

## Is Lining Up Days Before Concerts Fair?



*Photo by Katelin Cameron, 2023.*

Have you ever bought general admission tickets for a popular musician then decided to arrive at the arena a few hours early to beat the crowds, only to be faced by hundreds of people in line packing up sleeping bags and tents.

As far back as 1925 people were lining up at the box office to buy tickets before they sold out. This would happen for concerts, sports events, film premiers, and theatre shows.

Line up culture can be seen rising in the 60's with the Beatles' intense fan base. 'Beetle-mania' was one of the first times generally young women were witnessed expressing obsession through fanatic behaviour.

The culture continued to grow over the 70's, with fans waiting longer and crowds becoming larger. In Canada, 1972, thousands of people lined up for the Rolling stones a week prior to the concert.

The Covid-19 Pandemic shut down the live music industry entirely, once musicians were allowed to tour again, line up culture made a strong return.

However now, the topic has become extremely controversial online between fans.

Now fans line up days before concerts to secure a spot in the mosh pit, the most desired spot is 'barricade'.

This a barrier structure that is positioned in front of the stage, used to prevent fans from reaching the performers.

Grace Baine and Sarika Allen are both regular concert campers. Allen once spent four days in Chicago lining up for the band '21 Pilots', in negative three degrees. Baine's longest time waiting in a line was around one-hundred and forty-eight hours.

“I want to get close for the experience it gives me. I’ve been brought on stage before; I’ve sung with artists before. It’s not even about where I am at the show, if something went wrong, I still would not have regretted camping,” Baine says.

Baine and Allen say one of the biggest upsides to lining up for concerts is the friendships and bonds they make with people who share similar interests.

The culture is more prevalent in the alternative genre, lining up is often the first time these young fans meet other people they relate to.

Abdul Zraika works as security at Rod Laver Arena, he oversees keeping fans who camp out and line up at the venue safe. He says he has witnessed line up culture grow post the Covid-19 Pandemic.

“You’ve got probably fifty-odd people that will actually camp out now, as opposed to years prior or pre-Covid, where you had maybe less than ten,” Zraika says.

Concert camping lines in Australia usually follow ‘the number system’. It works by the first fan in line bringing a permanent marker and numbering everyone who arrives at the line behind them, preventing other fans cutting in line.

The system is completely run by the fans and the concert venues rarely recognise it as legitimate, however it is useful to keep safety, and fairness.

“Not every venue outside of Melbourne does it, never mind wherever else you go, but it’s pretty straight forward when there is a numbering system,” Zraika says.

Baine and Allen say respect is the biggest rule in line up etiquette, pushing in line or saving numbers for friends is looked down upon.

“Have a shower, get food, but you basically have to sleep at the venue and do the hard yards. You spend most of the hours together,” Allen says.

People who participate in camping for concerts often receive hate and criticism.

Some of the arguments include unfairness. Many people are not able to take days out of their schedule for concerts, but still want the benefits of the barricade.

Most fans who are against camping culture do not recognise that it could be fun for the campers. The activity is becoming more popular might prove the majority enjoy the experience.

“We’ve had pizza parties, played games overnight. It’s just a fun experience, regardless of what happens when you get inside the venue. I think a lot of people are missing out on that by hating on it so much,” Baine says.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, more fans are getting involved and then posting about it online. This might be the first time mainstream audiences are exposed to line up culture.

However, camping out for concerts is not a new phenomenon and has been a part of live music and fan culture for decades.

As much controversy as it has caused recently, the people who participate show no signs of stopping.

“I’ve had friends describe it like childbirth. To go through all this torturous, laborious shit, but then you see the band, you see the artist and you forget everything,” Allen says.

*By Katelin Cameron*