# Ticketmaster sued by FTC over illegal selling tactics

**By COOPER WOODWARD**
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Imagine you're buying a ticket to see your favorite band live in concert, only to discover that the price you saw isn't what you're paying.

That's what the U.S. government says has been happening at Ticketmaster and Live Nation. Now the federal government, along with seven other states, wants them to be held accountable.

The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and a coalition of states have filed a lawsuit against the largest entertainment companies in the world, LiveNation and its ticketing arm, Ticketmaster.

One of the central charges of the complaint, filed by the FTC on Sept. 18, is what regulators call "bait-and-switch" pricing, where tickets are advertised at a modest face value, but fees and mark-ups aren't disclosed until late into the ticket buying process, further raising the price.

The FTC claims that these fees have inflated the price of tickets anywhere from 24% to 44% of what consumers believed they were paying. To put this into scale, consumers paid $16.4 billion in mandatory fees on purchases from 2019 to 2024.

The FTC's complaint also alleges that users purchased millions of tickets through the primary market and resold them, using Ticketmaster's own resale platform, at much higher prices. Ticketmaster collected fees from both the original user purchase and the resale, an exercise critics argue effectively equal to "triple dipping."

The lawsuit cites several different laws that LiveNation violated, which are section 5(a) of the FTC Act, which bans deceptive acts or practices, and the Better Online Ticket Sales Act, which aims to prevent the avoiding of ticket purchase limits through bot software.

The states joining this suit, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nebraska, Tennessee, Utah and Virginia, bring additional consumer protection claims under respective laws in their states.

Now to ask the question, how did we get here?

The foundation for this lawsuit began back in 2022, when singer-songwriter Taylor Swift's Eras tour had millions of fans locked out of presale access, enduring long waits in queues as they watched tickets vanish into the hands of resellers, who would resell them at, on average,10 times the price.

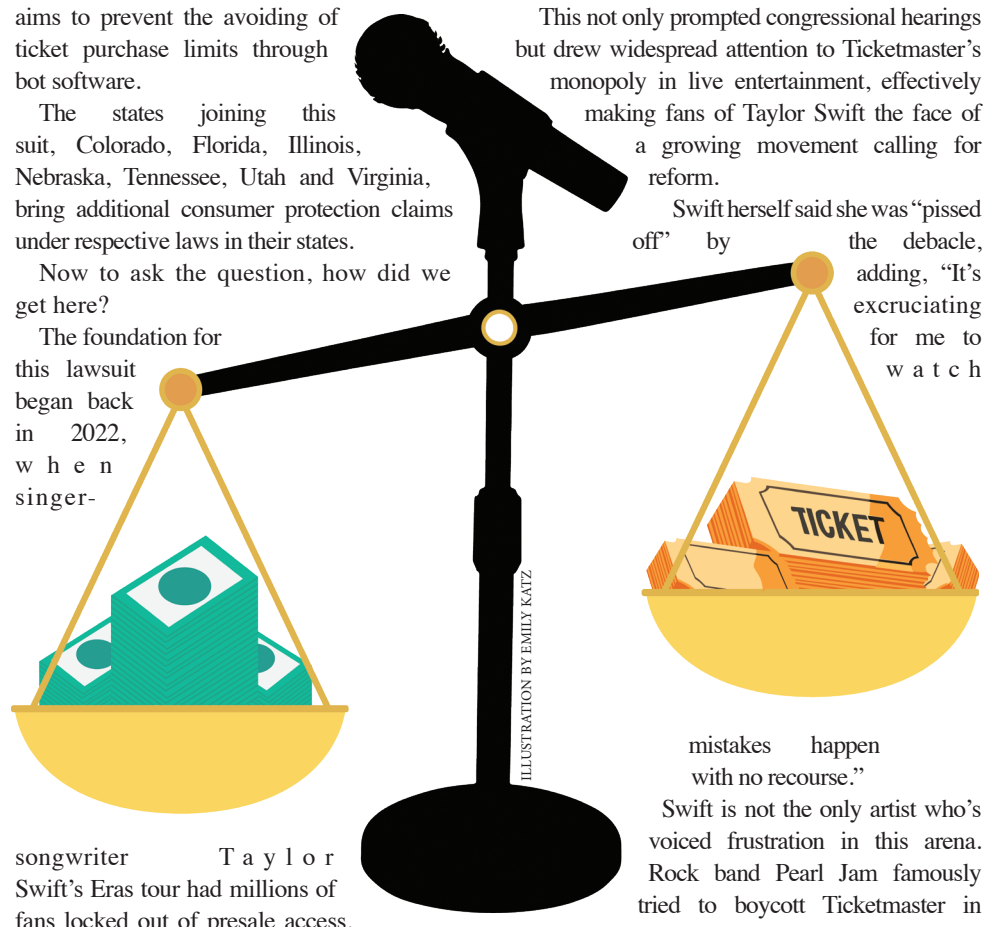

ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY KATZ

This not only prompted congressional hearings but drew widespread attention to Ticketmaster's monopoly in live entertainment, effectively making fans of Taylor Swift the face of a growing movement calling for reform.

Swift herself said she was "pissed off" by the debacle, adding, "It's excruciating for me to watch mistakes happen with no recourse."

Swift is not the only artist who's voiced frustration in this arena. Rock band Pearl Jam famously tried to boycott Ticketmaster in the 90s. Following its failure, guitarist Stone Gossard said, "We knew this was going to be a battle for the soul of live music. We wanted to make tickets more affordable and fair, but the system is stacked against us."

What does this mean for consumers? It means everything.

In the last five years, Americans spent more than $80 billion buying tickets with Ticketmaster. That, combined with ticketing control of 80% of major venues, allows the company to have both the power and the incentive to limit enforcement of ticket limits when it suits their benefits.

