**The Dawn of Dynamic Pricing** - feature (884 words)

Oasis are heading for Oz. Yet somehow, like everyone who moved there to avoid the rain, Australian fans have managed to get away without having to face Britain’s second worst asset – dynamic pricing. A sworn enemy of anyone who’s ever found their favourite artist in high demand.

When the UK stretch of the Oasis reunion tour was announced, the country all but fell at the Gallagher’s feet. Demand exceeded the number of available tickets by approximately ten times the amount, guaranteeing more than a few fans disappointment.

This represented only the first hurdle. Those who did manage to fight their way to the front of the queue – after waiting up to seven hours in a pixelated traffic jam for the privilege – were greeted by prices hiked up to almost three times their original value. Ticketmaster had recognised the obvious astronomical demand and therefore deployed their ‘dynamic pricing’ strategy. Also known as platinum pricing if you prefer your hustle with a little shine.

Some believe this strategy nurtures an elitism where fans who can’t afford the new prices are given a false sense of hope. One fan who was willing to pay the already expensive original ticket cost but later found their funds insufficient was Jodi Emberton who reported: “Queuing for over three hours just to be told the same ticket my friend had bought earlier for £150 was now £390 was insanity.” She went on to conclude that, “the whole thing has made me question Ticketmaster’s loyalty to fans.”

Dynamic pricing essentially allows cost to fluctuate in accordance with the number of people seeking tickets and the quantity of tickets still available. It seems the aim was to minimise the ability of scalpers wishing to up the price for the secondary market by assuming consumers would rather pay over the odds from an official source instead. This and the fact that if prices are already high, the room for profit on said secondary market would be so low it wouldn’t warrant the effort of acquiring a ticket. Essentially, it was all designed to benefit real fans.

Unless of course, you are a real fan who has now queued for several hours only to be priced out just as you’re ready to swipe your card.

The scheme caused immediate backlash which led to its removal for the US and now Australian leg of Oasis Live 25. The Gallagher brothers may have managed to bury the hatchet, but it seems Ticketmaster might just have dug a hole deep enough to find it.

Live music has been becoming steadily less affordable as artists strive for shows that double up as art installations or Broadway productions. Perhaps the deprivation we all felt as fans during the pandemic led us to the belief that the return of live music needed to appear bigger and better than ever. For reference of bigger and better, search Sabrina Carpenter’s Short n Sweet show; it’s pure theatre kid magic. Maybe Ticketmaster is simply trying to cash in on a market where the motto is basically ‘come for the content, stay for the music.’

Or maybe dynamic pricing started with more honourable intentions. Even pre social media, where concerts are fodder for views and likes, no fan wanted to be the one who missed out. In the case of Oasis, it was intended to prevent tickets from ending up on third party sites such as Viagogo where they may or may not be legitimate. One fan who found themselves able to secure a ticket only through the dynamic pricing system was Elaine McNaught. Speaking on the chaos later she stated: “I queued for hours on that day and there was a point even after all that time I became convinced it was going to have been for nothing.” Thanks to the dynamic pricing system keeping more tickets in the hands of Ticketmaster she was able to purchase enough tickets for her and her children. “The relief I felt knowing I wasn’t going to disappoint them sort of overrode my grievance with having to pay that much money… I wouldn’t have trusted paying that amount anywhere else,” she added.

The Labour Government has planned to look into dynamic pricing and ticket touting with Paul Foster, Labour MP for South Ribble, commenting on what he labels a “completely unethical and manipulative process that serves to punish fans for artist’s success.” He claimed, “This process does not dissuade touts but rather it emboldens secondary sellers who see this as the perfect opportunity to charge over face value.” Mr Foster added, “I welcome the upcoming review into ticketing sales that will further inform future legislation… this review will include taking a look at dynamic pricing and the queueing systems that are used to incentivise price hikes.” He finished by noting, “I will do everything I can to support the Government in its efforts.”

Sometimes, good intentions still start riots. The future of dynamic pricing appears uncertain although, it seems clear it has caused some fans to question the morality of Ticketmaster and associated parties. As for the Gallaghers, their continued ability to sell out shows regardless would suggest they’ve still managed to walk away as the wonderful wizards of the working class they always were.

Ticketmaster were approached for comment on this feature which is still pending response.