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# Why Every Woman You Know Is Frothing-at-the-Mouth Feral for 'Heated Rivalry'

The gay hockey show has awakened something in us all.

BY [KAYLA KIBBE](#) | PUBLISHED: DEC 15, 2025



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"I haven't felt this alive since I was a One Direction fangirl in middle school," my roommate told me over drinks last week. She was talking, of course, about the only thing literally anyone wants to talk about right now: the Horny Gay Hockey Show also known as *Heated Rivalry*.

It could not be less of a secret that the steamy Canadian series has taken over everything from TikTok to the minds, hearts, and fantasies of seemingly every woman alive since making its way to HBO Max late last month. But while the sexy streaming hit—an adaptation of the 2019 romance novel by Rachel Reid—certainly isn't the first to dominate the discourse and attract a loyal and horny fanbase, something about the whirlwind, overnight fanfare surrounding *Heated Rivalry* just feels...different.

From TikTok to group chats to brunch tables and beyond, *Heated Rivalry* fans—many of them straight women—are gushing over the show with a frenetic enthusiasm that makes you wonder if it's laced with something other than hot gay sex. When I put a call out on my Instagram Story last week in search of viewers who'd be willing to chat for this article, the immediate response from fans flocking to my inbox declaring they'd take any excuse to talk about their new obsession was so overwhelming to my sensitive introvert's system I ended up removing the app from my homescreen and fully avoiding it for two days. (If you reached out, thank you and sorry if I didn't get back to you—it's not you, it's me.)

So what is it about this gay romance between two closeted male hockey players that seems to have every woman and her mother reaching uncharted levels of feral, frothing-at-the-mouth horniness?

For one thing, "*Heated Rivalry* thrives on suspense, longing, and the verboten," Zachary Zane, Grindr's sex and relationships expert, tells *Cosmopolitan*. These themes are common fixtures of the romance genre for a reason and tend to be arousing regardless of the gender or sexual identities of either the characters or the audience. "The enemies-to-lovers trope is a classic one that many people find appealing," says Zane, adding that turning anger or competition into lust "can be, simply put, really hot" to people of all genders and orientations.

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Still, while the show's sex appeal may be less about gay or straight than the simple principle of hot is hot, sex therapist Casey Tanner, a sex expert for LELO, says there are some specific reasons the gay male dynamic at the heart of *Heated Rivalry* may be so attractive to women—especially those of us who have sex with men.

“For many straight women, the pull of *Heated Rivalry* is getting to watch men do something they crave more of in real life: be wildly, visibly vulnerable,” Tanner tells *Cosmopolitan*. “The chemistry between Shane and Ilya isn't subtle—they pine, they spiral, they rearrange their lives around each other.” Thanks to gender norms that promote a rigid, emotionally avoidant and restrained version of straight masculinity as the societal “ideal,” the level of emotional intensity playing out on screen between Shane and Ilya is both foreign and therefore alluring—something many women aren't used to seeing from a male love interest and may wish for more of in their own relationships.

This level of passion and yearning between two straight-presenting jocks “disrupts a lot of what we've been taught about masculinity,” says Thea Wayne, host of the Seggs Talk Radio podcast. Wayne suspects that women's collective love of *Heated Rivalry* reflects “a growing desire to see male vulnerability and intimacy”—both in general and perhaps, for some of the show's female fans, in their own love lives.

Then, of course, there's the gay sex itself. Specifically, the arguably somewhat depressing reality that for many women used to both onscreen depictions and lived realities of sex that objectifies, degrades, and/or represses female sexuality while centering male pleasure, watching sex between two men is a welcome reprieve from the internalized pressure, anxiety, and even trauma many of us have to come to associate with sex.

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“Two men together means two people who are both culturally allowed to want—to take and receive pleasure without hesitation,” says Tanner. “That can be incredibly compelling to watch, especially for women who are used to porn framed around one person’s pleasure and the other’s objectification.”

Essentially, while the idea of women being turned on by gay male sex that has nothing to do with us might seem counterintuitive, the fact that it has nothing to do with us may actually be precisely what makes it so appealing. In eliminating our own role in sex with men, gay sex allows straight women to enjoy the male sexuality we’re attracted to without all the fraught societal implications and triggers that tend to come with it.

“When women enjoy gay porn or erotica, it is often less about the specific gender configuration and more about the absence of certain pressures,” says Tanner. “Gay smut is a way to enjoy raw desire without stepping into the role of ‘performer’ or ‘object.’”

Basically, it takes the pressure off—and that alone can make it significantly easier for women to tap into arousal and desire.

Tanner adds that this trend of women responding to gay smut reflects broader insights from LELO’s recent [Desire Survey](#), which finds that women are “claiming desire as something that can be curious, contradictory, and context-dependent,” she explains. “Even when content is framed as ‘for’ gay men or queer audiences, women are clearly finding their way to it and staying there—not because they’re confused, but because those stories give them access to a kind of intensity, tenderness, and emotional risk they don’t always see in straight media.”

