

Smashing the Demon Lizard Patriarchy: Queer Feminist *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Rewatch Podcasts Raise the Stakes for Queer Feminist Sonic Space

By Alex D. Ketchum

Smash the Demon Lizard Patriarchy!

The phrase “smash the demon lizard patriarchy” adorns coffee mugs, t-shirts, baby onesies, and gift wrapping paper, and it repeats during the chorus of “Reptile Boy,” the fifth track on the *Songs from the Second Season of Buffering the Vampire Slayer* CD. The sentiment of smashing the demon lizard patriarchy infuses queer feminist *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* rewatch podcasts. These podcasts exist at the intersection of queer horror, feminist communication, and podcast studies. The supernatural horror coming-of-age drama television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which focuses on the story of vampire slayer Buffy Summers and her friends, lovers, and tribulations, and its spinoff television series *Angel*, have inspired numerous rewatch

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podcasts since their respective 1997-2003 and 1999-2004 runs. The rewatch podcast genre typically follows the formula of discussing one or more episodes of a television show per podcast episode; recapping the plot; discussing the themes, content, design, and production of the episode; and often evaluating the success of the episode against each podcast host's own standards. The self-identified queer feminist *Buffy* rewatch podcasts *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* (2016), its sister podcast *Angel on Top* (2018), and *Slayerfest98* (2017), do something more. By placing feminism and queerness at the forefront, these podcasts move beyond fandom and open up a space for queer, feminist, and anti-racist critiques of the beloved horror series. Furthermore, these podcasts provide feminist queer sonic space; instead of merely creating a physical space to build community and share queer and feminist perspectives, these podcasts use audio such as voice recordings, music, sound effects, and clips to occupy auditory space. These podcasts attend to the absence of queer feminist and lesbian feminist voices within the podcasting medium, remarked upon by scholars such as Mél Hogan, Dayna McLeod, and Stacey Copeland. Their success has generated fandoms for the podcasts in their own right, leading to the production of platforms for these fan communities and opportunities for merchandising, artistic creation, and enterprise (See Figure 1). In addition, their success affirms the queer, feminist readings of *Buffy* and *Angel* and as a result, claims space for queer and feminist fandom within the horror genre.

Literature Review

Queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts have received little academic attention, as is the case with *Buffy* podcasts at large. Communications student Jamison Keith Warren's MA thesis

“Queering the Looking-Glass Self: Media and Identity in Queer Fandom” discusses the private Facebook group of the *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* podcast in order to better understand fans’ queer reparative readings of the television series.¹ While I appreciate Warren’s construction of the *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* podcast as a paratext, serving as a kind of extension of the narrative and allowing for a deeper and more engaged discussion of the show (78), unlike Warren, I focus on the publicly available podcast episodes, social media, websites, and cultural productions of *Buffering* alongside other podcasts such as *Angel on Top* and *Slayerfest98*. As part of an edited collection on urban fantasy and stemming from her dissertation on the female gothic, literary scholar Jenna Guitar’s article “The Vampiric Nature of Transmedia Storytelling in the *Buffyverse*” discusses *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* as one way in which fans are able to continue the *Buffy* story beyond the canonical television episodes and the *Buffy Dark Horse* comics. Similar to Warren’s piece, while Guitar notes the queerness of *Buffering*, Guitar does not discuss other queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts. Scholars have yet to write about *Slayerfest98* and *Angel on Top*; however, journalist Evan Ross Katz’s *Into Every Generation a Slayer Is Born: How Buffy Staked Our Hearts* mentions both *Buffering* and *Slayerfest98*, including quotes from hosts Jenny Owen Youngs, Kristin Russo, and Ian Carlos Crawford. Katz omits mention of any of the four *Angel on Top* hosts or the podcast. Other *Buffy* podcasts such as *Tiny Fences*, *Dusted*, *C’est Pourquoi Buffy*, *Another Buffy Podcast*, *Buffy the Gilmore Slayer*, *Big Miss Stake*, *The Sunnyvale Stacks*, *Prophecy Girls*, *Beer with Buffy*, and *The Chosen Two* have similarly not received scholarly attention. While the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* has spawned academic conferences, numerous edited

anthologies, journal articles, and books, the *Buffy* podcasts are newer territory for academic inquiry.

