

B-I-N-G-O: Everything Old Is New Again

☒ When I read an article a couple of weeks ago in the Wall Street Journal entitled, “How Do you Spell Hipster? It Could Be B-I-N-G-O,” I laughed out loud.

Why? Because even though I was a closet bingo player in my youth, I believed the perception people had of bingo enthusiasts back then was that only little old ladies in church basements, smoking cigarettes, with rows of cards on the table in front of them and a pile of pennies to mark them, enjoyed the game. Little did I know that in 40 years young people would come out of the closet and raise their bingo cards and dabbers proudly. But back then, it just wasn't “cool” and, being young, I had to at least appear to be “cool.”

One night back around 1970, I went to bingo with a friend. My exceptionally-“cool” older boyfriend called the apartment and my Dad answered the phone. When asked to speak with me, my Dad said, “oh, she's at bingo.” Well, the next day, when I spoke with my boyfriend, he simply said, “I called your home yesterday and your Dad said you were at bingo.” Even though he didn't say another word, I immediately tried to cover my tracks and said, “Oh, well, huh, that's where I tell my Dad I'm going when I'm really going somewhere else.” Although I doubt my boyfriend thought anything of it, I was absolutely horrified and later screeched at my Dad, “How could you say that? How could you tell my boyfriend I was at bingo?” My poor father was used to my screaming and ranting and just walked out of the room.

Forty years later, bingo is now enjoying a growing resurgence among young people, along with knitting, bowling and euchre (which I actually had to google to find out what it was).

In a suburb of Chicago, an upscale tea shop (owned by Billy Corgan, frontman for Smashing Pumpkins) hosts monthly bingo nights for 30-something hipsters with the numbers being called by different local celebrities, including Chicago news anchor, Bill Kurtis. Winners are promised prizes ranging from a jar of honey from Mr. Kurtis's farm to a greeting from him for their voice mail. (He does have a great voice.) Proceeds go to non-profits.

What was a dying game is not only making a comeback in the states, but some other enterprising guys accidentally came up with the idea of "Rebel Bingo," and have hosted bingo nights at music venues in 35 cities around the world drawing anywhere from 800 to 2000 people, usually ranging in age from 21 to 30.

When a pizza pub in Portland, Oregon began hosting Bingo and Bourbon it turned a usually dead Monday night into a full venue and significant sales.

So with so much technology out there and news of horrific events bombarding us whenever we turn on our television or computer, it's nice to know that something as simple as a low-tech game of bingo is still capturing our attention. Now if shoulder pads would just come back into fashion ...

In this case, I've always loved bingo so I totally get it, but if you don't, God bless you.