

voice **10** PLUS+

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# Generation Y



LENA ROSS collage

Wait,  
who  
are  
these  
people?

By LENA ROSS

I first realized I was quintessentially generation Y at a Bloc Party concert in early March.

We've been called the cynical generation; MTV generation; millennials; echo boomers; Nintendo generation and generation next. Though there is no one accepted definition, demographers Neil Howe and William Strauss have consistently used "the high school class of 2000," or those born in 1982 as their starting point. Basically, those belonging to generation Y were born between the late 70s and late 90s. We were old enough to have understood the cultural impact of Sept. 11, 2001 and we likely watched it on TV, read background on the Internet and mulled about it to a friend on the phone simultaneously.

The concert, at the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Vancouver, is an odd scene as hipsters crowd inside what's been dubbed the most opulent theatre on the Pacific Coast. But I realize this is generation Y: a fluid combination of old and new, thrift-store and designer, aesthetic and intellect. Flying buttresses, lush red carpeting and patchy beards make for a charming backdrop. And text-messaging wallflowers add colour to the carved, golden interior.

When we arrive I see I am inadequately clad in jeans and an old silk-screened T-shirt. I wish I had spent more time looking like I didn't care about what I was wearing.

As the rush of people hit me, I am met with a flurry of asymmetrical hair, little vests, ripped jeans, vintage scarves, long necklaces with little glittery fruits and rainbow Adidas. And that's just the girl standing in front of me.

Generation Y has an insatiable need to put mismatching things together in a statement that is quizzically ironic about being ironic. A tall beefy guy cuts in front of me for drinks whose shirt says, "Chad is Rad" with a picture of the African country Chad. He guzzles back a \$6.75 beer, wipes his mouth on his sleeve and tells his friend to shut up.

When I finally arrive at the counter I ask if they take Interac. No? Well what about Visa? MasterCard? Oh, cash only. Lucky I came with someone who always carries cash.

I go outside to get some air and notice there are very few people smoking. I look down at my purse and realize I spilled my drink in there. My boyfriend, who I am dating because of his technical savvy (always more helpful than brawny), makes sure my sticky vodka cranberry-stained phone is okay. He then makes sure

my iPod is unharmed. "My hero," I say. "The techie kid is like the new knight in shining armor!" He chuckles as he recycles his beer can.

We trot down to our seats and gear up. Bloc Party takes the stage in a blaze of red lights and smoke, and the crowd goes nuts. The band's front man Kele Okereke shouts, "It's so cold in this house." The digital screens of camera phones set the crowd ablaze as everyone tries to get the best picture of the band. Serving as the new lighter, a camera phone paradoxically creates an easy permanent record, but becomes ultimately replaceable when something better is photographed.

In a recent review of Okereke's live performance at the Astoria in London, Pitchfork critic Bret Gladstone said, "He embodies the dirty little remainder of our accelerated culture: How all that information and all those desires can leave one feeling empty, hollow, and nihilistic about who they are and what they feel."

And the band's slick power-rock performance made me feel unsure of what to do with myself. Do I scoff in the manner typical of the cynical generation? With moves referencing the last five decades, all I can do is dance the night away. And maybe when I get home I'll watch a David Lynch movie to clear my head. ☺