The television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* exists within multiple genres including fantasy, supernatural, action, dramedy, and coming of age story. When scholars have discussed *Buffy* within the horror genre, some have specifically utilized feminist and queer lenses for their analyses. Having published over 57 issues, *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy+* and its affiliated conference have dedicated numerous pieces to the queerness of *Buffy*.² Although media scholar Lorna Jowell's *Sex and the Slayer: A Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy Fan* discusses the feminism and queerness of *Buffy* first as part of a subversion of the horror genre (192), Jowell's chapter "Whedon, Feminism, and the Possibility of Feminist Horror on Television" within *Joss Whedon Vs. the Horror Tradition: The Production of Genre in Buffy and Beyond* re-examines *Buffy*'s relationship to the feminist horror genre. Despite re-evaluations of the showrunner Joss Whedon's commitment to feminist principles in light of revelations of his alleged inappropriate abusive on-set behavior (a topic also addressed by the queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts I discuss in this article), the idea of *Buffy* as a feminist and queer horror show is pervasive. Many of the discussions about *Buffy* reflect some of the greater arguments about the importance of queer horror and queer feminist horror. Joe Vallese's edited collection *It Came From the Closet: Queer Reflections on Horror*, film scholar Alison Peirse's edited volume *Women Make Horror: Filmmaking, Feminism, Genre*, and film scholar Sonia Lupher's work on women's horror film festivals speak to the intersection of feminism, lesbian and queer identity, and the horror genre. These works all point to the ways that the horror genre enables feminist and queer readings through its use of tropes,

production choices, and aesthetics. So while scholars have noted the importance of queerness and feminism within the horror genre, and within *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* specifically, far less is written about queer horror podcasts, of which queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts are a subset.

Horror Queers, *ScreamQueenz: Where Horror Gets GAY!*, *Scared Gay!*, *Queer Horror Cult*, and *The People Under the Scares* are all queer podcasts that focus on horror films. The genre of queer horror film and television podcasts is currently dominated by self-identified white gay and queer men, with exceptions such as *Ghoulfriends*, hosted by lesbian and queer feminists, *Brother Ghoul's Tomb*, created by a Black non-binary host, *Girl That's Scary*, hosted by Black queer women, and *Bloody Maryz*, hosted by two non-binary folks. *Attack of the Queerwolf* and *Gaylords of Darkness* are hosted by multi-gender teams. Media scholar Mél Hogan has pointed to the lack of representation within podcasting, including queer podcasts, of narratives by and for lesbians, queer women, and feminists. As media scholar Dayna McLeod reflects on the role of lesbian and queer podcasts and radio, “queer radio [and podcasting] disseminate information to people who are closeted, in the process of coming out, or merely interested in queer women’s culture” (quoted in Hogan 208) but, as Mél Hogan adds, “wishing to do so in a private and personal manner” (208). The existence of this media is vital for connection and the creation of queer culture (King and Sanquist) across space and place, made stronger by queer readings of media. Feminist podcasters Raechel Tiffe and Melody Hoffman likewise argue that it is important that feminists occupy sonic space and that podcasting can serve as a site of resistance. The queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel on Top*, and

Slayerfest98 create a space within queer horror podcasting that centers queer feminist narratives.

Methods and Methodology

In order to attempt a comprehensive approach, I listened to every episode of *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel on Top*, and *Slayerfest98* available on their main feeds by December 31, 2022; examined their respective social media accounts and websites; and analyzed their merchandise, events, and public appearances. This approach meant that I listened to all 217 episodes of *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* that appeared on the podcast's main feed, available with transcripts.³ After the hosts covered the series finale of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, October 12, 2022, marked the curtain call episode for the podcast's *Buffy* coverage. Subsequent episodes have focused on new television series and are generally outside the scope of this article. I listened to the 102 *Angel on Top* episodes available on the main feed as of April 24, 2023. New episodes will become available throughout 2023, as *Angel on Top* has yet to finish the fifth season of *Angel*. For *Slayerfest98*, I have listened to the 290 episodes on the main feed discussing every episode of *Buffy*, the first season of *Angel*, and a variety of Marvel, DisneyPlus, and other pop culture productions including *X-Men* (2000-2020), *Ms. Marvel* (2022), *Black Panther* (2018), and more. The podcast feed was formerly shared with its sister podcast *My Bloody Judy*, covering more explicit horror content.⁴ These three podcasts also have associated accounts on Patreon, the membership platform that enables content creators to run a subscription service. However, I chose to not include an analysis of *Buffering's* Patreon episodes and 668 [Patreon posts](#) and *Angel on Top's* *Angel on Pot* [Patreon](#) episodes, in which former hosts Laura Zak and Brittany Ashley smoked marijuana and re-

discussed some of their favorite *Angel* episodes. I have omitted a discussion of Patreon content as it is not publicly available, with a few exceptions. While I have listened to every *Slayerfest98* Patreon episode about *Buffy* and *Angel*, I will not discuss content that remains behind a paywall, with one exception. As episodes generally range from 45 to 95 minutes among the 3 podcasts, as part of this project I have listened to over 704 hours of podcast audio.

