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Why Travis Scott's Tour Is Selling Poorly: Expert Explains (Exclusive)

On resale sites, tickets for the rapper's current tour are going for as low as \$7. An expert who spoke with The Messenger cites factors including a "negative halo effect" from the Astroworld tragedy

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Could a "negative halo effect" from the Astroworld tragedy be to blame for Travis Scott's poor ticket sales?
Lorne Thomson/Redferns

Despite being one of the biggest hip-hop stars and money-makers in the industry, Travis Scott is facing low demand for his upcoming tour dates.

Scott sold out his first drop of Utopia – Circus Maximus Tour tickets back in August, but the second round of dates have been tougher to move. On resale sites, tickets are going for as low as \$7, originally priced at \$65 plus fees. Meanwhile, there are still a significant amount of open seats in certain cities. What's the reason for the slowdown?

Speaking to The Messenger this week, Jesse Kirshbaum, music-industry trends expert and founder of the Nue Agency, chalked up the sluggish demand, in part, to Scott's "negative halo effect" — a reference to the tragic events of the Scott's 2021 Astroworld festival, during which 10 showgoers died in a fatal crowd crush. Beyond Astroworld, though, other factors could be contributing to the underwhelming sales. Here's how Kirshbaum broke it down.

A questionable image

"I think fans are a little weary," Kirshbaum told The Messenger. Scott recently brought out Kanye West, a still-divisive figure, at his performance in Rome. "It was the start of the kind of rehabilitation of Scott's live experience. But it's a controversial situation," Kirshbaum said. "His first shows back didn't necessarily

reinstall confidence."

Fans aren't the only ones taking note of Scott's dropping stock. "The promoter Live Nation, as big as it wants it to be, is also not putting the full muscle behind this," he continued. "I don't think Live Nation is trying to go too hard, too fast on this. Public sentiment is not as high, not as hot right now on Travis."

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"The only thing that's really driving Travis' ticket sales are his consistent clothing drops," Kirshbaum added. "The sneakers are doing extremely well, but there's a lot of controversy around them. They've been gamified. And his persona with the Kardashian affiliation, that doesn't sell tickets. ... It just drives press, and drives questionable press."

The brand-builder isn't a fan-engager

Kirshbaum believes that a wildly lucrative brand isn't enough to get fans across the country on board. "What sells tickets is a deep connection to your fans. And Travis is not the type of fan-engager, like with the Swifties or the Bey Hive or even the Drake show. I mean, [Drake is] just calling for fan love the whole time. It's just a full on Drake interaction with his fans. Travis' show, he won't even look you in the eye," he explained. "It's more mysterious. It's more of a spectacle. It's more of a riot. It feels like punk rock, and that's probably a little scary for parents. It's probably a little scary for fans."

There's no denying that Scott is surrounded by hype, but the low ticket demand suggests that energy might not resonate in every city. "He's from Houston. We know he is going to do well in L.A. We know he's going to do well in New York. But in Miami, he does nightclubs," Kirshbaum said. "I don't know if he translates to a hard ticket act across the country."

He diluted the product

Scott can thank his super-fans, scalpers and collectors for the initial run of tickets selling out. The diehards were ready at the computer to scoop their seats. Savvy resale marketeers and scalpers figured the tickets would be big-ticket items like Scott's collectibles, shoes and action figures that can sell for tens of thousands of dollars. With the following round of dates, Kirshbaum asked, "Second- and third-tier fans, are they going for it?"

The resellers aren't all making returns on their investments. "He diluted the product by adding more dates," Kirshbaum said. "The scalper business is so savvy, and that's why they're selling these tickets at a loss. They know the marketplace better than everybody else. So they know that there's just too much supply, not enough demand, and that's why tickets are going for way below face value. ... They can't hold these tickets. They've got to get rid of them."

Bigger than the live experience

The live concert experience is a relatively small part of Scott's brand as it exists today. Scott has partnerships with huge companies like McDonald's and Nike. People bid on Travis Scott toys and candles and skateboards. "If I was a sneaker company, I would prefer to be in business with Travis Scott than Beyoncé," Kirshbaum said. "But I wouldn't think that that audience is the diehard audience to go buy stadium tickets all over the country, all over the world."

"Travis is one of the great brand-builders," he added. "But his career and his success is bigger than the live show."

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