

FILM

The famous cinematic journey down the yellow brick road seems to have been taken away from us by this cruel modern world.

Once the exclusive province of the queer, the queer-at-heart and those too naive to recognize the layers of gayness that permeate the entire affair, the colorful, giddy classic *The Wizard of Oz* now seems most prominently appreciated as a reclaimed stoner flick. (The potheads found out you could turn down the sound and cue up Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* to achieve an eerie synchronicity, apparently an earth-shattering experience when one is properly "relaxed.")

Now, instead of being *The Movie That Indirectly Inspired Stonewall*, it's *The Movie That Indirectly Inspired the Munchies*.

The stoner version relies on home technology that didn't exist when this writer was a youngster, though. Remember the pre-VCR days when we had to wait for the networks to show old movies? Well, I'm proud to be a member of what was possibly the very last generation to experience *The Wizard* as an annual televised event.

No amount of commercial interruption could have diminished the prospect of its broadcast in the eyes of my feverishly anticipatory self between the ages of 4 and 11. It inspired a sense of expectation, a devotion unmatched even by the routinely scheduled and, therefore, less special television I staunchly refused to miss: *Wonder Woman* and *The Golden Girls*.

My blissfully ignorant parents had never heard of gaydar; if they had, I picture a sort of gaydar-alarm going off at top volume to the tune of "Over the Rainbow."

Of course, all of us—gay, straight and everything in between—were affected by the film when we were children, but when it comes to the formative-gay-experience factor, it wasn't

about just *liking* it but about *loving* it to the point of identifying in a way that could make one quite reckless.

For example, how else can a young lad unabashedly descend on his playmates wearing a Burger King crown, waving a "wand" (actually a depleted paper towel roll) and trilling, "I'm Glinda, the Good Witch of the North" than if his head is somewhere in the magical land of Oz? This is according to the experience of, um...a friend of mine.

The film plays like a secret metaphorical preparatory manual for children on the common-places of queer experience: Oz is like a great big gay bar where a little girl from Kansas, who happens to be a fag hag ahead of her time, learns all about strictly platonic friendships with polite yet irrepressible men who have a ready show tune on hand for every occasion.

She runs across a gruff-on-the-outside, tenderhearted-on-the-inside "bear" (the Cowardly Lion) and queens prissy (the Tin Man), dizzy (Glinda) and bitchy (the Wicked Witch

Ding-dong!

Come out, come out, wherever you are for *Sing-a-Long Wizard of Oz*

BY CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN



What a bitchy queen won't do for a good pair of shoes. *Sing-a-Long Wizard of Oz* Gay Night, complete with costume contest, is April 17.

of the West, who's mean to Dorothy because she's cuter and has better shoes).

It's, frankly, an invaluable resource for gay children who may otherwise learn too late about the special appeal of tiny little dogs or that getting groomed, primped and made over beforehand is vital, even if one has come to a

city to obtain one's missing vital organs, or that striking up a rousing sing-along is a perfectly appropriate way of coping with one's fear of evisceration by lions, tigers and bears (oh my).

Speaking of sing-alongs, the time has come for those of us who know what it feels like for the world not to understand one's childhood craving for sparkly red footwear (or perhaps a later inclination to follow in the footsteps of the Tin Man by hitting up random strangers for lubrication) to come together in a context that will actually encourage us to belt along to our favorite *Wizard of Oz* numbers.

After the unequivocal success a few years ago of *Sing-a-Long Sound of Music* (I'm told that flick has a few gay fans, too), Cinema 21 is bringing to Portland a sing-along version of the great and powerful Oz April 9 to 18.

Here's the best part: April 17 is Gay Night, featuring a costume contest. Not only will you once again get to follow the yellow brick road, you and your friends will also be following that on-screen bouncing ball to an ecstatic height you've only previously experienced by "ruining" the movie for fussy fellow viewers who simply couldn't appreciate the heart and soul you pour into your own stunning renditions.

And you'll do it in a gingham dress. Have fun, munchkins. [7]

SING-A-LONG WIZARD OF OZ plays 7 p.m., plus 2 p.m. weekend matinees, April 9 to 18 at Cinema 21, 616 N.W. 21st Ave. Gay Night is 7 p.m. April 17. Tickets are \$10 for opening night, \$12-\$16.50 all other times from the box office or www.ticketweb.com. See Page 44 for a special contest only for Just Out readers!

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