I chose to focus on these podcasts, in particular, due to their popularity, their longevity, and their explicit queer feminist podcasting approach. These podcasts explore queer and feminist themes within the television shows. The hosts discuss academic queer and feminist theory in episodes; Judith Butler's name has been dropped on all of these podcasts. The podcasts broadcast ongoing discussions about gender, sexual orientation, race, and class dynamics in the television shows on the screen, behind the scenes, and also behind the production of the podcasts. It is also appropriate to analyze these podcasts specifically, as their creators explicitly call the podcasts "queer" and "feminist" within the episodes themselves, in their promotional materials on their websites, social media, and marketing, and in the case of *Slayerfest98*, through written correspondence with Ian Carlos Crawford. Although many *Buffy* podcasts begin by attempting to cover every episode of *Buffy*, it is an immense task to discuss 144 episodes and completion is rare. Thus many *Buffy* podcasters, with or without a queer and/or feminist lens, have been unsuccessful; for example, *The Queer Buffy Podcast*, started in 2021, only made it until Season 1, Episode 3 with 4 episodes and a trailer.

While these three podcasts and their creators participate in the *Buffy* and *Angel* fandom, their success, consistency, and entertainment have generated smaller fandoms of their own.

Thus, I also followed and analyzed the Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts of the shows, the central hosts (including former hosts), and their producers. These include @bufferingcast, @angelontopcast, @jennyowenyongs, @kristinnoeline, @lafergs, @lorganmutich, @britt27ash, @la_wa, @albadaza (only on Instagram), @MackMacTlksBack, @slayerfestx98, and @ianxcarlos. As *Slayerfest98* regularly includes two guest hosts, for this article I did not follow all of those guest host accounts, unless the @slayerfestx98 account cross-shared the content. Furthermore, I analyzed the podcasts' websites, including their affiliated web stores: <https://www.bufferingthevampireslayer.com>, <https://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/Slayerfestx98>, and the now defunct *Angel on Top* webstore angelontop.merchnow.com.⁵ *Slayerfest98* also has a YouTube channel in which folks can access the podcast audio and additional trailers: <https://www.youtube.com/@Slayerfestx98/videos/>.

I analyze these podcasts through the lens of queer feminist sonic space. The concept of queer sonic space was articulated by communications scholar Stacey Copeland as part of her work on late twentieth-century lesbian radio shows. Building on historian Donna Halper's work on women in radio, Copeland demonstrates that queer sonic space not only does the work of queering the societal soundscape, but also is part of a larger push for queer people and particularly queer women to take up physical, embodied, sonic, and visual space, which had been and continues to be primarily dominated by male, heterosexual culture. In this article, I analyze the technological affordances of feminist queer horror podcasting in order to better understand how queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts occupy sonic landscapes. As the edited volume *Queers in Space* makes clear, having communal space for marginalized people,

especially queer people, is vital. Feminist queer *Buffy* podcasts create queer feminist sonic space, not only to provide social visibility, but also to enable listeners who might be far from physical queer spaces to participate in queer feminist community. In 2022, musicologist Zane Larson built on the idea of queer sonic space, in a presentation on the musical attributes and stylistic markers of hyperpop, arguing that the genre “provides a path forward that breaks from the traditionally heteronormative sect of pop music and pop music culture, designating a postgender and unbridled queer sonic space” (np). Larson and scholars such as Anna-Elena Pääkkölä, John Richardson, and Freya Jarman show that queer sonic space does not just exist because queer people are participating in the sonic landscape. Rather, there are particular attributes and markers of queer sound.

