# RuPaul, Madonna, Bowie, Elton, Alan Turing... let's hear it for our heroes in Pride Month



It's Pride Month so what better time to celebrate our heroes and icons? People like Madonna and RuPaul, who not only embody the spirit of resilience and creativity but also underscore the ongoing struggle for rights and visibility within pop culture. And look pretty good while doing it.

Chief among our icons would be Alan Turing, the brilliant mathematician behind the successful decryption of the Enigma code during World War II. Turing's groundbreaking contributions to the war are often overshadowed by the tragic events that followed his conviction for homosexuality in 1952. After enduring chemical castration as punishment, Turing's life ended in 1954, at the young age of 41, reportedly by his own hand. His legacy, however, has been elevated posthumously; in 2013, Turing was granted a royal pardon, with later tributes such as his image appearing on the £50 banknote. We now have the Alan Turing law, which provides posthumous pardons for men convicted under historically oppressive laws.

Marsha P. Johnson was another pivotal figure in the LGBTQ+ rights movement. As a Black trans woman, Johnson became a symbol of resilience and activism during the Stonewall Uprising in 1969, which marked a turning point in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. Alongside Sylvia Rivera, she co-founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) to provide vital support to homeless LGBTQ+ youth.

Music and performance have also been vital in advancing LGBTQ+ visibility, with stars like Freddie Mercury and David Bowie playing crucial roles. Mercury captivated audiences with his powerful voice and flamboyant stage presence even if he maintained a level of privacy around his sexuality until late in his life. Embracing a profound bond with Jim Hutton, Mercury's later years were marked by both love and illness as he battled AIDS—a condition he only publicly acknowledged shortly before his death in 1991. His enduring influence was underscored in a 2024 survey where he was named the UK's top gay icon.

David Bowie, on the other hand, made headlines with his groundbreaking portrayal of Ziggy Stardust, a character that defied conventional gender and sexual norms. Bowie's openness regarding his bisexuality during the early 1970s, including his iconic declaration, 'I’m gay, and I always have been' resonated during a time when such admissions were rare and often dangerous.

Elton John has also played an instrumental role not only in the music industry but in the broader gay sense. With record sales surpassing 300 million, he has used his platform to advocate for equality and awareness of HIV/AIDS. His marriage to David Furnish signaled a significant shift towards normalisation and acceptance within society, particularly during a period when many LGBTQ+ people faced enormous backlash. His recognition with the Legion d'honneur in 2019 by French President Emmanuel Macron must say something.

Madonna also stands as a powerful ally to the LGBTQ+ community. Known for her promotion of sexual rights and personal freedom, she has been a staunch advocate for LGBTQ+ visibility with unexpected appearances at venues, such as the Stonewall Inn, to rally with statements like, 'Let us never forget the Stonewall riots!'

Lastly, RuPaul has emerged as a formidable figure of representation in the entertainment industry, primarily through his role in RuPaul's Drag Race, which has elevated countless drag queens to icon status. It has also highlighted issues of gender identity and race, advocating for voter registration within the LGBTQ+ community. Just a few of the gay icons we should use the upcoming Pride Month to celebrate. Loudly.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/lifestyle/madonna-rupaul-among-most-influential-35278375> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/24/enigma-codebreaker-alan-turing-royal-pardon> - In December 2013, Alan Turing, the renowned mathematician and World War II codebreaker, was posthumously granted a royal pardon by Queen Elizabeth II. Turing had been convicted in 1952 for homosexual activity, leading to chemical castration and his untimely death in 1954. The pardon acknowledged his significant contributions to the war effort and science, rectifying the unjust treatment he had faced due to his sexuality. This act was part of a broader movement to address historical injustices against LGBTQ+ individuals in the UK.
3. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/marsha-p-johnson> - Marsha P. Johnson was a pivotal figure in the LGBTQ+ rights movement, particularly noted for her role in the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in New York City. Alongside Sylvia Rivera, she co-founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in 1970, providing shelter and support for homeless LGBTQ+ youth. Johnson's activism and resilience have left an enduring legacy, inspiring generations in the fight for equality and recognition of transgender rights.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/24/enigma-codebreaker-alan-turing-royal-pardon> - In December 2013, Alan Turing, the renowned mathematician and World War II codebreaker, was posthumously granted a royal pardon by Queen Elizabeth II. Turing had been convicted in 1952 for homosexual activity, leading to chemical castration and his untimely death in 1954. The pardon acknowledged his significant contributions to the war effort and science, rectifying the unjust treatment he had faced due to his sexuality. This act was part of a broader movement to address historical injustices against LGBTQ+ individuals in the UK.
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