

Elton attacks 'censorship' in US

Elton John has said stars are scared to speak out against war in Iraq because of "bullying tactics" used by the US government to hinder free speech.

"There's an atmosphere of fear in America right now that is deadly. Everyone is too career-conscious," he told New York magazine, Interview.

Sir Elton said performers could be "frightened by the current administration's bullying tactics".

The singer likened the current "fear factor" to McCarthyism in the 1950s.

"There was a moment about a year ago when you couldn't say a word about anything in this country for fear of your career being shot down by people saying you are un-American," he told the magazine.

The singer said things were different in the 1960s.

"People like Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, The Beatles and Pete Seeger were constantly writing and talking about what was going on.

Backlash

"That's not happening now. As of this spring, there have been virtually no anti-war concerts - or anti-war songs that catch on, for that matter," he said.

He voiced concern that it appeared acceptable to speak out if you were pro-Bush, using the example of country singer Toby Keith, but not if you were critical of the President, as in the case of country rock band, the Dixie Chicks.

"On the one hand, you have someone like Toby Keith, who has come out and been very supportive of the Bush administration and the war in Iraq - which is OK because America is a democracy and Toby Keith is entitled to say what he thinks and feels.

"But, on the other hand, the Dixie Chicks got shot down in flames last year for criticising the president. They were treated like they were being un-American, when in fact they have every right to say whatever they want about him because he's freely elected, and therefore accountable."

Sir Elton is currently in New York playing a series of concerts.

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