

# Us and Everything We Own hashes out real estate debate for young people in Vancouver

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Adam Lolacher and Julie McIsaac star in *Us and Everything We Own*, Sean Minogues tale of the torments (and expense) of living in Vancouver.

Photograph By DAVID COOPER

As a bulldozer digs a hole for another condo tower off Main Street, a group of actors is in a nearby studio rehearsing a play about a generation of young people who mourn the idea of ever being able to own their own home.

Our generation was raised with the belief we could do anything, says Adam Lolacher who plays Charlie in Sean Minogues new play, *Us and Everything We Own*. That belief has hit the brick wall of reality in todays economy. Sure you can follow your dream to be an actor, but get paid enough to afford a home? Society (and the federal government) wants more welders instead.

As 31-year-old Minogue says, It feels like the ladder has been kicked away after the last people who made it up.

Lolacher plays Charlie, whos broke and struggling but still a dreamer. He thinks hes found a way to financial prosperity opening a coffee shop with his barista co-worker Erin and his girlfriend Rachels brother, Simon.

Only problem is that the start-up money comes from Rachel and Simons parents, who have been known to be emotionally manipulative Rachel and Simon can have the money but theyre going to have to pay for it by accepting well-intentioned (surely!) but snide comments.

Rachel (Julie McIsaac) is adamantly opposed to accepting. She has sacrificed many pleasures in order to go through life paying for things herself. She doesnt want Charlie and Simon to accept her parents money. Besides, she wants to put all of their financial eggs into the buying-a-home basket.

Simon, whos never succeeded at anything, is awkward and suffers from anxiety. He sees the coffee shop as a way to make his own mark in the word.

Simon has no idea what hes doing, says Jason Cliff, the actor who will bring him to life at PAL Theatre April 5 to 13. Hes in way over his head but this is a step he needs to take. He has to put himself out there to feel success.

Erin (Genevieve Fleming), on the other hand, had lots of successes when she was younger but now is a failure when it comes to her expectations of what adulthood should be bringing her. She too really needs the coffee shop to go ahead. The lease for the coffee shop is ready to sign and all they need is the \$20,000 from Simon and Julies parents. Why on earth turn it down? Who cares if it means continuing to rely on the older generation?

Fleming says its a joy and a luxury to be part of a play the Vancouver run is its premiere that speaks for and to her twentysomething generation.

Its not only a Canadian story and a young persons story but its also a Vancouver story, says McIsaac.

She too is revelling in being able to play a lead role, not someone in the periphery the daughter of.

This play is about the concerns of our generation and the things that affect our world.

Minogue enjoyed much success with his previous play, Prodigals. He lived in Vancouver this is the place where his car broke down in a cross-Canada trek but hes now based in Toronto. Why? Because his girlfriend got a well-paying job there, a job that allows him to dedicate his time to writing.

I get frustrated by the narrow focus of the debate about the challenges facing his generation, especially when it comes to attaining many of the things society (and their own upbringing) says they should attain. Young people are often portrayed as parasitic organisms who are underperforming in a world that needs more welders than arts grads.

McIsaac says Minogues play also explores the issues of what has value in our lives. What is success? What do I feel is meaningful in my life?

People think that owning a house is a sign youve become a grown-up. That may still ring true, but what do you feel about yourself when you think youll never be able to afford it in todays market, let alone in the future?

Minogue, like others, finds himself starting to dismiss these agreed-upon cultural goals. He feels less of a need to own; renting is fine. He feels less of a need to make a lot of money; hed rather earn less doing what he wants to do.

Cliff says that were a generation thats happy with sustainability, that is, earning enough to get by. But were getting stretched thin and were not doing the things that bring us joy.

You can join the conversation and support a generation of young actors trying to make a living by attending Us and Everything We Own. Young adults, bring your parents. Parents, bring your children. Lets see what you talk about afterwards.

*Tickets are \$12 (for the April 4 preview) to \$22, available through Brown Paper Tickets. The play runs Tuesday to Sunday (April 5 to April 13) at 581 Cardero in Coal Harbour. On April 9 theres a two-for-one special with a post-show talk. Show time is 8pm except for the April 13 two-for-one matinee at 2pm. [TwentysomethingTheatre.com](http://TwentysomethingTheatre.com)*

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