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Playing gigs at the Olympics is a rip-off

Patrick Wintour (Political parties battle to claim Olympic advantage, 30 June), puffs up the Olympic Games as a political panacea for the ideologies of any political stripe. All the parties are piling on board. Labour says the "Olympics show the limits of a free market and the continuing role of the state". Regrettably this is not the case. Musicians are being ripped off in a way that would leave the banks weeping tears of envy. A leaked letter offering musicians a gig at the Windsor and Dorney Olympic site says that the budget allows for £50 per act per hour, and has a pile of pettifogging restrictions, including one where the bands are not allowed to sell their CDs. They have to trek all the way to east London to pick up their accreditation to perform and the letter cheerily says that "this is across the board for all Olympic events - even Paul McCartney has had to do this".

The minimum wage is £6.08 an hour, so an instrumental quartet travelling by car to perform a one-hour gig, including parking, unloading, performing, packing up, departing - with travel time length-

ened by the marvellously democratic notion of "Zil car lanes" for the Olympic apparatchiks - would cost a pathetic £97.28 by Gradgrind's arithmetic. Of course, you could use apprentices at £2.60 an hour, but will that be - another choice cut from the letter - "instrumental in creating a fantastic and memorable experience for our spectators"?

Politicians, quangos and businesses associated with the Olympic Games should hang their heads in shame at this shabby treatment of musicians and entertainers. I would think twice before coming to a country that treats its musicians in this way.

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