THE “HOOK”
As the weather starts to get warmer, many of us start to plan the next outing with friends and family to our favorite sports event or concert. Unfortunately for us, scam artists prepare to take full advantage of us in ways we would least think of. Often times, we as concert goers and sport spectators are so excited to attend the event, the last thing on our radar is scam artists selling us fake or counterfeit tickets. Today there are multiple ways to buy tickets online from a third party at a lower cost at sites such as Craigslist. Here are a couple of ways you can protect yourself from buying fake tickets that may look so real the only way you find out they are fake is when the tickets are scanned at the front door of the venue.

THE LESSON
1. Only purchase tickets from the box office of the event, or a well-known and reputable website that specializes in ticket sales such as Ticketmaster or Stub-hub.

2. If you decide to purchase tickets from an individual, (on sites like eBay, Craig’s List, or social media sites) never put money directly into their bank account or wire money at places like Western Union. Instead use a secure website that specializes in payments such as PayPal.

3. Avoid paying by cash, debit card, or money transfers because these payment options often times are not reversible. A much better way to pay is to use a credit card which will increase protection over other options because it can be reversed if you get cheated.

How to Spot the signs of ticket fraud
1. Check the details for contacts on the site you are buying your tickets from. This should include a landline phone number as well as a complete postal address. If the site is only showing a PO Box, this is a red flag. Often times PO boxes are used by fraudsters because it’s easy to set up an address for a phony company as well as making it difficult to trace who is actually setting up the fraud. Another red flag that fraudsters will use to make their website appear to be a legit company is using a cell phone as a contact phone number. Pre-paid cell phones can be purchased for cash without having to list your name or any information, making it very difficult, if not impossible, to track down who actually owns the phone number.

2. Before you make any type of payment on a website, make sure the address of the website starts with https (the 's’ stands for secure). This is very important when making any payment online.
How the scam happens:

You may see a website that is advertised through email or social media giving you the opportunity to buy tickets to a popular event. Fraudsters will create a legitimate looking company specializing in ticket sales, but behind the scenes there is no actual substance to the company other than a way to take and process your payment. These websites are very easy to make and appear to be real. Often times they will use a web address that is very similar to a well-known, reputable company and will trick unsuspecting customers into thinking it is the actual legitimate company they are used to seeing advertised.

This is considered to be a form of phishing. Fraudsters will take advantage of the extremely high demand for special events and concerts, knowing that people will often overlook the red flags of a fraudulent website, in hopes of actually being able to get a tickets to a popular event at the last minute. These phony websites will make it appear they have tickets to a sold out event or have tickets for an event that hasn’t even gone on sale yet. The scammers knows that people will do just about anything to get tickets to a popular event and take full advantage of the buyer’s lack of concern of fraud. Remember: *when it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.*

After you buy your tickets, you don’t receive them, instead you are told that a customer agent will meet you at the venue, or you are told to give your name to “will call”. Of course nobody will show up to meet you, or there will be no record when you report your name to “will call”. Another method is the fraudster will email you a fake ticket to print off, but when you arrive at the event you are told the ticket is a fake and that’s when the anger, humiliation, and devastation sets in. You have been scammed. After you realize this, you call the number you saw on the website only to find the number has been disconnected and you have been another victim of fraud.

So as the summer begins and popular events start to become a regular weekend occurrence, make sure to be on guard, use common sense, and look for the red flags for ticket scams we mentioned earlier. Even though you might be so excited to see your favorite concert, never let your guard down. Fraudsters are everywhere always looking for the unsuspecting concert enthusiast to make their next victim.