Part Three - A Queer Feminist Call to Ears
Lavender Sounds: The Audio Archives

Episode Description:
Today, there are over 5 million active podcasts in the world. What makes a radio show or podcast queer feminist today? How does queer or feminist *sound*? And have things really changed that much since The Lesbian Show and Dykes on Mykes first went on air? In this episode of *Lavender Sounds: The Audio Archives*, the trials and tribulations of queer feminist soundwork in our digital platform era.

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TRANSCRIPT

Stacey (Host) 0:00
Diary entry number 39. It's June 25th, 2022. Today I stood on the hot, sunbaked pavement at the corner of Church and Wellesley, holding a handmade sign that reads Dykes for Abortion Rights. I'm waiting for my friend and co-conspirator Elena to emerge from the subway station here in the heart of Toronto's gay village. It's the annual Dyke March and rally first one on the streets since the COVID 19 pandemic meant the cancellation of Pride events two years in a row. You can feel in the air the excitement and anxiety in equal measure, as rainbow-washed party goers and city curiosos descend in flocks to enjoy some bank-sponsored festivities.

As I wait, a queer elder approaches me. Someone I recognize as a mural artist in the community, and they say, “I love your sign. Can I take your photo?” We chat about the latest maddening news with the U.S. Supreme Court overturning Roe versus Wade and ending the national right to abortion upheld across the border for decades. Another fellow, queer, younger, this time I noticed earlier, was eyeing my sign musters the courage to approach for a photo as well. Than a reporter his air reads “fish out of water” as he asks if there will be more of me at today's march. I'm not sure how to respond. I made my sign that morning alone in my kitchen, but I knew I wouldn't be there alone. I carried it with me through the city streets, onto buses and trains to get here and along the way there were definitely looks of confusion, solidarity, disgust and apathy. But in that temporary aloneness, I knew I wouldn't be alone. I wasn't responding to a group call, though I later found out there were many. Instead, it was a sign made out of expression and a knowing it would find a dialogue. I knew many other dykes, lesbians and queers would be called to bring their fight to the Dyke March today. A collective understanding of what it means to uphold the queer feminism and political community, embodied by Dyke Marches around the world

(drums, chants - Dyke March)

Stacey (Host) 2:38
Finally, Elena arrives in their super gay T-shirt. Literally, it read “Super Gay” across their chest, and we make our way up Church Street to the rally where community speakers are amping up

the crowd with stories of resilience, queerness, rage and love. I can't quite hear our local queer councilor up on the rally stage. The crowd is so dense that our bodies seem to absorb their words. It doesn't matter though. We resonate with the crowd's cheers all the way to the back like rolling waves. I gaze around at the varied facial expressions and bodies around me. A queer ecosystem of arms and other various limbs and fixtures holding sister signs to mine. “Dykes for abortion rights” is resounded in “My body, not yours”, “Fuck your fetus fetish”, “Hoes before embryos” and “Midwives for reproduction rights”. At the front a larger than life coat hanger and its many human collaborators serve as our unofficial grand marshal. The crowd begins to shuffle forward to the beat of roaring motorcycle dykes and reggaeton music blasting from the back of a pickup truck. I join in as the sun beams down on my nocturnally pale graduate student’s skin and sweat begins to create small patches of dark purple through my “lavender menace” tee. In our chants, I hear echoes of Dykes on Mykes and The Lesbian Show, that potentiality in the amplified voice and the power of collective action. But I can also hear how our dyke politics has changed too. This is queer feminist sound at work. From protests and radio to podcasting and Tik Tok, if you listen for queer feminism today, what do you hear? Consider this my call to ears.

(Drums, Shouts - Dyke March)

Stacey (Host) 4:53
In this episode of Lavender Sounds, the audio archives, the trials and tribulations of queer feminist sound work in our digital platform era.

[Opening music - Divine by Pantayo]

Stacey (Host) 5:18
Today, there are over 5 million active podcasts across the world. So what makes a radio show or podcast queer feminist today? And have things really changed that much since The Lesbian Show and Dykes on Mykes first went on air? To tell the story, we will hear from a few present day sound workers behind some of my favorite queer and feminist podcasts. Erin McGregor from Queer Public, Andrea of Me & AU, Sidney and Chloe from Warriors, Bards ’n Brews, and Kaitlin, Mitra, and NK of The Heart. A quick note to say these interviews were held over Zoom video chat, so audio quality will vary accordingly.

