

LESSON 7

HOW TO TALK ABOUT MUSIC AND CONCERTS

By nine o'clock, the Tin Cup was wall-to-wall packed with a solid Friday crowd. The floor was sticky with spilled drinks, and the air was thick with excitement. I spent most of the time fixing my stupid tube top, cursing Janet the whole time for convincing me to wear "something hot." We saw Walter lurking in the corner, and we waved-we thought it was probably a good idea to stay in his good graces. He was talking to Tom the OJ, who also spun at the poetry nights. Tom kept looking around for someone to save him.

The folks at the Cup had put together a good, varied show. Janet's favorite was this alt-country band, Rose's Turn, which featured three fiddles, a banjo, and a harmonica. Then there was a skate punk band (which I hated) and a fake metal band called Kingdom of the Blind (which I loved), and what seemed like a million bands in between. Finally, around midnight, they announced that Rex's band, the Giants, was up. The postcard Walter had handed me said they were a "lo-fi indie garage extravaganza." I wasn't really sure what that meant, but it sounded good to me.

And they sounded even better once they got on stage. Aloud, raw set that clocked under twenty minutes-now *that's* the way rock and roll should be! Janet and I spent the entire time jumping around and dancing up a sweat in the first row. I tried desperately not to stare at Rex, who had the whole yeah-I'm-in-this-awesome-band-but-it's-no-big-deal pose down cold. And not only did he look good up there, but he was one of the best guitar players I'd ever heard-and I'm a really harsh critic. When he started to sing I was amazed at what a sweet voice he had. I mean, the guy could've been a choirboy; it was completely adorable. I spent the entire time staring at his shoes, worried that if I caught his eyes I'd faint and get trampled by all the pogo-ing high schoolers.

Janet ran *off* to the bathroom during their last song, but I kept dancing by myself. When the set was over, I stuck around by the stage, hoping to figure out a way to score an introduction. Lucky for me, Walter had started talking to Rex. Perfect opportunity, I thought, as I made my way over to them. "Hey," I said, trying to sound all cool and sultry. "That was a fantastic set. You guys are very..." and then I took a long pause, as if I hadn't planned out the whole line in advance. "Very Sonic Youth meets the Velvet Underground, with a little bit of the Strokes: I finished triumphantly.

The boys were quiet for a second. Wow, I thought. That must have really floored them. Go ahead and try to tell me that girls don't know anything about rock music. *Who's your daddy now?* "Um, thanks," Rex said finally. Walter had a dazed look on his face, and when I tried to see what he was looking at... I realized that, as I was moshing, I had somehow managed to spring free from my tube top. Losing all pretense of cool, I started trying to stuff myself back in my shirt when Janet came out of the bathroom. Thinking fast, she swooped in and grabbed me, making some excuse about curfew as she pulled me out the door. Thankfully, she managed to get out to the parking lot before bursting into uncontrollable laughter.

"Smooth move, Ex-Lax!" she guffawed, completely ignoring the death stares I was shooting at her.

"I'm going to kill you, Gonzales," I muttered. "Just drive me home already!"

WORDS ABOUT MUSIC AND CONCERTS

The punk band let loose with a lot of **cacophonous** noise. Thank God I brought my earplugs.

cacophonous (*adj*): harsh-sounding, unpleasantly loud

RELATED WORDS

The following words describe sounds.

The crowd was **clamorous**, clapping and yelling for all the bands and making a huge, **vociferous** noise.

clamorous (*adj*): making a loud, insistent noise

vociferous (*adj*): characterized by loud shouting

The first band used a cello, which added a **mellifluous** element to its more traditional guitar and drums.

mellifluous (*adj*): pleasant, rich in tone

The singer had a **dulcet** voice- almost out of place here at a rock show.

dulcet (*adj*): pleasant, soft, and soothing

I wish I had a voice as **sultry** as hers. I bet guys line up to get her number after shows.

sultry (*adj*): low-pitched and sexy (usually applied to a woman)

The bass player joined her for a few songs, adding his deep, **sonorous** baritone voice to her sweeter, higher one.

sonorous (*adj*): deep, resonant

One band had eight instruments and sounded positively **symphonic**. You could tell they were all highly trained musicians.

symphonic (*adj*): harmonious

The first singer was so nervous that her voice was barely **audible**,

audible (*adj*): able to be heard

Rex turned out to be a **virtuoso** on the guitar.

virtuoso (*n*): a masterful musician

I mean, I knew he was cute, but I had no idea he was such a **maestro** as well.

maestro (*n*): an expert in a particular art, especially music

I love to hear the **convergence** of really good instrumentalists.

convergence (*n*): coming together

At the end of their last song, Rex's band launched into a crazy **improvisation**. It was a little too Phish for me, but I was impressed anyway.

improvisation (*n*): the performance of something that hasn't been planned beforehand

Rex's greatest **opus** was a song dedicated to his childhood skateboard.

opus (*n*): a creative piece of work in the arts

Most of the bands alternated louder, harder songs with softer **ballads**.

ballad (*n*): a slow, romantic song

Rex looked so majestic on stage, I could imagine him as a **bard** from a time long ago. Then I stopped being a moron and started listening to the show again.

