Richard Madeley leads train wreck debate between four straight people over straight actors playing gay roles

LILY WAKEFIELD JANUARY 12, 2021

Richard Madeley led a train wreck debate on whether gay actors should be cast in gay roles while guest hosting an episode of Channel 4’s Steph’s Packed Lunch.

Stepping in for regular host Steph McGovern, Madeley led a discussion with ex-footballer Chris Kamara, actor Luke Kempner and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi. Not only were none of them gay, only one was actually an actor.

Madeley kicked off the discussion by referencing a recent Radio Times interview with Russell T Davies, in which he explained why “authenticity” is key in casting gay roles.

He said: “I know Russell and he’s a very bright man, a very thoughtful man and he’s usually right about stuff. On this one, I’m finding it hard to agree.”

Kempner jumped straight in by insisting he had “gay actor friends”, and compared casting gay people to casting cannibals.

“I think you have to be really careful with this stuff, because I’ve spoken to a lot of my friends, gay actor friends, who have said that if you go down this line you’re then saying that gay actors can’t play straight characters, which can’t be correct,” he said.

“But, you know, if it’s the first gay superhero, I think it’s important for that to be played by a gay man. Or a gay woman. They have to have some sort of understanding of the character.

“But, you know, what’s it going to be if it’s a remake of Silence of the Lambs? You know, like, it’s acting.”

Kamara seemed confused, presumably like most viewers, about why he was a part of this discussion, and said: “Well, I just think, acting is acting. You pick the best person for the role. You have an audition. You go to, whatever you call it, a rehearsal, casting.

“You play the part, you read the part, you study the part. You should get the part for the best job. Why are we now identifying this?”

Richard Madeley suggested straight actors might pretend to be gay to get queer parts.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi went with the bizarre argument that trying to increase representation by casting LGBT+ actors in LGBT+ roles might force queer people to out themselves.

She said: “What if somebody doesn’t want to be out? Will they feel compelled to talk about their sexuality before they went for an audition?”

Richard Madeley chipped in: “Or make it up! Yes, I am gay, because I want the part!”

At one point, Madeley admitted: “Now, we haven’t got anybody who’s gay in this studio.” He then went on to quote “Richard E Grant, who’s not gay of course”, explaining that “if you want someone to play a disabled role, that would be a disabled actor”.


In his *Radio Times* interview, Russell Davies also pointed out: “You wouldn’t cast someone able-bodied and put them in a wheelchair, you wouldn’t Black someone up. Authenticity is leading us to joyous places.”

Completely missing the point that casting queer actors was about giving them a seat at the table in telling queer stories, Kempner insisted that sexuality was a spectrum, while race and disability were not.

He said: “But isn’t sexuality a spectrum? You know, there might be people who are straight that were gay at one time. How do we know?”

[https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/01/12/richard-madeley-straight-actors-gay-roles-russell-t-davies/](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/01/12/richard-madeley-straight-actors-gay-roles-russell-t-davies/)