[music fades down]

Stacey (Host) 6:09
Radio shows and podcasts are a crucial part of queer feminist politics, culture and history. But what makes a show today queer or feminist, anyway?

Erin 6:20
What was important to me was that we told stories from the margins, and I didn't just take the low hanging fruit. This cannot be another show about white people. I look a very, I mean, I'm white. My name is the whitest name you're ever going to hear. I don't need to tell another lesbian story, you know, like those things are super, super important. But like, I'm almost 40.

Younger people have, like, a whole new language of talking about sexuality and gender. And I would be doing the community a disservice. And also my identity had shifted like I had definitely gone from a point in my life to being like, “Oh, I'm a lesbian capital L lesbian”, to swinging to being like, “Oh, I'm queer”, or like, you know, or suddenly, like being like, “oh, I guess like I kind of understand bisexuality”, whereas, like, for a long time I was like, What? My name is Erin McGregor. My pronouns are she, her and I am a producer and I also am employed at the Association of Independents and in radio, a non-profit dedicated to supporting underrepresented voices in media. But mostly, I'm a freelance journalist. I mean, I don't know. I'm just one person who cares a lot about telling queer stories. What makes something queer? I don't know. It's just like I really like being confused. Older lesbian culture where, like, it was really important to identify as lesbian for me was always very important to identify as queer, even if I was a textbook lesbian. Now I just think that like gender, like I want to understand what other people are experiencing.

Mitra 8:04
Queer feminism. Um, first and foremost, the people that make it. My name is Mitra Kaboli. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a radio producer and like an audio documentarian for the queers, like, you know. That was kind of another thing, when people are like, “no one's going to listen to this show.” It's like, you, sir, don't have to listen to the show. Well, especially when we were starting, people were like, Who? Like, I wouldn't want to listen to that. And it's like I've been listening to men talk my entire fucking life. Like, if you can't listen to this for half an hour, like, to hear, like, women and queer people, like, talk about what's important to them and, like, their bodies and their lives, then like, fuck you. Sorry. Like, I don't even know what to say to that.

Sidney 9:01
Oh, gay chaos. We don't really have, like. Like it's just us. So we don't have a production team. We don't have a network because we shouldn't be on a network. Yeah, I mean, for for like, a comedy, quote, unquote, podcast, we talk about, like, ethics a lot of the time.

Chloe 9:23
You know that we have also sort of branched out from Xena as well to talk about other sort of queer and feminist media. I’m Chloe pronouns she/her. I'm, I guess, a queer podcaster and amateur photographer and I co-host and produce Warriors Bards and Brews.

Sidney 9:47
You sound like you don’t know what our podcast is called (both laugh)

Stacey (host) - That’s Sidney

Sidney
pronouns they/them. I co-host Warriors Bards and Brews with Chloe. I'm not an amateur photographer and I don't do any of the editing because I'm very bad at it, as Chloe's pointed out a few times. Yeah, I guess, professional, big gay nerd. The simple fact that we're both queer and

like, I'm trans and queer, I kind of like navigate my life looking at everything through that lens like, you know? It's not my personality, but it's a big part of my life.

Chloe 10:14
I really feel like queer media representation is really important. And it's, you know, I watch so much queer media, I read so many queer books, all that kind of thing. I mean, you could argue that it is almost an extension of my identity, but I don't know, it seems..

Sidney
I wouldn't say it's an extension. I think that how we identify and how we present and how we navigate the world definitely filters into the show. You know, I'm not going to like, self-censor too much, like, my opinion is like, whatever, like I'm going to go off on Terfs because fuck Terfs even though we have a small audience, we do kind of get that message out that like if you feminism isn't inclusive, it's bullshit feminism.

