

## Concert Flameout



I spoke earlier about a concert I attended and considering it was \$40.00, there were five groups playing there. To me that was a real steal considering the names playing on that day. In most cases today it is real hard to find any semi big name groups that you get a ticket for that good price, even in the cheap seats.

I remember way back in the summer of love paying \$6.00 for a concert for Diana Ross and the Supremes. All be it a great concert for a 13 year old, it was really expensive for the day. As time moved forward, I remember paying up as high as three dollars for the hottest groups in

Canada and still found it steep.

I got kind of spoiled in the mid seventies working for a company that promoted all the concerts in Ottawa and received free admission to every concert in the area.

As time moved forward with inflation, I did not mind paying for concerts at the new rate but it got to the point where I became very selective about the ones I attended or even desire to try and get tickets for.

There is a place in Toronto called the Molson Amphitheatre where you can get lawn seats at a lower rate for a lot of good concerts. Well you can guess where I buy tickets these days \*S\*.

The last major concert I attended for a high price was Bob Seger. They were sold out and I entered an auction online for tickets. Yeah I know a simple way of scalping but considering what regular tickets were priced at two years ago and it being sold out, I got a pair in this auction for 3 bills and loved his good old style rock and roll.

Anyhow for someone like me that has attended well over 500 concerts in my past, today I am very selective on who I will even consider to see in concert.

Recently I came across this great article from The Toronto Sun that I wish to pass along to all of you regarding this Concert Flameout.

Please enjoy and happy concert searching at reasonable prices.

Peace and Love  
Wayne  
Email [Wayne](#)

How to solve the concert flameout  
By DARRYL STERDAN, QMI Agency

Going to concerts used to be simple. You stood in line. You bought a ticket. You went to the show. You picked up a T-shirt, had a warm beer and a dusty hot dog. And you left with enough money in your wallet to do it again.

Not anymore. Now, to see your favourite band, you need connections.

You need to join a fan club. You need to find a presale. You need computer savvy and lightning reflexes. And if you want to sit closer than the nosebleeds, you practically have to raid your RRSP.

If it's any consolation, fans aren't the only ones suffering. The cash cows have come home to roost for rockers and tycoons too. Ticket sales have tumbled. Attendance has dwindled.

Artists from Christina Aguilera to Limp Bizkit have "postponed" tours.

Festivals such as Virgin, Edgefest and Pemberton are on hiatus. Sarah McLachlan's Lilith has cut prices.

Even an act as seemingly bulletproof as Lady Gaga offered two-for-one seats to a recent U.K. gig.

In the U.S., Live Nation has waived fees at 50 venues for June. The show might still go on — as long as it goes on sale.

What in the name of Ozzy went wrong? Basically, it boils down to two words: Technology and greed. Years ago, they teamed up to destroy CD sales. Now their reunion tour is bringing down the curtain on the concert business. Here's the story:

## *The Past*

In 1980, Canada's minimum wage ranged from \$3 to \$3.65 an hour. The average top-price concert ticket (according to my old stubs) cost \$10 to \$15. You could pull a shift at Mickey D's to buy a ticket — and score a front-row seat with luck. Over the years, those numbers crept up like everything else, but the ratio held. By the mid-'90s, those fast-food jobs were netting \$5-\$7, while the average ticket (according to Pollstar) cost about \$25.

The Eagles blew that to hell. When the California rockers buried the hatchet for their 1994 Hell Freezes Over CD and reunion tour, they became the first band to sell \$100 tickets. And since there's a sucker born every minute, people paid. Naturally, other rockers took notice. Many followed suit, jacking prices — while sellers upped service fees to get in on the action.

Fans felt the pinch. But when the Internet arrived, the squeeze really began. When ticket-selling empires went online, the game instantly changed. Instead of just vying with neighbours for seats, you went against a global army of scalpers who scarfed up tickets and resold them at usurious rates. Ticket companies got into the game themselves, redirecting buyers to their own reselling sites. (And let's cut the crap: Anyone who resells tickets at inflated prices is a scalper. They can blather all they want about serving consumers; they're still pond scum. And they will have a special place in hell — in line for eternity outside a Hendrix gig without enough money for a ticket.) Anyone over 30 probably recalls the last time they lined up to buy tickets, only to be told the gig had sold out online in minutes. And they likely recall thinking: This system sucks.

