

How gay comedy *Love, Simon* breaks boundaries by playing it safe

Notes & Cues:

Article:

"Adorable" is not a word we often use when discussing LGBT cinema, even at its most swooningly romantic. *Love, Simon* is a different proposition in pretty much every respect. Like *Call Me by Your Name*, it tells the story of a winsome 17-year-old boy awakening to his alternative sexuality, but Berlanti's decidedly un-queer film was made for malls and multiplexes.

So why does *Love, Simon* feel, in its own uncool way, momentous? Partly, of course, it's because the Fox release is the first major-studio film ever to centre on young gay romance. But there are a number of ways *Love, Simon* could have been styled, and Berlanti opts for the safest.

And there's something strangely defiant—subversive, even—in that safeness: an assertion of mainstream identity that says LGBT storytelling has earned the right to be as conventional and as unconflicted as its fluffiest straight counterpart.

The film might be over-idealising a world in which youthful homosexuality still meets with ugly opposition in many cultures, and underselling the personal difficulty of coming out for some nervously closeted high-schoolers. As Simon tells his digital penpal, he ultimately knows his friends and family will embrace him either way.

Others might well greet it with a shrug, but that may itself be a kind of victory, or at least a turning point. If, years from now, *Love, Simon* is remembered—only for having preceded the lot of cornball feelgood crowdpleasers about LGBT characters, then Berlanti's adorable film will have done its job.

Summary: