

POP CULTURE

Beyoncé is going on tour. Is Ticketmaster ready?

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Beyoncé announced in an Instagram post Wednesday that she is embarking on a world tour in support of her Grammy-nominated album “Renaissance,” and it didn’t take long for fans to wonder whether Ticketmaster would be able to handle the swarm of buyers.

The hotly anticipated tour will kick off in Stockholm in May, taking the pop superstar to arenas and stadiums across Europe before she returns stateside in July. The tour is scheduled to run through the fall, culminating Sept. 27 at the Superdome in New Orleans.

The tour announcement followed Beyoncé’s performance last month at the opening of a high-end luxury hotel in Dubai, which was her first live show in four years. But that Dubai concert did not include any songs from “Renaissance,” an [ode to Black queer culture](#).

Tickets will be sold through Ticketmaster, which faced intense scrutiny after the meltdown tied to the [mad rush](#) for tickets to Taylor Swift’s “Eras Tour” in November. The fiasco prompted a [Senate hearing last month](#) and criticism from Republicans and Democrats that Ticketmaster is a “monopoly” causing damage to the live music industry.

With the Beyoncé tour rollout coming only a week after the Senate hearing, there are questions over whether the company can avoid another disaster. Ticketmaster said in a statement that the company “expected there will be more demand than there are tickets available.”

WHAT TO KNOW

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How do you get tickets for Beyoncé's tour?

Ticketmaster is using a multistep process in which fans must register and be verified as human beings, in hopes of deterring “bots” trying to snap up a tickets for scalpers to resell. Would-be concertgoers can register three ways: as “BeyHive” verified fans for presale tickets; the “Citi” verified fans presale; or for the general sale. People can register for all three, and everyone buying tickets needs to go through the verification process.

Once a fan is verified, they will either receive an access code the day before the ticket sale or be placed on a waitlist. Ticketmaster warns that receiving an access code does not mean you have a ticket; it merely gives someone a chance to buy tickets, which are doled out a first-come, first-served basis on the sale date.

For North American shows, Ticketmaster is dividing registration into three groups. The registration window for the first group — which includes shows in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Las Vegas, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C. — ends Thursday at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time.

Registration for the second group ends at the same time on Feb. 9, and registration for the third group ends on Feb. 16. See the groupings and full lists of cities [here](#).

The European tour will kick off in May, and the North American tour will open in Toronto in July.

Why is buying tickets so complicated?

Ticketmaster introduced the so-called “Verified Fan” system as an effort stop scalpers — who use computer programs called bots — from hoarding tickets and reselling them for a profit.

But Ticketmaster used the system during Swift’s ticket sales, which resulted in persistent glitches on Ticketmaster’s website. Fans who had registered and received access codes waited for hours on Ticketmaster’s crashing website only to walk away empty-handed. Ticketmaster, which eventually halted sales, said an “unprecedented” level of demand and “bot attacks” led to the meltdown.

This time, Ticketmaster is staggering ticket availability via the three registration groups. Experts say that could help ease the burden on the website’s servers, and perhaps help avoid a total meltdown.

It “will give Ticketmaster a chance to respond to problems that arise in the initial rollout,” said William Robertson, an associate professor of computer science at Northeastern University, noting that the company will also use technology to weed out bots.

“This is a tough problem,” Robertson added, “but it’s encouraging to see Ticketmaster take steps to clamp down on scalpers even if they only come after the Taylor Swift debacle and the threat of regulatory action.”

How will tickets be priced?

The fact that there is no pricing information on the Ticketmaster site suggests prices will be set dynamically, with prices fluctuating based on demand, said Eric Budish, a University of Chicago professor who has closely studied the ticketing industry.

Budish also said that because the tickets are transferrable, the resale market will drive prices higher. Making tickets nontransferable, he said, “is the only truly effective way to get tickets to fans at a price meaningfully lower than what the secondary market will bear.”

Ticketmaster said in a statement that event organizers determine how tickets are priced and sold, not the company.

What’s at stake for Ticketmaster?

Following November’s Swift meltdown, the company faced a groundswell of criticism, as politicians and Ticketmaster competitors argued that the company’s market dominance — fueled by a 2010 merger between Ticketmaster and show promoter Live Nation Entertainment — led to high prices and poor service.

Those arguments were laid at the feet of a top Live Nation executive during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in January, who defended his company against bipartisan criticism. Some witnesses and politicians suggested the company should be broken up.

A lot is riding on the Beyoncé tour for Live Nation, said Barton Crockett, an analyst for Rosenblatt Securities.

“They can’t have any more mess-ups,” Crockett said.

The last thing the company should want is Beyoncé and Swift joining forces to rally other global superstars against the company, he said.

“It’s incredibly important right now for Ticketmaster [and] Live Nation to be really good to global superstars,” he said. The Swift incident “has shown what can happen when things fall off the rails.”