The attributes of queer feminist sonic space include the content and theme of the audio material and the voices that are broadcast. Queer feminist content and themes include analyses of power, violence, resilience, oppression, marginalization, and resistance through a feminist lens that is queer inclusive. Fostering queer feminist sonic space also means producing an auditory environment through sound, especially voices. Podcast audio prioritizes the power of the voice over the visual, and there are gender politics around the register and pitch of who is speaking. As the peer-reviewed podcast *Secret Feminist Agenda* discusses, voices that are considered “masculine” and are lower pitched are often perceived in Western cultures as the voice of authority. Furthermore, there is a particularly gendered policing of women’s, gay men’s, and queer peoples’ voices: the very demographics of the queer feminist *Buffy* podcast hosts. Women’s voices will receive criticism for being allegedly shrill or for having vocal fry. Some gay and queer

men's voices will be mocked for pitch and tone and some queer women's voices will be berated for not performing femininity "properly" (McGreggor). Renowned feminist writer bell hooks encourages reflection on whose voice is the voice of power, particularly of liberatory power. The queer feminist *Buffy* podcast hosts and their guests diversify the voices within the horror podcasting genre and challenge preconceptions of what a horror podcast host or guest sounds like. These podcasts are not just creating feminist sonic space or queer sonic space, but queer feminist sonic space as they speak about *Buffy* and *Angel* using a queer feminist lens. In this article I pay attention to both the community fostered through feminist queer *Buffy* podcasts and the particular characteristics of shows' audio, analyzing how queer feminist sonic spaces also impact physical spaces.



Figure 1 (photo by author): This photo showcases merchandise from *Slayersfest98* (4 stickers and a pin with *Buffy* producer Dolly Parton holding a stake), *Angel on Top* (Fresh Brood mug and Big Demon Energy pin), and *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* podcasts (“Smash the Lizard Demon Patriarchy” shirt and mug, “Pay Buffy Summers” sweatpants, 4 CDs with the original songs from the podcast, a “Randy for Giles” pin, “Time Turns Kittens into Cats” mug and sweatshirt, and a “Slayers Every One of Us” sweatshirt).

About the Podcasts

Named as one of *Paste Magazine's* Top 30 Podcasts of the Decade, *Esquire's* Top 10 Podcasts of 2018, *Time's* Top 50 Podcasts of 2018, and BBC America's 10 Most Buzzworthy Podcasts of 2018 *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* is a bi-weekly podcast in which the once-married host team of musician,

Jenny Owen Youngs and LGBTQ+ youth activist Kristin Russo discuss *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, one episode at a time, spoiler free. Launched on September 1, 2016, the queer women's feminist rewatch podcast *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* followed a formula for the 144 episodes covering each episode of *Buffy*. After the sound of a chime at the top of each episode, Owen Youngs and Russo discuss updates, news for the podcast and announcements for special events or newly released merchandise. For a while, Russo had a spooky news segment in which she described paranormal, disgusting, or strange current events such as a house's basement flooding with blood. This opening section also includes the announcement of the "Sexual Tension Award" winners, in which listeners voted via Twitter polls between the four groupings of characters and/or objects with the most sexual tension between them in the previous episode. During this segment, the hosts often discuss potential queer subtext in the episodes. Next, the theme song plays, followed by a recap in which the two hosts share opinions and thoughts on the episode. After the analysis and jokes conclude, the hosts let listeners know where to follow them on social media, sharing their various handles and links. The hosts then howl out like werewolves, singing "Awoooo!" Each *Buffering* episode ends with an original song about the television episode written by Owen Youngs and Russo. Musicality permeates *Buffering*, as the hosts wrote an entire musical episode including 17 original tracks to cover the *Buffy* Season 6, Episode 7 musical episode "Once More With Feeling." Episodes are filled with recurring jingles about the show's characters (characters such as Spike, Drusilla, and Giles have their own songs, while other characters such as Cordelia and Willow have multiple) and the recurring audio clip of "the patriarchy," sung with haunted tones and played after *Buffy* characters such as

Xander made sexist comments or misogynistic content appeared in an episode. The show also includes many special episodes, interviewing *Buffy* cast and crew members, deeper thematic dives, and special segments on fashion with guest hosts. After concluding *Buffy* coverage in the fall of 2022, *Buffering* embarked on a rebrand. No longer *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, hosts Russo and Owen Youngs pivoted to *Buffering: A Rewatch Podcast*. In late fall and early winter of 2022, the hosts updated their logo and began to release episodes about the mystery-horror series *Yellowjackets* and announced plans to start covering the television show *The X-Files* in 2023.

