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Gay Directors, Gay Films?: Pedro Almodóvar, Terence Davies, Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant, John Waters

By Emanuel Levy



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Through intimate encounters with the life and work of five contemporary gay male directors, this book develops a framework for interpreting what it means to make a gay film or adopt a gay point of view. For most of the twentieth century, gay characters and gay themes were both underrepresented and misrepresented in mainstream cinema. Since the 1970s, however, a new generation of openly gay directors has turned the closet inside out, bringing a poignant immediacy to modern cinema and popular culture.

Combining his experienced critique with in-depth interviews, Emanuel Levy draws a clear timeline of gay filmmaking over the past four decades and its particular influences and innovations. While recognizing the "queering" of American culture that resulted from these films, Levy also takes stock of the ensuing conservative backlash and its impact on cinematic art, a trend that continues alongside a growing acceptance of homosexuality. He compares the similarities and differences between the "North American" attitudes of Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant, and John Waters and the "European" perspectives of Pedro Almodóvar and Terence Davies, developing a truly expansive approach to gay filmmaking and auteur cinema.



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Editorial Review

Review

Emanuel Levy's book is enlightening. It brings into clear focus the disparate works of five gay male directors and helps the reader see these films in new and refreshing ways.

(Ed Sikov, author of *Film Studies: An Introduction*)

An impressively informative treatment of five prominent gay directors who represent a wide range of differences within the gay spectrum. Emanuel Levy's background in gay cinema, independent cinema, and traditional Hollywood cinema make him the ideal author for this significant and original study.

(Molly Haskell, film critic and author of *Frankly, My Dear: Gone with the Wind Revisited*)

In a nuanced examination of five pioneering gay directors, Emanuel Levy moves with fluid grace and astonishing erudition through a broad range of national traditions and personal styles, nailing what is peculiar and intriguing about each auteur. His study will enchant anyone interested in the twists and turns of gender, sex, and cinema over the past fifty years.

(Thomas Doherty, author of *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939*)

A vastly intelligent, comprehensively procured treat for film buffs.

(*Kirkus Reviews*)

[Levy's] treatment of his subjects is comprehensive, and his passion always shines through.... This book is well-suited for the cinematic omnivore and the armchair aesthete.

(*Publishers Weekly*)

Like many good film books, this one's for movie mavens to argue with and revisit often.

(*Booklist*)

[*Gay Directors, Gay Films?*] succeeds where it counts, enlivening the discussion of what it meant to make 'gay films' in the 20th century.... Perfect for fans of film and gender studies.

(*Library Journal*)

Lively and entertaining.

(Brian T. Carney *The Washington Blade*)

Gay Directors, Gay Films? is a smart primer on the work of five very deserving directors. Casual film enthusiasts looking for a new trail to follow and readers interested in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender cultural studies should find plenty of material to inspire both movie rentals and thoughtful conversations.

(Ryan Little *The Washington Post*)

One of the finest books ever written on gay filmmaking.... Anyone seeking to explore the features and meanings of gay films in the future must read *Gay Directors, Gay Films?*

(Brian Bromberger *The Bay Area Reporter*)

A broad introduction to the fascinating work of these significant directors.

(Melanie White *Times Literary Supplement*)

[Levy] places their careers into the larger context of American and European society and its gradual acceptance of homosexuality over the past five decades. [*Gay Directors, Gay Films?*] seems especially timely and relevant at this moment.

(Leonard Maltin *Indiewire*)

[A] nuanced, eminently readable book.

(*Choice*)

A comprehensive account of five remarkable careers in film.

(Dion Kagan *Australian Book Review*)

About the Author

Emanuel Levy is a professor of film and sociology, who has taught at Wellesley College, Arizona State University, Columbia University, the University of California, Los Angeles, and New York University. He is the author of nine books, including *Vincente Minnelli: Hollywood's Dark Dreamer*; *All About Oscar: The History and Politics of the Academy Awards*; *Cinema of Outsiders: The Rise of American Independent Film*; *George Cukor: Master of Elegance*; *John Wayne: Prophet of the American Way of Life*; and *Citizen Sarris: American Film Critic*. A two-time president of the L.A. Film Critics Association, Levy worked as senior critic for *Variety* and chief film critic for *Screen International* before founding the acclaimed website www.emanuellevy.com. He has served on the grand juries of fifty-four international film festivals, including Cannes, Venice, Montreal, Locarno, Taormina, San Francisco, and Sundance.

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