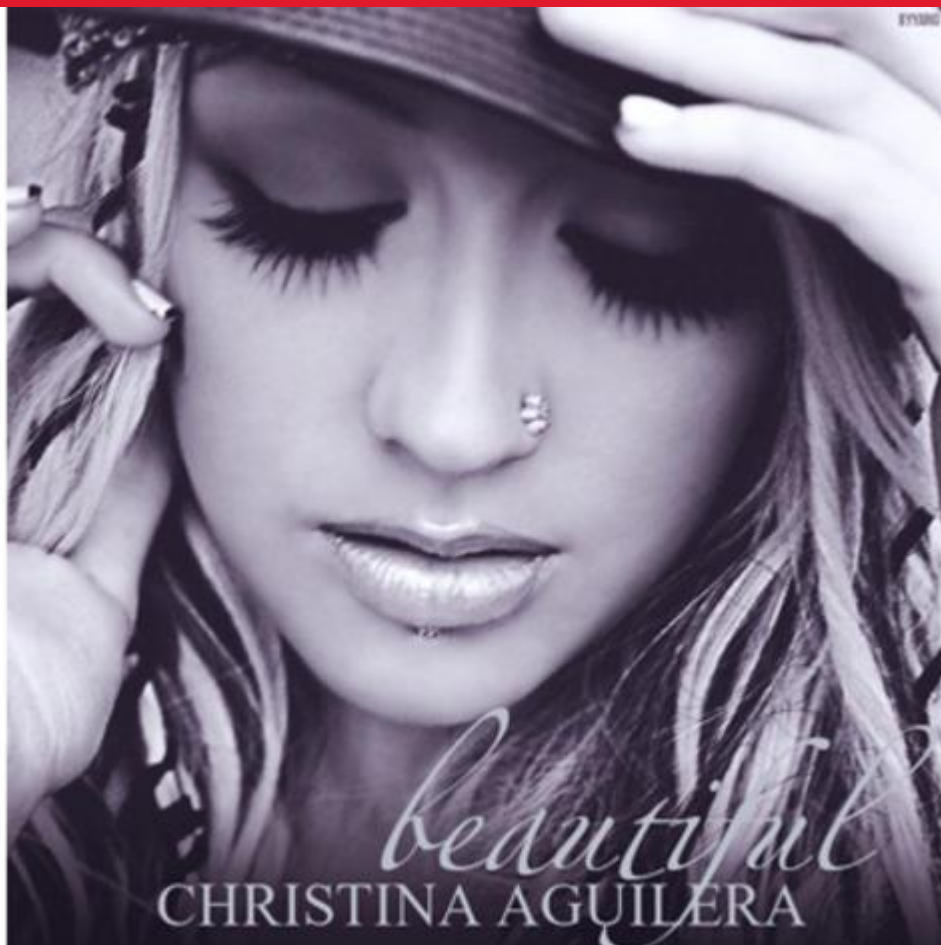


Best gay songs: 20-11

20

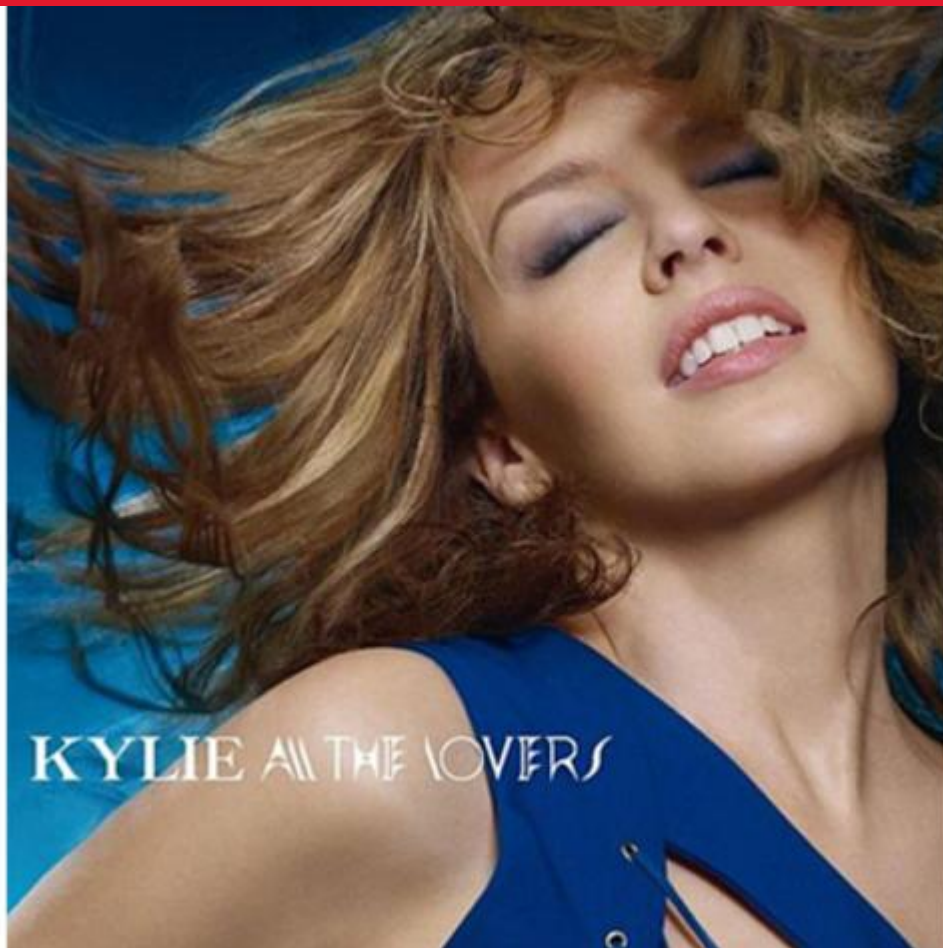


“Beautiful” by Christina Aguilera

A connecting link between Cyndi Lauper’s “True Colors” and Katy Perry’s “Firework” (both on this list), Aguilera’s 2002 power ballad – written and produced by 4 Non Blondes lesbian hit maker Linda Perry – proffers affirmation to those who feel they don’t fit in. In the video, these include young people with body issues, a goth punk, a (biological) man putting on women’s clothes and two guys tongue-kissing in public. “I am beautiful no matter what they say,” Aguilera insists on behalf of all these surrogates. “Words can’t bring me down.” But songs can lift you up, and this one is a musical antidepressant. – *Adam Feldman*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAfyFTzZDMM

