



*Where
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CURIOSITY
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LGBT Study, Research & Learning



- **Arts & Media**
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the leather boys

Eliot
George



ALLIED FILM MAKERS present

**DIRK
BOGARDE**

**SYLVIA
SYMS**

IN MICHAEL RELPH
AND BASIL DEARDEN'S
Production

VICTIM

Also Starring

DENNIS PRICE



Original Screenplay by Janet Green and John McCormick
Produced by Michael Relph • Directed by Basil Dearden



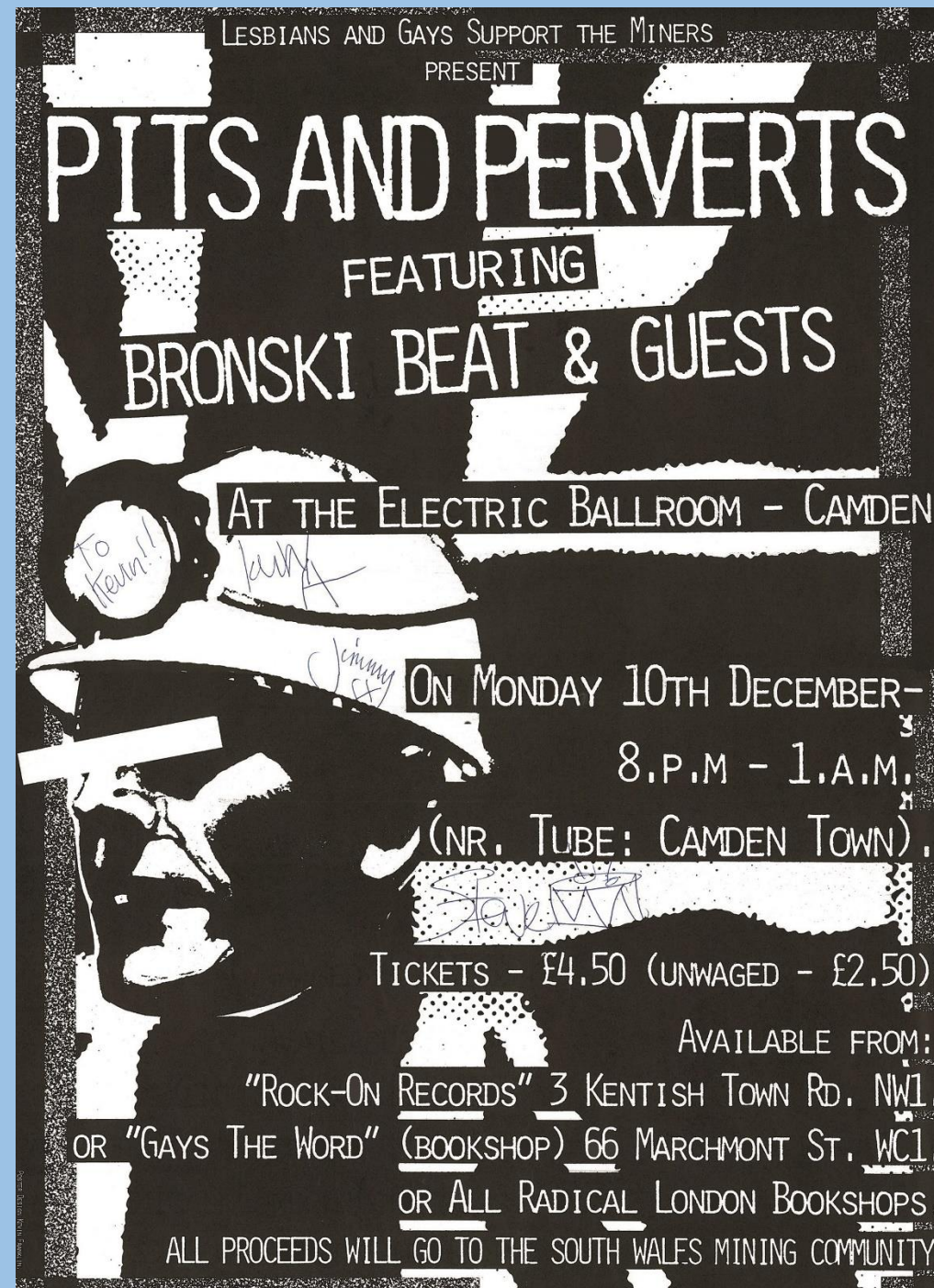
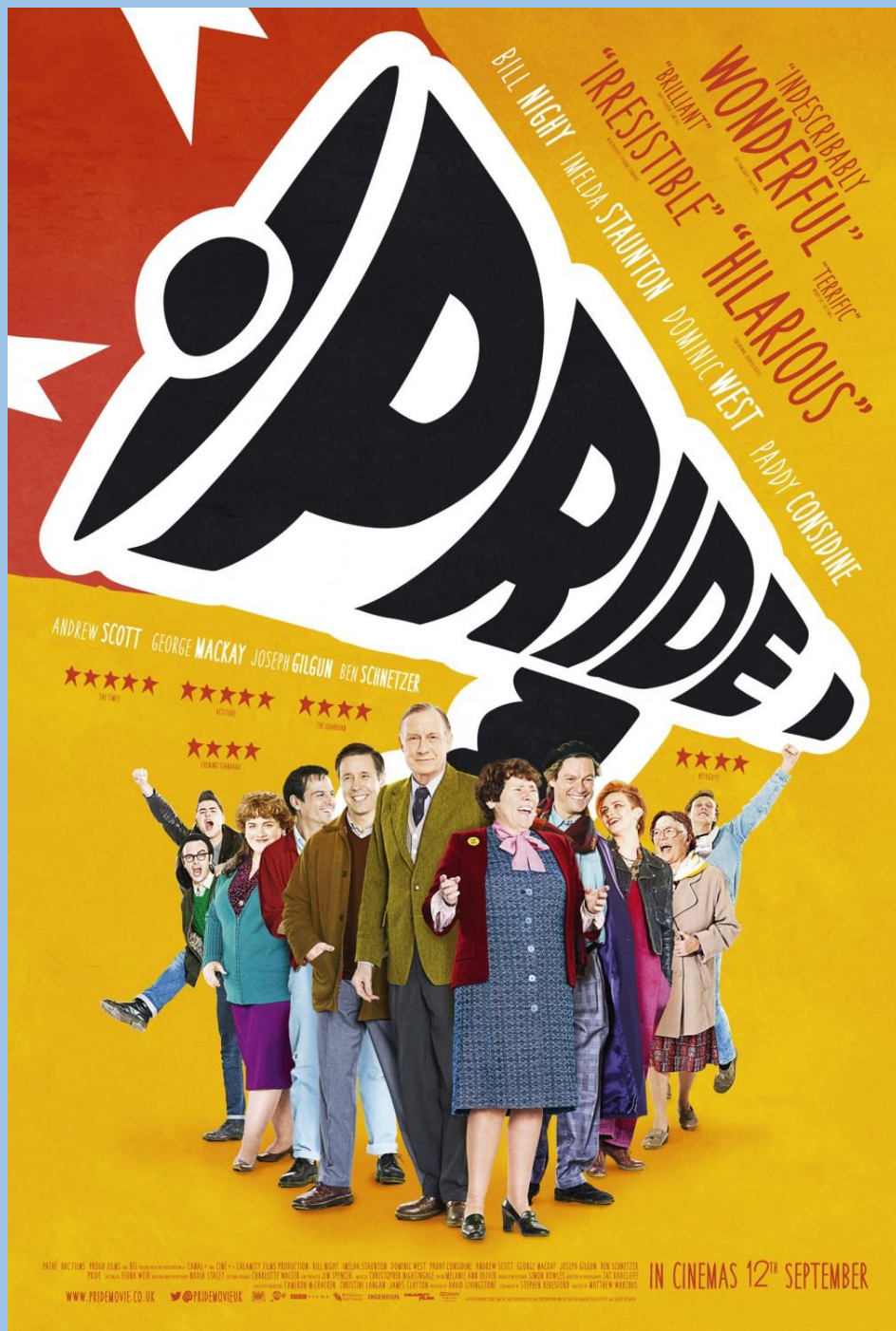
GAYS AND FILM