bard (*n*) a poet, particularly one of national importance

Rex had a beautiful speaking voice too. He spoke in rich **cadences** that seemed out of place at a place like the Cup.

cadence (*n*): the way the voice rises and falls in pitch while someone is talking; the way poetry or prose flows

WORDS ABOUT PERFORMANCES AND CROWDS

After the first three bands played, I needed a **respite**. It was so hot that I left to take a walk outside for a while.

respite (*n*): a brief rest

RELATED WORDS

When Rex's band came onstage, Rex announced that their keyboardist was on **hiatus** for a few months, but he'd be back in time for the spring Battle of the Bands.

hiatus (*n*): a break in something where there should be continuity

With his dark good looks and his fantastic guitar skills, Rex was an **arresting** stage presence.

arresting (*adj*): catching people's attention

Rex had an especially powerful effect on the girls in the audience—some of them looked positively **stupefied** when he started to sing. (Okay, so maybe I was one of them ... but I caught myself, eventually, and managed to close my mouth.)

stupefy (*v*): to amaze

Between sets, while the stage crew was setting up the next band's equipment, people tended to **dissipate** from the stage.

dissipate (*v*): to spread out

The lead singer of the punk band screeched like a **feral** animal.

feral (*adj*): like a wild animal

I'd never seen such a **congregation** of mullet-wearing hipsters in my life.

congregation (*n*): gathering of people

The singer was such a magnetic presence; if he cleaned up and made a habit of kissing babies, I could see him as a really effective **demagogue**.

demagogue (*n*): a political leader who appeals to people's emotions as opposed to their rationality

After finishing his set, the lead singer of the punk band **impudently** threw a speaker into the audience.

impudently (*adv*): done in a bold, shameless way

Synonyms for *impudently* are **brazenly** (*adv*) and **audaciously** (*adv*), which both mean fearlessly or shamelessly.

The crowd was **boisterous** tonight—they kept yelling and clapping, even during the slow songs.

boisterous (*adj*): energetic, rowdy

Some of the more **bourgeois** concertgoers seemed offended by the more explicit lyrics. What were they expecting at a rock show?

bourgeois (*adj*): behaving in a way considered typical of the affluent middle class: being materialistic, being conventional in taste and outlook

One guy sang a song of such **candor** about an ex-girlfriend that it made me a little uncomfortable. What if someone she knew was in the audience?

candor (*n*): extreme honesty

WORDS ABOUT REX

When I told Rex I liked his set, he responded with a **cryptic** "Huh." What am I supposed to make of that???

cryptic (*adj*): mysterious

RELATED WORDS

I always find an **enigma** so exciting.

enigma (*n*): a mystery

My feelings about Rex are far from **ambivalent**.

ambivalent (*adj*): not caring one way or the other, or having mixed feelings

He seems pretty **impervious**, though. How am I ever going to get to know him?

Impervious (*adj*): unable to be gotten through

Rex is a **laconic** guy. Who doesn't love the strong-and-silent type?

laconic (*adj*): using only a few words

Rex doesn't say more than he needs to, but he never seems **terse**; he manages to be warm without ever saying much. I can't tell if he's **reticent** because I'm weird, or if he's just **bashful**.

terse (*adj*): speaking very little. A stronger word than *laconic*: implies harshness and brusqueness

reticent (*adj*): unwilling to communicate

bashful (*adj*): shy

Rex likes to wear a beat-up black leather jacket, and sometimes he rides a motorcycle. I swear I'd never buy into that whole **renegade** thing, but I have to admit, it does have its charms.

renegade (*n*): an individual who breaks away from a group

Rex has a big scar above his eyebrow that I find particularly **alluring**.

alluring (*adj*): very attractive, tempting

I can't believe I've been so easily **beguiled** by a boy ... let alone a boy in a band. Whenever I see him, I'm so **mesmerized** I can barely form sentences. He really is pretty **sublime**. At the very least, I don't find him **repulsive**, like I do most boys my age.

beguile (*v*): to charm, to seduce

mesmerize (*v*): to fascinate, to hypnotize

sublime (*adj*): divine, perfect

repulsive (*adj*): disgusting

Rex is the **archetypal** hip, moody rock-type a girl like me is supposed to fall for. Predictably, I totally fell for him!

archetypal (*adj*): providing a perfect example of something

Janet likes big football player guys, but I prefer more lissome boys.

lissome (*adj*): slender and graceful

Janet claims I only like emaciated boys, because they make me feel better about how skinny I am. I say I just prefer them sinewy.

emaciated (*adj*): overly skinny, underfed. This is a much more extreme term than *skinny*, *lissome*, or *sinewy*.

sinewy (*adj*): lean but strong

Rex has this way of blinking really languidly before he speaks that makes my ears go all red.

languidly (*adv*): sleepily moving or talking

The **antonym**, or opposite, of languidly is **animated** (*adj*): energetic, full of activity.

Rex doesn't have a **blemish** on him – he's absolutely perfect. Not that I'm obsessing or anything.

blemish (*n*): a small flaw; a pimple