

BOOKINGS

Intimacy Issues: How Small Buildings Take on Big Shows

The 'Springsteen on Broadway' trend continues as Madonna's coming tour heads for the opera house

BY BRAD WEISSBERG

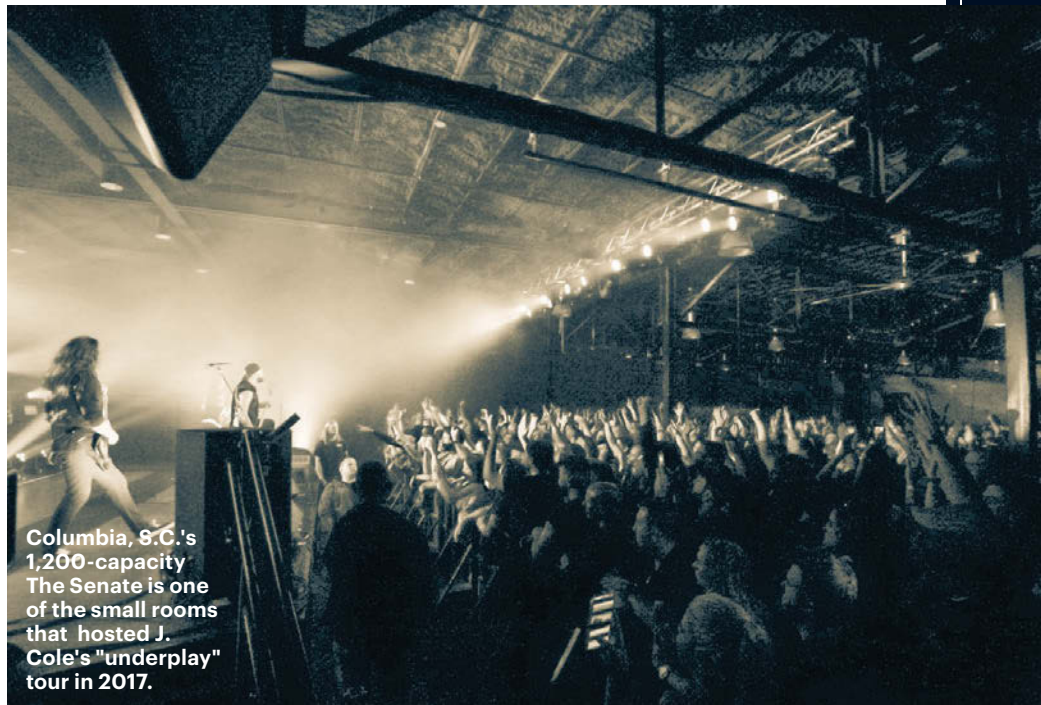
JAWS DROPPED WHEN Madonna announced that her new tour would start in September at the 2,100-seat Howard Gilman Opera House at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and move into similarly small rooms for the remainder of the 48-show tour.

Madonna, who practically invented the crowd-pleasing, production-heavy tours we see today, has been selling out arenas and stadiums since the 1980s and holds the record for the best-selling tour by a female artist in live event history after she grossed \$411 million from 84 shows with her 2008-09 Sweet & Sticky Tour, according to Pollstar.

Madonna said she's looking forward to performing in more intimate settings. She may have been inspired by the Las Vegas residency model, or maybe it was seeing the incredible success Bruce Springsteen had with his "Springsteen on Broadway" residency at the Walter Kerr Theatre in New York City, where he grossed \$106.8 million over 58 weeks.

But more likely, the sudden enthusiasm for small spaces of Madonna and promoter Live Nation has to do with modern-day touring economics and a shift in the market for how tickets are priced and distributed.

With a smaller inventory comes tighter control and the ability to charge fans the value of the ticket and not let the secondary market gobble up a portion of the profits by



Columbia, S.C.'s 1,200-capacity The Senate is one of the small rooms that hosted J. Cole's "underplay" tour in 2017.

buying tickets in bulk and selling them at a huge markup.

