

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Understanding Woke Bingo

Our Friends · Tuesday, March 10th, 2020

Bingo isn't what you might immediately think of when you imagine something new, up to date, and, dare we say it, trendy. That's really the whole point of bingo for many people; it is comforting and traditional, and it hasn't changed for decades. Multiple generations of the same family will have played, enjoyed, perhaps even won, bingo in their time, and it's something that everyone can have a lot of fun with.

The advent of [online bingo](#) will have caused something of a stir within the bingo playing community, but in the end this worked out just right. Although village halls, bingo halls, holiday camps, pubs, theatres, and plenty of other places will have a physical bingo game going on at various points throughout the calendar, the online game didn't disrupt this. The going out to bingo brigade kept going out, and the ones who wanted to play online did so – again, everyone was happy.

Yet now more changes are afoot, and these changes are being called 'woke bingo'. This is something entirely different, something that pulls at the very fabric of the game and even those who didn't mind the digital version (or liked it, come to that) might find this new idea too much.

### What Is Woke Bingo?

The term 'woke' is used to describe people who have realised that what they were doing in the past was not really acceptable, and they have 'woken up' to the fact that change needs to be made. In most cases, they will have been doing something offensive without realising, then being told or understanding what they were doing was causing offence, becoming 'woke' and not doing it anymore.

How does this relate to bingo? It's the calls. The traditional bingo called that have been the same for decades are now considered – by some – to be offensive. Cries such as 'two fat ladies, eighty-eight' will be replaced with more wholesome, tame calls. Eight-eight, for example, becomes 'Wills and Kate'.

Although, of course, if you're a republican rather than a monarchist you might still have issues. At least, however, you're not insulting any fat ladies.

And this is woke bingo distilled. It is taking all the fun phrases that might upset someone somewhere (but probably won't) and changing them into something else that will take a long time to remember for those players of a certain age, and those who have been playing a long time and

are used to the old calls, no matter how old they actually are.

### **Did Bingo Really need to change?**

Online bingo site Foxy Bingo is behind these changes, it would seem. Learning how to play bingo is easy. It asked its customers to vote for their favourite new calls which were initially based on chatroom suggestions. They did this because more and more younger people are visiting the site (and other online bingo games) and they are the ones calling for change. The industry has to look at where the money is, and so it will do what it takes to ensure that the youngsters don't disappear again.

In total, there are 615 licensed bingo halls in Britain, and around four million people play the game in varying forms, including online. It's clearly popular, but will the new calls stand the test of time?

### **New Calls – Woke Bingo**

So just what are these new calls that are being mentioned so much? Here are some of them to think about:

- 7 = Flexitarian
- 9 = Get an Uber from mine
- 14 = Netflix and chill
- 25 = Quarter life crisis
- 35 = It's a vibe
- 38 = Avocado on a plate
- 39 = Love Island time
- 48 = Not another Brexit debate
- 49 = Amazon Prime
- 54 = Lads on tour
- 68 = Tinder date
- 74 = Recycle more
- 78 = Haters gon' hate
- 86 = Instagram pics
- 88 = Wills and Kate

### **Why Is Bingo So Popular even today?**

Although we don't know exactly how and why bingo started, the game we know today does have its origins in the 16th century, although not in the UK as might be expected – bingo seems to have started in Italy. It wasn't until the 1920s that the name 'bingo' was used, however. This came from High J. Ward who used it to describe his game at a local carnival, and made it the universal call when a card was filled so everyone knew the game was done. Until then it had been an expression of glee after success.

The sixties, though, was when bingo reached its headiest of heights in this country. There were around 14 million regular bingo players then, and 1600 bingo halls, and that number didn't change until the 1990s when the game clearly started to lose its appeal a little. This, it is thought, came about due to the National Lottery being introduced. It had a major impact on everyone at the time, and it meant that some lifelong bingo players would rather spend their money on a lottery ticket

than on a bingo game.

It didn't take long for things to change back again though. In the 2000s there was something of a resurgence in bingo, and it was partly down to the plethora of online sites that had sprung up offering the chance to play bingo in the comfort of your own home. It meant that those who wanted to play but who couldn't leave the house to do so for various reasons could still enjoy the game. And soon, although it hasn't yet reached the popularity it had back in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, bingo gained some new fans, many in younger generations.

Which is why many casinos are so keen to keep the young ones happy. If the growth of bingo continues, it might one day be back to the levels we saw in the 1960s, and if that happens then it won't matter whether the bingo calls are woke or not – it will be an industry worth a huge amount of money and one that will go from strength to strength.

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