

# Brit awards and Baftas: Criticising genocide and the rise of the far-right and being censored for it

**Paul Bond**  
8 March 2026

Last week's Brit Awards in Manchester saw several political comments by artists. Equally noteworthy were public reactions to broadcaster ITV's censorship of political comments in its coverage of the acceptance speeches.

ITV deliberately drowned out comments "Free Palestine and fuck ICE" by drummer Max Bassin of the band Geese.

Viewers complained at the censorship on social media, with one commenting, "I've never known the Brits bleep out so much stuff."

The Brits are a showcase event for the British music industry. Even in this corporate environment, artists spoke from the red carpet and the podium about the rise of Reform UK, the continued genocide in Gaza and domestic repression in the United States.

Perhaps the most interesting comments came from Irish artist CMAT, nominated for international artist of the year. She spoke out against "anyone trying to argue that art is not a political place."

"Everything is politics," she said. "More than ever, art is politics because you don't get to make art in a fascist state. Fascism is on the rise in every single country in the world." Fascism was "showing its ugly head in Ireland... all over the UK and don't even get me started on America."

She singled out the call by Berlin film festival jury president Wim Wenders for artists to "stay out of politics," calling it "cowardice."

It shows, she said, "that these people are extremely separate from how normal people live their everyday lives... They've become successful artists... and so they have wiped their hands clean of having to do anything with the working classes or having to do anything with anyone who is oppressed in any nation because they have

the luxury of doing that."

Wenders's comment was part of a campaign to ensure that the only politics on display were those of the German government. The systematic efforts to suppress criticism of the genocide in Gaza, particularly, have met a determined and public backlash from artists.

CMAT has been consistent in her support for Palestinians. In 2024, she pulled out of the Latitude Festival because of its sponsorship by Barclays, which was financially involved in the Gaza war. She ended her set at Glastonbury last year with a pro-Palestinian statement.

Other artists have also consistently protested the Gaza genocide. When Sharon Osbourne accepted a Lifetime Achievement award on behalf of her late husband Ozzy, Scottish singer-songwriter Jacob Alton held aloft a Palestinian scarf. Alton, who won the critics' choice award, included the words "Free Palestine" in the song "Fairy in a Bottle" at a Mercury Prize performance last year.

Sharon Osbourne has long been active in campaigns against critics of the state of Israel, including backing antisemitism smears against Jeremy Corbyn—of whom she said, "I want to physically hurt this man"—and opposing any boycott of Israel from the Eurovision Song Contest in 2024.

When Irish rap trio Kneecap led thousands in a chant of "free Palestine" at the Coachella festival last year, Osbourne joined the vendetta against them. She called for revocation of their work visas to the US. This was part of a systematic campaign that saw Kneecap refused entry to Canada and facing baseless terrorism charges in Britain.

Theo Ellis, bassist with group of the year, Wolf Alice, pointed to a wider crisis of information and media censorship. He said musicians "have a power to expose

people to information they might not have got somewhere else... Some of the major news outlets over the course of 2025 particularly were downplaying things and artists were taking up the mantle.”

He spoke with concern of the “shocking” rise of the far-right, “a really bad thing that people should take very seriously.”

Many British artists, including Wet Leg, pointed to the rise of Nigel Farage’s Reform UK with concern. Singer Self Esteem, nominated for best artist, said, “This country’s getting scarier and scarier... a dark place, darker than where we are already.”

When asked what she meant, she said, “The party that is doing the best in the polls at the moment.” She warned that “A lot of people don’t actually understand what certain parties are gonna do.” Even under these conditions, however, she insisted, “I just can’t not say what I think because it’s too frightening.”

Loyle Carner, nominated in the hip-hop category, also spoke of “scary times,” saying “it’s not hard to say” that “I hate Nigel Farage.” He hoped a “more powerful” response was to “try and find ways to express some sort of hope and generosity to the people like me who maybe feel marginalised or oppressed or left behind.”

Even the tamest of political comments requires censorship. ITV censored a joke about Peter Mandelson by the host, comedian Jack Whitehall. There is an anxiety in the ruling class that comment on such a detested figure could reveal the depths of hostility to the political system.

ITV claimed Bassin’s ICE comment was censored because of his swearing. As it was not possible to isolate the single swear-word in the five-second delay between live event and transmission, they claimed, they also removed the “Free Palestine” comment.

Whitehall joked that any swearing would be covered by “the best in the business on the bleep button tonight... the guy who did the Baftas.”

The Baftas was presented by the BBC a week earlier. A social media storm was whipped up over an incident there involving Tourette’s campaigner John Davidson.

Davidson’s Tourette’s involves coprolalia. When he is ticking, he involuntarily shouts extremely offensive things. This is not something he can control, and it is intensified at moments of stress. His life inspired the film *I Swear*, which shows the condition with sympathy and in depth. Robert Aramayo, who plays Davidson, won best actor.

Davidson was ticking when he arrived at the ceremony. The audience were alerted to this, but other performers

seem not to have been. When Delroy Lindo and Michael B. Jordan were presenting an award, Davidson shouted an offensive racial slur.

The BBC, which had a microphone at Davidson’s table, chose not to edit this out when it was broadcast later that evening. But much of the social media furore that followed was directed against Davidson.

Davidson has spoken of his distress, as the BBC had assured him that they would edit any of his involuntary swearing out of the broadcast. StudioCanal and Bafta had both made clear swearing would be edited out. Warner Brothers flagged concerned during the event. They were assured the BBC would be notified and the racial slur would be edited out. It was not.

Davidson had made four documentaries with the BBC, he said, and “feel that they should have been aware of what to expect from Tourette’s.”

While they were broadcasting comments guaranteed to cause distress to Davidson, Lindo and Jordan, the BBC also cut the words “Free Palestine” from the acceptance speech of Akinola Davies Jr.

The director won Outstanding Debut by a British writer, director or producer for *My Father’s Shadow*, about a family reuniting after the 1993 Nigerian election. He thanked “all those whose parents migrated” after escaping persecution or genocide. “Your dreams are an act of resistance,” he said, concluding, “For Nigeria, for London, the Congo, Sudan, Free Palestine,” which was greeted with applause. The last two words were censored.

Davies commented, “It was really important... to say that in a room full of artists, because we have an opportunity to influence people because they watch our films.” He pointed to recent years of demonstrations “trying to show solidarity with the people of Palestine, we’ve had some of the largest political solidarity demonstrations in the UK.”

The anxiety this provokes in the ruling class is driving the censorship and suppression of any critical comment. This censorship is posing ever more sharply the need for a genuine political alternative, revolutionary and socialist programme against genocide and war that can mobilise the international working class.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**