

More Dangerous Songs: And the Banned Played On

16 songs banned by the BBC



By the Britain's Most Dangerous Songs production team

The Kinks – Lola



Written by singer Ray Davies, Lola is about a relationship between a man and a “woman” who turns out to be a transvestite.

But it wasn't this gender confusion that worried the BBC. The song was banned for including the words “coca-cola” which was against their policy on product placement.

Davies had to interrupt the band's American tour to fly back to London to re-record the lyric as “cherry-cola” for the single release.



The Sex Pistols – Anarchy In The UK



The Sex Pistols' debut single, Anarchy in the UK was banned following their controversial appearance on the TV news programme, Today.

The song had already been played on the radio but the band had caused such outrage by swearing on television that they were banished from the airwaves.

Their next single, God Save The Queen was also banned but it didn't stop The Sex Pistols storming their way up the charts.



John Leyton – Johnny Remember Me

This was the first and only No.1 hit for singer and actor John Leyton who starred in the TV series, [Harpers West One](#).

The song tells the story of a young man haunted by his dead lover and was one of many 'death discs' popular at the time but banned by the BBC.

Other censored 'splatter platters' include, Tell Laura I Love Her by Ray Ricky Valance, Teen Angel by Mark Dinning and Terry by Twinkle.

George Michael – I Want Your Sex



This was George Michael's first solo single after splitting from school pal [Andrew Ridgeley](#), the other half of pop duo [Wham](#). At the time it was one of the few songs to include the word 'sex' in the title and the BBC restricted play of the song and video for being overtly sexually suggestive.

Some critics argued that the song was promoting casual sex at a time when AIDS was of great concern. But George released a statement to the contrary – I Want Your Sex is about attaching lust to love, not just to strangers.

It would be more than a decade before George would make a statement about his own sexuality.



Tom Robinson – Glad To Be Gay



Back in 1976 Tom Robinson was out, loud and proud. This song written originally for a gay pride march went on to become Britain's unofficial gay anthem.

Released on an EP, the BBC refused to play it on [the Radio 1 chart show](#), although [John Peel](#) broke rank and played the track anyway, as often happened!

Robinson later confused some journalists by marrying a woman and in 1996 added an extra verse to the song: “Well if gay liberation means freedom for all, a label is no liberation at all. I’m here and I’m queer and do what I do, I’m not going to wear a straghtjacket for you.”



Blondie - Atomic



This was one of 67 songs deemed unsuitable for broadcast by the BBC during the first Gulf War.

Boom-Bang-a-Bang by Lulu, Bang Bang by BA Robertson and Cher’s Bang Bang (My Baby Shot me Down) were among the explosive sounding songs on the list.

Maria Muldaur’s 1974 hit, Midnight at the Oasis, was also considered potentially offensive, along with I’ll Fly for You by Spandau Ballet and Everybody Wants to Rule the World by Tears for Fears.



Gang Of Four – I Love A Man In Uniform

This song was on its way up the charts until the BBC banned it as inappropriate when British troops were entering the Falklands War.

But this post-punk band had been banned before. Their 1979 single, *At Home He's a Tourist* was also censored by the BBC.

The band walked off *Top of the Pops* minutes before performing when they were asked to replace the lyric “rubbers” with “rubbish” — “rubbers” was considered too risqué for the BBC.

[I Love A Man In Uniform by Gang of Four](#) (BBC Music)



Scott Walker – Jackie

This was the first record to be banned by the new Radio 1. Walker’s cover of the [Jacques Brel](#) classic was banned because of homosexual references in the lyrics. The BBC was offended by the reference to “authentic queers” and “phony virgins”.

That same year the Sexual Offences Act was passed in England and Wales, decriminalising sex acts between two men over the age of 21 in private.

In 1991 [Marc Almond](#) covered the song and performed it on primetime television.



Shirley Bassey – Burn My Candle



This was Welsh singer Shirley Bassey's debut song when she was just 19 years old. However the word "sex" in the lyrics was considered too salacious and the song was banned by the BBC.

This initial set back didn't do Shirley any harm: she's went to sell more that 135 million records over seven decades.



Heaven 17 – (We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang



This was the first single to be released from Heaven 17's debut album, [Penthouse and Pavement](#).

The song was banned by the BBC after concerns that the lyrics libelled the then President of the United States of America, Ronald Reagan.

The synth-pop pioneers are still performing and, with the ban now lifted, [this version of the song](#) was recorded in 2010 for BBC Radio 6 Music.



Serge Gainsbourg & Jane Birkin – Je t'aime... moi non plus

Birkin and Gainsbourg were in a relationship at the time of this single's release, but Gainsbourg had written and recorded the song two years earlier for his then girlfriend [Brigitte Bardot](#).

Bardot's husband heard the track and Bardot subsequently pleaded with Gainsbourg not to release the song.

It was banned by the BBC for its overtly sexual content.

[Je t'aime by Serge Gainsbourg & Jane Birkin](#) (BBC Music)



Lil Louis – French Kiss

Some of the best panting in pop comes from this house track.

It was a hit in night clubs around the world but the change in tempo and sexual moaning were too hot for the BBC to handle.

Despite a ban it still reached number 2 in the UK charts.

French Kiss by Lil Louis (BBC Music)



Ian Dury and The Blockheads – Spasticus Autisticus

Ian Dury wrote this song as a protest against the International Year of Disabled Persons. As a polio sufferer he found this label patronising.

The BBC denied the song airplay, citing that the lyrics: “I wibble when I piddle 'cos my middle is a riddle” were offensive.

In 2012 the song was used in the opening ceremony to the Paralympic Games.

Spasticus Autisticus by Ian Dury and The Blockheads (BBC Music)

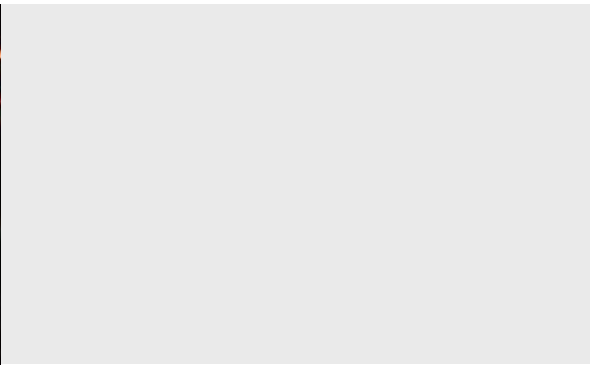


Radiohead – Creep



First released in 1992, Creep was rarely given airplay as it was considered too depressing! The song also contains the f word which was not acceptable for the BBC.

The band recorded an alternative, substituting the offending word with “very”. The song was re-released in 1993 where it reached number seven in the UK charts.



Screaming Lord Sutch – Jack The Ripper

Produced by the legendary [Joe Meek](#), this song was banned by the BBC for being in bad taste.

Lord Sutch is better known as the founder of the Monster Raving Loony Party, but back in 1963 he stood in his first election representing the National Teenage Party.

It's unknown if this song helped increase his vote.



[Screaming Lord Sutch at BBC Music](#)

Eliza Doolittle – Walking On Water



The young singer-songwriter ran into trouble with the BBC due to the religious content in this song.

Prior to an appearance on [BBC Radio 2](#), Doolittle was asked to change the lyric: "Sometimes I wish I was Jesus" to "Sometimes I wish it was easy to get my Air Max on and run across the sea to you."

There was, however, no problem with the reference to a popular running shoe...



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/5R152hTbVPQdYjn29q5jt4/16-songs-banned-by-the-bbc>