

# Pearl Jam Vs. Ticketmaster In The Tour War Of 1994

■ BY ERIC BOEHLERT

NEW YORK—Ticketmaster may have won the first round, but the battle between Pearl Jam and the ticket service appears to be just heating up.

A source close to Pearl Jam's management company confirms that the band has postponed its '94 summer tour. But contrary to published reports, the source says the tour was scrapped because promoters would not accept the band's demand that tickets be sold for no more than \$18 and Ticketmaster receive a maximum \$1.80 service charge per ticket (*Billboard*, April 23). It has been reported elsewhere that the tour was postponed because the band members were exhausted from their spring tour and distraught over Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain's suicide.

The source said that while trying to put together a summer road show, the band ran into "unconscionable activity" and "outright greed" among the concert industry



PEARL JAM

players, which forced it to curtail its attempt at mounting a low-budget tour.

The battle between Pearl Jam and Ticketmaster already is shaping up as a monumental one, pitting one of rock's hottest bands against the industry's most powerful ticket agency.

Band members appear adamant that ticket prices remain affordable for their fans. (Lead singer Eddie Vedder "talks about it incessantly" says a source close to the band.) And one way to do that, they insist, is to keep service charges low.

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# PEARL JAM VS. TICKETMASTER IN TOUR WAR

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But Ticketmaster has contracts with most of the major venues around the country, guaranteeing that the service company typically earns twice the \$1.80 per ticket limit Pearl Jam is seeking.

"The contracts exist," explains a source close to Ticketmaster, who labels the brouhaha "a tempest in a teapot." "You can't just walk in and say [to promoters], 'Ignore your contracts.'"

To sidestep those Ticketmaster agreements, Pearl Jam asked promoters to explore using nontraditional facilities, such as open fields and speed tracks, for the band's summer shows.

Andy Cirzan, senior talent buyer for JAM Productions in Chicago, says in order to pull off something that "unbelievably complicated"—creating alternative ticket distribution, building temporary facilities, dealing with unfamiliar unions in city after city—the band would have needed complete cooperation from promoters across the country, which Pearl Jam did not receive.

Cirzan estimates that only "a handful" of promoters (including JAM) were actively trying to meet Pearl

Jam's elaborate requests before the tour was abandoned. "Maybe people didn't want to deal with it during the summer of '94. But [ticket pricing/service fees] is a dynamic that's not going away," says Cirzan, adding, "It's not easy to change the rules of rock'n'roll overnight."

A Pearl Jam management source confirms a recent Los Angeles Times report that lawyers for the band sent the Justice Department's antitrust division a memo last month claiming Ticketmaster had pressured promoters not to handle Pearl Jam shows. A Justice Department spokeswoman would not confirm Pearl Jam's complaint, but did acknowledge the antitrust division is looking into "the possibility of anti-competitive practices in the ticket industry."

Ticketmaster executives would not comment on the claim, but a source close to the company suggests Pearl Jam simply gave up too quickly. "Get more creative," says the source. "Go do something in a high school or a college or Central Park [where Ticketmaster has no contracts]. Just get around it. But don't say its antitrust. That's absurd."