

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Hot ticket Ticketmaster makes its move to bigger quarters

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

WITH THE PISTONS basking in their championship season, Grand Prix cars priming for this weekend's race and a sizzling lineup of entertainers heading for Michigan this summer, selling tickets is big business.

Ticketmaster, the only computerized ticketing company in Michigan, recently moved to larger quarters in Bingham Farms and hired additional staff to handle its growing business. The Los Angeles-based company, which services more than 100 cities nationally, brought in Jeff Kline as new general manager to run the Michigan office now in the Bingham Office Park on Telegraph Road.

The 26-year-old Kline, who lives nearby, headed Ticketmaster's Colorado office before he came to Michigan full-time in March to oversee the new headquarters. Since his arrival, he has introduced a ticket method using wrist bands, to make buying tickets safer and more orderly and to eliminate "camping out." Giving reasons for the new plan, Kline said, "Parents don't want to worry about their kids waiting overnight to get concert tickets, and Ticketmaster outlets won't tolerate camping out and the problems that come with it."

TICKETMASTER SELLS tickets for an impressive list of clients including Pine Knob, Meadow Brook Music Festival, Cobo Hall/Fordice Silverdome, Joe Louis Arena, Palace of Auburn Hills, Fisher Theatre, Detroit Lions, Detroit Tigers, Detroit Pistons, Kellogg Arena, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Boblo Island, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, De-

'When tickets for the Who went on sale several weeks ago, each outlet had 500 consecutively numbered wrist bands to distribute.'

— Jeff Kline

troit Science Center, Ford Auditorium, Royal Oak Music Theatre, Shrine Circus, Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, and Grand Prix, as well as numerous nightclubs.

Consumers who want tickets to any of hundreds of events around Michigan have three options. They can make a special trip to buy advance tickets at the box office where the event will take place, they can buy tickets at one of the 70 Ticketmaster outlets which include Harmony House and Hudson's as well as numerous independent stores, or they can call Ticketmaster direct at 645-6566 to charge tickets over the phone using Visa or MasterCard.

The service charge Ticketmaster adds to ticket prices corresponds to the convenience of the ordering method and depends in part on the event. Ticketmaster keeps service charges for family shows lower than for musical events.

Customers who order by phone pay the highest service charge, \$1.50-\$3.50 per ticket because phone ordering is the ultimate convenience. Those who buy tickets at the outlet store near their home or business pay a bit less in service charges - between \$1-\$2.50.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/Staff photographer

Kline said Ticketmaster expanded its office facilities and staff to better serve customers. The office's enlarged phone center includes a training room where new operators practice for a week before going on the floor. Approximately 90 operators on different shifts answer calls 365 days a year, seven days a week - from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays.

A NEW PHONE center coordina-

tor on staff monitors each operator's efficiency and keeps records of how long customers remain on the line before they are served, as well as the number of calls received and what percentage of callers are ordering tickets and calling for information. Nationally five out of six callers ask for information on upcoming events and one out of six places an order.

Credit cards account for a large percentage of Ticketmaster's business. Fred Rosen, chairman of the

board for the national company, said Ticketmaster "has ways of protecting customers and itself from credit card fraud." He declined to go into detail because he says, to remain effective, these methods can't become public knowledge.

He added that the Michigan office currently sells 70 percent of its tickets at outlet stores and 30 percent over the phone. The national norm is 60 percent at outlets and 40 percent over the phone, and Rosen expects

Michigan will evolve to the national pattern. Ticketmaster introduced wrist bands to Michigan after the method debuted successfully in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Denver. Kline said wrist bands avoid "camping out," which people once did to hold their place in line waiting for tickets to go on sale.

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