

“Cate Blanchett’s cheekbones could cut me, and I would sincerely say thank you”

Much has been written about the invisibility of women in mainstream culture as they age. We’ve all heard of Leonardo DiCaprio’s propensity for girlfriends under 25, and Maggie Gyllenhaal was only 37 when she was turned down for a role as the love interest of a 55-year-old leading man for being “too old”. However, the opposite seems to be true amongst queer women and non-binary people, with a suite of, often Gen Z-run, social media accounts popping up to document the sapphic yearning for the over 45s.

“Cate Blanchett’s cheekbones could cut me, and I would sincerely say thank you,” posts [@lykeblanchett](#) on her Instagram account, in a meme which has been liked over 1,000 times. Meanwhile, [@sapphic_middledaged_actresses](#), writes on her page: “I’m sorry I haven’t replied to your messages or answered your calls, all I did was obsess over middle-aged actresses and I will happily do it again.” The same is true on TikTok, with accounts celebrating the sex appeal of what is often referred to as the “Holy Trinity” – Cate Blanchett (aged 53), Sarah Paulson (aged 47) and Sandra Bullock (aged 58).

But why has crushing on older women become such a hallmark of the Gen Z lesbian and bisexual experience? DIVA spoke to some of the creators to find out.

Marit ([@maritboxy6](#), she/her), is 20 years old, lives in the Netherlands and works with people with disabilities. She started her TikTok in 2020 during the height of lockdown when she was bored. It now totals 74.1k followers. She feels it’s important for queer people, especially those still in the closet who don’t feel understood by their friends and family, to look to people who are older for a sense of maternal love and comfort. “A lot of people think we just have ‘mummy issues’ and, I mean, some of us do, but also these actresses are just really hot,” she tells me.

Creating community is another factor. “TikTok is mainly seen as an app that gets people addicted to their phones, which is true,” she says. “But it’s also a safe space where you can realise that you’re not the only one in the world who feels a particular way.”

Fern (they/them), who runs [@venablesdarling](#), is 21 and works as a nanny in London, agrees. They tell me about being contacted by people who say these posts have helped them come to terms with their sexuality.

There is also something inherently counter-cultural about embracing an age bracket of women who are often not considered as sexual beings by society at large. “Pretty much all of society’s expectations about what makes a beautiful woman pander to the male gaze,” says Fern. “Social beauty norms for women are based on what men are taught they are supposed to want. I honestly don’t think it’s surprising that age is yet another social norm that queer sapphic people subvert, and that we have a different group of celebrities we are attracted to than those in heterosexual culture.”

“If I were to meet another queer sapphic 21-year-old, they would be 100 times more likely to know who Sarah Paulson is than a 21-year-old cis straight male. It’s kind of nice for us to have something that separates us from straight culture, besides the obvious not being straight thing. I like having a community that’s so different from heteronormativity and everything that tells us we are supposed to desire.”

However, these creators are also mindful that their fandom shouldn’t become objectifying. Fern tells me about how they can become uneasy about the oversexualisation of some of these actors within the community, noting how Sarah Paulson still gets called “Mommy” by many of her fans, despite the actor having expressed discomfort with it. For Fern and others, it’s important to celebrate the beauty and elegance of these women, whilst remaining respectful.

These concerns about non-consensual oversexualisation aside, it feels these online spaces provide an important place where queer people can come together, be themselves and build community. Equally, in a world where older women are often sidelined, these memes are a welcome reminder that attractiveness doesn’t end at 45. The question is: when will the rest of society catch up? **D**

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PHOTOS: CREATIVE COMMONS/EVA RINALDI, GAGE SKIDMORE, HARALD KRICHTEL