Ticketmaster's reign of tyranny

KATIE KNGHT

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

On August 27, 2024 Oasis announced their 2025 reunion tour, the first time Liam and Noel Gallagher will perform together in 16 years since their disbandment in 2009.

On Aug. 31, the day the general sale was set to begin, thousands of fans who were promised a ticket buying experience free of scalpers, bots, and resellers logged on, but were met with soaring ticket prices and only a few walked away with tickets. So, what happened?

Oasis used Ticketmaster's face value exchange program, a clause ensuring tickets resell for the price the seller bought them at and to discourage scalpers from nabbing fistfuls of concert tickets. But Oasis had also opted into dynamic pricing, a system where tickets are priced by demand, instead of proximity to the artist, which shattered the illusion of what Oasis fans thought would be accessible concert tickets.

How did we get here? On October 22, 2022, Taylor Swift announced the "Eras Tour," and Ticketmaster, in anticipation of the demand, opted to use their Verified Fan lottery system. Where eager fans would register for a chance to win a code which allowed them to purchase their seat. But more codes were sent to fans than there were available tickets, and the tickets sold so quickly due to bots and scammers hoping to make a quick profit that the public sale of the tour was canceled – leading to many unsuccessful lawsuits, petitions and even a hearing in front of the Supreme Court.

If you aren't a Swiftie, or an Oasis fan, you may believe that price-gouging when it comes to concert sales doesn't affect you or even that scalping tickets is a product of the free market, but these cultural shifts in concert accessibility may have dangerous consequences for the future of live music.

What happens when seats are empty, not because of the artist of their marketing team, but because no one can afford to buy them? When venues panic after losing money on parking, merchandise and other sources of revenue only brought by attendees who physically attended?

While Ticketmaster, with their face-value exchange program, claims to want to protect fans from resellers, if the artist opts in, former ticket scalpers and members of resale groups testify that Ticketmaster secretly offers deals and presales to known resellers. Meaning that most of the time, scalpers have access to tickets before fans.

The world witnessed this during Beyonce's "Renaissance Tour," where entire sections were sold out before the tour was even announced.

In an already perilous economy, Ticketmaster recognized that scalpers and bots reselling tickets for tens of thousands of dollars causes damage to their reputation and harms their customer base, so they enact performative measures to appear as if they care about consumers while collecting the fees from every single $2,000-$40,000 ticket resold on their platform.

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF OLIVIA FRAZIER | MUSTANG NEWS

Graphic of tickets sold with "The Disaster That is Ticketmaster" as the artist.

This vicious cycle of Ticketmaster pandering to desperate fans while also taking advantage of them is no doubt due to the 2009 merger of Ticketmaster and Live Nation, which gave Ticketmaster exclusive access to nearly every artist in the world.

Despite outrageous ticket prices, the fault line spreading across the future of live music is not entirely due to scummy middle-aged men in basements buying thirty "Eras Tour" tickets. The root of the problem lies at what drove them all to that digital queue in the first place; living in a world where with every year that passes you need increasing amounts of money to survive, because of unregulated, shameless corporate greed.

This Week's Pop Pick

ELIJAH TEMPLETON | LIFE EDITOR

"INFINITE ICON" PARIS HILTON

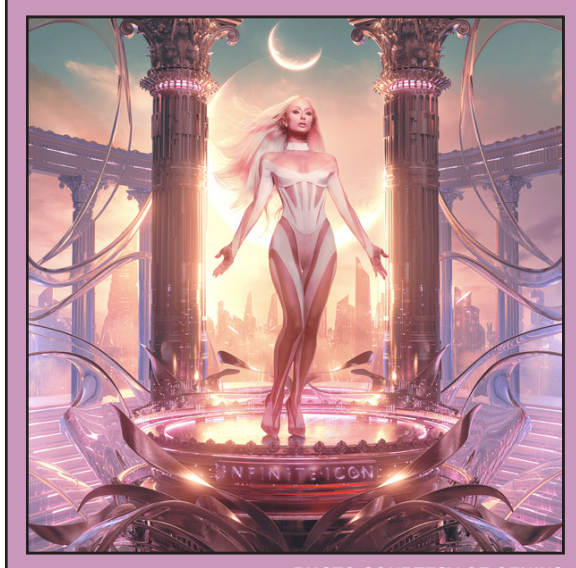

PHOTO COURTESY OF GENIUS

18 years after her self-titled debut album, "Paris," Paris Hilton has returned with her sophomore album, "Infinite Icon," and honestly, it's quite good.

The project, executive produced by Sia, features an all-star cast of female collaborators who Hilton assembled to tell the story of her life in the almost twenty years since her first foray into music.

The album starts with "Welcome Back" which sees Hilton on the other side of a failed relationship, welcoming herself back

This theme of lessons learned and personal empowerment is a constant throughout the record and works as the core message of the entire album.

On two back to back tracks; "Chasin" featuring Meghan Trainor and "BBA" featuring Megan Thee Stallion, Hilton celebrates her growth and relishes her icon status in pop-culture.