Andrea 10:58
I would say all of us are feminists and some of us like very explicitly kind of consider that part of our politics. But yeah, you know, I don't think we've ever had that conversation. I think it's just kind of a natural outcropping of everybody who is queer in person, especially kind of coming out of like, I don't know if you're familiar with the term transformative work fandom, but like fanfic writing, which tends to kind of really support and reward you writing about queer stuff in a way that is not necessarily true in mainstream media. My name's Andrea Klassen. She/they. I am a podcaster, ex-journalist was most recently the kind of primary person showrunner behind Me and AU and reluctant communications professional living currently on Vancouver Island, but who's mostly been based out of interior B.C.. Certainly having queer characters or queer people behind the mic is one kind of obvious answer. But I think, yeah, I think it is just like when stuff is speaking to those particular experiences. I was originally saying that was a flippant thing, but I really think a lot of it for me is when, when it is queer people behind the mic because I think that a like, radio piece about a queer experience from a straight journalist, hits different.

Kaitlin 12:20
I come from an era where this idea of queering something was like about taking these scripts that we have around love, gender and intimacy and like breaking them apart and like rewriting them. I am, I guess I've started calling myself an audio artist. I guess I've been calling myself that this whole time, but I've only just recently stopped feeling pretentious when I say it (laughs) because I don't really want to call myself, I just don't identify as a podcaster. And I guess we don't really call it radio anymore.

Stacey (Host) 12:55
Kaitlin started the award winning queer feminist podcast The Heart, along with Mitra Kaboli after volunteering together at CKUT community radio in Montreal on the sex and intimacy focused show Audio Smut still on air today.

Kaitlin 13:09

I started out in radio kind of revamping a show on CKUT 90.3 FM. It was called Audio Smut. We kind of took the concept and like broadened it out, which when we changed the name from Audio Smut to The Heart, when we got picked up on a network in the States called Radio Topia. What really was changing was the scope of the show, you know, like when we changed the name to The Heart, we kind of like Audio Smut was like a really fiercely like sex positive, like sexuality focused show. And The Heart became more about intimacy in the broadest sense of the word and like love and relationships, like with a really radical sexual politic obviously. But it wasn't the focus anymore.

The format of The Heart is like, it's a team of different people with different identities, all making work about their own bodies and their own lives and their own experiences from their point of view. So the idea of the personal as political is very, very, very, built into the roots and foundations of the way that we do this work. So Audio Smut was yeah, definitely like a queer show and so was The Heart. What did that mean for the inside of the show? It meant we basically just never we didn't we didn't work with people who were straight. That's what it meant. At times there were a few exceptions to that rule, and the exceptions were when we were working with someone who was person of colour because we were, you know, I mean, because we were also feminist, we were like always thinking about like power and histories of oppression. And so like, being diverse in terms of sexual orientation was and gender was one thing, but race politics were always part of our feminism, like from the very beginning.

Mitra 15:09
Yeah, I knew that Audio Smut was a show. The flyers were like everywhere in Montreal and it was like a picture of like a butt with like a microphone and it was just really funny (laughs). And then me and Kaitlin Prest also worked at the same restaurant together for a couple of years, I think. And I knew that she was also on the show. And I don't know, I think one day I was like, “Hey, what's up with that?” And she was like, “Yeah, man. Like, come on down.” And I was like, “okay, I'll come on down to the station”. And so then I, officially started volunteering with CKUT, and they like, give you a little training and a kit and like, just like, show you how to, like, use their stuff and then are like, “cool, have fun! Bye”. And I was like, amazing. It was just the right amount of hand-holding, I think for me.

In 2011, there was just like no one left making Audio Smut besides me and Kaitlin and I was still in Montreal and she was like, kind of like graduating into more of like the public radio scene in her time in New York. And I think she had made some like radio friends and they were like, “Your show is really good. You should try and make this a thing”. And I think she kind of glommed on to that idea a little bit and she was like, move to New York, like, let's do this for real. And I was like, okay, yeah, sure, I have a green card. I've kind of grown up in between the U.S. and Canada my whole life. So, like, relocating to the US wasn't a problem for me, personally. I wasn't like, Oh yeah, New York, like my dreams are finally coming true. I was like, “Well, I guess I'm done at Concordia, so sure, like, I could do that.” We had just, like, lists and lists and list of potential names we like talked to a friend of a friend who's like a professional Namer like, that's their job. They like, name shit. And so we like, you know, got some names from that person we like asked a bunch of people their opinions about our shortlist. Everyone has an opinion those

kinds of things or truly inconclusive. The Heart was out there for a little bit. The Heart as like a muscle like it, just like it. We were trying to avoid something that was cute. The heart. It's raw, it beats, there's blood, you know, so it could encompass the full range of emotions. When you're talking about intimacy, the heart isn't just like this cute little thing. It's just it could mean so many different things. And we had all these, like, Google Docs with, like, it bleeds, it beats it, but it was not just like, Oh, let's call it The Heart.

