



ticketing mailbox <ticketing@culture.gov.uk>

DCMS/BIS evidence for investigation1 message

To: "ticketing@culture.gov.uk" <ticketing@culture.gov.uk>

20 November 2015 at 18:40

Good afternoon,

With regards to the BIS/DCMS joint call for evidence to inform the Independent 'Review of Consumer protection Measures related to Online Secondary Ticketing Platforms', I would like to submit evidence on behalf of the Roundhouse.

Positioning

Built in 1847 as a railway repair shed, today the Roundhouse is loved by audiences and artists as one of the most incredible live performance spaces in the world. Not so many people know that we're a whole lot more than that. We make really great work with some of the biggest names in music, and boundary-busting leaders in theatre, circus and spoken word. Great artists power brilliant experiences at the Roundhouse every single day. Young creatives are at the heart of everything we do. Each year we help 3,000 11-25 year-olds realise their creative potential through opportunities in music, media and performing arts.

In my position as Ticketing Manager, I head up the team responsible for providing primary ticketing for all our public events here and for the 70-80 commercial music gigs we host each year, my team oversees selling around 70% of our 3,000 capacity venue through our own channels. Around two thirds of these events sell out through a combination of our own box office and other primary agents employed by the promoters hiring our venue.

Those ticket agents include Ticketmaster, See Tickets, Gigantic, Stargreen, Songkick, Dice, AXS, Crowdsurge, Music Glue and Sandbag. Promoters include AEG Live, SJM Concerts, Metropolis Music, BBC, Communion, Eat Your Own Ears and Kilimanjaro. Over the last couple of years, we've hosted some of the biggest and hottest names in the industry right now: Hozier, Sam Smith, FKA Twigs, Chic, The National, Atoms for Peace, and Prince.

Evidence**1. Pricing**

Our aim is to ensure that many events held at the Roundhouse are priced accessibly, with our average ticket price for the last few years hovering at the £25.00 mark. This is an attempt to make the art that we programme on our stage accessible to all but is, however, undermined on a relatively large scale by the secondary market: at any given time, around 3-4,000 tickets for our events are listed for sale on the 'big 4' resale platforms at prices in excess of the face value.

While legislating against this practice has been rejected by the government to date, we feel that upholding a free market in this sector punishes both our visitors,

the music industry, and us as a venue. We feel confident that the onus on visitors to spend above face value on tickets impedes their ability to attend multiple events across the year, as well as less money to contribute to our vital secondary income streams (bars, catering and merchandise) during the course of a single visit.

The criticism levelled by previous investigations into this issue that the industry are attempting to 'cherry-pick' their audiences by pricing events lower than their free market value could be considered valid in theory; however, our experiences of more sophisticated attempts to dissuade touts from buying tickets to ensure they fall into the hands of 'genuine fans' at their face value have been of very limited success (e.g. offering tickets to fan clubs, limiting the amount of tickets per customer, enforcing ID checks against tickets), with much negative feedback from customers on overly bureaucratic and restrictive terms and conditions.

2. Fair trading and the Visitor Experience

While the government has made headway in improving the purchasing experience for customers on the secondary market with changes to consumer rights legislation, we have found the experience offered to these visitors to our venue questionable on many occasions. Although legislative changes mean that the purchaser will not be left out of pocket, we deal with many very emotional fans who (rather than being mis-sold tickets) have no tickets waiting for them at all and while we make every effort to accommodate them by tracing the original booking in our system from very minimal information, this often results in them being turned away or requiring them to purchase new tickets. The fact that they will get their money back is, we would suggest, very much at the bottom of their list of priorities in that moment. The reasons for their being turned away can be for a variety of reasons, including touts issuing 'letters of authorisation' for the same tickets to multiple secondary buyers to not given sufficient information for us to trace bookings (2,500 tickets in our venue are general admission standing so the block, row, and seat detail requirements from new legislation are irrelevant).

In addition, in the context that the majority of issues we face are raised on the night of the event and that two thirds of our events are sold out well in advance, the so-called guarantee to replace tickets in advance made by the secondary market are also unlikely to be fruitful.

On many occasions for each event, it comes to our attention that tickets have been passed on via the secondary market, e.g. when buyers make contact to ensure the tickets they've purchased are genuine, when sellers approach us to arrange delivery of their tickets to secondary addresses or disclose this information to us voluntarily; however, we are in a very weak position to exercise our terms and conditions and cancel these tickets since it undermines both our potential secondary spend and, moreover, the experience of our visitors and the fans of artists using our venue – ultimately punishing the wrong person in the supply chain.

Next steps

We have been sourcing methods of upholding our contractual obligations to promoters who hold events here and protecting our primary income, while offering a realistic service to customers who cannot attend events for genuine reasons. To date, we have considered offers from the secondary market to form official partnerships (which would undermine our efforts to restrict tickets being sold above face value entirely), looked at partnering with ticket insurance companies (which would undermine our right to exercise exceptions to our terms and conditions in extreme circumstances) and exploring opportunities to offer a face value resale platform through our own channels, or by partnering with established companies in this area such as Twickets.

We are currently scoping out a possible solution with Twickets, who offer a moderated, face value resale platform and initial references from their current partners look positive.

While this would be an excellent solution to help customers who can no longer come to our events through no fault of their own (illness, injury, travel issues), this would be of limited value in solving the root of the problem: that proportion of people who buy tickets from our box office are buying them only for commercial gain.

11/23/2015

Department for Culture Media & Sport Mail - DCMS/BIS evidence for investigation

I wish you every success in your hunt for evidence for this investigation and would be more than happy to work with you further on providing more details of our experiences with the secondary market. Please feel free to get in touch if you'd like to speak further or even come down to our venue one evening if you'd like to see the effect of the secondary market first hand.

Regards

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 | Ticketing Manager | | www.roundhouse.org.uk

Each year the Roundhouse works with over 3,000 11-25s enabling them to realise their creative potential; and offers audiences of all ages new and extraordinary experiences in live music, circus, theatre and new media.

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