That means Madonna fans will have to shell out anywhere from \$359 to sit in the rear balcony to \$1,650 to sit in the front row. So, while Madonna may play to the same 34,000 fans in 17 nights at the BAM opera house that she would have played to if she had booked Brooklyn's Barclays Center for a couple of nights, she and her partners will make a lot more money.

Where Madonna goes, others follow, and it's a good bet that big stars playing small venues is a trend that's going to increase as more acts and promoters do the new touring math.

Patrick Scully, vice president and general

of BAM, agreed that at least some of the credit for getting Madonna to play his venue goes to Bruce Springsteen. "He did a phenomenal show that was highly successful and a lot of the other artists are looking at doing a similar residencies, or touring small spaces, because of his huge success."

Before her month of shows at the downtown Brooklyn venue, Madonna will also spend a month rehearsing there.

"Our brand is nontraditional theater, so we struggled initially with whether having a commercial show like Madonna will damage us in any way. We had to look at the optics of it," Scully said. "We'll be strongly identified

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

with the tour since it's being developed here and then playing here for so long."

Despite the preliminary jitters over booking Madonna, BAM forged ahead. "We decided it was too good an opportunity to pass up," he said.

Logistically, the most complicated aspect of hosting Madonna is the ticketing, according to Scully.

"We've got a ticketing system that's designed for our regular performing arts presentations, but this is an arena-sized artist with many followers who want tickets. We are not built to sell that many tickets in an hour."

The solution came in the form of help from Live Nation's ticketing partner, Ticketmaster.

"Using Ticketmaster has created new challenges because we're not getting the box office passed through to us," Scully said. "It's new for us to work this way."

BAM is not expecting a huge production but is planning for at least a moderately produced stage show.

"It's Madonna," he said. "We doubt it's going to be just her and a guitar. We do big operas and things like that and have room for five to six trucks, so we should be able to accommodate whatever she and Live Nation bring in."

Security will be stepped up for Madonna's

show. Bag checks are scheduled, and metal detectors are being discussed. Staffing will be increased in the front of the house and at the concession stands, as Scully is preparing for sellouts.

"We normally offer a la carte dinner, but for Madonna we're preparing for heavy bar service," Scully said.

"We're definitely going to increase the points of sale." BAM partners with Great Performances for hospitality services.

"It wasn't how many semis can we accommodate; it's how many hands can we accommodate."

— THOMAS GLASGOW

The Senate, a 1,200-capacity general admission live entertainment venue in Columbia, S.C., went through the experience of hosting an arena act in its tiny concert space when J. Cole played the building in 2017.

"It was part of his 'underplay' tour where he played the first part of his tour in small clubs and the second part in massive arenas," said Thomas Glasgow, the marketing manager of The Senate. "We were the very first date on his tour."

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Other than a swarm of people who showed up trying to buy tickets, the night went smoothly.

"There were no major issues," Glasgow said. "We loved having him and it's so fun to see an artist of that caliber here. The more of that we can get, the better."

Country music venues may provide the best roadmap for success hosting gigantic names in small spaces.

"Country artists have been playing tiny rooms for a long time down here; it's a tradition," said Scott Bailey, entrainment director for Ryman Hospitality which owns Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, the Grand Ole Opry, the Blake Shelton-branded Ole Red and the Doghouse at Ole Red Tishomingo, a new 300-capacity venue that opened in Shelton's Oklahoma hometown on Memorial Day weekend with Luke Bryan and Shelton.

"As the owners of the Opry, we have a lot of experience with big acts and big on-sales," Bailey said. We use the same ticket company, AudienceView, for all our venues. When we have a Blake Shelton or a Luke Bryan playing one of the smaller venues, we have a long conversation upfront with AudienceView, so the on-sale goes smoothly."

Closing off the on-sale the moment the seats are filled is another suggestion he made. "You don't want to alienate the fans by having them go through the whole ticketing process if the room is sold out," he advised.

Bailey also recommended having extra staff working on nights when big stars do shows, as well as hiring extra security in case someone who can't get a ticket makes a scene.