Kaitlin 18:20
Like at that time in the industry, especially in the public radio industry, any kind of overt show of a political lean made you not viable, you know, because the whole that whole I mean finally it's ten years later and 12 years later we're finally realizing that this idea of objectivity really just means the white, straight male gaze. And public radio's getting wise to that finally. But at the time, we were nobodies. Nobody cared about us. They thought we were like, weirdo pervert, like pornographers. And so we hid our politics internal and had to do this kind of like contortion of pretending like it was a show about love, but like, it was a gay show, You know what I mean? So and that's kind of the way that, like, that's kind of what's defined my, my method of feminism, which is problematic actually, because I have been having to do this kind of like double layered, you know, straddle of appealing to the white male straight gaze while inserting radical politics. And like that balance has always been a struggle, you know, like this idea of telling a universal story.

Stacey (Host) 19:36
While indie shows like Warriors, Bards and Brews and Me and AU focus on niche communities of listeners, but they're shows as a side project to their everyday jobs. Sound workers like Kaitlin and Mitra find themselves at a crossroads between their queer feminist politics and making their show profitable in today's highly competitive podcast industry. Similar to The Heart, Queer Public is a show which aimed to strike a balance between their politics and that hi fi American Public Radio podcast Sound.

Erin 20:09
QP, yes, my child. So the logline is Real Life Queer Life, which was written by Ariana Martinez. Some people are still like kind of confused by what that means. This is what we wrote, and I'll tell you if I still agree. We're telling character-driven, sound rich stories that meet real queer people where they are. We use music sourced from amazing queer bands and artists. We'll walk through Philadelphia's nightclubs and bars and into City Hall, snuggle with an asexual catalyst road trip with a non-binary teen to their first big concert, dig through the depths of Tumblr for the best fan fiction hanging out in a queer hair salon in Los Angeles and even time travel through queer life in the 1980s. Oh my gosh. So Queer Public, it came out of a big life change for me, which is that I left Montreal. I had had this seed planted by Dana and Mel.

Stacey (Host) 21:11
The Dana and Mel Erin mentions here is Dana McLeod and Mel Hogan. Before Erin entered the American Public Radio and podcasting scene, they volunteered at CKUT in Montreal for Dykes on Mykes.

Erin 21:25
I was working as a nanny, but I would go on these runs and I would start instead of putting on music, I would put on podcasts. And so I had really just discovered, I think, like This American Life and very quickly, just like started ripping through it, would find myself at times, like crying, listening to these audio stories. And I was like, this is what I want to do. Like, this medium is so powerful. This is what I want to do. I want to make This American life but for gay people. Well, I didn't know a damn thing about the industry. I knew absolutely nothing about taking audio because I'd only ever done it live in shop CKUT in Montreal. And so what I know now is This American Life has a staff of 30 and a multimillion-dollar budget and I like undocumented, Erin, living in Los Angeles was like, I'm going to make this big, ambitious show. It end up being really expensive and I have no idea how to make any more episodes. And then Nancy had come and gone in that time, which was a big show with big money WNYC with, you know, Tobin and Kathy, who I had met many times. When their show ended, I was like, if they can't even stay on the air, how are we going to stay on the air? You know? And so the queer shows that I know that are still kicking Homoground ten years in the making, which is in many ways the closest thing to Dykes on Mykes. Interview style, you know, lots of different music made by queer artists and gender reveal, which I met Tuck Woodstock in 2017 at Workn It and they were telling me that they had this idea for a show and gender reveal now makes like so much money. They give money away because their their community engagement is just like so, so, so, so, so good.

Mitra 23:30
Yes, I am like a queer feminist woman, obviously. I do think that we, like, upheld a certain degree of politics as best we could. You know, like, it wasn't perfect. Nothing is. Um, but like, the bigger we got, the messier it got, honestly.

