NEWS LESSON

The Queue, the Price and the Disappearing Cheap Seats



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes a concert worth saving up for?
2. Would you rather sit close once or go to several cheaper gigs?
3. Can watching a live performance on a screen still feel special?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**tiered**	☐	A	serious promises to do something
2	**resale**	☐	B	arranged in different levels, for example of price
3	**commitments**	☐	C	to find something very hard to do or survive
4	**enormous**	☐	D	something special that you enjoy but do not have often
5	**struggle**	☐	E	people or companies that organise and advertise events
6	**reunion**	☐	F	extremely big
7	**treat**	☐	G	when a band comes back together after a long time
8	**promoters**	☐	H	selling something that you bought before

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Dynamic pricing, booking fees and standing tickets that vanish in seconds have changed what a night out costs. Who gets left outside?

1 The excitement of seeing a favourite artist can disappear surprisingly quickly when ticket sales begin. Fans wait in online queues, watch prices appear and make rushed decisions about forking out hundreds of pounds on a single evening. For many fans on a tight budget, live music is starting to feel less like an affordable night out and more like an expensive treat they must save up for.

2 There are understandable reasons why prices have risen. Large concerts require sound and lighting equipment, transport, venue staff, security and sometimes enormous stage productions. Touring costs have increased, while the music industry itself has changed. Streaming gives listeners easy access to songs, but the income musicians receive from it is very different from the old business of selling physical albums. Touring has become an important source of revenue for many artists.

3 Ticket-selling systems have also attracted criticism. Some events use dynamic pricing, where prices move according to demand. Others use tiered pricing, with different fixed prices for similar tickets. During the sale for Oasis's reunion concerts, many fans reached the front of long queues only to discover that the cheaper standing tickets had sold out. More expensive tickets were still available, but this pricing structure had not been explained clearly enough in advance.

4 Following an investigation, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority secured commitments from Ticketmaster to improve the information given to customers. The authority did not find evidence that the Oasis tickets changed price through real-time dynamic pricing. Instead, its concerns centred on the way different ticket tiers and their benefits were presented. It was an important distinction, but hardly a comforting one for fans who had waited for hours.

5 Resale websites create additional frustration. Tickets that originally cost a reasonable amount may be advertised for several times the price when a concert sells out. Fans may feel they have no choice if the artist rarely performs nearby. Social media increases that pressure by turning concerts into events people are expected to share, even when the cost of going is difficult to justify.

6 Some musicians and promoters have tried to keep prices down, while critics say the industry should be clearer about fees and ticket availability. Others argue that artists have a right to earn as much as the market allows. Meanwhile, small independent venues offer much cheaper live music, though many struggle to stay open. For some fans, a small gig is a real alternative, not a second best.

7 Nobody expects a major concert to be free, but there is a difference between paying fairly for an experience and being priced out of it altogether. The more exclusive live music becomes, the less it resembles the shared experience that made it popular in the first place.

Sources: The Arizona State Press and LBC. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The authority was unhappy mainly about how the ticket tiers were presented, not about prices changing in real time. (T) (F) (NG)
2. The text says streaming pays musicians about the same as album sales once did. (T) (F) (NG)
3. Small independent venues offer cheaper live music, but many find it hard to survive. (T) (F) (NG)
4. Ticketmaster has since changed how its website shows ticket tiers. (T) (F) (NG)
5. The authority decided that the Oasis sale used dynamic pricing but approved of it. (T) (F) (NG)

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

alternative	availability	criticism	dispute	distinction	justify	preference	revenue

1. Touring has become an important source of _____ for many artists.
2. The company faced strong _____ after its website crashed during the sale.
3. Some fans find it hard to _____ spending a month's wages on one evening.
4. For many people, a small local gig is a real _____ to a stadium show.
5. There is an important _____ between a high price and an unclear price.
6. Fans complained that information about ticket _____ was hard to find before the sale.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time many fans reached the front of the queue, the cheaper tickets _____ . (SELL)
2. Touring costs _____ in recent years. (INCREASE)
3. Last month, the same ticket _____ at three times its original price on a resale site. (ADVERTISE)
4. Fans would feel less pressure if their favourite artist _____ nearby more often. (PERFORM)
5. If prices keep rising, fewer young people _____ able to attend. (BE)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Learn the verb with its noun as one unit. We make a decision and have no choice, but we do not do a decision.

add	budget	choice	concerns	habit	make	reward

1. Fans in a hurry often _____ rushed decisions when ticket sales begin.
2. Travel, food and hotels can _____ a lot to the cost of a night out.
3. If the artist rarely performs nearby, some fans feel they have no _____ but to pay.
4. The investigation raised serious _____ about how the ticket tiers were explained.
5. Students on a tight _____ often cannot afford a stadium ticket.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would make concert tickets feel fairly priced?
2. Should the best view always go to whoever can pay most?
3. Which part of a concert would you miss most if you stayed home?

9 Role-play: is the ticket worth it?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who wants to go

Your favourite singer is on tour and tickets are very expensive. You want to buy two. Explain why it matters to you. Ask your friend to come, and answer their worries.

Student B · the friend who is not sure

You like the singer, but the ticket, the travel and a hotel cost a lot. Ask questions about the total price. Suggest another plan, then decide together.

Useful phrases

I'd love to go, but it's a lot of money.
It's a once in a lifetime chance.
How much would it cost in total?
We could save up for it.
What about a smaller gig instead?
I think it's worth it, don't you?

Afterwards, tell the class: did you buy the tickets, and was it a fair decision?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 H · 3 A · 4 F · 5 C · 6 G · 7 D · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 revenue · 2 criticism · 3 justify · 4 alternative · 5 distinction · 6 availability

6 Verb forms

1 had sold out · 2 have increased · 3 was advertised · 4 performed · 5 will be

7 Language focus

1 make · 2 add · 3 choice · 4 concerns · 5 budget

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