

Amin El Gamal



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In addition to its WeHo meet-cute and its even cuter central couple, Mike Mosallam's *Breaking Fast* boasts a key ingredient of a modern rom-com: a sassy gay best friend. Only don't expect Sam (Amin El Gamal) to be a two-dimensional sidekick. He may tell Haaz Sleiman's Mo he should give that broad-shouldered actor he met the first night of Ramadan a chance and he does provide the warmhearted comedy with most of its biggest laughs, but as played by El Gamal, Sam is as fully realized a queer character as you're likely to find.

A self-described flamboyant, gender-non-conforming kid from Palo Alto born to Egyptian parents whose love of Judy Garland eventually led him to pursue a career in acting, the *Prison Break* and *Good Trouble* actor saw Sam



as sunny rebuke to the kind of dour and dangerous stereotypes Arab and Muslim actors are often called to play.

"It was really healing to be in a part

where I was allowed to be funny and buoyant and wise and the good friend and compassionate and silly and messy and stupid—like all the different colors of a complex human being. And also, desirable."

More to the point, *Breaking Fast* lets Mo and Sam offer distinct visions of how they reconcile their sexual identity with their faith—making their differences a key plot point in one of the film's most affecting scenes, an iftar dinner for four that sours all too quickly.

"I felt very liberated to play a role that portrays a queer Muslim with so much joy," he says. "I found it almost subversive to see a queer Muslim who loves themselves, and lives out loud, who takes the best of queer culture and the best of Muslim Arab culture and embraces both of them."