Students reflect on series finales of acclaimed teen TV shows ‘Buffy’ and ‘Dawson’s Creek’

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003)

5 classic Buffy episodes
1. “Becoming”—Buffy has one chance to save the world, but has to kill the monster the man she loves has become.
2. “Hush”—Acted in nearly complete silence, the actors manage to communicate without dialogue.
3. “Poesy” — Viewers are introduced to Spike’s (James Marsters) rather interesting past in this episode.
4. “The Body”—Buffy finds the body of her mother. It is set with no background music and sandwiched between images of Joyce’s body.
5. “Once More With Feeling” (The Buffy Musical)—This episode boasted of nomenclature and dance numbers, all performed by the actual actors.

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

Into each generation a Slayer is born. One girl in all the world, a Chosen One. One born with the strength and skill to hunt the vampires. She is Buffy, the Vampire Slayer. But not for much longer.

At the end of this season, Buffy the Vampire Slayer will end its seven-season run. Buffy is the title character, has decided not to renew her contract. Joss Whedon, the creator and executive producer, will not continue the show without her, although a spin-off has not been ruled out.

Buffy, the character, has overcome vampires, demons, a giant snake that destroyed her high school, a government-run operation, a god, and her own death twice, producing nine episodes, including for the writing of “Hush,” an episode where there is complete silence for the majority of the show.

Buffy, the show, has overcome unexpected character departures, snubs from the Emmys, mixed ratings and a major switch of networks in its sixth season.

“It is a show that has fascinating storylines that keep surprises coming,” said Dr. Patrick Chmel, chair of fine arts. “Buffy is hot.”

The show, based on the 1992 critically-tanked movie of the same name, was a mid-season replacement on the WB and premiered in March 1997. Historically, mid-season replacements do not do well and the pattern continued with this show. Buffy was not an instant sell to fans, attracting only 3.7 million fans in its first season as compared to the 5.5 million it attracted during its highest point and the 4.2 million it attracts presently.

Despite all of the obstacles that Buffy has had to face, it was always able to maintain a loyal, if small, fan base.

“It’s kind of a cult classic—people either know it and love it, or don’t know anything about it at all,” said Laura Luck, secretary in the fine arts department.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer has spawned thousands of fan websites, fan fiction, books and even an academic journal called Slayage, the International Journal of Buffy Studies, which discusses topics such as religious imagery, the moral responsibilities Buffy has to face and the role of feminism in the show. It is now in its seventh volume.

“Maybe the best thing about the show is that it defies category, or rather, that it encompasses all categories,” said Dr. Jerry Rife, professor of Fine Arts. “It is a drama, a comedy, part action film, dark horror and includes coming of age stories, dealing with power, relationships and the magic of friendship. These are things we all have to deal with, and this show teaches us how it can be done.”

Boating lines such as, “Two Slayers, No waiting,” and “If the apocalypse comes tomorrow, the caliber of the writing is one of the reasons that the show is so highly regarded by critics, and the fans respond to it as well.

“It is a great show for many reasons. First and foremost, the writers are not afraid to take risks,” said Rife. “They will kill off a main character such as Joyce, Tara, Angel and Buffy, twice, if it furthers the storyline. The writing is uniformly good to excellent.”

Of course, pretty much is everyone’s favorite slayer. The Vampire Slayer.

“I’ve tried to watch it,” said Amanda Wylie, graduate student and resident director of Conover Residence Hall. “It just seems to me like one of those shows people watch just for the hot girls.”

The diverse views of the show are reflected in the action of the Emmy’s. Buffy has won two Emmy awards for makeup and music, and has been nominated nine other times, including for the writing of “Hush,” an episode where there is complete silence for the majority of the show.

“It is quite unlike other shows on television,” said Rife. “I think it will continue to live and influence us in syndication.”

Buffy will air its series finale this May. Many characters who had left the show will return for it. Whether or not Buffy herself will survive is yet unclear, although there are reportedly many surprise deaths.

