it will be the longest almost-60 seconds of your life, but there it is. Less than one minute. In fact, it's 129 minutes of really intense longing and sadness and unabashedly weepy, doomed love story. In a very real way that's a lot more porny than any of the man-on-man canoodling that made it past the editing room. But if you're going to be a big sissy about it then you can go get her that Diet Coke and jumbo popcorn during the first major sex scene. And no plugging your ears and singing "Mary Had a Little Lamb," either. All singing is inherently gay, is why. Plus you'll be in a movie theater and some big bruiser gay guy might kick your butt. Then you'll feel even more emasculated.

4. Remember that it's a western

And the script was adapted by none other than Total Dude Larry McMurtry. That guy is the coolest western writer in the country. He wrote "Lonesome Dove." You love "Lonesome Dove." In fact, the only problem with remembering that it's a western is having to ignore the fact that most westerns are about 1000 percent gay. If you think I'm making that up, just go watch "Red River" again.

5. They're tortured and you get to feel sorry for them

Just like in that Tom Hanks movie, these gay guys get kicked around a lot. It's set in the 1960s and the characters played by Heath and AJ don't even know they're gay. They think they're just regular straight guys who suddenly find themselves all turned on by each other and, honestly, don't even really understand why they're awash in yucky, hypnotic love feelings. Actually wait... you know what? Don't think about that too much. Better if you just forget about the "why" of it all and start rooting for these underdogs. Pretend they're like Sean Astin in "Rudy."

6. Anne Hathaway, who plays AJ's wife, gets topless. The End

I think it's fair to report this and here's why: as a gay man, the only reason I even agreed to sit through the really stupid remake of "The Longest Yard" was because one of my friends told me you get to see the wrestler Goldberg in the shower. In one scene. That's it. I sat through the whole thing for one scene. In that respect, my hetero pals, we are all brothers deep inside — it's just a different brand of naked flesh that ignites our prurience.

7. And finally, it's just your turn

Really, it is, and you know it. Imagine how many thousands of hetero love stories gay people sit through in their lives. So you kind of owe us. Now get out there and watch those cowboys make out.

Dave White is the film critic for Movies.com and has a not-all-that-gay blog at www.livejournal.com/users/djmrswhite.

© 2006 MSNBC Interactive

© 2006 MSNBC.com

URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10342237/>