

# Bragg packs Pub Flamingo

by Payne Schwarz

If you want to live life in an hour, make sure that hour is spent watching Billy Bragg live — he gives it all in a condensed, but unmarred version. His words will make you cry; his jokes will make you laugh; his puns, smirk; and his love, smile. His honesty is undeniable; and his seriousness, at times, is almost unbearable. His guitar ranges from a raw punk growl to a relaxed, mournful strumming as he walks you through a corridor of passion, pain and happiness.

Billy Bragg began his cross-Canada tour on September 7 to a sell-out crowd at Pub Flamingo. His "urban folk music" has filled three albums and several EP's to date, and this tour is to support his LP *Workers Playtime*, released September 12.

Billy Bragg's obsessive career began in 1982, after three years of living under Margaret Thatcher's government. "I was 21 in 1979, and I managed not to think about politics," says Bragg. But Thatcher's policies on health care, education, and unemployment drove him into his brand of

urban folk music. As he explained to the crowd at the Pub Flamingo: "I am here only due to the dedication and determination of one lady, and I'll never forget her name — Margaret Thatcher. She made me the political animal I am today." Bragg took his guitar and portable amp all around Britain in 1982 and 1983, becoming popular with striking workers and the unemployed. He recorded his first LP, *Life's a Riot*, in three days, for only 125 pounds.

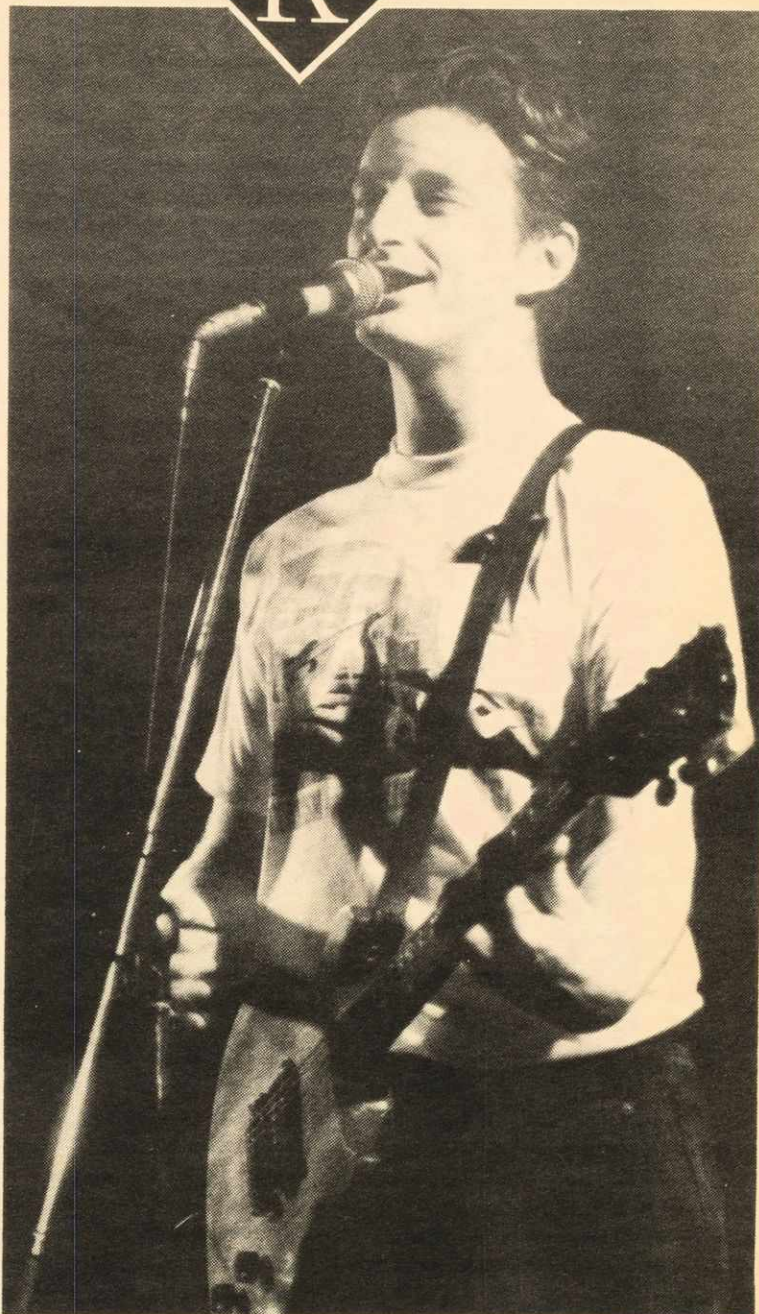
Bragg's lyrics are concerned with politics, peace, and love. He drives home his political songs by making the political situation understandable. He brings it down to a level of "everyman", making it personal and poignant at the same time. Billy Bragg cannot be misinterpreted. Though bitterly political at times, Bragg insists he's not a political songwriter because his music is about life in general. But by necessity there is a political undertone to his work. "I have to be involved, as an artist, in political situations, because I believe cultural activities have a very important

role to play in political issues," says Bragg.

Many of the "non-political" songs he writes are about small, personal love affairs (often failures) in which he attempts to make the audience empathize with him. He doesn't consider himself tackling the standard "pop" theme of defining "What is Love", but rather sees himself defining "the small details we all have in common but feel only we have felt." He says of himself, a political activist, writing love songs "I have to satisfy my heart as well as my intellect. I have desires too."

Bragg's live performance was full of conversation. He stopped after almost every song to point out some quirk of life or poke fun at some political issue — the Iran/Iraq war, free trade, "yuppie-ism". In under two hours he took a club of several hundred people and moved them into his own front room, making them feel not as if they paid to go in, but were invited by Bragg to attend. At the end of the night, everyone in the audience must have felt, to some extent, a bond with Billy Bragg.

Photo: Eric Brown



Bragg - never bluffing on his crusade against the conservatives.

Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society

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GENERAL  
MEETING

Thursday, 29 September 1988

at  
NOON

Ordinary Business

1. Minutes
2. Annual report of the Publishing Board
3. Financial Statement
4. Election of a director (student representative)
5. Report of the editor

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