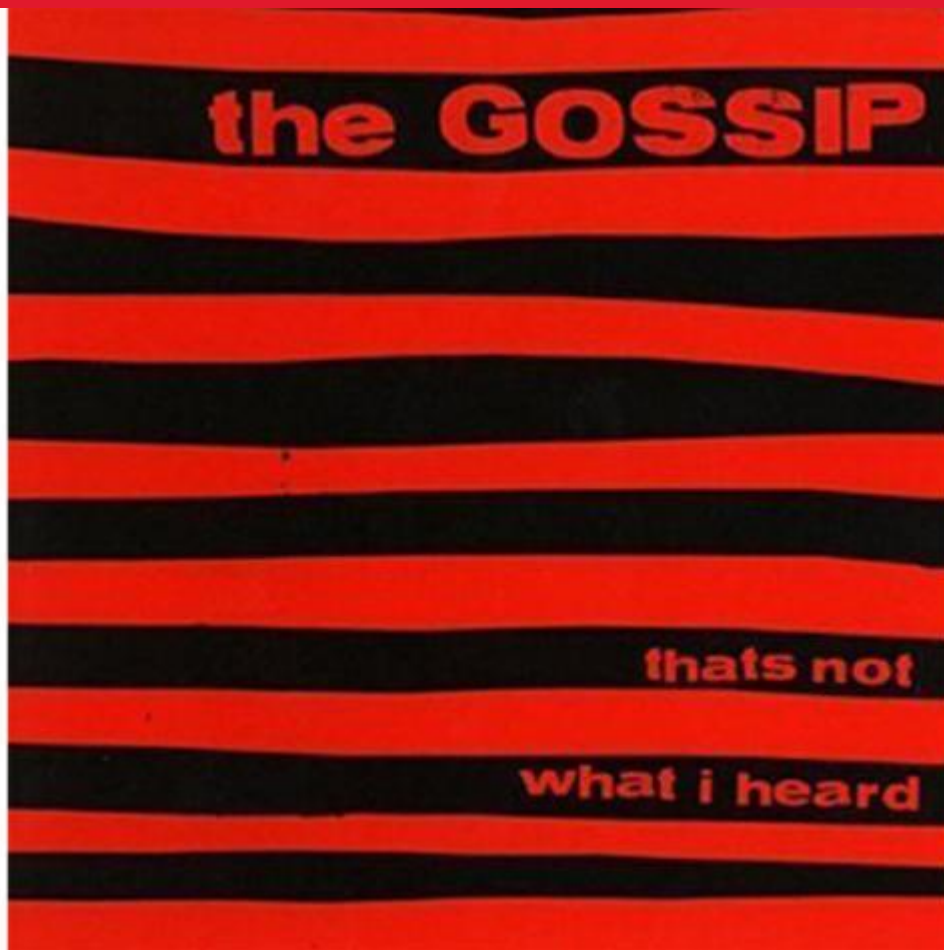


“All the Lovers” by Kylie Minogue

The Australian pop princess may have scored her biggest dance-floor hit with “Can’t Get You Out of My Head” (or, ahem, “The Locomotion”), but euphoric, gorgeous disco swoon “All the Lovers” really captures the spirit of Pride. Minogue herself has said that the video is an homage to her gay audience; it features a human pyramid of pansexual smooching (in the style of naked-installation artist Spencer Tunick). For good measure, there’s also a galloping white horse, a dove, balloons and an inflatable elephant. – *Sophie Harris*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=frv6FOt1BNI



“Where the Girls Are” by Gossip

We could've gone with a number of Gossip tracks; fiery frontwoman Beth Ditto has said the group's later breakthrough hit "Standing in the Way of Control" was penned as a reaction to President Bush's endorsement during the 2004 election cycle of a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage, after all. But there's something about the casual confidence with which the self-described "fat, feminist lesbian from Arkansas" introduces herself in this lo-fi come-on from the band's 2000 debut: "When I'm right, I'll say I'm right." – *Kris Vire*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHL5Nc9sVWw