In a statement, FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson emphasized how live entertainment needs to be accessible to everyone. "It should not cost an arm and a leg to take the family to a baseball game or attend your favorite musician's show," he said.

Live Nation and Ticketmaster have not yet publicly responded in detail to the allegations. The lawsuit asks for a permanent injunction of these behaviors, civil penalties, a return of money gained through the platform's inflated fees and other relief deemed appropriate by the court.

The implications of this lawsuit will be felt for years to come.

If wrongdoing is found, the live music industry is changed forever and a multi-decade-long monopoly is brought down to its knees.

If wrongdoing is not found, then LiveNations' stronghold over live entertainment grows, and their dominance will continue to go unchecked.

This case likely will not be settled for another few months, but if you are a fan of live events, you need to tune into the results of what is to come, because it could change everything.

# The slow, silent collapse of late night TV is impossible to ignore

**By ANTHONY ANGELILLO**
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"I bid you a very heartfelt good night."

Those were Johnny Carson's final words on "The Tonight Show" on May 22, 1992. Nearly 50 million people tuned in to watch him say goodbye after 30 years behind the desk.

That number is hard to imagine today. When I read about that moment, I realized how far late-night has come since then. I am 18, and I have never stayed up to watch a whole late-night show live. I have watched highlights on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, but I have never sat through the entire thing. That says a lot about where late-night stands now.

Carson's farewell marked the end of an era and the beginning of a battle that defined late-night television in the 1990s.

In the wake of Carson's departure, NBC had a tough choice to make. Give "The Tonight Show" to Jay Leno, Carson's guest host since 1986, or David Letterman, who had built his case with "The Late Night Show" after Carson. NBC chose Leno, fearing he might leave the network otherwise.

Letterman, furious, left the network to launch "The Late Show" on CBS in 1993. His debut drew 23 million viewers, and for a while, he was beating Leno in ratings. But Leno eventually pulled ahead, thanks in part to big moments like Hugh Grant's infamous 1995 interview after his arrest.

The rivalry lasted for decades and became the subject of Bill Carter's book "The Late Shift," which captured the backroom deals and egos that defined the first "late-night war."

After that, these hosts gave late-night some fresh energy and expanded the genre's landscape. Craig Ferguson brought a quirky style to CBS's "Late Late Show" from 2005 to 2014. Jimmy Kimmel carved out a space on ABC starting in 2003, while Conan O'Brien kept NBC's "Late Night" weird and unpredictable.

The second-late night war came in 2010. NBC and Jay Leno had promised Conan O'Brien "The Tonight Show" years earlier in 2004, and he finally took over in 2009. However, NBC tried to keep Leno in prime time at 10 p.m. with his own show. That experiment hurt local news and "The Tonight Show" ratings, leading to pushback from affiliates.

NBC, panicking, proposed moving Leno back to 11:35 p.m. and sliding "The Tonight Show" with Conan to 12:05 a.m.



ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY KATZ

Conan refused, writing his famous "People of Earth" letter, and walked away with a $45 million settlement. Leno returned to "The Tonight Show" in March 2010, and Conan left for TBS to start his own show, which lasted until 2021. The fight was ugly, public and embarrassing for NBC. It also showed how much the ground had shifted: even during the drama, ratings were nowhere near Carson's era.

Fast forward to today, and the numbers tell the story. In Carson's day, "The Tonight Show" could pull in 15 million viewers a night. Now, Stephen Colbert leads the field with 2.42 million viewers, followed by Jimmy Kimmel at 1.77 million and Jimmy Fallon at 1.19 million. In the key 18–49 viewer age demographic, Kimmel beats Colbert with 220,000 viewers. That is an 80 percent drop from a decade ago.

Meanwhile, Fox News' "Gutfeld!" averages 3.29 million viewers, making Greg Gutfeld the most-watched late-night host in America, even though his show airs at 10 p.m. on cable.

The money has followed the audience out the door. In 2018, advertisers spent $439 million on late-night TV across the Big Three networks. By 2024, that number had fallen to about $220 million. Networks can not ignore that math.

James Corden left "The Late Late Show" in 2023 amid reports that the show cost $60–65 million a year to produce, yet generated less than $45 million in revenue, resulting in a CBS annual loss of approximately $15 million.

CBS replaced it with "After Midnight," a cheaper panel game show, but even that ended in 2025. The network has now abandoned the 12:37 a.m. slot entirely, ending a tradition that began in 1995.

Paramount has canceled "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," despite it being the top-rated show, and it will end in May 2026. CBS says the decision is financial, not performance-related, with reports suggesting the show was losing $40 million a year.

Then there is Jimmy Kimmel. His show averaged 1.7 million viewers this year, but controversy hit in September when ABC pulled "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" off the air after comments about the killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

The suspension sparked Federal Communications Communications threats and political backlash. When Kimmel returned, the episode drew 6.26 million viewers, his biggest audience in a decade. However, that spike only shows how rare those numbers have become.

As someone who grew up on social media, I get it. Why stay up until midnight when the best moments are already on YouTube by morning?

Colbert's monologues rack up millions of views online, far more than his live audience, while Jimmy Fallon's games and sketches trend on TikTok.

The problem is that digital views do not generate the same revenue as TV ads. Networks built these shows for a world where people watched live. That world is gone.

Late-night TV is not completely dead, but it has undergone significant changes. The audience is now fragmented, while show budgets are getting tighter, and it is no longer a nightly ritual for the young adult audience of Generation Z. The format still produces moments that spread across social media. But the late-night shows that once shaped American pop culture are now a declining business.

As a fan of comedy and media, I hope late-night TV finds a way to adapt. However, the truth is that the nightly ritual Carson signed off from in 1992 is not returning. The audience has moved on, and so have I.