

Neil Young and Eddie Vedder defend Bruce Springsteen against Trump's attack on free speech and fascist threats

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Iconic rock musicians Neil Young and Eddie Vedder have joined Bruce Springsteen in making public statements denouncing Donald Trump for his authoritarianism and attacks on democratic rights and the US Constitution.

In the wake of Springsteen's criticism of Trump during a concert in Manchester, England on May 14, the fascistic president's reply on his Truth Social platform—which included unhinged personal attacks and the incitement of his supporters—has evoked sharp responses from other musicians.

The growing number of popular artists making such statements is an indication of the deepening political crisis of the Trump administration, which includes declining public support.

Neil Young, a persistent critic of Trump, issued a statement on his Neil Young Archive website defending Springsteen and Taylor Swift, who have both come under attack by the president:

What are you worryin' about man? Bruce and thousands of musicians think you are ruining America. You worry about that instead of the dyin' kids in Gaza. That's your problem.

Young continued:

I am not scared of you. Neither are the rest of us. You shut down FEMA when we needed it most. That's your problem Trump. STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT ROCKERS ARE SAYING. Think about saving America from the mess you made.

Taylor Swift is right. So is Bruce. You know how I feel. You are more worried about yourself than AMERICA. Wake up Trump!! Remember what the

White House is? 86/47??? That's what you think about? You are forgetting your real job. You work for us.

Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, speaking from the stage in Pittsburgh, directly addressed the authoritarian implications of Trump's response to Springsteen:

[Trump's] response had nothing to do with the issues. They didn't talk about one of those issues, they didn't have a conversation about one of those issues. All that we heard were personal attacks and threats that nobody else should try to use their microphones or voice in public or they'll be shut down.

Now that's not allowed in this country that we call America. Part of free speech is open discussion. Part of democracy is healthy public discourse. The name-calling is so beneath us. Bruce has always been as pro-American with his values and liberty, and his justice has always remained intact. And I'm saying this now to be sure this freedom to speak will still exist in a year or two when we come back to this microphone.

The statements from other artists that include condemnations of Trump followed the prepared political critique delivered by Springsteen in the opening show of his Land of Hope and Dreams in Manchester. Introducing the E Street Band, Springsteen declared:

The mighty E Street Band is here tonight to call upon the righteous power of art, of music, of rock

‘n’ roll in dangerous times. We ask all who believe in democracy and the best of our American experience to rise with us, raise your voices against authoritarianism, and let freedom ring.

He continued, directly addressing the state of the nation:

In my home, the America I cherish, the America I have celebrated, has served as a symbol of hope and freedom for 250 years. Unfortunately, it is now under the control of a corrupt, inept and treasonous administration.

Springsteen’s remarks, captured on his newly released live EP “Land of Hope and Dreams,” also condemned the government’s attacks on civil rights and freedom of speech:

There’s some very strange and dangerous things happening out there right now. In America, individuals are being persecuted for exercising their right to free speech and expressing their dissent. This is occurring now. In America, the wealthiest individuals are finding satisfaction while neglecting the world’s poorest children, leaving them to face illness and death.

Trump’s response was immediate and vitriolic. On his Truth Social platform, he posted a juvenile edited video depicting himself hitting a golf ball that knocks Springsteen down on stage. The post included a barrage of insults including, “he’s not a talented guy,” calling Springsteen an “obnoxious jerk,” and a threat that he needs to “keep his mouth shut,” until he comes back to the US, “and then we will see how it goes for him.”

In a further escalation, Trump has threatened to block Springsteen’s re-entry into the US and to launch an investigation into his support for Democrat Kamala Harris, alleging violations of campaign finance laws.

In a series of posts, Trump accused Harris’s 2024 campaign of illegally paying celebrities—including Springsteen, Beyoncé, Oprah and Bono—for endorsements and appearances, calling for a “major investigation,” and saying, “It’s not legal! For these unpatriotic ‘entertainers,’ this was just a corrupt & unlawful way to capitalize on a broken system.”

According to Federal Election Commission filings,

however, the Harris campaign paid standard fees for event production and travel—\$75,000 to Springsteen’s production company and \$165,000 to Beyoncé’s—for campaign services, not secret endorsements.

Trump’s attacks on artists and his calls for investigations into their political expression are part of the administration’s attack on democratic rights. Trump has repeatedly denounced judges as illegitimate obstacles to his fascist agenda, especially as the judiciary has blocked over 150 of his executive orders—including attempts to eliminate the Department of Education and to deport immigrants without due process.

The spectacle of a sitting president publicly feuding with musicians, threatening investigations and attempting to silence critics has heightened public awareness that democratic rights are under attack and authoritarianism is being normalized.

The statements from Young, Vedder, Springsteen and other artists are part of a wider and growing mass political resistance and defense of free speech, democratic rights and against war and genocide across the US and around the world.

In a related development, Brian Eno, the renowned composer and music producer, recently issued a public statement sharply criticizing Microsoft for providing artificial intelligence and cloud services to the Israeli military amid the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Writing on social media about his own history with the software monopoly—Eno created the iconic Windows 95 startup sound—he expressed dismay that a project once symbolizing technological optimism is now linked to what he describes as “the machinery of oppression and warfare.”

Eno accused Microsoft of complicity in war crimes, stating, “If you knowingly build systems that can enable war crimes, you inevitably become complicit in those crimes.” Eno called on Microsoft to suspend all services that facilitate violations of international law and pledged to donate his Windows 95 fee to victims in Gaza.

He also voiced solidarity with Microsoft workers who have protested the company’s actions, urging other artists and technologists to join his call for accountability.



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