

Billy Bragg's "Worker's Playtime"

Romance on a political conscience

By Michele Thibeau

When Billy Bragg's new album *Worker's Playtime* finally gets filed on my shelf (probably next year) it will go between Everything But the Girl and Sarah McLachlan. This album is a bit mellow, compared to some of his other work like *Levis Stubb's Tears*. Perhaps it only seems mellow compared to his powerful performance in Halifax.

Such songs as *Tender Comrade*, and a capella song about the bond between soldiers during the war, and *Must I Paint You A Picture*, about true love, depict only one side of Bragg. On the same album we find songs such as *Rotting On Demand* and *Waiting For the Great Leap Forward*

which depict his politically conscious side. The first one reminds us that we are "innocent until proven guilty" through the eyes of a man in a crowded jail cell reflecting judge's words, "This isn't a court of justice son, this is a court of law." The second is about trying to make a change in our society, a great leap forwards, but, like the song says, it's "one leap forward, two leaps back", but you could always "join the struggle while you may; the revolution is just a t-shirt away (while) waiting for the great leap forward."

It seems that on this album he wanted to create a sound different from that of Wiggly and himself on their guitars. There are all

sorts of credits for such instruments as piano, drums, cello, and even flugelhorn. While this change in sound works well, some of the power of a man and his guitar, witnessed in songs like *Levis Stubb's Tears* seems to be missing.

Is Bragg taking a more subtle approach to politics on this album, with only two very political tunes? Maybe so. Perhaps he would like to be invited to Mandela's Freedom Concert next year. The organizers this year said Bragg was too political. In any case, if you are a Billy Bragg fan this album will probably wear thin in your walkman from over-play just as it is doing in mine.

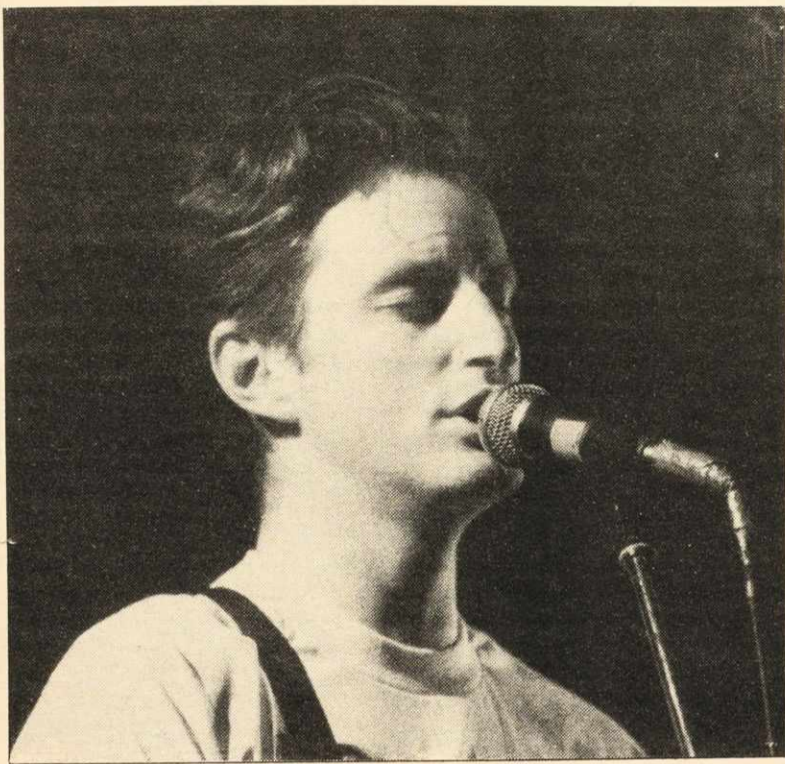


Photo by Eric Brown

Bragg, more subtle on vinyl than on stage, brings a mellow feel to his new album.

From powder magazine to Halifax's newest gallery

By Lisa Clifford

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia recently opened at its new home on Hollis Street. The long search for a permanent home for the Gallery has been going on since 1908 when the gallery existed for many years in a powder magazine at the Halifax Citadel. More recently, however, it has been housed in the former Nova Scotia College of Art and Design on Coburg Road.

The Gallery's new location is the old and historic Dominion Building, completed in 1867. The building has served as a post office, customs house, law courts, RCMP office and a farmers' market over these many years. Entrance to the Gallery is free of charge and comprises of some 2000 works. Priority seems to have been given to artists who were or are residents of Nova Scotia.

Also featured are temporary exhibitions that change every four to six weeks. An especially interesting temporary display, by Nova Scotian born Fred MacCulloch, are the pencil sketches, watercolours and oil paintings of beautiful European cities where MacCulloch spent much of his time.

The Jack and Joan Craig Gallery, containing unique fold art paintings and sculptures, was also interesting. Local artist Ralph Boutlier had several works on display. His self-portrait, sculptured out of wood, looked real enough to carry on a conversation.

Inuit Art was also prominently

displayed, with soapstone and serpentine carvings of the traditional otter and walrus.

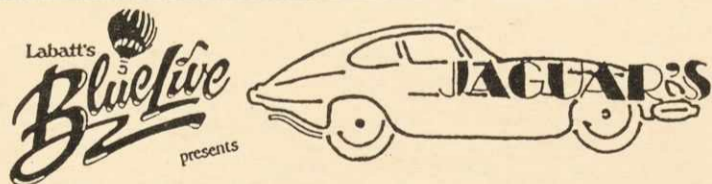
In addition to Canadian and local works, the Art Gallery has several displays of British and European art. Each painting reflects the different style and mood of the individual artist.

Many art novices don't know a fine painting from the scribbles of a child. Art, of course, is a matter of individual taste but it would be nice to know that to look for in a work of art. On the Gallery's lower floor is the Way I See It Gallery, an exhibition

designed to teach people about looking at art.

On the calendar of events for the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is a display of photographs on China. A Japanese photographer spent six years in the People's Republic of China and his photographs will be featured from December 15 to January 29.

Gallery tours are offered throughout the year on Sundays at 2:00 pm and all members of the public are encouraged to attend regularly offered lectures, films and panel discussions.



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