

Gregg Araki is 59, and so is my mom. That's almost 60! That's wild! How can the badboy of new queer cinema be the same age as *my mother*, a woman who was not upset when *Green Book* won best picture? How can they both be almost SIXTY?!?!? This does not make sense to me. I must investigate.

Araki is one of the directors associated with the “new queer cinema” of the early 90s. New Queer Cinema was a very loose movement, more a name given to like minded filmmakers responding to the same questions than any sort of organized style. When people talk about New Queer Cinema they’re talking about Todd Haynes, and Araki, and *Paris is Burning*, and *Swoon*. It’s a response to AIDS, and to queer theory, and queer nation.

Araki isn't my guy, (Todd Haynes is my guy), but I've always respected him, and he's been doing a lot of press because he has a new show *Now Apocalypse*, which I haven't seen yet but I want to, because it has the kid of *Teen Wolf*, and because it's Gregg Araki. He makes cool weird movies, and I'm all about cool weird movies. I've been thinking about his career, and New Queer Cinema in general, and what it means today, when there are so many more (but not enough!) movies about people who aren't straight.

Gregg Araki's most iconic film is probably *The Living End*, which I saw once, about five years ago, and only remember in fragments, but oh what fragments they are. It's about two HIV+ men who kill a cop and go on the run. It's a road movie. Lots of very phallic guns. All sex and death. Very low budget. Very punk rock.

Araki's most widely seen film is probably *Mysterious Skin*, which I saw once, like nine years ago, but I still remember specific shots — the close up on the cereal and milk. I remember renting it in from Blockbuster video to watch on a night when my parents were out of the house. I think I tried reading the book after watching the movie, but never got through it, and didn't feel like I needed anything more from that story.

Mysterious Skin stars Brady Corbet, who directed the deeply weird film *Vox Lux*. I saw *Vox Lux* exactly 96 days ago, and I still don't know what I think of it. It was stylish filmmaking, with messy ideas, and Natalie Portman deserves an Oscar for the sheer audacity of that performance.

Yesterday I saw Gaspar Noé's *Climax*, which is a wild wild film. It was a beautiful early spring day, and I left work half an hour early to catch the 4:50 screening, and making the time to see this movie on the big screen was one of the best choices I've made in ages. It's about a bunch of French dancers who get dosed with LSD and their party turns into a sex and death disaster.

(Corbet and Noé are straight people, as far as I can tell from wikipedia, but I'm bringing up these films because they feel influenced by New Queer Cinema, and because I've been thinking about them lately. I'm trying to write this zine in a single afternoon on my work computer, trying to capture a single afternoon's worth of thinking. I should mention new movies by cool new young queer directors, but I can't think of anything I want to say off the top of my head. Is Angela Robinson still young? We should all talk about Angela Robinson more.)

I remember being excited about Araki's movie *Kaboom* before it came out, because it sounded absolutely crazy. Describing the plot is tricky, because I don't remember it very well, and also it was weird. It's about college kids, and one of them was named Thor, and there was a lot of sex, and possibly the end of the world? I didn't manage to see it until it was out on DVD, what must have been eight years ago. It was absolutely crazy, and I can't remember the end, but I remember the end was A LOT. I remember that I loved that this movie existed, even if I didn't love everything about the experience of watching this movie. Knowing that this movie existed made me feel better about the world.

A couple of days ago I almost got in a fight on twitter about *Love, Simon*, a dull movie that's promoting actively bad boring thinking. I have friends who really love that movie, and it's just, so bad for me. It's a story about a rich white boy who is just SO NORMAL except for the fact that he's gay, and being gay causes him a lot of anxiety, because he is so invested in the idea of being normal. He's just like everyone else, except for the fact that he's gay! It isn't a big deal at all! I hate this fucking movie!

No one in a Gregg Araki movie is just like everyone else. I haven't seen all of his movies, but I feel comfortable making that sort of blanket statement. He is not interested in making movies about people who are totally normal except for how they're gay. He's interested in like, the exact opposite of that.

Right now it feels like we're living through an exciting explosion of lgbt representation. Five of this past year's best picture nominees had queer people in them! (Which counts, even if three of those movies are bad, and one of those queer people is Mary Cheney). I love that there are so many movies with lgbt content, but a lot of those movies lack what I really love from New Queer Cinema.

Araki [talked to Vulture recently](#), and I want to share a quote from that. He said, “the thing about New Queer Cinema is it was never really orchestrated. It was just an accident. It was just a bunch of young artists really being impacted by AIDS and really like, “Holy shit, this is fucking insane what’s happening right now.” All of us, as artists, processing that and responding to it. ... That’s queer cinema. Queer characters in movies is not queer cinema.”

QUEER
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We're living through some fucking shit right now. The world is a scary place! Late capitalism is crumbling around us, the government (never to be trusted) is particularly dystopian, and we're living in an increasingly science-fiction universe. I want movies about queer people dealing with ALL THAT, not movies about boring suburban white boys who are upset that they can't be normal like everyone else.

That's like, half of the argument I want to make. Homonormativity is bad and boring and we as queer people should demand more from our films. It's 2019 — it isn't enough for a movie to be about a gay person. It should still be an interesting movie! It should still have something to say! DON'T GET STUCK IN BORING STRAIGHT PEOPLE STYLES.

The other argument I want to make is that watching weird movies will make you a better person. Which, obviously, is a bullshit thing to say, but also, a thing I kind of believe. Watch weird movies. Watch movies that take risks. Watch movies that don't make sense the first time you see them, or the second, or the third time, or ever.

“New Queer Cinema” was by and about people who aren’t straight, but the other thing that drew it into a movement is that they were all making stylish, exciting films. They weren’t making nice little movies about gay people, they were making some weird fucked up shit. Which is an important thing to do! It isn’t enough to have something smart to say, you have to say it with style.

This makes me think of something John Waters (queer cinema god) said, about how millennials might be doing interesting shit, but without any fashion. Hacktivists are cool but no part of their thing involves dressing up, which is a problem for him, and for me. We should bring down the old world in style. We should be queer in style.

So leave work early and go see a French film about sex and death. Have your Oscar winning actress do the most ridiculous accent. Cast a tv show with CW hunks and have them make out. Don't want to be normal. See more art movies.