

Tuesday, 30 June 2009

## Up to 12 Jackson fans commit suicide Fans to get refunds on Jackson's London concert



One of the final images takes on Michael Jackson just 48 hours before his death (Courtesy of AEG)

DUBAI (AlArabiya)

Michael Jackson's fans who had planned to attend his comeback tour this summer in London learned Tuesday they could either get a refund on their ticket or receive a physical ticket, but not both, organizers said in a statement.

Concert promoter AEG Live (UK) Ltd. said full refunds including service charge would be available to anyone who purchased tickets for any of the 50 'This is It' concerts from an authorized dealer.

Fans could also keep the ticket that cost between £70 (\$116) and £700 (\$1,160) and were printed with a specially designed hologram "inspired and designed by Michael Jackson" as memorabilia.

"[F]ans will have the option to be sent the actual tickets they would have received to attend the shows in lieu of the full refunds which are being offered," AEG Live announced in a statement.

Tickets for the tour sold out within hours of going on sale in March and about a million people were expected to see Jackson perform.

Rumors that the O2 concert in London would go ahead and take place, perhaps with his sister Janet Jackson, raged in the British media Tuesday amid reports that Jackson's mother had won the first round of a custody battle for the three fatherless children.

"The world lost a kind soul who just happened to be the greatest entertainer the world has ever known," said Randy Phillips, president and CEO of AEG Live. "Since he loved his fans in life, it is incumbent upon us to treat them with the same reverence and respect after his death."

The online auction site eBay already announced it would refund concert goers.

However the ticket costs are but a fraction of the money paid by AEG, which operates the London's O2 Arena, including the millions spent planning and promoting the July 13 premier and already paid to Jackson, in addition to nearly two months of open nights at one of the city's biggest venues.

### Complicated policies

Concert promoters are generally required to take out insurance to cover concert cancellations or non-appearances, but the policies are often written very specifically to cover various scenarios.

And since the cause of Jackson's death remains in doubt, the final decision by the Los Angeles coroner could have a significant financial impact.

If a drug overdose was specified as a risk with lower coverage, AEG may be entitled to less money, said Malcolm Tarling, a spokesman for the Association of British Insurers.

Bart Nash, a spokesman for insurerer Lloyd's, said a number of different policies were written to cover the Jackson concerts, each with different clauses that could be affected by the all important "cause of death" determination.

"These things are written into the policies, and each one is different, and these types of contracts are so complex that different issues affect different policies," he said.

Officials have warned it will be up to six weeks before a cause of death can be pinpointed because complicated toxicology tests are needed.

The skirmishing over refunds and open bookings is just one aspect of what is likely to be years of legal wrangling over financial matters, including Jackson's considerable debts, assets and custody of his three children.

A will drafted by Michael Jackson in 2002 which divides the singer's estate among his mother, three children and one or more charities and excluding the entertainer's father Joseph Jackson, could play a central role in determining how his tangled financial relationships will be unwound.

Yet a debate over the will's validity is likely to ensue as Katherine and Joseph Jackson claimed Monday Jackson died without a will. Jackson's lawyer is due to submit the late singer's will to court on Thursday.

The battles are likely to dwarf earlier fights for the control of assets left by other departed rock gods, including guitar hero Jimi Hendrix and reggae trailblazer Bob Marley.

### Fan suicide

Meanwhile Jackson's death has reportedly instigated a wave of fan suicide worldwide as loyal fans unable to cope with his passing took their lives while Australians sought Lifeline Australia, a suicide prevention hotline, to vent their distress.

A dozen suicides have taken place so far according to London-based Gary Taylor, who owns the biggest Michael Jackson online fan club.

"It is a serious situation that these people are going through but Michael Jackson would never want this," Taylor was quoted by Sky News.

A Tunisian girl from the upscale Tunisian town Manar committed suicide Monday by overdosing herself after listening to Jackson songs, Al-Hurra news channel reported Monday.

Jackson performed his first and only concert in the Arab world in Tunis as part of his World Tour in 1996. He donated proceeds from the concert, which drew 65,000 fans, to humanitarian causes in the Arab country.

(With agencies)