

# Chinese viewers balk at Bohemian Rhapsody censorship

By Yanan Wang and Shanshan Wang  
The Associated Press

**B**EIJING — A huge fan of rock legends Queen, Peng Yanzi rushed to see *Bohemian Rhapsody*, the biopic about the band's late lead singer, Freddie Mercury, while he was travelling in Britain last October.

It was a touching film that made him cry hard, Peng says. He loved it enough to watch it a second time in his home city of Guangzhou after the film garnered a surprise China release.

But the version of *Bohemian Rhapsody* he saw in Guangzhou was notably different from the original. Moviegoers in China say key scenes about Mercury's sexuality have been either abruptly muted or cut altogether.

"The cut scenes really affect the movie," said Peng, a Chinese LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) rights activist.

"The film talks about how (Mercury) became himself, and his sexuality is an important part of becoming who he was."

Scenes that were deleted include one in which Mercury reveals to his long-time partner that he is not heterosexual. In the part of the film where Mercury tells the band that he has AIDS, the dialogue goes silent.

"It's a pity" the scenes were removed, said Hua Zile, chief editor of VCLGBT, an LGBT-themed account with more than a million followers on Weibo, one of China's top social-media platforms.

"This kind of deletion weakens his gay identity. It's a bit disrespectful to his real experience and makes the character superficial," Hua said. "There is no growth and innermost being of him." Hua said he also watched both versions of the movie, in the semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong, which enjoys greater freedoms from censorship than



**KEY SCENES CLIPPED.** A customer looks at a movie poster for the film *Bohemian Rhapsody* at a movie theater in Beijing. Moviegoers in China say the version of the *Bohemian Rhapsody* shown in Chinese theaters erases mentions of Freddie Mercury's sexuality. The biopic on the lead singer of the British rock band Queen omitted a same-sex kiss and lacked scenes in which Mercury reveals he's not straight and that he has AIDS. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

mainland China, and the Chinese city of Guangzhou.

The missing scenes confused some moviegoers. Su Lei read Mercury's biography online before watching the movie so she could better understand the plot and character development.

"Now it's a very open era, influenced by some American and British TV dramas. People now can understand and accept this," said Su, who works for an accounting firm. She called the film "inspiring" and said cutting the gay content was "unnecessary."

Lu, a freelancer in Shanghai who asked to be identified only by his family name, watched the original version online after seeing the movie in a Chinese theater, where he said he found parts of the dialogue incoherent.

Lu said that despite some lines being erased, it was still obvious the main character is gay. "But the movie has been deleted like this, which affects its entirety," he said.

While LGBT content is generally

less taboo than other topics that Chinese authorities deem sensitive, same-sex relationships are still virtually absent from mainstream media.

In 2017, a government-affiliated internet TV association warned streaming content providers against depicting homosexuality, labelling it an "abnormal" sexual behavior. A similar move last year from Weibo provoked an outcry that prompted the website to backtrack and state that a "cleanup of games and cartoons will no longer target gay content."

When Chinese video site Mango TV livestreamed the Academy Awards in February, *Bohemian Rhapsody* lead actor Rami Malek's speech was subtitled to read "special group" when in fact he said "gay man."

Mango TV also censored two LGBT-themed performances during last year's Eurovision song contest, causing Eurovision to terminate its partnership with the Chinese broadcaster in the middle of the competition season.

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**FORCED INCARCERATION.** Oregon's Japanese Americans, an episode of *Oregon Experience*, is premiering on Monday, April 22 at 9:00pm on Oregon Public Broadcasting. The show follows the history of the Japanese community in Oregon, from its early pioneer beginnings to its forced incarceration during World War II (pictured). (Photos courtesy of the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience)

## New documentary explores the rich history, unjust treatment of Oregon Japanese Americans

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attorney Minoru Yasui, the first Japanese American admitted to the Oregon State Bar; Portland businessman and community activist George Nakata; former Oregon poet laureate Lawson Fusao Inada; and Matthew Stringer, executive director of the Four

Rivers Cultural Center in Ontario, Oregon.

*Oregon's Japanese Americans* premieres Monday, April 22 at 9:00pm on Oregon Public Broadcasting. Those without access to OPB are able to watch online at the same time at <[www.opb.org/JapaneseAmericans](http://www.opb.org/JapaneseAmericans)>.

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