

No ticket, no refund and the festival rocks on without you

After an unofficial agency's high-profile failure, Kate Hughes sees how to reduce the risks of booking online for sell-out events

Sunday, 24 August 2008

¹ It's a music lover's worst nightmare. You have paid out hundreds of pounds to a third party for your spot at a sell-out event. But your tickets never arrive, or you arrive at the venue only to be told your tickets are fake and are turned away.

² This was the fate of thousands of SOS Master Tickets' customers last week when the unofficial distributor left V Festival revellers and George Michael fans, among others, with no ticket, no money and, crucially, no comeback. The company's phones have been disconnected, and its website is unavailable. Trading Standards is now investigating.

³ Buying your tickets for sellout music or sports events from unofficial sources may seem like your only way in, but you are taking a risk, as Jonathan Maclean-Lambie, 36, from Glasgow found out. He lost £200 when he booked for this year's Leeds music festival through SOS Master Tickets.

⁴ 'You dream of going to these events, which can be once-in-a-lifetime opportunities,' says Mr Maclean-Lambie. 'Tickets for big

events sell out so quickly, it feels like you have little choice but to go to third parties. You save up, sometimes thousands of pounds, and then lose it all on a site that looked fine. People are not aware that things can go wrong.

⁵ 'It won't stop me going to events in future,' he continues, 'but I'll be going through official distributors in future. I'm just happy the company is under investigation and that nobody else will be paying money for nothing.'

⁶ The operator has every right to refuse you entry to a private event if you do not have a valid ticket or pass as determined by the event or venue manager. A receipt for payment without the ticket won't cut it either.

'People are not aware that things can go wrong'

⁷ You won't make it to the concert or match if you find yourself without a bona fide ticket, but

you may have a chance to get your money back, especially if you used a credit card to make the purchase. Jemma Smith, a spokeswoman for Apacs, the UK payments association, says: 'If you have bought something with a card, it is always worth talking to the relevant bank or company.'

⁸ Regardless of whether the problem was due to fraud or the company going bust, anyone making a credit card purchase worth more than £100 in person or online should be protected under section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act, which makes credit card providers and suppliers equally liable if it all goes wrong.

⁹ 'This means that if you paid by credit card, you can apply to your bank for a refund on the money if the goods or services do not turn up,' says Ms Smith. 'Debit cards with the Visa symbol also give you this protection.'

¹⁰ But be warned that you give up this right when you use websites that make purchases in cash on your behalf after you pay them ➡

English in Mind Second edition

Level 4 Unit 10

Article

THE  INDEPENDENT

➡ by card, because this is legally a cash transaction. The most notable of these is PayPal, which is the main method of payment on eBay. However, PayPal does offer its own dispute resolution service to mediate between buyers and sellers.

¹¹ What's more, if you buy a ticket through an auction site bear in mind that it is not responsible for the quality of the item. EBay, for example, states that where the seller is a private individual, the goods must be 'as described'. The goods are not legally required to be of 'satisfactory quality' or 'fit for purpose'.

¹² If in doubt, check on the official website for the festival in question. If you still wish to go through a third party online, at least look for a secure website with the prefix 'https' and for a UK-registered business address. This means that the company will be regulated by the Trading Standards Institute.

¹³ To avoid a third party seeing any payment card details you enter online, make sure there is a small lock symbol on screen at the checkout phase of your purchase. This shows that your connection to the seller's server is secure and cannot be viewed by other site users.

¹⁴ As for unofficial ticket touts outside the event, stay far away from them. The ticket may be real – even if you have to pay much more than the face value for it – but if it turns out to be a fake you will never see your money again.

¹⁵ Another risk in buying from a tout is that the organiser may have asked the original purchaser to register their name and bring some form of ID with them to the event. If you turn up at the gate with a ticket registered in someone else's name, you may not be allowed in. ■