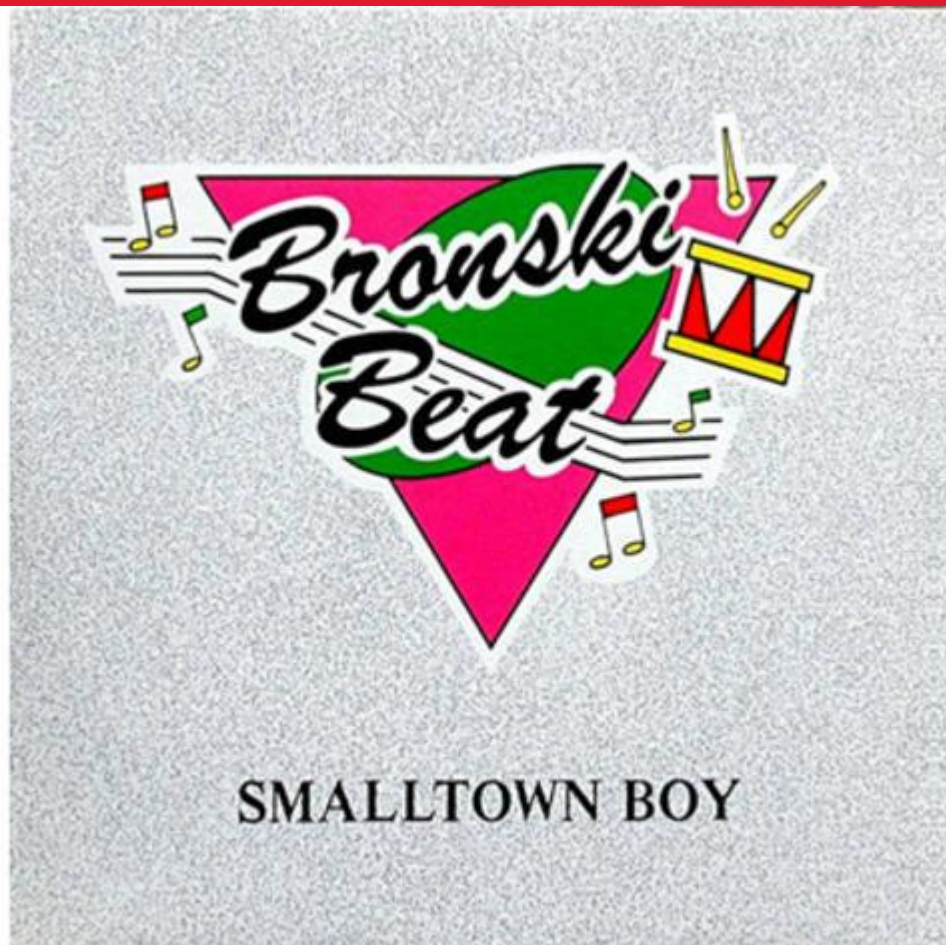


"It's Raining Men" by the Weather Girls

Gay icons Diana Ross, Donna Summer, Cher and Barbra Streisand all turned down Paul Jabara and Paul Shaffer's campy composition before the Weather Girls snatched it up in 1982. It's impossible to imagine any of those more famous singers diving into this ridiculous classic with the fearlessness and vocal pyrotechnics of former Sylvester backup singers Izora Armstead and Martha Wash, who take the song over the top in the best possible sense. – *Ethan LaCroix*

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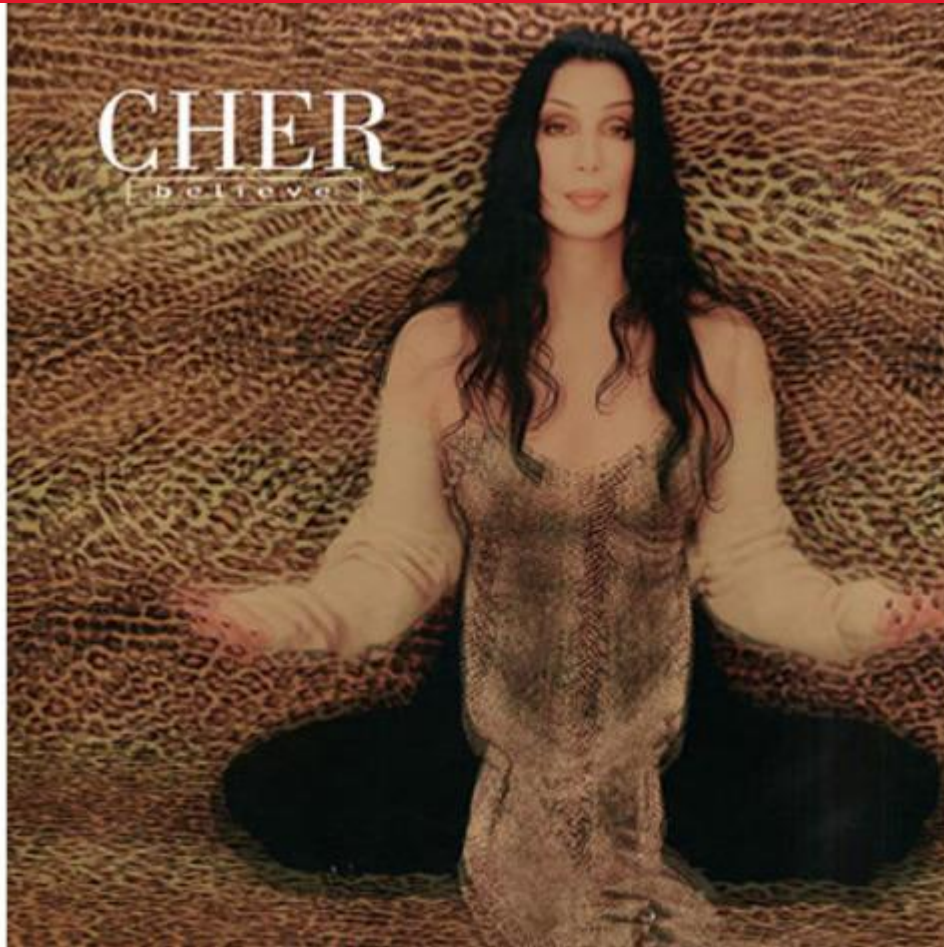


