# LGBTQ+ celebrities on the cultural moments that shaped their lives



LGBTQ+ voices from the worlds of music, comedy, sport, and activism unveil the significant cultural moments and icons that shaped their lives. From songs that provided solace to films that sparked self-realization, these reflections map a diverse landscape of inspiration.

For Skin, the lead vocalist of Skunk Anansie, Bronski Beat's song "Smalltown Boy" was instrumental in personal growth. Coming from a conservative Jamaican background in Brixton, the haunting sound and poignant lyrics of the song carved a path for queer young people like her to find their identity. The song's narrative of seeking love beyond the restrictive home environment resonated deeply. The Brixton Fridge nightclub, with its lesbian night Venus Rising, became a refuge, solidifying the song as a generational anthem akin to Billie Holiday’s "Strange Fruit."

Comedian Stephen K Amos recalls the influence of "The Wizard of Oz" seen through the eyes of a child fascinated by its production and themes. The film's portrayal of searching for a place in society and finding solace among misfits mirrored his feelings of being an outsider. This early exposure to themes of vulnerability and belonging sparked an enduring love for tragedies and torch songs.

Former SNP MP Mhairi Black describes the year 2018 as transformative, thanks to Hannah Gadsby's stand-up special "Nanette." Despite being an openly queer , Black found a new sense of visibility and authenticity in Gadsby's discussion of gender and societal expectations. The intense last segment of the performance, where comedy gives way to powerful social commentary, offered Black the strength to advocate for her community in the political arena during a tumultuous time for transgender rights.

In the late '80s and early '90s, comedian Margaret Cho was enthralled by the public relationship between Madonna and Sandra Bernhard. Their openness and playful defiance within the controlled realm of show business symbolized a liberation and visibility for queer identities that resonated with Cho's own experiences as a young entertainer.

Former rugby player Gareth Thomas reflects on viewing "The Kenny Everett Video Show" as a child, finding in its absurd and sexualized humour a glimpse of a world unlike his conservative surroundings in Bridgend. While it did not immediately allow him to embrace his identity, Everett's campy sketches planted seeds of hope and eventual self-acceptance.

Comedian Rosie Jones found her self-realization catalysed by "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," particularly the character Willow’s transition into a relationship with Tara. This storyline, diverging from then-typical portrayals of lesbian characters, allowed Jones to accept her own femininity and sexuality, leading to a pivotal coming-out moment with a friend.

Drag queen and DJ Jodie Harsh found a mirror in the British series "Queer as Folk," which aired during her formative years. The show’s protagonist Nathan mirrored her own teenage experiences, affirming her inclination to seek acceptance and a sense of community in the metropolitan nightlife of London.

For Heather Baron-Gracie, vocalist of Pale Waves, the character Alice Cullen from the "Twilight" series was a significant queer awakening. The film sparked her recognition of her attraction to women, clashing with the heteronormative expectations she felt in high school.

Comedian Sophie Duker recounts watching biblical films with her religious family and feeling stirred by the underlying sexual tension, often fantasising about the chaste characters on screen. These experiences, coupled with iconic films like "The Prince of Egypt," laid the foundation for her eventual acceptance of her bisexuality.

Perfume Genius cites "Edward Scissorhands," the 1988 "Hairspray," and Tupac Shakur's music video "I Get Around" as his pivotal influences. The blend of subversive camp, comical romance, and overt sensuality in these media deepened his understanding of his orientation long before adolescence.