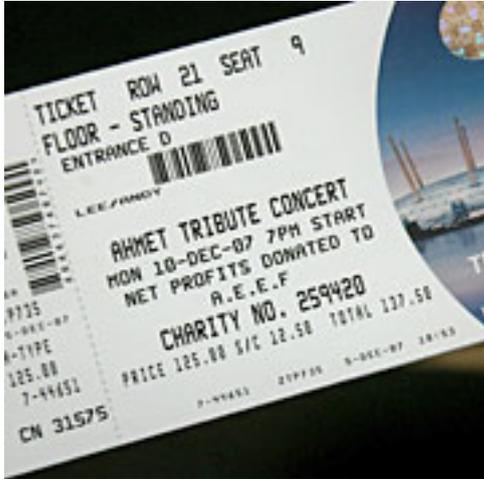


[The secondary ticket market](#) [1]

Written by [Dr Eamonn Butler](#) [2] | Thursday 6 March 2008



I was just trying to book some last-minute event tickets the other day. It's astonishing just how quickly many big events get sold out, mostly because of the policies of the promoters. Concerts and sports fixtures underprice their tickets in the belief that this makes them more accessible for the 'real fans' or because promoters earn more from sell-outs. So if you don't get in immediately the phone lines open, you've no chance.

A lot of policymakers would like to keep it that way because they simply don't like the idea of 'touts' selling tickets and making a profit out of Wimbledon and the like. The image is of the shifty, ill-shaven character flogging high-priced tickets outside the ground. But the reality is that there is now a thriving secondary market in event tickets, thanks to the internet and other highly respectable agencies such as Seatwave.

So folk like me can get the tickets they want, even if they have to pay a bit extra.

So I'm glad that the House of Commons committee on Culture, Media and Sport, in its recent report on the subject, rejected the case for heavy restrictions on the resale of tickets. The promoters want regulation so that they can continue to control prices. But you can't buck the market. An open and secure secondary market has got to be good for fans. Seatwave, for instance, offers a guarantee that the tickets it sells are genuine, 150% refund if they do not arrive on time, and a full refund if the event is cancelled (which is more than you get from many promoters).

But politicians are born meddlers, and the Committee also suggested that there should be a levy on tickets resold online. The idea is that any premium on the price can be channelled back to players and performers. In fact it would be just a tax on fans. And such is the way of these schemes that most of the cash would go back to the biggest stars, who are already not short of a bob or two. The market ? free of daft political schemes like this ? is unquestionably the best way to ensure that tickets end up in the hands of those who most want them.

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