“Smalltown Boy” by Bronski Beat

The openly gay English trio Bronski Beat was a pioneer in integrating explicit LGBT-activist messages into its music, including this 1984 debut hit. Frontman Jimmy Somerville, in a sensitive falsetto, sings about a lad who flees hometown bullying – “Run away, turn away” is the recurring refrain – against a steady, reassuringly numb background of rhythm and synthesizer. The song takes the pain of rejection and makes it danceable. – *Adam Feldman*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xuz94ZIPfjk



“Believe” by Cher

Pop queen and gay icon Cher has been making records for six decades and has scored a No. 1 *Billboard* hit in each of those decades. But 1998 megahit “Believe” is the jewel in the crown, still one of the best-selling singles of all time. Hatched in the mold of “I Will Survive,” “Believe” matches its message of romantic courage to shamelessly trashy Eurodance backing and lashings of vocal Auto-Tune. Ridiculous? Yes. Empowering? Utterly. – *Sophie Harris*

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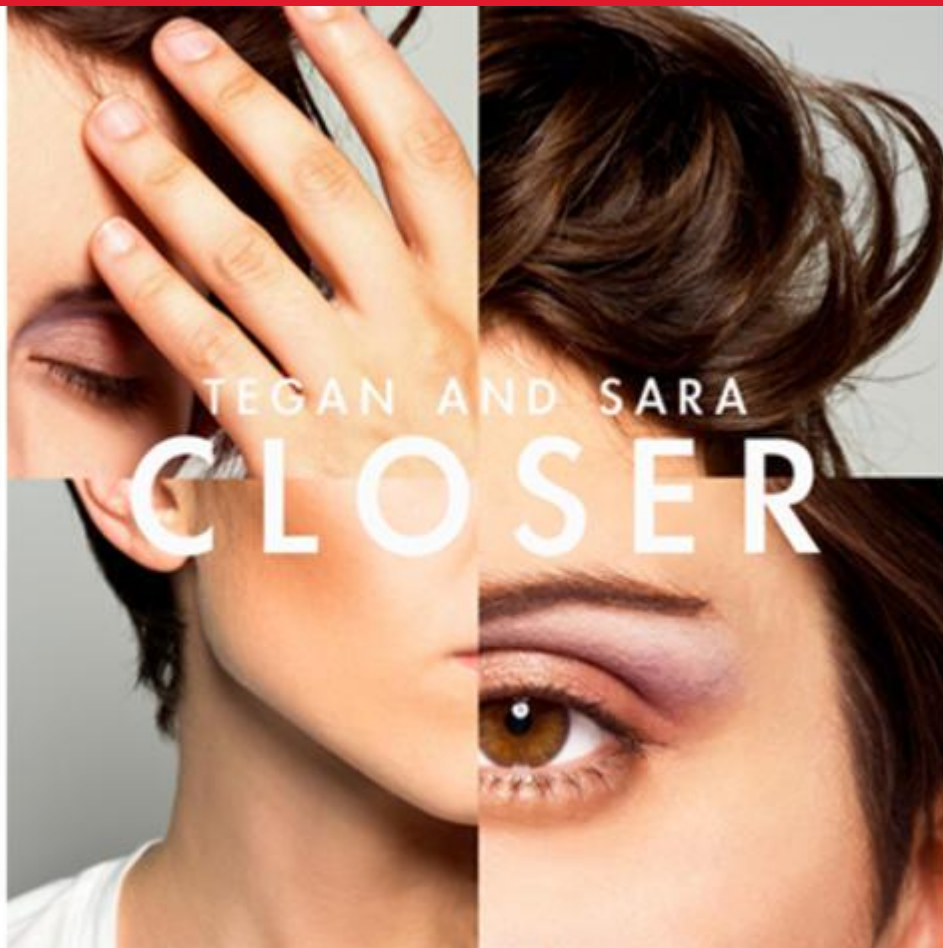


"Go West" by Pet Shop Boys

When the Village People got all Horace Greeley in 1979, it was most likely a wink and a nod to the growing gay utopia of San Francisco. By the time the Pet Shop Boys covered "Go West" in 1993, it was something altogether different. Coming at a moment after the most devastating years of the AIDS crisis, when the epidemic was better understood but its future was frustratingly unknowable, Neil Tennant's melancholy reading of the song's hope-filled lyrics, with backing from a large, all-male choir, finds something unexpectedly moving in a cheesy artifact. – *Kris Vire*

