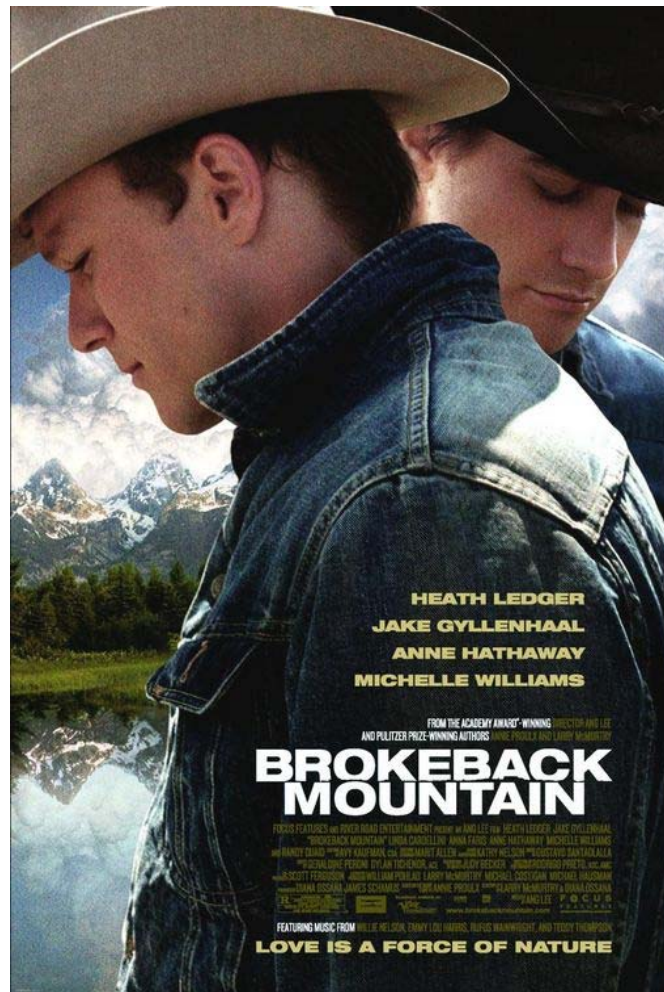


## **Brokeback Mountain Film Review:**

***“This film is not the year’s Best Picture. It’s only going to win the Golden Globes and Oscars because of politics...It’s all about politics” ....Unknown woman***

***“There was some open space between what he knew and what he tried to believe, but nothing could be done about it, and if you can’t fix it you’ve got to stand it.”...Annie Proulx***

**Love Is A Force Of Nature...**



**An epic love story set against the sweeping vistas of Wyoming and Texas, Brokeback Mountain tells the story of two young men - a ranch-hand and a rodeo cowboy - who meet in the summer of 1963, and unexpectedly forge a lifelong connection, one whose complications, joys and tragedies provide a testament to the endurance and power of love...Focus Features**



Before I get into my review of *Brokeback Mountain* I want to replay the conversation I heard from a couple sitting directly behind me at a local multi-plex. We were both watching the film's end credits and I could not help but overhear their brief, but telling exchange.

**Woman: “I can’t believe they gave a Golden Globe Nomination to Michelle Williams”...**

**Man: “Yeah, she was barely in the film and hardly did anything”...**

**Woman: “It’s politics that’s why she got it. Hey, did I miss anything while I went to the bathroom”...**

**Man: “No, just the part where Ennis got divorced from his wife. Nothing special or good about it.”**

**Woman: “This film is not the year’s Best Picture. It’s only going to win the Golden Globes and Oscars because of politics...It’s all about politics.”**

Yes, after watching *Brokeback Mountain* and then seeing all the hype and hoopla from film critics and watching the film be labeled as the front runner to sweep the Golden Globes, Film Critics Awards, SAG, DGA and Oscars, I would have to reluctantly agree that it is about politics. I firmly believe that *Brokeback Mountain* is a well made, touching and engaging male love story. But is the film all that? Is the film so much better than *Cinderella Man*, *King Kong*, *Syriana*, *Munich*, *Capote*, *The Brave New World*, etc.,. The answer is most likely a resounding no—in my opinion. Its just that it is hard to separate appreciating *Brokeback* on its own merits when it is garnering a lot of press and media accolades for non-stellar standout acting scenes, ordinary writing and not a highly interesting story. I get the fact that what makes *Brokeback Mountain* more important than say watching and memorizing all the combined seasons of *Queer as Folk* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, is its persistent and consistent efforts to try to never mention the word homosexual or have its lead characters of Ennis Del Mar, Keith Ledger, and Jack Twist, Jake Gyllenheim acknowledge they are gay. Thus a typical or straight movie viewer is less

