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—For section.....The Arts  
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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Nicely written as always, Sheryl. Please make sure the edit I made to the quote about priced for a king was what you intended. Sentence didn't make sense, so I presumed something was missing there.



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Breaking up the concert ticket monopoly

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 Live Nation/Ticketmaster controls most of the ticket  
3 market in the U.S. A Brattleboro venue operator is part of the  
4 effort to change that.

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 THE WEEK OF March 6 was an important one for live  
7 music.

8 During this time, the antitrust division of the U.S.  
9 Department of Justice (DOJ) took Live Nation Entertainment and  
10 its subsidiary Ticketmaster to court. They claimed the company

11 had an illegal monopoly that blocks competition in live event  
12 promotion and ticketing, resulting in high ticket prices for fans  
13 and forcing smaller competitors out. The case also alleged that  
14 the company uses coercive tactics to dominate the market.

15 The DOJ asked the court to break up the two companies,  
16 which merged in 2010.

17 As the owner and general manager of the Stone Church  
18 in Brattleboro, and president of the New England branch of the  
19 National Independent Venue Association (NIVA), Robin Johnson  
20 knows how important this case is and that it was long overdue.

21 However, in a surprising turn, the case was settled in just  
22 a week, with Live Nation being told to change some of its  
23 business practices.

24 \* \* \*

25 UNDER THE AGREEMENT, Live Nation will let venues it  
26 owns or operates sell half of their tickets through other platforms  
27 and allow performers to use outside promoters. The company will  
28 also let retailers, like Eventbrite and Vivid Seats, to list tickets on  
29 Ticketmaster's site, cap service fees at 15% at its venues, and pay  
30 a \$280 million fee to states that agree to the settlement.

31 More than two dozen states, including Vermont, said the  
32 settlement was not enough and called it just a slap on the wrist  
33 for the entertainment giant. They insisted the trial continue, so  
34 with a coalition of 30 states leading the way, the case was  
35 resumed on March 16.

36 "The problem with the deal is that they didn't break up  
37 Live Nation and Ticketmaster, which was what was originally  
38 asked," said Johnson. "Also, that fee is only four or five days'  
39 worth of sale for them."

40 According to *Billboard* magazine, Live Nation made \$25  
41 billion in 2025.

42 That's why Johnson, through his work with NIVA, is  
43 urging people to write to their attorney general to make sure the  
44 case continues until a fair agreement is reached.

45           During the pandemic, NIVA launched a successful “Save  
46 Our Stages” campaign, which rallied fans to to speak up and  
47 write to Congress to help independent venues like the Stone  
48 Church survive.

49           “NIVA was behind the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant  
50 that awarded \$16 billion to independent venues and promoters  
51 during Covid We generated about 20 million messages and  
52 emails from fans, and we became noticed in Washington for the  
53 strength of our coalitions,” Johnson explained. “Now we are once  
54 again asking people to write their state’s attorney general in  
55 support of this antitrust case.”

56           As they did during the pandemic, NIVA is using the  
57 “Save the Stages” slogan for this campaign. You can visit  
58 [saveourstages.com](https://saveourstages.com) and fill out a form that will go directly to the  
59 Office of the Attorney General. It couldn’t be easier or more  
60 important.

61           If you are a fan of live music, you know this is a fight  
62 worth fighting. The tentative settlement did little or nothing to  
63 lower ticket prices, which is the biggest problem for consumers.

64           Anyone who has tried to buy a ticket through  
65 Ticketmaster knows how frustrating the process can be.

66           You end up waiting in a long online queue with  
67 thousands of other hopeful fans. On top of that, you have to  
68 compete with bots, deal with extra fees, and sometimes find out  
69 tickets are sold out even if you got in right after sales started.

70           It makes you nostalgic for the days when getting a good  
71 concert ticket just meant waiting in line for hours at your local  
72 ticket outlet.

73           \* \* \*

74           NOW, LET’S LOOK at the prices.

75           *Variety* reported that when tickets went on sale for Bruce  
76 Springsteen’s upcoming No Kings-themed “Hope and Dreams”  
77 tour in Los Angeles, prices ranged from \$84.55 to \$3,007.20.  
78 Most people paid between \$400 and \$1,200, so it is no surprise

79 fans posted on social media that the “No Kings” tour was priced  
80 for a king.

81 Ticketmaster’s “platinum” ticketing is behind these  
82 expensive seats, which are reserved for the best spots in the  
83 house. They also sold platinum tickets for over \$1,000 for recent  
84 tours by Harry Styles and Bruno Mars.

85 These inflated prices impact a venue like Stone Church.

86 “Ticketmaster and Live Nation have ramped up the cost  
87 for their premium shows, and it leaves people unable to attend  
88 our shows,” said Johnson.

89 “As a smaller venue, we feel that ripple effect of people  
90 having a limited amount of disposable income to spend on  
91 entertainment, and that’s what impacts us most,” he added.

92 \* \* \*

93 OTHER CHANGES on the horizon could bring positive  
94 developments to the live music arena.

95 U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota, who has long  
96 pushed for ticketing reform, was disappointed by the tentative  
97 settlement and has introduced new legislation to stop these  
98 practices.

99 As described in a news release from Klobuchar, the  
100 Antitrust Accountability and Transparency Act would “strengthen  
101 review of antitrust settlements and ensure they protect  
102 consumers, workers and small businesses” instead of special  
103 interests.

104 U.S. Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vermont, quickly lent his  
105 support to this act.

106 “When there’s a bad merger deal, it is consumers and  
107 small businesses who foot the bill, facing higher prices and fewer  
108 choices as a result,” said Welch in a statement. “Any backdoor  
109 corporate settlement needs to face real scrutiny before it’s  
110 allowed to move forward. We need stronger antitrust laws that  
111 protect hardworking families.”

112 Johnson agrees that it is a good move and pointed to  
113 Welch as a strong supporter of small venues during the  
114 pandemic.

115 He added that Vermont has a strong bill in the state  
116 Senate awaiting approval that addresses ticket resale prices in the  
117 secondary market — yet another major problem that plagues the  
118 concert industry.

119 What this all comes down to is major changes are  
120 needed in the live music industry — and it starts with this case.

121 “Our big push now is to make sure the states in the  
122 antitrust lawsuit keep it going,” said Johnson.

123 He again encourages fans to use their voice to help  
124 ensure an outcome that benefits fans, artists, and independent  
125 venues.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

126 **SHERYL HUNTER** is a freelance writer from  
127 Easthampton, Massachusetts. Her work has appeared in various  
128 regional and national publications.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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