Kaitlin 23:48
Honestly, having to kind of straddle speaking to the quote-unquote general audience, which what we're really saying is white straight men who have all the power and who have the ability to say yes or no or, you know, like that was always the struggle for us. Is like we were always trying to like, those are the gatekeepers, or at least that they were at the time. And like, I just don't believe that success like that, that like when I say success, what I really mean is resources, like I wasn't striving for success so that I could like, get all this attention, like I was striving for success because we needed to fucking pay ourselves, you know what I mean? And like, it frustrated me seeing people who were not smarter than me, like just a regular white man, like getting paid $75,000 a year to make stuff that I thought was way shittier than what we were doing, you know? Just being completely honest and kind of bitchy.

Stacey (Host) 24:46
It's okay. It’s a queer feminist interview.
(both laugh)

Kaitlin 24:55

But like, but that really got it, that way of doing it like, I tried to explain it to Phoebe and NK, who were The new Heart this year, I was like, the the method is like the Trojan horse, you know, like we the Trojan Horse is narrative and like, excellence, like quality, you know, like really high quality, like beautifully made narrative cinematic work. And the, soldiers hiding inside of the horse is our radical politics, you know? And, and they were like, not having it, you know, like they were like, no, like I'm not going to do all that contorting act bullshit. The new Heart is very different from the old Heart in a lot of ways, in ways that I find refreshing, you know, but that I'm also like, it's weird being afraid of, I'm just maybe that's just also my politics, I guess, is like I am a very, like, inclusive person. And I sometimes I'm wondering, is that because I'm white? You know what I mean? I'm like, it's like that white woman trope of being like, let's do like, let's be kind and gentle and like, let's not be angry and let's be, you know, let's like, you know, push for change and really, like, calm ways that are and actually challenging or scary for the people that you're pushing against. You know? As I kind of set out to succeed in like public radio, like I was like, oh my God, I really think that there's no queer radio shows like on public radio. But the farther I went into that world, you know, it's that classic story of the punk band that goes pro and then they lose all their ideals because they're going deeper and deeper within capitalism, essentially. And like capitalism and feminism are like, not that you can't have both, you just can't. So anyway, that's all to say. I became a little bit like, I became more and more embedded in that world and have always felt guilty about it. And so I hired people who had never compromise their values to have mainstream success, to take over The Heart.

NK 26:35
I think of *Bitchface* as almost like it was our punk band, where we were very much like, we don't really know what we're doing, but also like a lot of the ways that audio is shaped by public radio conventions aesthetically, we're like very consciously like, we're not trying to do that. In fact, we're trying to figure out how to do the opposite of that.

Stacey (Host) 26:52
That's NK, one half of Bitchface, the audio art collective brought on to The Heart for the shows relaunch in 2020.

Audio from The Heart 27:09
[From Mermaid Palace and Radiotopia, welcome to The Heart..]

NK 27:30
I really think of that work on the heart as being like Bitchface made that. Yeah, I'm Nicole Kelly, I'm mostly known as NK, and my pronouns are she/her. We had made maybe like ten episodes of that show before we started working on The Heart, which was the first time, definitely the first time I had worked in audio professionally. Phoebe, like went kind of like went to an undergrad, like did some journalism stuff, so I learned how to produce from Phoebe and then learned how to sound design on Bitchface.

That project was kind of about like us trying to marry theory and our lives. We would be like, we would. Phoebe and I would read something and get really excited about it and become, like,

kind of obsessed with it and then kind of be like, is this actually applicable to actual life? Can you do this in life?

During the course of our friendship, we just kind of got really Into, you know, the 70s era, like radical feminism, it was just really fun and funny to us. And I thought that I liked their approach being playful and humorous and also really in-your-face. We also started making *Bitchface* around the time of the first Women's March, and so we also had an intervention at the Women's March because we were like, this feels so apolitical. And so we made a bunch of zines about intersectional feminism and about white feminism and were passing those out. So I think that was like the kind of beginning, like making like print media as well, like kind of like our irreverent practice.

So I think, like, “lesbian separatism is inevitable” - We were trying to document the process of unlearning and divesting. So like whether it's, you know, I think for me, like, I don't really think of myself as having like come out, I think of myself as having to realize, like heterosexuality is an institution that one can divest from and then like doing that, you know, and that time I was doing that around the time I met Phoebe and around the time we started making Bitchface. You know, I definitely feel like I went through a real lesbian separatist phase. But like, we weren't in that phase at the time we made that. And it's like really not to encourage people to become lesbian separatists per se. And I think especially with like how I think about queerness now, I wouldn't necessarily advocate that, but I think it's more just, you know, the point of being like, these are all choices that you can make. And, um, you know, political lesbianism as someone who like, you know, like I said, I identify as bisexual but had like mostly been with men up until a certain point. I did feel like something that I had to, like, really teach myself and unlearn a lot of things in the process of choosing my queerness.

