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Vince Vaughn Film's 'Gay' Joke Has Hollywood Taking Sides

By Hollie McKay

Published October 19, 2010 | FoxNews.com

Director Ron Howard's upcoming comedy "The Dilemma" came under fire after a trailer was released featuring the film's star Vince Vaughn's character referring to electric cars as "gay."

CNN host Anderson Cooper appeared on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and denounced the language, the joke soon disappeared from the film's trailer.

But an insider tells Pop Tarts it wasn't Anderson-on-"Ellen" that initiated the change.



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"The decision to change the trailer came two to three weeks prior to Anderson Cooper's appearance on 'Ellen' after learning some people were offended, as well corresponding with GLAAD (The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation,)" said our source.

But Vaughn, for one, was apparently not consulted.

"Let me add my voice of support to the people outraged by the bullying and persecution of people for their differences, whatever those differences may be," Vaughn said last week. "Comedy and joking about our differences breaks tension and brings us together. Drawing dividing lines over what we can and cannot joke about does exactly that; it divides us. Most importantly, where does it stop."

GLAAD condemned Vaughn's statement, and reportedly encouraged its supporters to insist the inflammatory phrase wind up on the cutting room floor ahead of the film's slated January 14 release.

"Vince is right. Comedy does bring us together, unless one of us is the punch line," GLAAD said on its website. "Then it pushes us apart."

But some say Universal went too far in dropping the joke.

"Although Vince's line in writer Allen Loeb's script was construed as hurtful, it's comedy. If you don't like it, don't watch it," media expert Gayl Murphy told Pop Tarts. "Comedy has a long history of living on the cutting edge. Politically incorrect is a cash cow in Hollywood, always has been, always will be.

Media Research Center's Dan Gainor thinks the outrage highlights hypocrisy in Hollywood.

"Notice how we only ask if comedy has gone too far when it's a liberal protected class being mildly upset? When the media bash Christians or conservatives, then we're supposed to mature and accept it's just humor," Gainor said. "Writers have plenty of freedom if they are willing to offend someone other than the right. Practically the only commandment most follow in Hollywood is: never offend a left-wing special interest group."

However, others agree with GLAAD and oppose Vaughn's stance.

"Calling something 'gay' is not comedy, it is lazy and unnecessary. Personally, I think it should be edited out because it's bad writing," TheFrisky.com's Editor and Chief, Amelia McDonnell-Parry said. "But couple the fact that it's bad writing with the fact that it comes at a time where people are feeling particularly sensitive -- as they should -- about the way gay men and women are treated in this country. Yes, I think they should have edited it out."

Could the negative publicity spell doomsday at the box office?

"This gaffe hit a point in time where this kind of thing really gets noticed and criticized and well may hurt the future of a film like this that targets a younger more culturally open demographic," said pop culture analyst Elayne Rapping. "The filmmakers and Vaughn have the right to say anything they like under the First Amendment, but if audiences and the media react negatively, they need to understand the changing times and realize the risks."

Could the firestorm also prompt Hollywood writers to proceed with more caution?

"I hope all the dialogue about bullying and making fun of gay people etcetera makes comedians and movie producers and writers in general think deeply about the context in which they make these kinds of jokes," McDonnell-Parry said. "Does it serve a bigger purpose? Does it really make people laugh? Why does it make them laugh? If all they are is mean-spirited, the joke falls flat."

By contrast, Gainor believes the concern shouldn't be focused on the future of comedy, but the future of the country.

"The gay extremists on the left have shown their true colors here. They are trying not to encourage tolerance," he said. "They are trying to mandate acceptance. Any individual or business that doesn't agree will be squashed."

- *Deidre Behar contributed to this report.*

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