

GLAAD Eye on the Media Nov. 29, 2005

GLAAD CALLS FOR MEDIA ACCURACY IN REPORTING ON “TRANSAMERICA,” “BREAKFAST ON PLUTO” AND “RENT”

Slate of films featuring transgender characters leads to misuse of terminology.

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) today called on the nation's entertainment media to use accurate terminology when referring to the transgender characters in the new films “Transamerica,” “Breakfast on Pluto” and “Rent”—avoiding usage of the words “transvestite,” “transsexual” and “sex change”.

Here are the preferred descriptions of the transgender characters in these three high-profile films:

“TRANSAMERICA”: Felicity Huffman won a Best Actress award at the Tribeca Film Festival for her role as Bree in “Transamerica.” There is early Oscar buzz for her portrayal of a male-to-female transgender person who is about to undergo sex reassignment surgery (the preferred term to “sex change”). Bree should always be referred to as she. While “transsexual” is the historical medical term to describe Bree, many transgender people prefer “transgender.”

“BREAKFAST ON PLUTO”: In Neil Jordan's period piece, actor Cillian Murphy plays Patrick, who moves to London, dresses as a woman, and chooses the name Kitten. At one point in the film, Kitten describes herself as “transvestite,” but that is a product of the times. By today's standards, once Patrick transitions to living as Kitten full time, the character should always be referred to as she and as a “transgender person.”

“RENT”: The character of Angel (actor Wilson Jermaine Heredia) has been erroneously referred to in the media as a “transvestite,” a pejorative term that should be avoided. “Transvestite” is an outdated term for (primarily heterosexual) men who occasionally dress in women's clothing. The preferred term is “cross-dresser.” But “cross-dresser” doesn't accurately describe Angel, who could be considered a “drag queen,” a gay man dressing as a woman for entertainment purposes or out of a sense of camp. Angel may also be considered “transgender,” since Angel's gender expression is fluid, and his friends use both male and female pronouns when referring to him.

Please note that it is never appropriate to put quotation marks around either a transgender person's chosen name or the pronoun that reflects his or her gender identity.

RESOURCES:

For more information, GLAAD's Media Reference Guide offers a transgender glossary of terms, available online at: <http://glaad.org/media/guide/transfocus.php>

National Center for Transgender Equality
<http://www.nctequality.org/>

"Transamerica" official site
<http://www.transamerica-movie.com/>

"Breakfast on Pluto" official site
<http://www.sonyclassics.com/breakfastonpluto/>

"Rent" official site
<http://www.sonypictures.com/movies/rent/>

RELATED ARTICLES:

Newsday — November 28, 2005
"Transamerica' Transforms Felicity Huffman"
<http://www.newsday.com/entertainment/nyc-felicity1127,0,2652546.story?coll=ny-entertainment-headlines>

USA Today — November 21, 2005
"Felicity Huffman Sitting Pretty"
http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2005-11-21-huffman_x.htm?POE=LIFISVA

Associated Press — November 7, 2005
'Housewives' come out for 'Transamerica'
http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20051107/ap_en_mo/transamerica_premiere

Extra — November 7, 2005
"Huffman Reveals Real-Life Identity Crisis"
<http://extratv.warnerbros.com/v2/news/1105/7/3/text.html>

ComingSoon.net – November 14, 2005
"Cillian Murphy: Dude Looks Like a Lady"
<http://comingsoon.net/news/topnews.php?id=11970>

New York Daily News — November 13, 2005
"Troubles of his own: The flamboyant hero of Neil Jordan's latest film can't be bothered about political violence"
<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/story/364742p-310614c.html>

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The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.