



Adam Lambert Stars in Historical AIDS Drama “Fairyland,” Says It Resonates Today

Produced by Sofia Coppola, “Fairyland” is based on a memoir by Alysia Abbott, who lost her dad to AIDS and was on the cover of POZ.

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On his new album, High Drama, pop star Adam Lambert covers hit by other artists, including Culture Club’s 1982 smash “Do You Really Want to Hurt Me.” The American Idol alum’s next project also finds the [LGBTQ](#) icon delving into the past while breaking new creative ground. He stars in this year’s Fairyland, an [AIDS](#) drama set mostly in 1970s and ’80s [San Francisco](#).

Produced by Oscar winner Sofia Coppola and directed by Andrew Durham, Fairyland premiered earlier this year at the Sundance Film Festival. There’s no word yet on when the [film](#) will get a wider release, but Lambert has been discussing the film while promoting his new album.

If the title Fairyland sounds familiar, perhaps POZ readers recognize it as the title of Alysia Abbott’s 2013 memoir. The book details her sometimes-troublesome upbringing by her gay father, Steve, in the bohemian Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, then her experiences leaving for college and living in France before returning to San Francisco to care for her dad, who died of AIDS-related illness in 1992.

Shortly after the memoir was published, Abbott and Whitney Joiner, who also lost a gay dad to AIDS, launched a group called The Recollectors to create a community of now-grown children who lost parents to the epidemic and want to share their experiences. Abbott and Joiner were featured on the June 2015 cover of POZ. For more about that, check out the article [“Telling Their Stories.”](#)

Whitney Joiner, left, and Alysia Abbott on the June 2015 cover of POZ

That POZ article ends with Abbott describing a dinner she had with Coppola, who had optioned the book for a film. Eight years and a second pandemic later, *Fairyland* is finally making it to the big screen.

Coppola recommended the film project to her photographer friend Andrew Durham, knowing that he, like Abbott, was raised by a gay father in San Francisco and took care of his dad as he succumbed to AIDS.

The film stars Scoot McNairy as Steve Abbott; Cody Fern (of *American Horror Story* fame) and Lambert as men in Abbott's orbit; Nessa Dougherty and Emilia Jones as the child and young adult Alysia Abbott, respectively; and Geena Davis as Steve Abbott's mother.

Described as a parallel coming-of-age story, the movie shows Alysia growing into a young woman at the same time that her dad—who led a closeted life until his wife died in a car crash—is finding his place in the liberated, partying gay community, a process that doesn't always lend itself to conventional child-rearing.

As such, *Fairyland* does more than glorify and praise its characters and their journeys.

"There's a tendency when people are marginalized in society that we present them in a way that is very positive," Durham told *Deadline Hollywood* (watch the Sundance interview below and [on YouTube](#)). "But that's a very narrow scope sometimes, and we aren't given the opportunity to have more complicated and nuanced characters, just like everyone else. That's what I like about Alysia's memoir. [Her dad] wasn't the poster child for perfect parenting. I think there's a lot of universal themes in that."

Lambert, who is openly gay and is the lead singer of Queen, said he finds echoes of the film's political climate in today's headlines. "The LGBTQ community is basically under attack again in the United States, and there's a lot of parallels to the time we're exploring in the 1970s," he told *Deadline Hollywood*. "You look at Anita Bryant [who led antigay campaigns] and Supervisor [Harvey] Milk [an openly gay San Francisco politician who was assassinated in 1978]. There are shadows of that going on today. We don't live in full harmony yet, though we're trying."

"When I saw the film," Lambert continued, "I thought, What a beautiful piece for anybody that doubts a gay person can be a parent or anyone who doubts that gay people go through the same things they do. It's a beautiful exploration of that and shows that the daughter ends up being a wonderful, complex, smart, healthy woman and she's OK."

[In an interview with Collider](#), McNairy, who plays Abbott's father, said the film also resonated with him. "It's a really beautiful story about a father-daughter love story set during the [AIDS epidemic](#), but more so, it's about these two figuring it out and trying to do better, and be better, and figure out who they are as people. It's not a movie I've seen or a story that I've seen in the cinema before."

McNairy added that researching the role gave him an education about the AIDS epidemic. “I didn’t know much about AIDS,” he acknowledged. “I always grew up in Texas. I was sheltered from it. I didn’t understand. I now realize the tragedy that this [LGBTQ] community went through—and no one was sticking their hands out to help.”

“I missed that [1980s AIDS] era by 10 years or so,” Lambert, who is 41, added in the Collider interview. “But growing up in the shadow of it, the aftermath of it, [I experienced the] fear that was around sex and homosexuality that permeated the ’90s. I was a kid in the ’90s, but you could feel it.

“I think looking at today’s LGBTQ community, especially young people coming up, there’s a lot of the history that we haven’t passed on to our community,” Lambert said. “There’s a lot of it that’s been lost. A lot of our teachers were taken away from us. The history that the queer community has been through is really important now, considering that we’re under attack again. We [have] got to make sure everyone knows what has happened already so that we cannot repeat our mistakes, and we can build upon what we can learn from it and come out stronger and more unified.”