Gay representation has been a part of cinema since the 1910s, and attempted to make 'visible the invisible'. The British 1960s 'kitchen-sink' realist films were some of the first examples to actively explore homosexuality as a 'social problem'. The gritty 'real' life backdrop of **Victim** (1961), **A Taste of Honey** (1961) and **The Leather Boys** (1963) served as a reminder of the difficulties many gay men faced in 'coming out' and being accepted in the 'swinging sixties'. These films sought to educate audiences about society's issues and bring about change.

Victim (1961) was a suspense thriller film that explored the blackmailing of gay men. It starred actor Dirk Bogarde as a married barrister struggling with his sexuality, and was the first British film to use the word 'homosexual'. It changed the public's perception and attitude towards homosexuality, and has been cited as having an impact upon the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. In contrast, **The Leather Boys** (1963) based on the book by Gillian Freeman (writing as Eliot George) was about the relationship between two bikers Dick and Reggie.

The social realist tradition continues more recently in films like **Pride** (2014) based upon the Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) 1984-85 movement and their work in the Dulais

Welsh mining community during the UK Miners' Strike. The 'Pits and Perverts' Electric Ballroom benefit gig was documented in the film.



GAY HISTORY & SCANDALS

Gay history documents a number of scandals in newspapers which offered some particularly negative representations. Journalist **Peter Wildeblood (1923-98)** was the first person since Oscar Wilde to admit in a British court that he was gay. He was arrested along with Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, Michael Pitt-Rivers and two RAF servicemen for having consensual sex at a party on the Beaulieu estate in 1954. Wildeblood and Pitt-Rivers were sentenced to 18 months in prison, and Montagu for 12 months. The public trial led to a Government inquiry resulting in the Wolfenden Report which recommended the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1957. Had it not been for the bravery of Peter Wildeblood standing up in court and documenting his experiences – it is debatable whether the law would have been changed as early as 1967.

In April 1963 the Sunday Mirror printed an article entitled ‘How to Spot a Possible Homo’, containing a list of possible features to look out for, such as “...*those who dye their hair, touch up their lips, and walk with a gay little wiggle*”. The 1980s reawakened some of this tabloid homophobia with the fears surrounding HIV/AIDS as a ‘gay plague’. The press contained cartoons and stories reinforcing prejudice towards gay men, with ‘deviant’ behaviour being blamed for the spread of the disease. Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, James Anderton, said in an interview that gay men were “*swirling around in a cesspool of their own*

making” (December 1986). The Terrence Higgins Trust was quick to respond to the crisis and produced many posters and leaflets designed to promote safe sex within the gay community.