When Russo and Owen Youngs approached the end of *Buffy*'s third season, they had to decide if they would simultaneously cover the show *Angel*. Ultimately, they decided to sponsor a sister podcast, *Angel on Top*, named after the comical moment in *Buffy* Season 3, Episode 10 when the mother character Joyce asks Buffy, "So, Angel's on top again?" Joyce is referring to the Christmas tree ornament, but Buffy thinks the question is about her boyfriend Angel. Launched on May 9, 2019, and hosted by the queer friend duo of writers Brittany Ashley and Laura Zak, the podcast follows a similar format to the *Buffering* podcast and even shares the same *Buffering* jingles. The major difference between the two podcasts is that instead of an original weekly song, Zak and Ashley perform a weekly spoken word poem in the character Angel's brooding tone. For the third season of *Angel on Top*, author LaToya Ferguson, later joined by television writer Morgan Lutich (her co-host also for the *AMPire Diaries*, a *Vampire Diaries* rewatch podcast) became the new co-hosts of *Angel on Top*. Ferguson replaced the spoken word poem with a final segment in which she recommends an episode of a 1990s or early 2000s Warner Brothers television show that the character Angel should watch

for guidance or inspiration based on the *Angel* episode's themes for that week. This segment, which of course also has its own theme song, plays to Ferguson's strengths as a pop culture critic. As the show *Angel* is a bit grittier and more adult than *Buffy*, the *Angel on Top* podcast replaced the "Sexual Tension Awards" with a "Fuck Watch" segment in which the hosts say which character or object in the episode they would want to have sex with. The *Angel on Top* podcast began with its own podcast feed, was grouped into the *Buffering Podcast* feed when Ferguson took over, and then regained its own podcast feed when *Buffering* neared the end of its *Buffy* coverage. Kristin Russo of *Buffering* continues to be a producer of *Angel on Top* and has a special segment in most episodes called "Kristin's Corner," also with its own theme song. The *Buffering* podcast family stands apart not only for its framing of the shows within a social justice-informed framework, but also for its cultural production, the feminist and queer-centered community it has fostered in digital and physical spaces, and its wide critical acclaim.

With the tagline "A Queer Latinx *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Podcast that occasionally covers Marvel stuff," starting March 10, 2017, *Slayerfest98* has covered every episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, alongside analysis of the *X-Men* movies and shows, Marvel films and shows, and other pop culture properties. The podcast's hosts named *Slayerfest98* after the *Buffy* Season 3 Episode 5 where Buffy and her frenemy Cordelia are forced to fight a group of vampires, demons, and killers on the night of their homecoming dance. In the beginning, *Slayerfest98* was co-hosted by Matthew Rodriguez and Ian Carlos Crawford. They would sometimes cover two episodes of *Buffy* in a single podcast episode. However, by *Buffy*'s second season, Carlos Crawford was the main host and each *Buffy*

episode warranted its own episode of the podcast. *Slayerfest98* often features the voices of queer folks of color; for each episode, Carlos Crawford invites three additional co-hosts from the pop culture, drag, and nerd communities. Notable and recurring co-hosts include media scholar Ashley K. Smalls, journalist Alex Abad-Santos, and voice actor Justin Fraction. Carlos Crawford has also co-hosted the podcast with *Buffy* script writer Jane Espenson, journalist Brett White, host of *Passion of the Nerd* Ian Martin, and *Buffy* book author Kiersten White. Episodes begin with an introduction of the hosts, a discussion of the plot in which Carlos Crawford asks different hosts to recap sections and share opinions, praise, and queer feminist critique. Every episode includes a “best outfit” segment in which the co-hosts share their favorite outfits, a “best moment or favorite scene” segment, and then an episode grade by the hosts. Depending on backgrounds of each week’s co-hosts, the hosts will draw comparisons to other pop culture properties; for example, the comic book authors and artists infuse the podcast discussion with references to comics. When Carlos Crawford began to cover *Angel* Season 1, he solicited a group of recurring co-hosts in advance including actress Summer Bishil, who played Queen Margo on the television show *The Magicians*, literary scholar Kimberly Ann Southwick, and star of *Drag Race UK* Crystal. All eleven co-hosts were introduced via a twenty-one-minute [YouTube video](#), filled with animations by Trevor Carlee on May 23, 2022. *Slayerfest98* has revisited some of Carlos Crawford’s favorite *Buffy* episodes during corresponding holidays or on important anniversary dates. In addition to inviting *Buffy* cast members for behind-the-scenes interviews, Carlos Crawford frequently welcomes Tom Lenk, who played Andrew on *Buffy*, as a recurring co-host. During the Season 7 coverage, *Buffy* Season 7 costume designer

Matt Van Dyne had a special segment during every *Slayerfest98* episode in which he recounted information behind his costume choices, shared where he purchased items, and described the budgets for each episode, all while reading through his old *Buffy* production files. In addition to being distributed via RSS feed, *Slayerfest98* episodes are also released on YouTube, usually without a video component. *Slayerfest98* also shares its content feed with *My Bloody Judy*, a queer LatinX horror movie podcast co-hosted by Ian Carlos Crawford and Zachary Patton Garcia.

Buffering the Vampire Slayer, *Angel on Top*, and *Slayerfest98* all place queerness and feminism at the forefront; they do this in their discussions, through the identities of their co-hosts and guests, in their marketing, and in the design of the episodes themselves. While queer and feminist readings of *Buffy* and *Angel* are not rare, these podcasts do more than “ship,” or imagine the characters of Buffy and the vampire slayer, Faith, together romantically and sexually. Of course, the podcasts discuss the importance of the witch Willow’s queer relationship with her girlfriend Tara and how this first recurring representation of a lesbian relationship on prime time television in 1999 was significant beyond the *Buffy*verse. However, the podcasts do more, providing a feminist and queer analysis to every episode, discussing the sexism, heterosexism, and racism within episodes; they critique and analyze the show not because they do not like it, but because the hosts care so much about it. For example, the *Buffering* hosts use a gendered class analysis to discuss Buffy’s lack of remuneration by the Watcher’s Council in their episode about “Checkpoint” (5.12). Russo and Owen Youngs consider themes of sex negativity and the treatment of Buffy after she has sex with Angel for the first time in their episode on “Innocence” (2.14). They also discuss

the usefulness and shortfalls of the coming out metaphor in their episode about “Becoming Part 2” (2.22). *Angel on Top* hosts discuss the non-consensual pregnancy of Cordelia’s character in the *Angel* episode “Expecting” (1.12), the alleged treatment of the actress Charisma Carpenter by Joss Whedon when she became pregnant in real life throughout the podcast’s Season 4 coverage, and the racism in numerous scripts’ depictions of the Black character Charles Gunn. Not every discussion of feminism and queerness is critical; some discussions are celebratory. For example, *Slayerfest98* has celebrated Buffy as a strong female character that has strengthened Carlos Crawford’s connections with his mother and grandmother and led to important discussions around feminism, coming out, and queer identity. He has even invited his family members onto the show to discuss this connection on the podcast. These are merely a few examples: there has never been an episode of these podcasts without the word “queer” being mentioned and within the three podcasts most episodes explicitly use the words “feminism,” “gender,” “sexism,” and/or “racism.”

The hosts also tie the discussions of *Buffy* and *Angel* to their own queer identities. Kristin Russo, Jenny Owen Youngs, Laura Zak, Brittany Ashley, LaToya Ferguson, Morgan Lutich, and Ian Carlos Crawford all identify as queer and the majority of their guest hosts do as well. The hosts do not hide their queer identity in any way and actively discuss queerness in their marketing, descriptions of their podcasts, and throughout every episode. In recurring segments such as the “Sexual Tension Awards” on *Buffering*, “Fuck Watch” on *Angel on Top*, and the “Favorite Outfit” on *Slayerfest98*, the hosts and guests also discuss their own queer desire in relation to the show. These choices signal to potential listeners that even if those listeners cannot access queer and feminist physical spaces, for one hour

(or more, if someone decides to binge listen to the podcast), listeners can inhabit queer feminist sonic space. Queerness and feminism infuse the creative decisions behind these podcasts and their outputs.

Slayerfest98, *Buffering*, and *Angel on Top* create explicitly queer feminist sonic space, by centering queer analysis in the discussion of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*. The hosts and their guest hosts bring their pop cultural expertise and lived experiences as queer, trans, and non-binary folks, people of colour, and folks with other marginalized identities. *Buffering*'s original songs created for each episode and recurrent jingles promote the musical creations of queer artists and contribute to queer sonic space. These musical creations enable not only a queer feminist perspective within the horror genre, but music genres as well. This contribution to queer sonic space moves beyond the podcasts themselves. Listeners can hear the songs outside of the podcast on streaming services such as Spotify; on physical media such as CDs and special edition LPs; on a song player available through the *Buffering* website; during live concerts that Jenny Owen Youngs does on the streaming service Twitch; during live recordings and performances hosted by *Buffering* in which podcast fans can watch the live taping of an episode; and at special events like the *Buffy*-themed proms that Owen Youngs and Russo hosted in Los Angeles in 2018, New York City in 2019, and 2022 at the Torrance High School, California campus where the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television show was filmed. The jingles are available through the website and Patreon and can be used as phone ringtones, providing a tidbit of queer feminist sonic space when a mobile device is called. These audio options expand the queer feminist sonic space of these Buffy podcasts beyond the podcasts, creating an even more immersive sonic experience.

addition, Carlos Crawford creates stickers and pins in collaboration with the artist Terry Blas, highlighting *Buffy* and Marvel characters, which he sells in his Etsy store. *Slayerfest98*'s YouTube videos, occasional Twitch appearances, and live shows at the historic Stonewall Inn in New York City create space for drag performances, with special appearances by drag queens Barb Hardley and Ryan Houlihan. Queer feminist *Buffy* podcasts foster community participation beyond the audio medium through these kinds of creative production, which is also a form of fan-made art.

I do not argue that *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel on Top*, and *Slayerfest98* are unique as sites of fan-made art. Numerous scholars within fan studies, online community studies, and communications studies, such as Julie Russo, have shown the value of queer fans' reappropriation of favorite shows, movies, and more. Although scholars such as Diana W. Anselmo will argue that fan art, especially by queer fans, is "unsanctioned affective labor produced by such a desperately underrepresented demographic," I argue that in part due to the quality, professionalism, and proliferation of *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel on Top*, and *Slayerfest98*, the fanart of these podcasts has gained unique legitimacy, bolstered by their queer feminist lenses. Furthermore, the economic contribution from sales of the podcasts' merch, music, and art, in addition to scattered advertisers on the podcasts, provide the financial support needed (as the hosts of all the podcasts remark in their recurring requests for listeners to join their Patreon or buy their merch) to continue the cultural production of these podcasts.

These three podcasts function beyond the *Buffyverse* fandom. They, themselves, have generated their own fan communities, spawning new sites of queer feminist horror fandom, and enabling listeners and creators to participate in

queer feminist community-making outside of the podcast. On the one hand, these podcasts serve as a function of fandom. Not only do the podcast hosts recap and analyze episodes one by one, but they also celebrate the actors, writers, creators, and on-set workers of the series *Buffy* and *Angel*. The inclusion of interviews with guest stars ranging from James Marsters (who played the vampire Spike), Juliet Landau (who played the vampire Drusilla), Mercedes McNab (who played the vampire Harmony), Kali Rocha (who played the vengeance demon Halfrek), Buffy stunt double Sophia Crawford, and Nerf Herder (the band that wrote the *Buffy* theme song) have lent legitimacy to the podcast within the *Buffy*verse fandom. Guests such as Tom Lenk (who played Andrew) and J. August Richards (who played Charles Gunn) have used these interviews to highlight their own queer identities. However, the podcasts themselves have become sites of their own fandom and cultural production. In addition to listening to the hundreds of episodes of the podcasts, fans of the shows follow the hosts' social media accounts, pay to become Patreon supporters of the shows, watch and listen to bonus content, buy merchandise, and participate in discussion forums dedicated to the podcasts. However, high rankings on "best of" podcast lists and, for *Buffering*, an inclusion as an answer on the television show, *Jeopardy*, on January 3, 2020, have pushed these podcasts outside the space of typical *Buffy* fandom. In addition, these podcasts have served a secondary purpose: When fans learned more information about *Buffy* producer and creator Joss Whedon's on and off set behaviors, the podcasts became a place where fans could continue to stay connected to the show and characters they had long loved and enjoyed while being able to distance themselves from Whedon.

Being a queer feminist *Buffy* podcast requires ongoing self-reflection and adaptation. Russo and Owen Youngs responded to the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests by making changes within *Buffering*. While the hosts had always discussed racism throughout their coverage of *Buffy*, they wanted to make a more explicit impact. As part of their anti-racist accountability, the white co-hosts hired Alba Daza and Mackenzie MacDade as producers and consultants. On their website, the hosts detail their anti-racist commitments which include: Black and Indigenous listeners can access the Patreon page and private *Buffering* Facebook Group at no cost; with the assistance of consultants Daza and McDade and a team of content moderators, they will work to reduce harm within the Patreon community, Facebook group, and other shared digital spaces. They committed to adding more BIPOC voices to the work and specifically, “working with BIPOC creators directly in the curation and production of episodes specific to race in the *Buffy* & *Angel*verse.” They also created an accountability feedback form for the BIPOC listenership to share concerns, and they created a digital library of anti-racist websites, reading lists, and social media accounts to follow (<https://www.bufferingthevampireslayer.com/justkeepfighting>). Furthermore, at the end of 2020, MacDade led the *Buffering* listenership in two anti-racism reading and discussion groups; the first was on Ijeoma Oluo’s *So You Want to Talk About Race*, and the second focused on Mikki Kendall’s *Hood Feminism*. A new jingle about “white supremacy” joined the cadre of recurring sounds within the podcast. In 2020, LaToya Ferguson became one of the new hosts of *Angel on Top* and has brought a Black feminist critique to the show. *Slayerfest98* always has included discussions of race and racism and has included co-hosts from a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The major adaptation of *Slayerfest98* has come with how the show has reacted to Joss Whedon with Carlos Crawford deciding to pause *Buffy* coverage for a summer after allegations about Whedon surfaced. During that time, Carlos Crawford hosted a special series which he called “The Summer of *X-Men*.”

Participants in *Angel on Top*, *Buffering*, and *Slayerfest98* all contribute to a larger queer feminist soundscape by guesting on one another’s podcasts. The hosts have taken turns guesting on one another’s podcasts. I first learned about *Slayerfest98* when Ian Carlos Crawford appeared on *Buffering* to discuss “Buffy vs. Dracula,” the opening episode of Season 5. LaToya Ferguson was a frequent guest and co-host on *Slayerfest98*, and prior to becoming the co-host of *Angel on Top*, she guested on *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* more than once. Brittany Ashley guested on *Slayerfest98*. Russo and Owen Youngs have guested numerous times on *Angel on Top*. Ashley and Zak also guested on *Buffering* before being the first hosts of *Angel on Top*. In addition to interviewing many of the same *Buffy* cast and crew members, the podcasts also share special guest hosts. In the way that *Buffy* and *Angel* are part of the *Buffyverse*, *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel on Top*, and *Slayerfest98* are all part of the queer feminist horror *Buffypodcastverse*.

Conclusion

As media scholar Patricia Pisters writes in *New Blood in Contemporary Cinema*, “a poetics, [or the structure, form, and discourse, of horror] is not confined to strict genre boundaries but can be found appropriated in psychological, social or political dramas as well as other genres”(4). *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel on Top*, and *Slayerfest98* open up queer feminist sonic space, attending to a poetics of horror. Their

cultural production of the podcasts, songs, poems, jingles, apparel, art, events, social media accounts, and websites all create a space for feminist and queer communities within *Buffy* fandom and the horror fandom at large. While *Slayerfest98* finished Season 7 coverage in winter 2022, *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* finished in Fall 2022, and *Angel on Top* will conclude *Angel* Season 5 coverage in 2023, the podcasts continue to bring a queer feminist analysis to horror. Carlos Crawford uses the podcast now to discuss *Angel* alongside horror movies and Marvel shows. *Buffering* has moved onto *Yellowjackets* and began *X-Files* coverage in 2023. *Angel on Top*'s podcast hosts Ferguson and Lutich have discussed returning to Seasons 1 and 2 of *Angel* eventually so they can do their own analysis to complement Zak and Ashley's coverage. Hopefully, these podcasts inspire listeners to create more queer feminist horror television and film podcasts, opening up even more feminist queer sonic space. In the meantime, with each episode released, these podcasts continue to try to smash the demon lizard patriarchy.

Notes

¹ Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains that reparative reading is a way of naming how marginalized audiences creatively engage with stories that are not meant to sustain them.

² See McAvan, Recht, and Greenwood for examples of these articles.

³ Transcriptions of all episodes are available at <https://www.bufferingthevampireslayer.com/transcriptions/>.

⁴ I am not counting most of the 49 episodes of *My Bloody Judy* which bring the feed count to 314, but I listened to a sample of 20 *My Bloody Judy* episodes.

⁵ The Internet Wayback Machine did not capture this page.

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