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Sat 30 Nov 2002

RINGING THE CHANGES: Fans at Primal Scream's Corn Exchange gig will be able to test the new system whereby a virtual ticket is sent by text to mobiles in the form of a barcode, right

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Word is it's end of line for tickets

BY SAM HALSTEAD

THE days of queuing overnight in the freezing cold to snap up prized concert tickets may soon be over.

Mobile phone users in the Lothians will be able to get tickets texted to them in a trial of a revolutionary booking system to be launched today.

The ticketless booking system, which will be tested for the first time in the UK ahead of a Primal Scream gig in the Capital next month, is tipped to slash lengthy queues and take ticket touts off the street.

And the backers of the "m-ticket" are already promising the system could represent the future of ticket booking across the UK.

Instead of joining hundreds of other fans in queues, fans of Primal Scream, headed by lead singer Bobby Gillespie, will be texted virtual tickets bought on-line, and have their mobile phones scanned by ticket attendants on the night to gain entry.

The system is the brainchild of mobile technology specialist Mobiqu and e-commerce company MercuryTide. The firms have chosen the Primal Scream concert at Edinburgh's Corn Exchange on December 16 as the guinea pig for the trial.

If it is successful, both firms have promised to take the ticketless booking system to other centres across the UK.

Fans wishing to attend the Primal Scream gig in the Capital next month will be able to log on to a website and request and pay for tickets to the concert. The virtual ticket will then be picture-texted instantly to their mobile phone in the form of a barcode, which will contain all the essential details of the concert including details of the band, ticket number, venue and start time.

Concert-goers will save the message and then turn up on the night, where

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door staff will be able to scan the ticket barcode in a matter of seconds.

Today, the backers of the technology were confident the trial would work.

Ronnie Forbes, director of Mobiqa, said: "We are using the Primal Scream concert as a trial, but the outcome, I'm sure, will show gig-goers how they could potentially use a mobile to purchase and store tickets, and get into concerts using m-ticket technology.

"I'm sure this method of purchase will become standard as mobile phones are pretty well ubiquitous in the UK."

The barcode technology has been developed by Mobiqa, a leading player in the international industry alliance for mobile and wireless businesses.

It has transformed the unique ticket number into a barcode image, which is converted into a picture message before being sent to the mobile phone.

David McBride of Regular Music, promoter of the Primal Scream concert, also welcomed the technology. "The instant delivery of the m-ticket means it will address many of the issues that we face with queues, security and the administration that surrounds the paper ticket.

"Most importantly, because the barcode is unique, it will reduce the problem we have with ticket touts."

He added: " Paper tickets are often misplaced or forgotten, the mobile phone is an essential item of kit these days, so it is much less likely to go missing before the gig."

Yogi Haughton, Evening News club correspondent, welcomed the ticketless system. He said: "I think this is a brilliant idea. It is great news because it is such a pain having to queue all the time."

But he warned the firms involved would have to ensure the trial ran smoothly: "If it does not work properly, there will be mayhem."

The mobile phone tickets can be bought at www.regularpresents.com.

Normal tickets for the concert are available from Ticketweb and Ticketmaster outlets.

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