

Open Letter to Performance Artists and Venue Operators

November 2, 2006

To Performance Artists and Venue Operators:

I am writing to you after a string of horrible concert experiences, with the latest being Dweezil Zappa/Zappa Plays Zappa at The Theater at Madison Square Garden in New York City on October 31, 2006. After making specific arrangements to travel to New York from Pittsburgh for the opportunity to see and hear one of my favorite musicians, I have become completely disgruntled regarding concert experiences and I will no longer spend good money to see any shows/artists, local or remotely, until specific issues are remedied.

My latest experience begins with arrival at The Theater at Madison Square Garden at 7:00 PM on October 31, 2006 for the 8:00 PM Zappa Plays Zappa show. As soon as the lights went out at 8:00 PM, the nauseating stench of marijuana circulated about, seemingly coming from all directions. After hoping it would dissipate, 45 minutes later, my wife and I decided to leave the show, because we could not stand the stench any longer. On our way out I noticed a gentleman exiting the Management Office, so I asked to speak with someone that might be in charge. I let it be known that we were experiencing issues regarding the marijuana stench and told him why my wife and I were leaving the show. To my surprise, the gentlemen I spoke with stated "I'm sorry, would it be possible to stand in the aisle way?", I guess in order to be outside of the smoke infested area, and continued to state that being our seats (Section 303, Row H, Seats 10 & 11) were near the upper end of the venue "the smoke was rising from the lower areas". After hearing that along with the lack of concern and compassion for my issue and that nothing was going to be done, my wife and I did leave the show. After spending \$110.00 (plus \$19.70 convenience charge) for 2 show tickets and travel expenses to see the show, I got a whopping 45 horrible minutes.

Since when has it become legal to use marijuana, display public intoxication, and smoke cigarettes in confined public places (assuming you have a local smoking ban/ordinance) at your show or in your venue? It is not my responsibility as an attendee/ticket purchaser to police any venue or people within, which is what venue/event/artist security are suppose to handle, whether it be for the visibly intoxicated, venue safety, or illegal substance use. Purchasing an event/concert ticket does not give attendees a free pass to act irresponsibly. It is the venue and, yes, the performance artist to insist on a safe environment where all participants can enjoy the show/performance. Apparently, this responsibility is not being taken seriously by the performing artist or venue operator. This is completely unacceptable.

If you are not enforcing a policy that promotes a safe and pleasant experience for all, you are encouraging the behavior I have stated.

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I am recommending the following solution to the problem:

1. Design, promote, and enforce a policy stating what will not be tolerated at your event/venue (illegal drug use, public intoxication, cigarette smoking (according to local laws & ordinances), etc). Ejection from the event will result for non-compliance.
2. Have drug enforcement at each venue entry point. Bags are typically searched for weaponry, so just add on drug enforcement. Ejection from the event will result for non-compliance.
3. Have an alcohol drink limit per person. Ejection from the event will result for non-compliance. This will minimize complete intoxication & disruption to others.
4. Promote order amongst the attendees. Ejection from the event will result for non-compliance.
5. Eject attendees that do not adhere to local laws or artist & venue policies.

I would happily pay an increased ticket price to cover the cost of the above stated solution to attend a show that I could enjoy.

I do not consider myself to be a Stick-in-the-Mud, however I do want to be able to enjoy a show that I really look forward to without having to be pushed around by drunks or be exposed to the sickening stench of marijuana. I am not attempting to limit one's fun & enjoyment at events nor do I have a concern what is done in one's own home, but I do not want to be exposed to these issues or behaviors after spending a good amount of money and time to see a show.

As stated previously, I will no longer be spending money on your shows or at your venues until corrective action is taken. If my zero spending approach on shows/events is of no concern to you, so be it, but you will have lost my spending dollar/disposable income for good.

I do not mean to single out the Zappa Plays Zappa show, but this experience is the 'Straw that Broke the Camel's Back'. I have experienced similar issues with, unfortunately, increased frequency at various venues with various styles of performing artists.

This letter is to serve as notice if you were unaware that these activities are occurring at your shows or venues. This is not an isolated issue. I have to conclude that many are being negatively affected if these issues are occurring at your show or venue. I am taking the time and speaking for those that either thinks that nothing can be done or that no one really cares.

Sincerely,

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