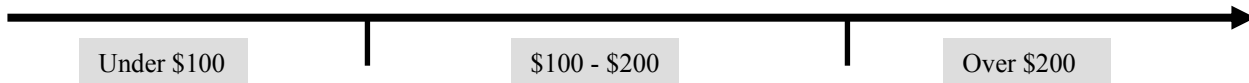


Madonna

As superstar Madonna announces her latest world tour, a discussion starts about UK ticket prices: are they too high?

- 1 Which was the last pop concert you went to? How much did the ticket cost? Compare your answers with a partner.
- 2 How much would you expect to pay for the following concerts: *Elton John / Madonna / Prince / Rolling Stones / Bruce Springsteen*? Mark their initials on the line below, then scan the article to check your answers.



Confessions of a material girl

This month, the 'material girl' lived up to the title of one of her earliest songs by announcing a World tour – and ticket prices which many see as outrageous. The pop superstar's London and Paris concerts are already sold out. Those lucky to snap up a ticket most likely paid from £150 (\$263) to £475 (\$833) for front block tickets. Prices on eBay now reach £1200 for a pair of premium seats.

Madonna is one of the most commercially successful artists in the history of popular music. A pop icon, she has the ability to constantly reinvent herself, to constantly adapt to musical trends. At the same time, she maintains complete artistic control over her career. Her 2004 Re-Invention tour took around \$125 million. This latest tour includes concerts in New York, Amsterdam, Montreal, and Tokyo.

Do prices have to be so high? Bruce Springsteen, on a recent tour, made every ticket at \$75 in order to offer better value

for fans. Prince starts his latest tour with US ticket prices at \$100. For the past several years, concert ticket prices have been increasing. The average ticket for a Rolling Stones concert last year was \$200. For Elton John, prices were \$110. The concert business does seem a healthy part of the music business, given the concerns over lost revenues due to digital piracy. 'It's just supply and demand' according to one commentator in the music industry.

Some defend the price of tickets due to the extraordinary high costs of setting up a world tour: to transport a band, the sound system, their crew, as well as the costs of hiring a venue, paying security staff and all the marketing. Messages submitted to a BBC web forum said it was a once in lifetime experience. 'Real' fans are prepared to pay these prices, claiming that she's worth it. Plenty of messages gave the opposite opinion – 'it's hard to justify her greed'. If you get a ticket, the chances are you will be in for a spectacle – but will it be worth the ticket price?

- 3 Read the article. Which arguments are used for and against the high prices of tickets for pop concerts?
- 4 Find words or expressions in the article from the following definitions.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| (a) very shocking or unreasonable | (paragraph 1) |
| (b) someone very famous who people think represents a particular idea | (paragraph 2) |
| (c) income from business activities | (paragraph 3) |
| (d) the crime of making and selling illegal copies of music from the internet | (paragraph 3) |
| (e) a website where people can express their ideas and opinions | (paragraph 4) |
| (f) a strong wish to have more money or things than you need | (paragraph 4) |
- (Definitions from or based on *Macmillan English Dictionary Text* © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2002)

- 5 Which of the following views is closest to your opinion? Compare your answer with other students.

(a) "These prices for Madonna tickets are outrageous. This is just greed!"

(b) "Ok, the price is high, but justified – it's just supply and demand!"

(c) "She's amazing, a legend in her lifetime; worth every penny!"

- 6 Work in small groups. Choose a pop artist and price the tickets for their concert. Present your choice and justification of the price to the class.