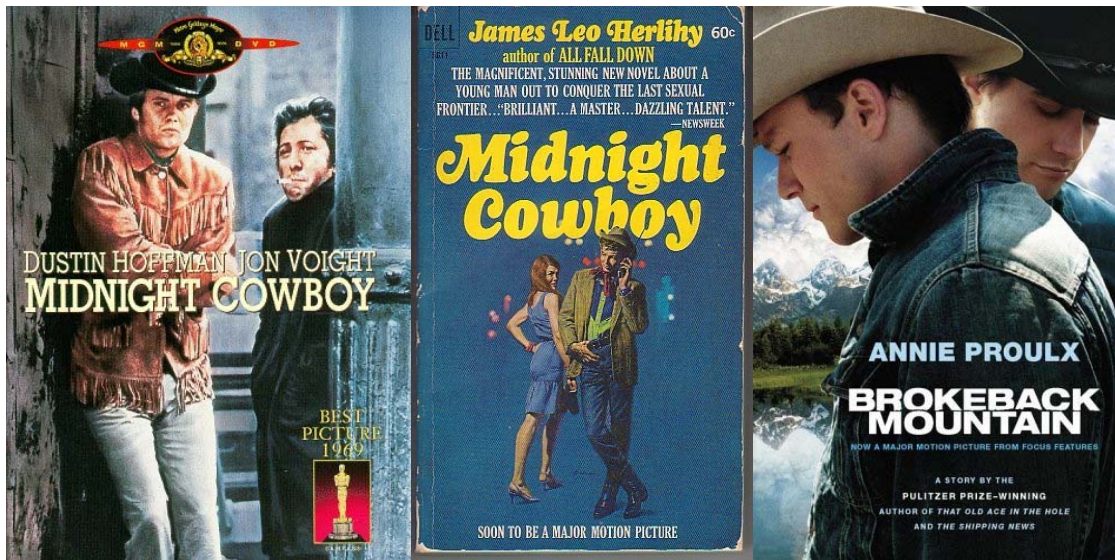


pre-disposed to reject *Brokeback* as a normal romance. Jack and Ennis are trapped in a deadly homo lynching 1960's West--that does not understand them or their love for each other. I would've bought much of *Brokeback*'s story and liked the film on many levels until Ang Lee did something so contrived and silly that it defies explanation—even more so than his inept and myopic directing of *The Hulk*.

At some point in the early part of *Brokeback* we see that Jack and Ennis have not seen each other for several years since their brief—yet passionate love affair atop Brokeback Mountain. And when Jack does finally track down Ennis, the secret and only true love of his life, they proceed to wildly kiss each other under the stairs of Ennis's crib. This impulsive act of unbridled manly lust is caught by Ennis's wife Alma, Michelle Williams. If Alma does not see Ennis tongue down Jack, then she would probably have never suspected or flat out known her husband was gay—or on the “**Yosemite Sam Down Low**”. I can't believe that Ennis was so overtaken with emotion that he would kiss a man in by his house, in broad daylight and in the near vicinity of a public laundry room. Why go through the trouble of being afraid to expose who they really are? When a big public kiss will destroy their lives on the spot. This scene is important because if Alma does not see Ennis and Jack's kiss, then she would not have divorced Ennis. This in turn would mean Jack would have been forced to accept that he and Ennis had to hide their true feelings—instead of blaming Ennis for not running away with him to live together--after Ennis was no longer married to Alma. With no divorce--*Brokeback* is just a film about infidelity.

You do have to highly respect Keith Ledger's and Jake Gyllenhaal's performance in *Brokeback*. But one does have to question how Michelle Williams got Golden Globe nominations for doing absolutely nothing. Michelle barely had one dramatic scene in *Brokeback* and it did not deserve her getting a nomination at any awards show on the planet. But it is the piling on praise from critics and winning shiny statues on awards shows that will make a lot of regular people—the ones who sat behind me—think that the no one in *Brokeback* got them legitimately. It's almost ironic that Hollywood sets itself up to be the fall guy for conservatives. When surely *Passion of Christ* should have been nominated in all the major Oscar categories and not lesser ones like best cinematography or make-up. It will be too silly to suddenly see *Brokeback* get a zillion nominations and then win them as well. No one in Hollywood would dare say *Brokeback* was mediocre or less than deserving.





There was another historic male bonding and culturally revolutionary film thirty plus years ago. It was called *Midnight Cowboy* with Dustin Hoffman a John Voight. It was the only Hollywood film to be rated “X” and still win Oscars in 1970 for writing, directing and best picture. Ironically, Hoffman and Voight lost best actor to another real cowboy legend. John Wayne won best actor for his gritty performance in *True Grit*. Just like in *Brokeback*, John Voight played Joe Buck—an ordinary cowboy--the greatest image, symbol or icon of American or Western manhood. It was a cowboy that came to tame the big urban landscape and in the end he was forced to do things to make money and survive that no real hetro-cowboy would want to unless he got kicked in the head by a bull. The point in *Midnight Cowboy* was to stand our beliefs on their head and make us deal with issues like male bonding and traditional ideas of a “real” man. Dustin Hoffman and Voight gave electric and exciting performances and the script’s writing truly captured the time of a changing America. No longer were the simple *Leave It To Beaver* lifestyle films going to suffice for 1969 audiences. Just being a rough, tough man like John Wayne—like Joe Buck—no longer guaranteed one could conquer a fast changing world.

We end up thirty-seven years later with Hollywood on the verge of giving another sweeping round of Oscars to another momentous societal and cultural male redefining film. The only difference is that *Brokeback Mountain* is no *Midnight Cowboy* in the acting, directing or writing departments. *Brokeback Mountain* is surely a meaningful and serious film that I strongly recommend one seeing. But I do also greatly understand that insightful woman sitting behind me that also thought sincerely that *Brokeback Mountain* was “okay—but not all that”. There will come a time in the near future when a homosexual romantic film will be accepted as easily or treated as normally as a heterosexual romance film. And when that happens everyone will attribute *Brokeback* as a pivotal film that broke down many homophobic barriers. I give *Brokeback Mountain* three cheesecakes out of five.

Sincerely,

*David L. Watts a.k.a. Money Train*