"A little planning will go a long way," he said. "And really, if we've done everything right, once the act starts playing and the magic happens, it doesn't matter if there's two people in the room or 10,000." ▣



Blake Shelton, who can easily sell out an arena, plays the 300-capacity The Dog House at Ole Red Tishomingo in Oklahoma.

COURTESY RYMAN HOSPITALITY



BTS did an on-stage interview with iHeartRadio during the band's swing through New York City in May.

LIVE! ROUNDUP

BTS WORLD TOUR DOMINATES WITH STADIUM EVENTS

SOUTH KOREAN BOY band BTS hits No. 1 and then some, taking the top four positions in the largest-capacity category on Hot Tickets with two-show engagements in each market. The three highest-grossing dates all earned more than \$10 million, with the vocal group's two-night stint at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., landing at No. 1. Sales revenue for those shows May 18-19 surpassed \$14 million from 98,574 sold seats. It was the band's only appearance this year in the New York City metropolitan area and the third stop on the Love Yourself: Speak Yourself tour that began May 4-5 at

the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., followed by Chicago's Soldier Field on May 11-12.

After the three North American dates, the boy band headed to South America for one late May appearance on the continent, a two-show run at São Paulo's Allianz Parque that comes in at No. 4 on the chart. With 84,728 tickets sold, the concerts on May 25-26 racked up a gross of \$7.8 million.

Two engagements in Europe followed the shows in Brazil, led by a pair of concerts June 1-2 at London's Wembley Stadium. With a whopping sold ticket count of 114,583 — the highest attendance logged at any of the venues on the 10-week tour — the U.K. performances scored \$13.5 million at the box office to take the No. 2 ranking on Hot Tickets. Paris hosted the band for the final European date on the tour, a two-night run at Stade de France on June 7-8. Holding the No. 3 ranking, the concerts at France's national stadium registered a combined gross of \$13.3 million from 107,328 total tickets. Only four shows in two Japanese cities remain on the Love Yourself: Speak Yourself tour, which is set to conclude July 14.

The trek is an extension of BTS's Love Yourself world tour, which kicked off in August and ran through early April, visiting

Asia, North America and Europe. The previous tour was staged at arenas in North America and Europe (except for one stadium date at New York's Citi Field on Oct. 6), yet all but one of the Asian dates were booked in stadiums. The first two shows on the 2018 tour were held at Seoul's Olympic Stadium in the band's home country Aug. 25-26.

MORE LIVE! HIGHLIGHTS

Cher hits Hot Tickets in the 10,001-15,000 Capacity category with a sold-out performance May 16 during her Here We Go Again tour, which is slated to run through mid-December. Her concert at Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls, S.D., lands at No. 3 based on a \$1.2 million take from 10,415 total tickets sold. Kenny Chesney follows at No. 4 on the chart with just over \$1 million in sales from his own sold-out concert at the Sioux Falls arena on the following evening. His May 17 show was attended by 10,649 fans.

With 21,064 sold tickets from both events, Cher and Chesney earn the Denny Sanford Premier Center the No. 3 slot on Top Stops, but it ranks the highest among North American arenas in the 10,001-15,000 Capacity group. ■ — Bob Allen

HOTTICKETS MORE THAN 15,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures provided to Pollstar. Date range: 5/16/19-6/15/19. Data updated as of June 16.

