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**The Bingo Renaissance**

**By John C. Thorensen**

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Little old ladies in slippers, playing for pennies and cents in a converted community hall is no longer the reality of bingo. The game has in recent years and now more than ever undergone a rebirth in its popularity and status and now looks set to boom in the coming years.

In the UK alone, bingo comprises a total annual stake of around £1.1 billion. It's now big business and not just for the bingo halls. Customs and Excise collect around £115 million in duty incurred by bingo each year.

However, the sun has not always shone on the bingo industry. In 1974, the game seemed to hit its peak in popularity. It was widely seen as a cheap and cheerful way to provide mass entertainment. However, the advent of television seemed to cripple the game and its popularity fell dramatically until the end of the 90s. Yet for all the doom and gloom, the trend seems to be rising again. Numbers are holding and profits are increasing.

This new surge of popularity has been partly due to the vigorous marketing campaigns as executed by the bingo companies. Television and literature campaigns for bingo are now being promoted in Europe and companies are attempting to reinvigorate the game by adapting and modernising some of the antiquated lingo that seemed to keep it stuck to its past – 21, the Key to the door, lucky legs 11, etc.

Bill Clinton, Elle MacPherson, Damon Hill and Jade Jagger are all regular players of the game and no doubt have contributed to its popularity and rebirth. Many however disagree. To avid players, it is not the glitz and glamour of the game that is so appealing; it is rather the warm, social aspect that seems to fire the hearts of bingo players around the world. For regular players, it is a safe opportunity to socialise, have fun and experience the thrill of gambling whilst being surrounded and protected by a friendly atmosphere and a hopefully humorous bingo caller prevailing over all.

## The Bingo Renaissance

The UK's Chancellor Gordon Brown's recent proposition to cut the duty on bingo and replace it with a tax on the operator's income has proved popular with players and investors alike. The investment bank Lehman Brothers claim that this duty removal would increase bingo profits by 30%.

However, for all the celebrity icons and national edicts proclaimed on the game, what is undeniable is that worldwide the appeal of bingo does seem to be most prevalent amongst working class, single females. What is also interesting to note is that the bingo promoters themselves are not too interested in marketing the game to those who fall out of this category. Quality and not quantity seems to be the name of the game as far as they are concerned. They see it as more likely and realistic to entice existing players into spending a little more on their visits. The fact that so many bingo players are single females is certainly advantageous to the industry, seeing as this social group is becoming more and more populous as well as wealthier and liberated.

Of course it is not just the bingo halls that are profiting. The internet revolution has not failed to leave its mark on the bingo industry. Now, at the switch of a button and the click of a mouse, prospective

bingo players are able to play from their own living room. What is interesting to note is that even with the social aspect of the game being removed, the majority of the players are still female. There is an argument to suggest that the advent of online bingo is in fact nothing to be jumping for joy over. After all, many of the positive attributes to bingo are removed. Players do not even have to check off their cards themselves, it is automatically checked off for them. Not only does this remove some of the fun, but it also reduces the mental agility benefits to virtually nil. The social aspects of the game are also missing, although some would argue that the online forums and chat rooms are simply a new pseudo form of socialising. The secondary business that surrounds the bingo halls also suffers under the concept of online bingo. Food, auxiliary games, drink and entertainment all become irrelevant when playing from home and the concern that players are now playing purely for the money as opposed to the warmth of the social atmosphere is much more real. Having said that, in terms of bolstering bingo popularity, the internet has certainly played its part and in many cases has provided an easy access option to those who either are not fond of the socialising aspects of the game or for whatever reasons are unable to attend the bingo halls, themselves.

To say that bingo will ever become the craze of the gambling world or an industry propagated by the modern casinos is perhaps a little ambitious. In fact, that may not even be what the game is about or where it would be happy to lie. However, what can be fairly certain (if anything can be in this business) is that the popularity of bingo as its own entity is holding well and looks set to stay the course of time. At least for the time being anyway!

John C. Thorensen is professional gambler and work as consultant in Royal Club Casino New York. He wrote articles about gambling and gambling strategies. Most of the articles will be included in his new book.

Online Bingo –

– Your bingo resource

## How To Play Bingo

By Adel Awwad

Bingo is like a lottery – it is a game of luck. Further, learning how to play Bingo is both easy and fun. There are lots of variations in the way that Bingo is played and learning how to play Bingo and all of its variants can prove to be an exciting pastime; one with many different prizes at stake. However, the basic principles remain the same and you will discover that while learning how to play Bingo, all of the principles apply to the all important Bingo card.

The Bingo card is printed with its own unique grid of numbers, usually ranging from 1 up to 90, and is arranged in columns and rows. There is a caller who calls the randomly selected numbers for the players to mark off their card. It will be decided before the game begins what pattern of numbers are needed to win. For example, the player may need to get every number on their card, known as a full house; or a row or column, or perhaps two rows, etc.

Bingo originated from a game called Beano; so called because players covered up the numbers on their cards with beans. Nowadays players commonly use what is known as a dauber or dabber to mark their numbers. These are often fluorescent in color so that when playing in a darkened hall they can still be seen.

Bingo can be found in different types of venues ranging from casinos to arcades and village halls. In America, Bingo is often played in halls run by church or charity organizations. If you would love to stay at home and play Bingo it can even be played on the Internet!

There are many people who like to add to the excitement and play more than one Bingo card at a time. Be warned, this is not as easy as it sounds! Playing Bingo does involve some skill as well as a lot of luck. The callers shout each number in quick succession, often within seconds of each other. You have to be very fast with your eyes and your fingers to keep up, and there is little time to ponder. It is not for the faint-hearted!

If you prefer to play a safer version, online Bingo may well be worth considering. The player is given some random cards generated by the computer, and there is often a facility for using an 'auto-dauber'. This is where the computer marks your cards for you, so it doesn't matter if you miss a number or two. The computer will even call 'Bingo!' for you if you are lucky enough to win!

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