Either way, Buffy will be sorely missed by its fans. As it said on Buffy’s tombstone, “Buffy Summers. She saved the world, a lot.”


5 classic Dawson episodes
1. “Beaux’ Concess” — After breaking up with Jen, Dawson begins to see Joey in a new light.
2. “Detention” — A spoof on The Breakfast Club, everyone ends up spending Saturday in detention. And Abby Morgan starts a game of truth or dare.
3. “The Kiss” — Joey and Dawson’s friendship blossoms into a romance.
4. “The Graduation” — This episode has the characters facing graduation with Andie returning to town.
5. “A Perfect Wedding” — While the Cape-side crew helps the Potters cater a wedding, Joey and Dawson share a kiss, and Jen and Abby’s drunken night comes to a satisfyingly tragic end.

By Jennifer Kuhn
Photography Editor

They say all good things must come to an end. In a culture currently defined by reality shows and one-hit wonders, long-running dramas and sitcoms, which were once the staple of quality television, are being replaced by shows which chronicle the lives of construction workers and dirty people stranded on nameless islands.

Thus, six years after Joey Potter (Katie Holmes) first climbed through Dawson Lerry’s (James van der Beek) bedroom window, the time has come to close that window and draw the curtain on what has been one of the greatest teen dramas in recent time.

For those who have been living under a rock for the last six years, Dawson’s Creek followed the lives of its four main characters as they made the jumps from adolescence to adulthood. What started as a mere mid-season replacement back in Jan. 1998 quickly set record ratings and won the approval of critics and viewers.

“I used to look forward to the show every Wednesday night,” said Alison Wallstedt, a junior management major. “My friends and I would watch it together and everything, but I don’t watch it as much anymore.”

The show combined the charm of The Wonder Years and the drama of Beverly Hills 90210 and played a significant role in defining the late ’90s teenager. It introduced musical artists such as Paula Cole and Sarah McLachlan, and left viewers feeling like they had just spent an hour with their best friends.

However, not everyone agreed the show deserved as much hype as it received.

“Somehow, my high school loved the show. I found it odd that people could spend so much time discussing imaginary people,” said sophomore Allen Huang.

“Everything is scripted and happy endings and blah! It didn’t reflect real life.”

Now, let’s be honest, maybe the kids of the creek didn’t live the typical life of an everyday high schooler. Not everyone can hop in a boat and paddle their way across the creek, get into their best friend’s house, and never be able to use words in their daily conversation that most of us had to look up during the commercials. But Dawson’s Creek made big colds. It was never uncommon to hear words like “ebulliently” and “prettily” used in a conversation between Dawson and Joey in the hallways of Cape-side High.

Although labeled a teeny-bopper drama, Dawson’s Creek served as more than just entertainment for the 12-34 crowd, it provided a stepping stone for the WB network to be seen in a much more positive light. Along with Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Felicity, Dawson’s came to define the WB’s programming strategy.

“We will always carry an emotional attachment to Dawson’s Creek, for without it, the WB would not exist,” WB entertainment president Jordan Levin said in an interview on the WB website. “The show defined who we are. The WB has grown alongside the cast and in the process, the series became a defining and life altering experience for all involved.”

Created and originally written by Kevin Williamson, the show still holds the WB’s record for best-ever rating (6.3) among the 12-34 crowd. However, fans are quick to agree that the show’s content peaked during the first two seasons, and went downhill from there.

The reason for the noted difference between seasons two and three is the fact that Williamson left the show. Although it’s odd for a creator to actually leave a show completely, Williamson said, at the time, that his hectic life was taking its toll.

“I was starting to crash and burn,” he said. “It was best I not be part of it that year.”

Luckily, for all of the fans of the ‘older’ Dawson’s Creek, Williamson (along with co-producer Maggie Friedman) will be returning to write the final two-hour episode, which will air May 14.

According to Williamson, the show will focus on the original core cast, and will flash forward to the years following college graduation and a memorable event that brings them all back to Cape-side. This will give all fans, new and old, one last chance to splash in the creek before it dries up for eternity.