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$14,050,410	BTS	MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, N.J.	98,574	Live Nation	May 18-19	2
2	\$13,529,201	BTS	Wembley Stadium, London	114,583	Live Nation	June 1-2	2
3	\$13,398,884	BTS	Stade de France, Paris	107,328	Live Nation	June 7-8	2
4	\$7,872,113	BTS	Allianz Parque, São Paulo	84,728	Live Nation	May 25-26	2
5	\$6,604,579	Buckeye Country Superfest	Ohio Stadium, Columbus	51,971	in-house, AEG Presents	June 8	1
6	\$6,529,928	Paul McCartney	Lambeau Field, Green Bay, Wis.	49,416	FPC Live, Marshall Arts / AEG Presents	June 8	1
7	\$5,812,426	Eric Church	Nissan Stadium, Nashville, Tenn.	56,521	Messina Touring Group / AEG Presents	May 25	1
8	\$5,527,014	Pink	Madison Square Garden, New York	29,997	Live Nation	May 21-22	2
9	\$4,781,392	Billy Joel	Citizens Bank Park, Philadelphia	40,969	in-house, Live Nation	May 24	1
10	\$4,356,430	Pink	Bell Centre, Montreal	32,780	in-house, Evenko, Live Nation	May 17-18	2

HOTTICKETS 10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures provided to Pollstar. Date range: 5/16/19-6/15/19. Data updated as of June 16.

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$1,779,313	Paul McCartney	Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Fort Wayne, Ind.	10,695	AEG Presents	June 3	1
2	\$1,506,414	Westlife	FlyDSA Arena, Sheffield, England	20,492	in-house, Live Nation	June 7-8	2
3	\$1,202,976	Cher	Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, S.D.	10,415	Live Nation	May 16	1
4	\$1,028,493	Kenny Chesney	Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, S.D.	10,649	Messina Touring Group / AEG Presents	May 17	1
5	\$946,834	Backstreet Boys	TUI Arena, Hannover, Germany	11,197	Live Nation	May 21	1
6	\$810,646	Bad Company, ZZ Top	Austin360 Amphitheater, Austin, Texas	11,848	C3 Presents	May 19	1
7	\$787,238	Mumford & Sons	FlyDSA Arena, Sheffield, England	11,439	in-house, SJM	June 4	1
8	\$762,539	All Elite Wrestling	MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas	10,953	in-house	May 25	1
9	\$755,301	André Rieu	Hallenstadion, Zürich	7,920	in-house, André Rieu Productions	May 18	1
10	\$725,492	André Rieu	Atlas Arena, Lodz, Poland	10,636	in-house, André Rieu Productions	May 31	1

HOTTICKETS 5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures provided to Pollstar. Date range: 5/16/19-6/15/19. Data updated as of June 16.

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$2,486,418	Janet Jackson	Park Theater at Park MGM, Las Vegas	15,464	in-house, Live Nation	May 17-22	4
2	\$1,654,218	Janet Jackson	Park Theater at Park MGM, Las Vegas	9,474	in-house, Live Nation	May 25-26	2
3	\$1,282,594	Maluma	Auditorio Nacional, Mexico City	18,840	OCESA / CIE	May 23-25	2
4	\$1,168,790	The Avett Brothers	Filene Center at Wolf Trap, Vienna, Va.	20,461	in-house	May 23-25	3
5	\$1,112,061	The Tenderloins	Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.	13,134	in-house	June 7-8	2
6	\$606,540	Kenny Chesney	Tuscaloosa (Ala.) Amphitheater	7,134	Messina Touring Group / AEG Presents	May 24	1
7	\$567,705	Roger Hodgson	Royal Albert Hall, London	8,310	Triple A Entertainment Group	May 23-24	2
8	\$539,846	Pitbull	Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas	8,170	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation	May 19-24	3
9	\$531,793	Jerry Seinfeld	Tribute Communities Centre, Oshawa, Ontario	6,089	JS Touring, Live Nation	May 31	1
10	\$523,649	Lynyrd Skynyrd	Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.	6,637	in-house, Live Nation	May 24	1

HOTTICKETS 2,001-5,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures provided to Pollstar. Date range: 5/16/19-6/15/19. Data updated as of June 16.