Stacey (Host) 29:40
The Heart’s 2020 relaunch episode, aptly titled for the study is Lesbian Separatism Is Inevitable. The episode is co-produced and hosted by Nicole Kelly and Phoebe Unter as a love letter of sorts to the duo's experience living out a lesbian separatist fantasy at a dyke ranch retreat in 2016.

Audio excerpt from The Heart “Lesbian Separatism is Inevitable” 30:00
(Music)

Stacey (Host) 32:05
A quest to locate Dyke Heaven. You can hear the mix of The Heart's established narrative formula and hi fi sound blended with Phoebe and NK's unapologetic politics. As I make this episode, The Heart's next release, which revisits the Gaza monologues by Ashtar Theatre speaks to the political roots that Kaitlyn and the Mermaid Palace team are striving for, all while tuning in to the strengths of sound design for sharing intimate human stories.
[electronic music plays underneath - Digital Daydream by Cherry the Penguin]

Throughout this project, I found myself constantly slipping back and forth through time from lesbian feminist radio in the 1970s back into our queer feminist present. As I listen to the lavender sounds featured across all of these shows. I shared in this listening back with everyone I interviewed to choosing clips I thought might resonate, spark memories, or get them thinking about the politics of sound more broadly. I listened back with Kaitlin to a Dykes on Myke's Kiss-In collage from 1991, made by Deb VanSlet from audio taken at a kiss-in event held in commemoration of the sex garage raids in Montreal. And we got talking about the aesthetics of sound production today. What does queer sound like? How do we produce a sense of intimacy and sexuality on the radio?

Kaitlin 33:40
Two different things kind of came up for me. One of them was just like thinking about my own privilege, I guess, I'm just thinking about the 90s and like how much scarier it probably was to be in public and like to say these types of things on the radio, you know what I mean? Like the stakes were higher then. It was more of a marginalized identity then. yeah, and like, I'm just thinking about my own privilege of like being, be coming up at like ten years later, you know, like I'm thinking of how easy I didn't even have to come out, you know, like, my parents were just like, Oh, I just assumed that she was your girlfriend. I was like, cool. You know, everybody's a little bit gay in Montreal, you know, like, so it just it was just never a thing. Like, I just I'm just thinking, like, even though I just describe, like, how hard it was, for us, like, I'm just reflecting on probably how much easier it was for us and like, how much fucking courage, badass-ness that they had.

And then the other thing I couldn't help but think was because I am an expert and I have like developed an expertise on representing intimacy, I was like I was critiquing it a little bit. I was like, no, but that's not how you want to record a kiss. You want to record a kiss, you have to hear all the sweet, cute things that they say to each other and like what they what they like, their little giggles and like their little, you know? Like that's something, I guess something that I've developed a lot over time is like, how do you translate intimacy? You know? Like, how do you, like the sound of a kiss? It sounds kind of gross. Like, so how do you record the sound of a kiss that makes you feel like you're being kissed? And I know now what are the ways that you do that? You know, like you record the breathing? Because usually people are, you can hear someone's nose like breathing into someone's cheek and like how the breath kind of trembles or like how people get a little nervous and like, giggle and like or say cute things, you know, the touching. You can usually hear where the hands are actually, you know, you can hear their hands or in the hair or on their back or if they're pushed, pulling someone into them or all this stuff.

Stacey (Host) 35:51
The formalization of podcasting into a full blown media industry, on one hand has allowed for audio artists to find space to make thoughtfully produced, high quality sound work. Work that plays to podcasts, afforda nces as a sound first medium, primarily listened to alone and over headphones. But on the flipside, there also needs to be a continued space for DIY ethos in podcasting for people to experiment, to get messy, to fail, to speak to their niche with or without

the highly specialized labor needed for a large scale audio, documentary and narrative driven work. Making queer and feminist sound work isn't easy, let me tell you. But at the end of the day, community connection, hearing ourselves in the stories of others. Well, that's what it's all about, isn't it?