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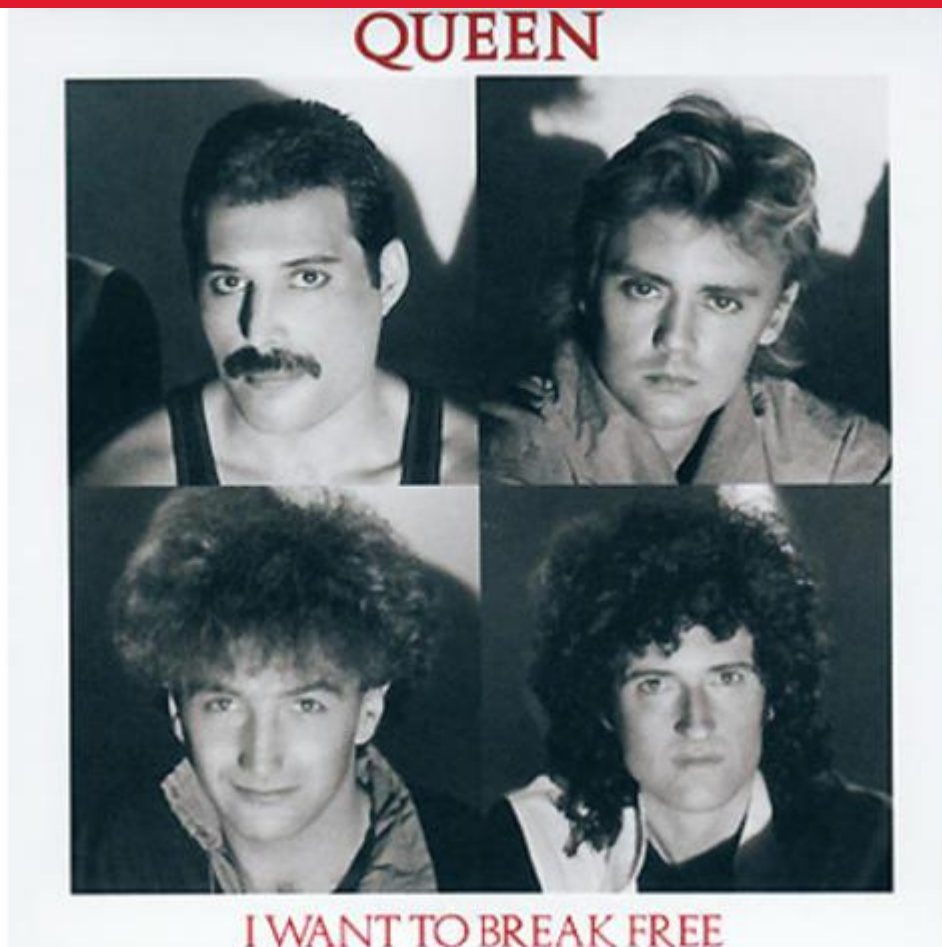


“Closer” by Tegan and Sara

The Quin twins may have become the world’s most influential lesbian sister act with the massive success of this lead single from 2013’s *Heartthrob*, which finds the ladies shifting away from fuzzy guitars and toward shimmery dance pop. It’s the most accessible entreaty to getting physical since Olivia Newton-John went to Dancercise; that Tegan and Sara’s young fans don’t give a shit about the gender of the “you” in “how to get you underneath me” puts us that much closer to fine. – *Kris Vire*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e9NSMY8QiQ



“I Want to Break Free” by Queen

You’d never guess this emancipation anthem was written by Queen bassist John Deacon and not frontman Freddie Mercury, such is the relish with which Mercury belts it out: "God knows, I've got to break free!" The Brits didn't bat an eye at the video – a parody of U.K. soap opera *Coronation Street*, which has the entire band in drag, Mercury as a horny housewife – but it was banned over here in the U.S. Par for the course. – *Sophie Harris*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4Mc-NYPHaQ



“You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” by Sylvester

A decade after Stonewall, openly gay musicians were still a rarity (being out is arguably a risky career move to this day). But flamboyant singer-songwriter Sylvester proved that queerness wasn't incongruous with chart success, thanks to this incredibly infectious 1978 disco classic, one of the most beloved songs of its era. – *Ethan LaCroix*

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyAHULpMXKQ