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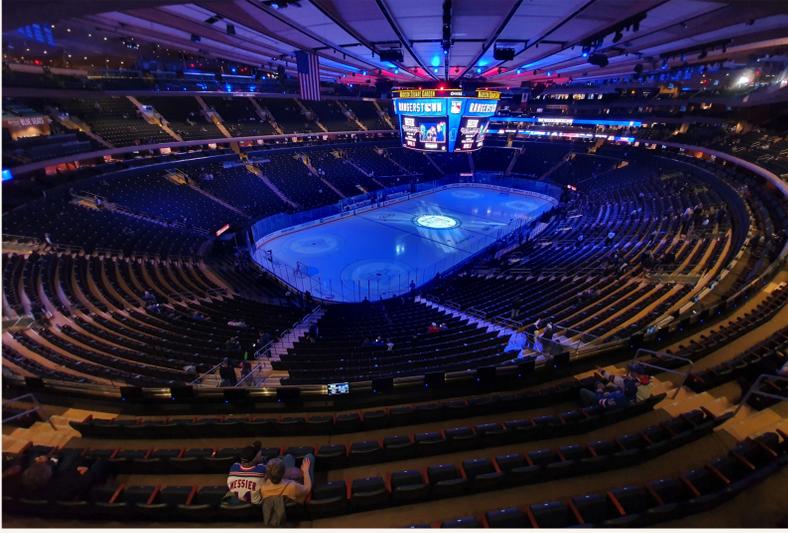


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HEATED RIVALRY: THE APPEAL TO WOMEN EVERYWHERE

12 HOURS AGO [social media icons]

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This article is written by a student writer from the Her Campus at Virginia Tech chapter and does not reflect the views of Her Campus.

Since its release, Heated Rivalry has practically broken the internet. Social media feeds are continually flooding with edits and interviews with the stars. The fanbase has only grown with a specific demographic, in particular, creating the majority of discourse: women.

Other than the obvious appeal (*wink wink*), why are so many women drawn to the storyline of this show? Why have women obsessed over these characters, but more importantly, the relationships they share? Although there are numerous reasons, it likely comes down to traditional gender power imbalances.



Following the release, women fled to social media to express their obsession with Heated Rivalry. In a mix of edits and fangirling, female fans began psychologizing to uncover the true appeal; it all comes down to gender roles.

In homosexual relationships, female or male, there is a stereotype that there is a "man" and a "woman" in the relationship. This idea is still discussed regarding LGBTQ+ relationships today, but the brilliance of Heated Rivalry is that there are rarely definitive gender roles. No male character is the woman in the relationship. They are both simply men who love one another; it's an equal partnership.



This is where the appeal toward the female gaze comes from. The main characters build their relationships on true love and devotion, but additionally, on equality. It offers female audiences a fantasy world where they can experience visually a relationship where no one is forced into the stereotypes of the woman in the relationship.

Additionally, women everywhere are likely attracted to how masculinity and romanticism coexist within the show. The main homosexual male characters don't take on stereotypical feminine traits simply because they are gay; they are just as masculine as any straight man. On top of their raw masculinity, the male characters are incredibly romantic towards one another. This shatters the gender norm that romanticism is not masculine.



Similarly, the main male characters are unconditionally vulnerable with their lives, struggles, and emotions. They're depicted as sensitive and complex, rather than the stone-cold stature men are often taught to be masculine. These vulnerable moments are what truly create the intimacy between the characters.

Although many heterosexual women may crave masculinity in a man, women likely would agree they don't want it at the expense of romance. The lack of traditional gender roles acts as a model for how men can be both romantic and manly.

The show also highlights highly consensual and intimate sexual scenes. For women who feel sex in their lives is forced, it can be refreshing to see true consent between the two characters during these spicier moments.

So, how is this achieved so well? It actually starts with removing the woman from the center of the romance. This allows for emotional longing without the pressure for the "woman" in the relationship to fill the role of the caretaker. Instead, both men in the two relationships we see throughout the show take care of one another equally.

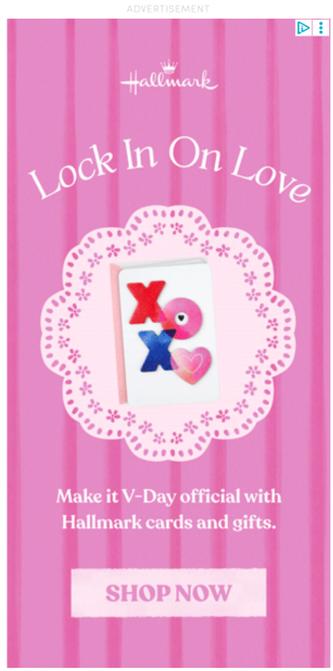
Although there are many reasons to take pleasure in the show (iykyk), the modernism and forward thinking are truly what's behind this show taking over the industry. To meet your new favorite TV show boyfriends, Heated Rivalry is currently available on HBO Max.

If you are more of a reader, you can purchase the entire Game Changer series online at Barnes & Noble for the whole story. And when all is said and done, do yourself a favor and watch the Rock Me Edit.

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Cat is a sophomore double majoring multimedia journalism and english with a minor in professional technical writing. She is currently a lifestyles editor for the Collegiate Times where she spends the majority of her time. Outside campus life, she loves reading a good book, going rock climbing, and exploring the great outdoors.



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