

# Billy Bragg is Difficult

More of the very brashful best from Billy Bragg with his 'Difficult' third album. Bragg tells it as it is, and as loudly as it requires; but here's a novelty, Bragg singing and singing passably well...with humour, emotion and commitment.

*Greetings to the New Brunette:* a love song to Shirley Williams, one of the notorious 'Gang of Four' who broke away from the Labour Party to form a 'new left' founded upon the polite politic of the cheese and wine reception.

Bragg shows, with sharp wit, why the Social Democrats failed to elicit the support of the working class:

*The people from your church agree  
Its not much of a career  
Trying the handles of parked cars  
Whoops, there goes another year  
Whoops, there goes another pint of beer*

*Train Train:* a reworking of 'The Count Bishops' classic of the mid-seventies - fast, hard, passionate rock and roll.

Bragg attacks institutionalised love in *The Marriage*, and, in *Ideology*, the careerist ambitions of politicians on the left and their interpellation within the Establishment in a land where 'The courts, the private handshake, The Stock Exchange and the old schools tie,' account for more than the votes of the 'patient' millions.

The ambiguous (sic.) *There is Power in a Union* features Bragg's lyrics on a traditional tune. Very English? Yes, but the economic contradictions within The Maritimes should provide us with access to the overtly political songs, and, being frailly human, we all share the emotional access to songs such as *Levi Stubb's Tears*, *Wishing The Days Away*, and *The Warmest Room*:

*And she did speak her mind*

*And told them all that she believed  
The only way to disarm was to disarm*

The Bragg there is no real distinction between the emotional and the political, the two are intimately related and act upon one another in subtle ways. Witness *The Passion*, a track with which Bragg reveals his growing maturity with committed directness in defining the emotions which are instrumental in maintaining taboo. A beautiful song on a tragically brutal subject:

*The fear of a daughter runs high  
In the mind of a father to be  
For something is growing inside  
But we don't talk about it, do we.*

*The Warmest Room* follows to restore to us Bragg's inherent optimism. Redolent of *A Lover Sings* from 'Brewing It Up

With Billy Bragg, 'The Warmest Room' contains none of the formers eventual pessimism:

*And here she comes again  
And I'm sitting on my hands  
And she sing to me that stren song  
Here she comes again and I'm biting my lip  
But it won't be long,*

love in the future

tense rather than in the past. *The Home Front*, takes us back to Blighty, the 'Land of A Thousand Roses, where

nostalgia is the opium of the age', and shows us, if we don't already know, that the main obstacle to social change is a misinformed, ageing population whose place in History is as: 'Clock watchers, old timers, window shoppers.'

Bragg's discord is not only refreshingly different, but necessary in a society whose prime obsession is in smoothing over the evidence of contradictions within it.

Billy Bragg comes to Montreal on the 29th of November. Watch this space.

Lauchlan McLoughlan

## Go See Zero Hour

If you enjoy a good thriller go see 'Zero Hour'. This enterprise, TNB Contact Theatre co-production is a great way to spend 95 minutes. 'Zero Hour' is a high-powered espionage thriller about CIA covert operations in Central America. Just as you feel you have the plot pegged, things shift and you find yourself awed at its cancerous growth and its terrifying implications. At the end you cannot sort out the naive from the bastards.

Under Ted Johns direction, Joe-Norman Shaw, David

Etheridge and Mark Wilson fill their ten-by-ten prison cell with powerful action. Jules Tonus' set plucks the drama out of the world and presents it to us for an almost clinical examination.

The disturbing unreality of 'Zero Hour' will keep you involved with these men and their schemes, and yet keep them thankfully distant.

'Zero Hour' is playing in Edmund Casey Auditorium, December 3rd through 6th at 8 pm.

## Police Best of ? Album

An examination of fine workmanship by Tim Martell

The Police; "Every Breath You Take- The Singles"

Friends, with the winds of winter upon us, and this album recently released, I have no choice but to begin with the obvious pun... freeze, its the Police.

I apologize, it's been that kind of week. Anyhow, on to more pertinent matters- like this album. Just how does one analyze an album containing the top hits of one of modern society's true supergroups? At first thought, one could see this collection as yet another example of capitalism at its best, released to trigger yet another wave of Police-itis after recent doubt about the trio's future (solo works of the past few years by Sting, Stewart Copeland and Andy Summers had brought forth rumors of the band's permanent separation). However, the release of "Every Breath You Take- The Singles", and another twelve inch single by the Police should reduce somewhat all questions about their return to the studio.

Those of you out there who are tired of endless "Best of" albums will be happy to learn that each track from "Every

Breath..." has an original, re-recorded sound with a few twists thrown in for good measure. A new version of "Don't Stand So Close To Me", a big seller for the Police, is an example of those twists (and is entitled, oddly enough, "Don't Stand So Close To Me '86." How original).

The band also manages to maintain its classic sound, however; and that is apparent immediately as the twelve-song montage opens with one of their hits, "Roxane." I can almost see Eddie Murphy slumped in the bottom of his jail cell, wailing the lyrics a la Stevie Wonder in "48 Hrs".

My apologies if I am giving

the impression that the listener must be a fan of the Police to enjoy this album. In fact there could be no better way to introduce someone to the possibly unfamiliar Police tunes, than with this collection of their best singles (hey santa, this would be an ideal stocking-stuffer for that little brother or sister whose music collection is just beginning). However for the folks out there who ARE Police fans, this album demands listening to. Even if you have to hear it at, say, a party somewhere. Over, and over, and over again. Right Guys?

If you can find out what I mean.

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