## *The Present*

Today it sucks harder. Online piracy has decimated CD sales — fewer than five million albums were sold in the last week of May, the lowest total in decades. As a result, artists must tour farther and longer to fill their coffers. And since many still live in self-centred, champagne-filled dream bubbles, they don't seem to believe the principles of supply and demand apply. They think they can tour in summer, though hundreds of acts are scrambling after the same shrinking pot. They think they can still charge big bucks (today's average price: \$63) in a dollar-store economy.

And — in a move so deluded, short-sighted and self-sabotaging even Wile E. Coyote wouldn't try it — they believe they can soak fans for even more with VIP packages. For \$350, you can watch Justin Bieber's soundcheck. For \$1,300, you can keep your folding chair after the Bon Jovi show — and perhaps take a picture of Jon's maracas (sadly, this is not a euphemism). Before Aguilera folded her tent, she planned to charge \$800 for a picture with her. And she was one of few artists willing to meet fans.

Most VIP packages include tickets down front, refreshments and a bag of swag, but zero contact. If that sounds lame, consider the widely circulated online tale of one fan who said he shelled out \$1,100 for a VIP package, only to be “treated like s---” and laughed at by an apparent insider who told him the band makes its money from “dumb” fans like him.

## ***The Future***

So there you have it. And here we are — inundated with concerts we can't afford, played by elitist stars whose priority seems to be fleecing the suckers one last time. Is it any wonder fans are staying away in droves? Is there anything to be done? Glad you asked. Now that we've cleared the air, let's talk solutions. Here's how the industry can get the concert scene back on the road to health:

## ***Get Real***

Do you have a one-named singer? Does your catalog have enough hits to fill two hours? Have you made an album this decade — and did anyone care? If not, you are not worth \$100. So get over yourself and stop gouging us to make the mortgage on your mansion. We're getting by with less; you can too. Oh, and instead of slashing prices when tickets aren't selling — which only burns dedicated fans who already ponied up — sell them cheap first to get the ball rolling, then raise prices. As for vendors — you sell hundreds of thousands of tickets a day; adding 30% of the price in so-called service and convenience fees isn't helping.

## ***Space Out***

There are 12 months in a year. But every summer, every act jams their tour into the same 12-week period from June to August. Next year, hit the road in the off-season. In much of this country, the concert calendar is a dead zone from December to March. You could literally be the only game in town. Yeah, it's cold. But I suspect you'll get a warm welcome from fans.

## ***Scalp Scalpers***

The Industry maintains scalping can't be stopped. Really? Seems pretty simple: 1) Stop presales; 2) Put the attendee's name on every ticket sold — no exceptions, no TBAs, no duplications; 3) Prohibit resales, changes or transfers; if you can't use your ticket, it can be returned for a refund (minus a service charge) and goes back for sale at face value; 4) Make fans show photo ID at the gig. I'm no genius, but it seems that would work. So why hasn't it happened?

Could it be because artists want to justify their own money-grubbing tactics? And if you think a ticket-name system would be cumbersome:

Have you flown lately? Your average airport processes several times more people every day — and searches them. Checking IDs at an arena shouldn't be tough. If it is, let patrons check in early — hours or days — and get a wristband so they can breeze in at showtime.

## ***Respect Fans***

This is the big one. And the most basic. Stop treating people like walking ATMs. Stop treating rich ones better than regular ones. And stop putting money and marketing before music. Nobody wants a folding chair with your name on it. They want to hear you play. And if you want them to keep coming en masse, you need to make them all feel special.

If you don't, it's only a matter of time before all your gigs are private shows for millionaires.

And they aren't big on folding chairs.

Be Your Own Boss

Need a role model? Try Bruce Springsteen. He disdains VIP packages.

He battles scalpers. Tickets for his last tour reportedly maxed out at \$98. And he seems to do OK. So it is possible to sell out without being a sell-out.

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