Erin 36:42
Like I would try one editing platform and I would hate it and I would try another one and I would hate it. And I just like I was driving myself crazy because I thought something was wrong with me. And then the more I studied the, like the art of making narrative, I realized, Oh, this is just hard. This is just really, really hard. And I stumble upon this amazing artist named Ariana Martinez, whose pronouns are they/ them, and Ariana was a new voices scholar for the organization that I now work for. One day I had posted in like the Dyke Day, LA Dyke Day, if you like, ever have a chance is like the best day of the entire year, it's my favorite. And I had posted in the like the Facebook event for it and when I went to go look at the numbers, we were getting 500 downloads or 500, yeah, 500 downloads a day. And I was like, that's really weird. Like, all of that is from the Dyke Day post? Well, it turns out we were actually trending and we were actually like number one in the rankings for a minute because we were being featured on the new and Noteworthy page next to Shaq like Shaq, you know who Shaq is.

Anyways, so we kind of had this like early success. We had this beautiful website, we had this big lanch, but then like we never figured out how to make audio again together. To try to learn this craft of narrative storytelling, it's my favorite form of storytelling. It's the most engaging, it's the most sound rich. It is the hardest to learn. And so I started finding like, little courses here and there, like Creative Life had a course. So I started taking these little classes I would like go to, you know, I would watch like live streams of conferences and things. And then my marriage ended and I find myself in Philly and I get the opportunity to go to the SALT Institute for documentary studies. And I go there and I tell everyone about Queer Public, and everyone's really excited, but I don't have time in a week to make anything for Queer Public. So I make a story about these two drug dealers. One of them ends up being gay. Anytime I try to make a story that I don't think is gay, it ends up being very gay. I have absolutely zero attachment to hosting the show. If someone else said, I want to come take the brand and do this other thing with it, great, be my guest. Like, this is not my mic, it's not my microphone. You know, it belongs to the community.

Kaitlin 39:19
I'm kind of tired. Like, I think that's the biggest thing, is that after that eight year run or ten even like at the end of the shadows, like when I started at Mermaid Palace, I was so fucking burnt out, you know. Like before it was me and my team versus the industry. But now the site of revolution for me is how do I treat my people well? You know? How do I make the policies of this company feminist? How do I resist capitalism in the way that I pay people and the way that I work with people? And that's been the biggest learning curve because I've been I've been doing this so scrappy for so long and paying ourselves so little that I still see myself as that, like 25 year old who was making $12,000 a year trying to live in New York City. I'm not that person anymore, you know? And so, like, I'm realizing the infrastructure and policy and like, what is the

experience of the people working at my company? How do I make it good and positive instead of like rough around the edges? Scrappy, you know, like not getting paid enough, working too hard. How do you make a healthy work culture? You know, like that's the new site of my feminism at this point. Very hard and scary questions. And I have not I have not managed it perfectly. Like that's a fact. Like, you know.

NK 40:44
Bitchface yeah, I feel like we were really intentional about every aspect of the process. Some of those values did include, for example, you know, if we interview someone and we make a piece, this is also like not conventional in the industry, but that we would let them hear the piece and decide if they wanted to go forward with it or not. I think some other stuff, just like esthetically, is for most of the Bitchface episodes, and also for that one lesbian separatism. We would often reach out to queer artists, musicians that we liked and ask if they would, if we could use a specific song or a song that they were interested in. We had a friend who made a couple of really fun covers. She made a cover she made like a cumbia cover of Hotline Bling for one of our episodes that I think is better than Drake's original.

Like many people do, something one way does not mean that's how it's always done. Or just because people perceive something one way doesn't mean that's how it's, you know, always is. Queering audio. Like, what would that mean? I guess something that you're thinking about a lot. So the stories that we're telling the guests that we're featuring, the experts who I choose, even the how I even think about who's an expert and who's not, it's like those things to me all do feel like part of, like a feminist and queer politic, even though I'm not always talking about gender.

