

# FOR YOUR EARS ONLY...

It's a far cry from *Women's Hour*. Erotic podcasts aimed at a female audience are being downloaded in record numbers. *Kat Brown* finds out what's getting us hot under the headphones

**E**rotica has seriously moved on since the days of lady novelists dictating tales of ripped bodices from their chaises longues. In the past decade we've seen E L James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy bring breathless sex to the daily commute (thanks to the Kindle, where no one can see what you're reading). Now women have a new secret thrill – X-rated podcasts.

And unlike mainstream pornography, which is overwhelmingly made for and sold to men, these 'porncasts' – short fiction focused on female desire and often read aloud by actors – are proving a huge hit with women.

'The biggest sex organ is the brain, and with audio the brain activates every sensual part of our body,' says Lianne Young, a relationships counsellor and adult industry expert, who has recorded her own erotic audiobooks. 'It's about escapism: you don't think about work or any other stressors. You don't have to share it with anybody, and it's individual, whereas every conventional porn film is the same – watch two or three and you may as well have watched them all.'

'Women are creative creatures with an imagination that can be wild and free. Listening to erotic stories allows us to fill in the blanks and tailor the visuals of the scenario to our own tastes and experiences,' adds Lisa Williams, co-founder and host of sex and relationships podcast Hotbed Collective.

'Being able to listen to something sexy rather than have it on show is quite valuable to women

who have been raised to think that their pleasure is shameful,' she says. 'Plus, pleasure is a private thing. People love that they can listen to our podcast on the tube without anyone knowing that they're hearing all about how to have an orgasm – and it's the same with all of these erotic podcasts.'

An estimated six million Britons listen to a podcast every week, so it was only a matter of time before the global porn industry – which is worth a whopping £78 billion – got in on the act. For up to £8.49 a month, women can subscribe to erotic podcasts such as Dipsea, which offers a range of stories in categories such as 'hot and heavy' and 'relax and unwind'. Alternatively, the erotic hub Quinn – launched by Caroline Spiegel, the 22-year-old sister of Snapchat CEO Evan Spiegel – has been dubbed 'a turn-on community of anonymous people' and contains audio files and sexy stories uploaded by other users.

'These podcasts help me feel sexy,' one listener tells me frankly (and anonymously). 'I have a lot on, and sometimes I just can't be bothered to get in "the mood". Listening to a story gets me in touch with my imagination, meaning that I'm more inclined to chat up my husband than go to sleep.'

The discreet nature of podcasts also appeals, she says: 'They don't show up on my Amazon account, thank God, as it's used by the rest of the family.' The titles of audio erotica also tend to be less graphic than the visual kind. You can listen at the gym, or on the bus, and provided

you keep the volume to a sensible level, nobody will be any the wiser.

And unlike in adult movies, where men tend to be muscle-bound studs and the women pneumatic blondes, 'You can literally put your body type and preferences centre stage,' says Anouszka Tate, co-host of the sex education podcast Project Pleasure. 'That's a pretty revolutionary concept in a world where women often view their own sex lives through the eyes of men because that's the only depiction of sex presented to them. Mainstream media and porn often present only a certain type of person as sexual and therefore as having a right to enjoy sex.'

Part of this rise in erotic audio is also due to ethical concerns surrounding the adult industry – to say nothing of better acting. There are no sexual demands on a podcast performer – they are simply reading the stories. If you'd prefer something more authentic, shows such as SwingerCast feature 'real people' sharing their own adventurous sex stories with other partners, and the bilingual podcast Voxxx features stories read by the French erotic actress Lélé O.

And of course, not all aural sex is XXX-rated. When Dipsea started in the US in December, its creators Gina Gutierrez and Faye Keegan, both 29, wanted to offer its listeners gentler stories that allowed them to connect gradually with their sensual side rather than launching straight in with whips and chains. As with all sex, what you enjoy – and how you enjoy it – is up to you. **Y**

## SIX OF THE BEST



### QUINN

tryquinn.com, free  
A women's written/ audio erotica hub that lets you search by male or female voice and sexual category.



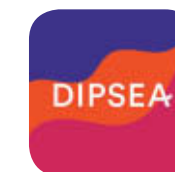
### BAWDY STORYTELLING

com, free  
Funny and full-on performances of real-life erotic tales.



### FERLY

wearferly.com, free  
Think self-discovery and opening up to sexual enjoyment, with a healthy serving of sensual stories.



### DIPSEA

dipseastories.com, from £8.49  
More than 100 stories plus 'guided sessions' for singles and couples listening at home.



### THE KISS ME QUICK EROTICA PODCAST

thekissmequicks.com, free  
Its episodes cover genres from lesbians to werewolves.



### JUICY PEACH

bit.ly/2XUoMn3, from £4  
Sexy tales performed by their creator; premium access for listeners wishing to hear their own names being moaned in ecstasy.