

“Lightyear” - The Battle for LGBTQIA+ Representation Behind Disney/Pixar’s Failed Blockbuster

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Abstract : In this work, we intend to explore the impact that the film "Lightyear" (2022) had on the social context of its production, distribution, and reception. This film, produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and Pixar Animation Studios, depicts the story of Buzz Lightyear, a Space Ranger from which the character of the same name in the "Toy Story" film franchise is based. This prequel was predicted to be the blockbuster of the year, but it was a financial fiasco and the subject of numerous controversies, which also caused it to be drowned out by the film "Minions: The Rise of Gru" (2022). The reason for its failure is not based on the film's narrative or quality but on its controversial context for being a commitment to LGBTQIA+ representation in an unexpected way, by featuring a same-sex couple and showing a kiss shared by them. This representation cost Disney distribution in countries against LGBTQIA+ representation in media and involved Disney in major disagreements with fans and politicians, especially for being a direct opposition to the Florida House Bill 1557, also called the “Don't Say Gay” bill. Many major companies have taken a stand against this law because it jeopardizes the safety of the LGBTQIA+ community, and, although Disney initially cut the kiss off the film, pressure from the staff and audience resulted in unprecedented progress. For featuring a brief homosexual kiss, its exhibition was banned in several countries and discouraged by the same public that was previously the focus of Disney's attention, as this is a conservative “family-friendly” branded company. We believe it is relevant to study the case of "Lightyear" because it is a work that raises awareness and promotes representation of communities affected during the dark times while less legislation is being approved to protect the rights and safety of queer people.

Keywords : Don't Say Gay” bill, gender stereotypes, LGBTQIA+ representation, lightyear, Disney/Pixar

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