GAYS AND SPORTS

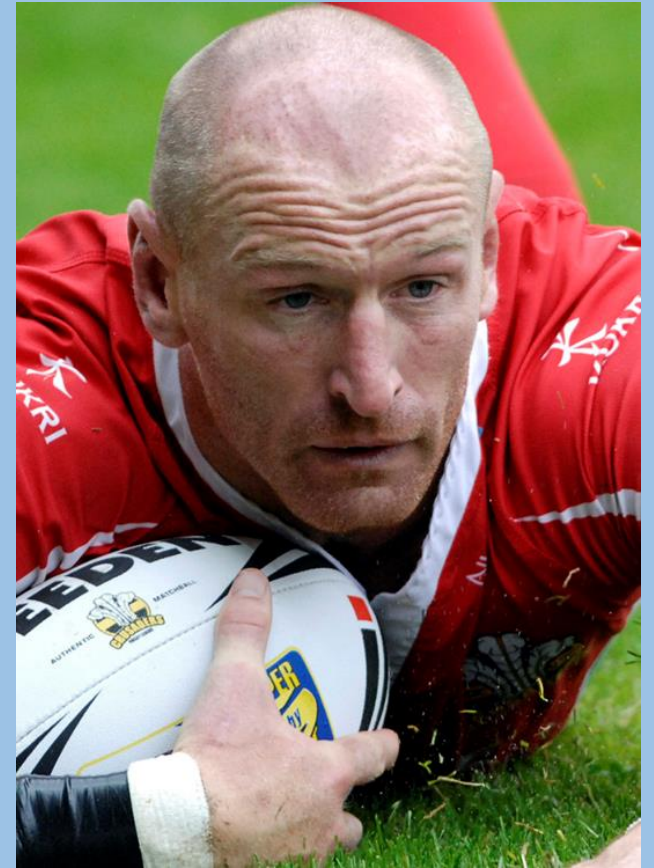
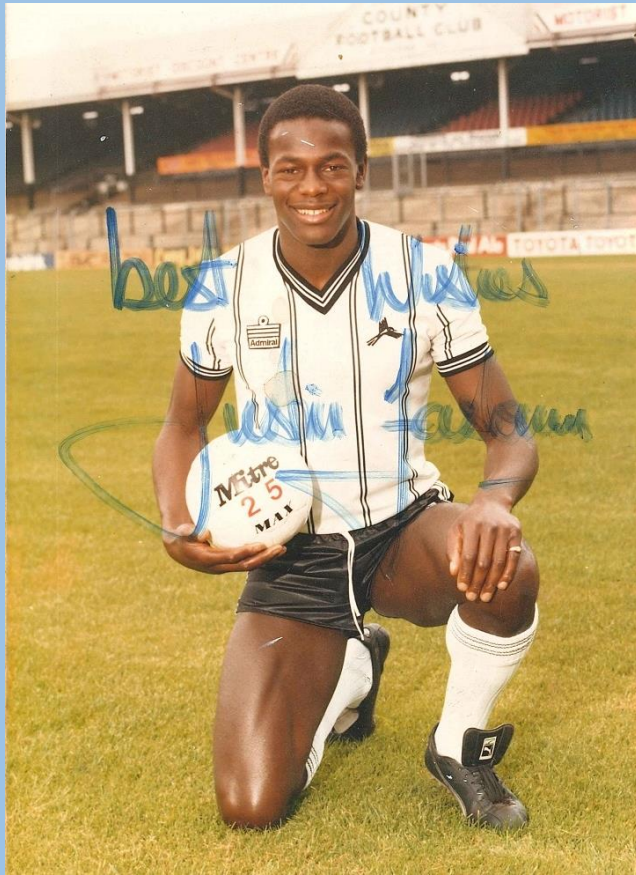
Sporting achievements have been celebrated at the **Gay Olympics** and **Gay Games** since 1982 in San Francisco. Openly gay men and women in competitive professional sports have not always been respectfully treated. British figure skater and Olympic Gold medalist **John Curry** was outed by the press just before he won Gold at the 1976 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck. He often spoke about being “haunted” by the gay tag and faced homophobic jibes about being a ‘fairy’ when he was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 1976. He died in 1994 from an AIDS related illness.

Justin Fashanu was Britain’s first openly gay professional footballer, playing for teams such as Norwich City, Notts County, Manchester City and West Ham United. In 1990 he came out to The Sun newspaper who ran with the story on its front page as "£1m Football Star: I AM GAY". Fashanu committed suicide in 1998 and today he is honoured by Brighton’s The Justin Fashanu All-stars football team, which was created by the Justin Campaign promoting the inclusion of openly gay players in football.

International Rugby player **Gareth Thomas**, nicknamed ‘Alfie’, came out in 2009. He was the first openly gay professional rugby union player. Since retiring from the sport he has gone on to be a supporter of gay rights issues, including Stonewall, and has appeared on a number of

reality television programmes. **Keegan Hirst** (Batley Bulldogs) was the first British rugby player to come out as gay while playing the sport.

Steven Davies was the first professional cricket player to come out in 2013, playing for England and Surrey CCC. Other positive LGBT role models in sports include Tom Daley, Casey Stoney, Michael Sam, Robbie Rogers, Jonny Gascoigne and Ian Thorpe.