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$2,676,202	"Hamilton"	Cobb Great Hall at Wharton Center, East Lansing, Mich.	17,903	in-house	May 28-June 2	8
2	\$2,591,188	"Hamilton"	Cobb Great Hall at Wharton Center, East Lansing, Mich.	17,892	in-house	May 21-26	8
3	\$1,815,370	"Dear Evan Hansen"	Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis	20,196	Broadway Across America, Hennepin Theatre Trust	May 28-June 2	8
4	\$1,768,821	Tyler Perry's "Madea's Farewell Play Tour"	Fox Theatre, Atlanta	23,287	Live Nation	May 23-26	6
5	\$1,557,642	"The Lion King"	Ziff Ballet Opera House, Arsht Center, Miami	18,283	in-house, Broadway Across America	May 21-26	8
6	\$1,502,239	"Come From Away"	Carol Morsani Hall, Tampa, Fla.	19,463	in-house	June 4	8
7	\$1,438,273	Backstreet Boys	Sant Jordi Club, Barcelona, Spain	17,475	Live Nation	May 17	1
8	\$1,434,545	"Hello Dolly!"	Durham (N.C.) Performing Arts Center	20,424	in-house, Nederlander Concerts	May 21-26	8
9	\$795,209	Neil Young	Paramount Theatre, Seattle	5,536	Live Nation	May 20-21	2
10	\$725,760	Eddie Izzard	Beacon Theatre, New York	11,377	Westbeth Entertainment	May 21-25	5

HOTTICKETS 2,000 OR LESS CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures provided to Pollstar. Date range: 5/16/19-6/15/19. Data updated as of June 16.

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$368,702	Donny & Marie Osmond	Flamingo, Las Vegas	3,304	Caesars Entertainment	May 21-25	5
2	\$299,520	"Jersey Boys"	Washington Pavilion, Mary W. Sommervold Hall, Sioux Falls, S.D.	4,593	in-house	May 21-23	3
3	\$194,880	Sebastian Maniscalco	Humphrey's Concerts by the Bay, San Diego	2,784	in-house	May 16-17	2
4	\$177,480	Rob Thomas	Center Stage, Northfield, Ohio	1,476	in-house	May 31	1
5	\$176,755	"Kinky Boots"	Midland (Mich.) Center For The Arts	2,709	in-house	May 28-29	2
6	\$171,744	Tony Bennett	Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, Cedar Falls, Iowa	1,542	in-house	June 7	1
7	\$168,023	"The Illusionists"	Mayo Performing Arts Center, Morristown, N.J.	2,440	in-house	May 18	2
8	\$166,826	Sammy Hagar and The Circle	Center Stage, Northfield, Ohio	1,250	in-house	June 2	1
9	\$159,090	Neil deGrasse Tyson	H-E-B Performance Hall at The Tobin Center, San Antonio	1,738	in-house	June 3	1
10	\$147,773	Derek Hough	Orpheum Theatre, Los Angeles	1,690	NS2, FPC Live	June 1	1

TOPSTOPS MORE THAN 15,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by tickets sold. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date range: 5/16/19-6/15/19. Data updated as of June 16.

RANK	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	CAPACITY	GROSS	SHOWS
1	Allianz Parque, São Paulo	126,662	50,000	\$9,164,615	3
2	Wembley Stadium, London	114,583	98,000	\$13,529,201	2
3	Arena Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico City	107,622	22,000	\$1,664,165	6
4	Arena Monterrey (Mexico)	107,511	17,500	\$2,141,311	9
5	Stade de France, Paris	107,328	81,338	\$13,398,884	2
6	MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, N.J.	98,574	82,500	\$14,050,410	2
7	Madison Square Garden, New York	70,468	20,789	\$9,221,797	5
8	Nissan Stadium, Nashville, Tenn.	56,521	68,000	\$5,812,426	1
9	Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio	51,971	100,000	\$6,604,579	1
10	Bell Centre, Montreal	49,795	21,500	\$5,436,758	4
11	Lambeau Field, Green Bay, Wis.	49,416	60,790	\$6,529,928	1
12	Citizens Bank Park, Philadelphia	40,969	43,500	\$4,781,392	1
13	Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, Calif.	38,971	22,000	\$3,205,047	2
14	Foro Sol, Mexico City	34,135	55,000	\$2,308,717	1
15	Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles	33,713	17,500	\$3,595,309	2