This project features perhaps Hilton's most introspective track to date, "Fame Won't Love You," where Hilton laments her previous chase after fame, awards and status.

The introspection and self-growth theme in the lyrics on this record are on full display with the aptly titled; "ADHD" which sees Hilton come to terms with her own diagnosis of the disorder and champion it as a superpower, rather than a hindrance.

Numerous tracks see Hilton champion her relationship with her husband, Carter Reum. "Legacy" and "Infinity" are two particularly impressive tracks that work as love ballads hidden beneath a dance-pop exterior.

"Without Love" featuring Maria Becerra, includes a Spanish verse that offers a nice sonic change to the track and was a real standout moment on the project.

This album tells the story of Hilton's struggles and personal journey that she has embarked on, chronicling all the ways she has grown in the years since her debut effort.

I was unaware that Paris Hilton even made music and was pleasantly surprised by how much I ended up liking this project. The production was crisp and the introspective lyrics were a shock when I went in expecting a generic pop album that highlighted the exuberance and decadence that Hilton is so well known for.

I would recommend this album to any pop music fans and anyone who isn't quite ready to let go of 'brat summer.'

Final Score: 7.5/10

The story of the Oasis reunion

ELIJAH TEMPLETON

LIFE EDITOR

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIMON EMMETT

Oasis, one of the biggest bands to come out of England since The Beatles, recently announced that they will be reforming for the first time since their highly publicized break-up in 2009.

The founding and only consistent members of the band, brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher, have reportedly rekindled their relationship that was wrecked following the band's breakup.

The band was formed in 1991 when Liam joined a group called 'The Rain' which featured Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs, Paul McGuigan and Tony McCaroll. Liam quickly decided that he would not be in a band called 'The Rain' and changed the name to Oasis.

Noel was initially asked to be the band's manager but declined and soon joined the band as lead guitarist and primary songwriter.

Oasis' debut album; "Definitely Maybe" was released in the fall of 1994 and debuted at number one on the British charts and became one of the best-selling debut albums of all time, having sold 8.5 million copies to date.

The bands sophomore project; "(What's the Story?) Morning Glory" released in 1996 and was even bigger, selling over 22 million copies and became one of the biggest albums of all time.

Many fans see the band's peak as their two night performance at Knebworth festival in August of 1996 where they performed to 125,000 fans on back to back nights.

Oasis would continue to tour and release albums, but never again reached the massive heights they did in their early years. Fueled by Noel's songwriting and Liam's iconic combination of vocals and attitude, Oasis was a mainstay in pop-culture for nearly two decades.

The brother's relationship was one of constant turmoil and violent altercations that saw both leave tours multiple times during the band's initial run. More often than not, it was Noel who left, as was the case in 2009, when he walked off of a planned show in Paris and never came back.

Noel went on to form 'Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds' which served as a backing band for live performances and a studio band for album recordings on Noel's solo projects.

In the aftermath of the split, Liam and the remaining members of Oasis formed a new group, Beady Eye, that lasted until 2014 before splitting up.

After leaving the public eye for a number of years, Liam returned in 2017 with his debut solo album; "As You Were." This project was well received and thrust him back into the conversation of 21st century rock n' roll. Finally standing on his own two feet without the assistance of his brother, Liam began to forge his own path.

This resurgence for Liam and continued production for Noel placed them on more even ground in negotiations and could very well have played a key role in the brother's being able to reconcile and agree to reform the group again.

The 'Oasis Live '25' tour was announced on Aug. 27 and tickets went on sale that following Saturday. Millions of people joined the queue for a chance to score tickets and Ticketmaster struggled to handle the immense traffic.

In the end, they sold out 17 stadium shows in a few hours, selling an estimated 1.4 million tickets in what is sure to be the musical event of the summer.

CLUB SPOTLIGHT: KAPPA PI LAMBDA THETA

LAILA CASIANO

OPINION EDITOR

Kappa Pi Lambda Theta, an international art honors fraternity, strives to provide a space for art students by fostering artistry and imagination at Arkansas State University.

Founded as Kappa Pi Alpha at the University of Kentucky in 1911, the fraternity's A-State chapter was initiated in 1948, dissolved and then re-established in the 2024 spring semester.

Although classified as a fraternity, Kappa Pi Lambda Theta is predominantly female, but members of all gender identities are accepted.

"We wanted to provide a space for art students to have a Greek experience in a form of brotherhood amongst their peers," Charlotte Kate Mobley said.

Mobley, a senior art history and museum studies major from Memphis, Tennessee, is the president of the Kappa Pi Lambda Theta Chapter at A-State. In February, she and others founded the chapter, saying she wanted to create a space for art majors because there wasn't any on campus.

"We have theater, we have band, we have music, and we have a fine arts program, but we don't have a fine arts organization other than the student art union, which isn't a space exclusively for art students," Mobley said.

Mobley's leadership role was given to her through her active experience in Greek life, like being a member of Delta Zeta Omicron Epsilon and being Vice President of Administration for the National Panhellenic Conference. As president, Mobley handles biweekly meetings, social media, event planning, recruiting and purchasing items needed for planned events.