GAYS AND TELEVISION

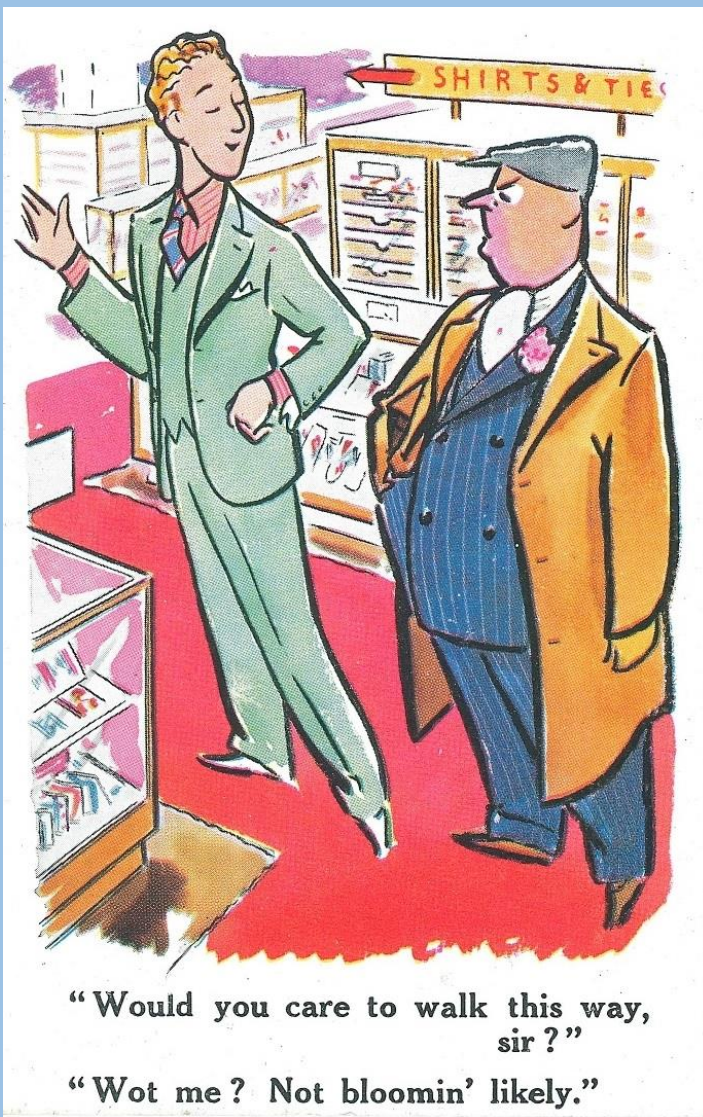
The first major depiction of homosexuality was in the ITV Play of the Week 'South' made by Granada television (1959). The play explored an intense love affair between two soldiers serving in the American Civil War. The leading role of the exiled Polish officer Lt Jan Wicziewsky was played by Peter Wyngarde, who would later go on to create Jason King with distinctive campness in the action-adventure series Department S (1969-70) and his own spin-off Jason King (1971-72).



The first gay kiss on British television was in the BBC-2 production of the Prospect Theatre Company's *Edward II* (1970) with Ian McKellen as King Edward. The first lesbian kiss was in the BBC-2 play 'Girls' as part of the Second City Firsts play (1974) made by BBC Pebble Mill in Birmingham with Alison Steadman and Myra Frances.

Saucy Seaside postcards of the 1950s poked fun at gay comedy stereotypes (often with a homophobic undercurrent). The 'trouble with the Pansies!' Donald McGill postcard portrays the effeminate 'comedy queer' which has appeared in many films, television and radio programmes. The seaside comedy humour of the postcards continued in the BBC series *Are You Being Served?* (1972-85) with the gay character Mr. Humphries, played by John Inman. Confusion would later arise around the character's sexuality when during interviews Inman would deny the character's gayness, despite much evidence to the contrary presented within the TV series. 1970s comedian Larry Grayson presented an openly gay image on television with his catchphrases "*Shut that door!*" and "*What a gay day!*".





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