Mitra 41:48
Queers in basically every realm of society in the world, whatever they're fucking into, they are like paving the fucking way, you know? You can make a show about climate change, but if you're like a queer feminist, then that's like the lens that you are looking at things at. Then it is, you know, like I don't think you have to necessarily be talking about like sex or gender or sexuality or like those intersections at all. So much as like looking at how the intersection of those things affect literally everything else in our lives. I never really felt like Audio Smut was an extension of my identity. I feel like people are surprised to hear that, though, and I feel like people kind of put that on me a lot. I am an artist and a creative person. I make all kinds of art and I have a wide range of work. I think I feel like I got a little bit pigeonholed. Some of this is like, wrapped up in kind of me and Kaitlin's break up a little bit where I was like, this isn't my identity. Where in the way where, you know, at the time I felt like Kaitlin felt like it was just so deeply personal to her, all of it. And I was just like, I mean, I don't know, it's hard because I put so much of myself into it with not a lot of tangible return. In the past couple of years when I was working at 30 for 30, I could very easily say that my job there was not an extension of my identity because it was so transactional. It was like clock in, clock out. They gave me the money, I do the work like and I leave and we never talk about it again. And that was so liberating for me.

Erin 43:47

With like my next project. Is it a gay story? I happen to be gay, so it will be a gay story, but it's not about being gay.

Stacey (Host) 43:47
From the 1970s to the present, it comes as no surprise that queer existence sounds and feels radically different today, while simultaneously evoking a familiar sense of belonging across generations. Lesbian feminism has transformed into a rich diffusion of interconnected identities and political standpoints across queer feminism. When it comes to wins for queer rights and the feminist movement, it's as feminist scholar Gayle Rubin once said, quote, “The more I explore these queer knowledges, the more I find out how much we have already forgotten, rediscovered, and promptly forgotten again”. If this project has taught me anything, it's just how essential queer community is. And even as we hear more and more queers on the mic, we have to keep advocating for ourselves and others in our communities to be given the space to bring stories that resonate in queer feminism to the forefront. We can hear it in podcasts like The Hearts, Warriors, Bards and Brews, Queer Public and Me and AU and we can hear it in the Dyke Marches across the globe too. As a queer media historian, I feel lesbian feminism everywhere. It is not forgotten. It may go by a different name or many names, but if you bend your ear and listen, you hear it in the chants and whispers of these lavender sounds.

[Music -Divine by Pantayo]

Stacey (Host) 45:37
In this episode, we heard from just a handful of queer and feminist sound workers. Soundworkers willing and able to speak with me, who had links to the two historical Canadian shows at the core of this project, Dykes on Mykes at CKUT Montreal and The Lesbian Show of Vancouver Co-op Radio. But the archive is never complete. Today there is a rich listing of queer, trans and feminist content from across North America. So here are just a few to bend your ear. Okay, list Gender Reveal, Country Queers, TransLash, Two Dykes on a Mic, Queery with Cameron Esposito, The Strange Case of Starship Iris, Big Dyke Energy, Hood Rat to Head Wrap, The Queer Collective Podcast and of course, insert your show of choice here.

[Music continues]

Stacey (Host) 46:36
This has been Lavender Sounds, The Audio Archives. I'm Stacey Copeland. There are so many people I want to thank for making this project a reality. From my supervisory team at Simon Fraser University during the dissertation work that led to this project. And of course, every single person I interviewed, as well as the artists behind the music featured throughout the series. Please check out the show notes for a list of music, show clips, people and resources featured in each episode. And, of course, special thanks to University of Michigan Press. This has been Lavender Sounds, The audio archives.

[music fades out]

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Featured Audio + Additional References:

Audio Clips and Music in order of first use:

- Audio used with permission to design soundscape for the opening scene (thank you to all!):
    - Church and Wellesley Ambience Recorded by Elena Hudgins Lyle (August 2024)
    - Dyke March Toronto 2024 audio from The Ken Continuum https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OADF8lxtplk
    - Hannah Goldman - NYC Dyke March 2024 audio clip [“drumming”]
    - DC Dyke March 2023 audio clip by Anna Casey [“trans rights chant”]
    - Dyke March Toronto 2023 recording by Stacey Copeland
- Divine by Pantayo [opening music]
- The Heart “Lesbian Separatism is Inevitable” - https://www.theheartradio.org/solos/2020/1/15/lesbian-separatism-is-inevitable
- Digital Daydream by Cherry the Penguin (Epidemic Sound)

Voices Featured in order first heard:
Erin McGregor, Mitra Kaboli, Sidney Gill, Chloe Krause, Andrea Klassen, Kaitlin Prest, and Nicole Kelly (NK)