Of course, none of this means that every woman who’s found herself full-on feral for *Heated Rivalry* likes it because she secretly wants more from the men in her life or is exhausted by the pressures of performing for the male gaze under patriarchy. There are *many* reasons to love this Horny Gay Hockey Show. Below, 10 real women reveal theirs. (Although, to be fair, you may find many of these responses more or less reflect what the experts have explained above.)

## 10 Real Women on Why They Can’t Get Enough of *Heated Rivalry*

- "I feel like gay media hits women like me so hard because it depicts a relationship where all parties involved are treated equally. Women in heterosexual relationships are so used to being devalued by their partner, and their sexual pleasure isn't always prioritized. **It's just nice to watch smut where nobody is being degraded or devalued** and the pleasure of both parties is the top priority." —Annie, 21
- "Besides all the classic elements that make this story enticing, **I think seeing men be intimate, romantic, and vulnerable with other men just reminds us that they're human.**" —Niki, 24
- "At a time when women's sexuality, identities, and bodies are policed and surveilled to the utmost extreme, **Heated Rivalry provides what we all yearn for: meaningful, exhilarating intimacy full of tenderness and desire.** This show is hot and women are drawn to it because we finally see what we crave—sexy, messy, filthy, and complex love." —Sarah, 25
- "What I find hot about the show is the vulnerability and chemistry between the main characters. **The sex scenes are intimate in a way that makes consent visible** through the characters' actions and body language, something rarely depicted in mainstream media." —Alyssa, 26
- "I think men, especially in media, are always shown as the aloof, in-control ones, and **it's really attractive to see them depicted as vulnerable and down bad for a change.** I also think there is just something about rivals-to-lovers that is inherently really hot." —Victoria, 27
- "I love the way the show is shot. The darker lighting ramps up the yearning and makes everything feel moody and sensual. We get a lot without it being too much or too in your face. This show just makes you want to blush, giggle, and kick your damn feet. And **honestly, women just don't get to see men open up like this.**" —Amanda, 37
- "I think the show has a lot of appeal because it's unconventional. We see typical guy/girl relationships, even girl/girl relationships, being normalized elsewhere in media. Guy/guy is fresh, it's exciting, and we're not used to it. **I think people just want to see exciting relationships, with less emphasis on traditional gender norms.**" —Lillian, 28
- "Lesbians love it because it's full of yearning and romance but also action! Also, **I watched with friends and we all knew instinctively that the show had to have a lesbian cinematographer because of how sexy and romantic the camera work is.** We looked it up, and there are indeed lesbians behind the camera!" —Audrey, 26
- "**The only thing better than having a boyfriend is having two boyfriends who are also boyfriends.** *Heated Rivalry* has only exaggerated that fantasy for women," —Alaska, 26
- "In a way, Shane and Ilya both appeal to women's desire for a more idealized man. They're handsome, they invest in their physical fitness, they're successful. They're also sensitive and vulnerable. In order to confront their feelings for each other, **they're forced to confront the**

constructs of masculinity (and realize how confining they are) in a way straight men don't have to. Seeing that onscreen fulfills some sort of dream for women who want more emotional depth and maturity from the men in their lives." —Phoebe, 22

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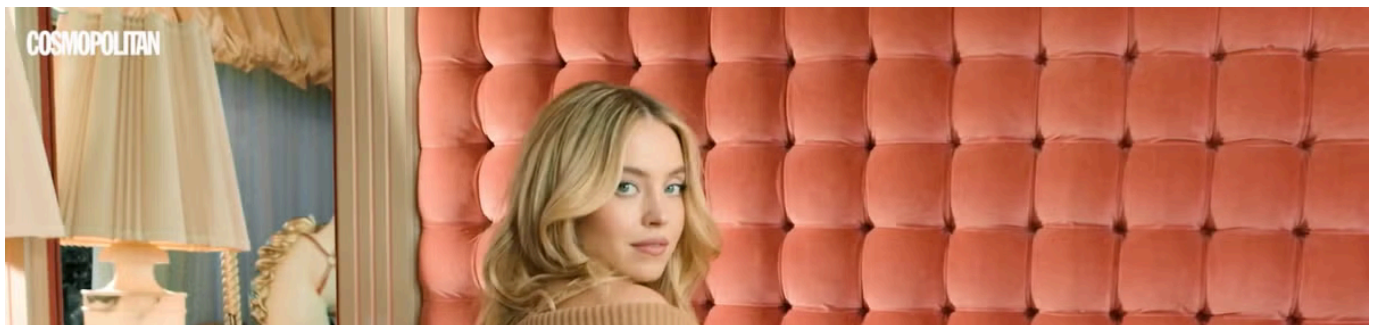


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