But Kappa Pi life is not all business, it's also full of community, friendships and personal growth.

Athena Gentry, Vice President of Philanthropy for Kappa Pi, said her leadership role provides community support and outreach. Gentry, a senior in art education major from Hardy, Arkansas, said being a part of the chapter helped her connect with members of the A-State and art community in a meaningful and personal way.

"I think it's been really good for me personally, for my personal development, because I've been exposed to a lot more like-minded people," Gentry said.

Gentry spoke of the importance of the Kappa Pi community, adding being a part of the chapter brought a lot of positivity in both her social life and her work as an artist.

"It means community and belonging, but also, just getting support from other artists, and getting to support other artists," Gentry said. "We all also get inspired from each other's work, which is really awesome."

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE KATE MOBLEY

Kappa Pi Lambda Theta members in Spring 2024.

Katie Evans, a sophomore studio art major from Hardy, Arkansas, said having a good sense of community within Kappa Pi encouraged her to be more confident and to make friends.

"I would say it's encouraged me to open up a lot more and to speak to people that I never would have had the courage to speak to before," Evans said.

Evans spoke of fraternity activities and how they impacted her to become more free-spirited, like when she participated in creating sock puppets or painting with her fellow fraternity members.

"I think I definitely struggle with being a perfectionist, but this helps me just be goofy and fun," Evans said. "Seeing other people's work and seeing how it's imperfect, in the best way possible, definitely made me more comfortable."

Kappa Pi meets every other Tuesday in Room 105 of the Fine Arts Building. With dues of $65 for first-years and $50 for returning members, those being initiated must go through GPA checks and portfolio reviews.

"There are pros and cons to exclusivity, but it creates a good bond between us because it gives you a group of people who are really committed to it because they chose to be here," Mobley said. "I like to think of all of us as pretty good friends and we got to create that sense of brotherhood because of it."

Local church continues worship services in the Fowler Center

ALLIE CARSON

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Over a year ago, the Fowler Center opened its doors to a large church congregation after they were forced to leave their building and it has become an adjustment for all involved.

On Aug. 6, 2023, First Church, formerly located in downtown Jonesboro, moved into the Fowler Center for their Sunday morning services after a vote within the church caused the disaffiliation side to leave their building.

The dispute comes from many United Methodist churches across the nation wanting to disaffiliate from the conference over different religious views. However, a large reason for First Church was for ownership of their church property.

Senior pastor John Miles, who has served at First Church since 2006, said they moved to the Fowler Center because of how nice the building is and the abundance of available parking.

"The other places we looked at couldn't have handled how many people we had. They didn't have parking," Miles said. "So when we realized we could use Riceland Hall and the theater and then the classrooms at Fowler, it was a perfect fit for us."

Recently, the legal dispute they were involved in with the United Methodist Church came to an end. Miles said that the ending of the dispute gives the church the ability to focus on what comes next instead of what happened in the past.

The senior pastor said the next steps for the church are not only to recover financially but also give its members more time to enjoy the space they're in currently. He said they will begin strategic planning about what they want to be in the future as a church, but it will not come without its difficulties.

Miles said the college ministry is growing and he hopes to have more students worship with them.

"That's our hope. I mean, since they can walk to the Fowler Center, but so far we haven't had the kind of impact I was hoping we'd have."

The church's young adults group, SeekFirst, is led by 2021 A-State alum Noah Gregory. Gregory has been involved with First Church since February 2022 as the worship experience director.

"After our church set up our temporary home on campus, we immediately started talking about ways to connect with the students right outside our door," Gregory said. "That's how SeekFirst was born."

Gregory said under different circumstances, they might have started a college ministry eventually, but it would not have become what it is today without the move.

"We're more of a life group than a traditional ministry," Gregory said. "It is a laid-back, comfortable space where everyone gets to share."

Lilly Crawley is a senior strategic communications major from Jonesboro and the communications coordinator for First Church. She said she has attended First Church her whole life and has been involved since she was 14.

Crawley said the move to campus has taught her a lot.

"It's also helped a lot of the church. I feel like it's helped us grow together as a community and kind of be able to put more trust in God than in ourselves," Crawley said. "It's just really helping us grow together and just be more in a community because we're in a tighter space."

Photo by Allie Carson | Special to The Herald

First Church members perform live music for Sunday morning service on Sept. 8.

The strategic communications major said being on campus has brought more students to SeekFirst, especially when her and other members did the community fair as people seemed interested and excited about the young adults group and the services on campus.

Crawley said her main goal with SeekFirst was to find new friends who were like-minded and wanted to learn more about Jesus. She said the idea behind the group was to create a community for young adults who wanted to attend.

"[The group was for people] who needed more of a community of younger people their age, who follow Jesus and just to learn what it looks like to follow Jesus in college and after college," Crawley said.

Services are held at the Fowler Center in Riceland Hall at both 9:30 a.m and 11:00 every Sunday and the Drama Theatre at 11:00. SeekFirst meets Thursdays at 7 p.m in the Student Union.