

# Angry fans in jam after 'scalping'

By ADAM HARVEY

Fans have claimed that scalpers have robbed them of the chance to buy cheap tickets for Pearl Jam, one of the rock industry's most popular acts, which will tour Australia next month.

While most rock bands say they owe it all to their fans, it seemed that for once, a major act was prepared to forgo huge profit for the benefit of concertgoers. Pearl Jam tickets were \$36.80, including a booking fee – below the usual price for a top act.

But fans claim scalpers bought most of the tickets minutes after they went on sale.

Pearl Jam's Sydney Entertainment Centre concert sold out within five minutes, and all 30,000 tickets for the band's Eastern Creek concert went in three hours. All but two Pearl Jam concerts sold out within three hours.

Melanie Lyn, 17, of Carlingford, a regular concertgoer, was fourth in line at a Hornsby ticket agent – but when she got to the counter, Pearl Jam's Entertainment Centre concert was sold out. She bought tickets for Eastern Creek, but by then, even that concert was half-sold.

"We had people in front of us buying 500 tickets – which meant that only three people got tickets at Hornsby... We go to every concert that comes out because we love music, but you always get scalpers at these things," she said.

"Every single concert we've gone to, we've been sold bad seats, because scalpers buy up the tickets almost as soon as they go on sale."

In an industry where decent seats often sell for up to \$150, Pearl Jam has a reputation for being fan-friendly. It has taken the US ticketing agent Ticketmaster to court for alleged anti-competitive behaviour, and insists on low prices.

Melanie says Pearl Jam's Australian promoters, Frontier Touring, should have imposed a limit of four tickets per person. She is organising a protest against its policy, outside the Entertainment Centre concert on March 10.

Frontier claims that scalping is not a problem, and that limits on tickets are unnecessary. Tickets were sold through 54 box offices and 110 phone lines, so, of course, they sold exceptionally quickly, a Frontier spokesperson said.

But Triple J has received almost 200 calls from people claiming they saw scalpers buying Pearl Jam tickets. One scalper called to say he had bought 75 tickets.

Scalping is not illegal. But under the Prices Regulation Act, anyone who sells tickets for more than 5 per cent above their retail price can be prosecuted.

The NSW Department of Consumer Affairs used to prosecute scalpers before 1989, but says it is no longer worth it.



Melanie Lyn, who is organising a protest outside Pearl Jam's concert at the Entertainment Centre. Photo by BRENDAN ESPOSITO