

2018

Ticketmaster Verified Fan

Nicole Wasnock

University of the Pacific, n_wasnock@u.pacific.edu

Nicole Wasnock (2020) is pursuing a degree in Music Industry Studies.

This article was written as part of the curriculum for the Bachelor of Music in Music Management and the Bachelor of Science in Music Industry Studies at University of the Pacific. Each student conducted research based on his or her own areas of interest and study.

To learn more about the program, visit: go.pacific.edu/musicindustry

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass>

 Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#), and the [Music Therapy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wasnock, Nicole (2018) "Ticketmaster Verified Fan," *Backstage Pass*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol1/iss1/18>

This Opinion Piece is brought to you for free and open access by the Conservatory of Music at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Backstage Pass by an authorized editor of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.



TicketMaster Verified Fan

By Nicole Wasnock

Scalpers have been a major issue in the music industry lately. The majority of tickets for shows go to scalpers which are then put on second hand sites, and marked up to hundreds of dollars more than the face value of the original ticket. Of course, the artist never sees a penny of the profit that scalpers make.

Well, TicketMaster has come to the rescue! Their new program, TicketMaster Verified Fan, eliminates scalpers. At least, that's the idea. The program was tested on some smaller events before officially launching for Ed Sheeran's *Divide* Tour running March 2017 to August 2018. Fans signed up for a presale code by going to TicketMaster, entering their name, phone number, email, and the location they wanted to see the show. TicketMaster informed fans that even though they signed up for a code, there was no guarantee that they would receive one. Fans could sign up for a maximum of three locations. The day of the show, fans selected by an algorithm were texted codes and able to buy tickets. Of course, this experiment wasn't without complications. Many fans discovered that when they entered their codes and tried to buy tickets they were faced with a "Sold out!" screen. Others didn't even receive a code in the first place. Some fans have mobile carriers that don't receive texts from 5-digit numbers, causing them to miss out on codes and leaving them frustrated. But overall, the program is achieving its goal. According to David Marcus, the head of music in TicketMaster North America, "Less than one percent of tickets sold through the Verified Fan program so far have ended up in secondary ticket markets. Normally that number is a double-digit percentage."

The program has also been used with Harry Styles, Bruce Springsteen, Galantis, *Hamilton*, Niall Horan and more. The newest user is Taylor Swift, who is adapting the program to fit her

needs and fan base. In previous versions of the Verified Fan program, users simply signed up and waited for a code, and their previous ticket purchases helped the algorithm figure out whether they were a fan or not. For Taylor Swift, fans can participate in “boosts” that get them higher up in the virtual line of fans signing up for tickets. A boost is anything from buying Taylor Swift merchandise from her official store and pre-ordering her album (high level boosts) or watching her latest music video and tweeting pictures of her (medium level boosts). All these accounts must use the same email so TicketMaster can link the purchases and activity back to the account you signed up with for Verified Fan. Doing these things will move you up in the line and you will have a better chance at getting a code to purchase tickets. Some fans were disappointed with this method, one posted on Taylor’s Facebook page “I love the idea of the verifying fans... However, you shouldn't get moved up in line by spending a lot of money. I plan on saving money for tickets and for merch at the concert, I don't have the money to buy merch right now” (Brown and Roberts).

It’s easy for cynics to see this as a strategy. All these fans are not guaranteed tickets and not all of them will end up going to the show, but a great many of them will likely buy Swift merch and preorder the album to get a higher place in line. Those who end up going to the show might buy more merchandise at the concert itself. It seems like Taylor Swift will be profiting a lot from this program, but will the fans profit as well? Dave Brooks, an executive editor at Amplify argues “What are her options? You could just put [tickets] on sale and they’d get bought immediately by bots and scalpers, and fans would pay the markups and StubHub would make more money than Taylor Swift.” So is it possible this could be a win for fans and a win for the artist? Fans don’t have to pay for marked up tickets on the secondary market and the artists don’t get cheated out of the profit scalpers regularly make.

There are some bugs to work out in the program still, but TicketMaster Verified Fan is only

numbers and other fans who don't want to be pressured to buy merchandise in order to get a good ticket, but these problems can be addressed and fixed. Overall, the program seems to be doing a lot of good. Specifically, for Bruce Springsteen's Solo show on Broadway, less than 3% of tickets ended up in the secondary market and without the verified program that number would be around 50%, according to *LA Times* reporters Brown and Roberts. And as stated before by David Marcus, less than 1% of tickets sold through Verified Fan have gone to scalpers, which is such an impressive fact that it's worth repeating. With statistics like those, any minor bugs are pretty insignificant.

Works Cited

Alcantara, Ann-Marie. "Should You Use TicketMaster's New Product to Buy Concert Tickets?" *PopSugar*. 22 March 2017. Web. 2 October 2017.

Brown, August and Randall Roberts. "Taylor Swift's TicketMaster 'Verified Fan' Initiative Sparks Controversy" *Los Angeles Times*. 31 August 2017. Web. 2 October 2017.