

# Records

## Billy Bragg Talking With the Taxman About Poetry *Chrysalis*

There's always been something quixotic about Bragg's quest against exploitation, Thatcher and bullshit in general. It's like he's taken on the corporate world's bad men armed with nothing more than a portapak, guitar and an altruistic heart. Too good to be true?

Let's get cynical and say that his politics and working class background have made him the focus for a fashionably left wing music press looking for a flag and card carrying idol who doesn't sound like Genesis. That support has nudged Bragg's career a long way, but if you believe that there's no smoke without fire then idealistically there's no press without talent. Naive, sure, but Bragg's first record, the extended play *Life's a Riot with Spy Vs Spy*, has sold over 150,000 copies from a promotional outlay of \$300, a happy state of affairs resulting from the EP's undoubted merits and consequent



David & David

and continual press patronage.

Anyway, after the lull of *Brewing Up*, his first fully fledged album and one that didn't spark except perhaps for 'It Says Here', 'The Myth of Trust' and 'St Swithin's Day', last year's brilliantly moving single 'Levi Stubbs' Tears' promised that *Talking With the*

*Taxman* was going to save souls. John Porter's production, Bragg's great improvement as a writer and the presence of stars like Johnny Marr has ensured that it will.

Right from the crystalline charm of Bragg's opening chords on the wonderful 'Greetings to the New Brunette' through to the chiming 'There is Power in a Union' and the little-trumpeted tragedy of 'The Home Front', the record scarcely has a duff moment. 'The Marriage' and 'The Passion' are both beautiful songs about bad marriages leading to wasted lives, the latter being lifted into the sublime by Marr's guitar. And down a notch

there's 'Help Save the Youth of America' and 'Wishing the Days Away', typical but well-delivered echoes of folk tradition.

So on *Taxman* Bragg has easily justified the virtual heroic status that has been dropped on his shoulders. The money or the Bragg? No question Mr Taxman, take the Bragg.  
**George Kay**

## Various Artists That Summer! *Arista*

Yeah, *that* summer, when the sun of punk was waning and the heat of the streets was about to be lasered into discos to try and tan white boys. Teenage kicks relayed through the Clash, Sex Pistols Jam and lesser beings cleared the floor for the next wave of dancers — the conveniently dubbed "new wave."

*That Summer!*, a movie nobody went to, supplied a soundtrack that, at the time, was a mixture of what was to come and a reminder of those lesser beings that had clung to the drainpipes of punk. The Boomtown Rats spring to mind, here represented by 'She's So Modern' and 'Kicks'. Geldof sounding more affected than Jagger, too moderne. Lou Reed's presence comes through on Mink de Ville's studied cool 'Spanish Stroll' and the Only One's 'Another Girl Another Planet', two bands who failed to thrust home early promise. Eddie and the Hotrods tried with 'Do Anything You Wanna Do' to persuade people that they were real anarchists, but too

late as they were confirmed pub rockers.

Of the shape of things to come Costello had already proved that he was gonna be the king and with early singles like 'I Don't Want to Go to Chelsea' and 'Watching the Detectives', who was gonna argue? Not Ian Dury, that's for sure, since his 15 seconds ended when Chas Jankel left the Blockheads, but here we have his anthem 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll' and 'What a Waste.' And finally and probably most importantly the Undertones, who with 'Teenage Kicks' promised to carry the punk precepts of energy and excitement into this decade. They delivered.

*That Summer!* is a welcome little reprise and since a lot of these songs made the Top 10, a timely reminder of the good old days. White rock and roll at popular level doesn't look so good now.

**George Kay**

## David & David Boomtown *A&M*

David Baerwald and David Ricketts, along with producer Davitt Sigerson, have made a remarkable album. *Boomtown* is a model of poise, a cunning blend of grimy integrity and astute commercial viability.

David Baerwald is the word-smith, vocalist and sometime guitarist. His sharply etched lyrics provide the album with a virtually conceptual theme — a cynical and often desperate vision of life at the bottom in a big city. (Baerwald is a native of downtown Los

Angeles.) Here are stories about characters brought to hopelessness through drugs, drink, broken dreams and joyless sex. Even the couple of "love" lyrics chart the ends of affairs, one involving a remorseful narrator who has just blacked his lover's eyes.

David Ricketts is a multi-instrumentalist and talented melodist. Moreover the restrained craftsmanship of his arranging becomes increasingly seductive over a number of hearings. For instance on 'All Alone in the Big City' Ricketts starts with a sparse but pounding piano figure, then introduces brushed drums, a low growling synth, wailing wordless vocals, occasional percussion and a sustained guitar that eventually gives way to muted trumpet. And all this is on a backing track that is neither obtrusive or distracting. Indeed it even retains a sense of space.

Furthermore, despite the occasional employment of smooth sessioners like percussionist Paulinho da Costa, producer Davitt Sigerson ably prevents the sound from becoming slicked out. His approach is to counter the instrumental complexities by pushing drums and vocals well to the fore. The metronomic whack of the snare and Baerwald's gritty singing give *Boomtown's* sound the requisite tough edge to complement its harsh vocal imagery.

So here's an album that wins both ways — intriguing hook-laden pop music that actually enhances its bleak vision of urban reality. Rock noir for the Top 40.

**Peter Thomson**



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## THE JAYREM RECORDS COUNTDOWN

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH		
1	4	Reggae Blasters Vol. 2 Various Artists	GETI-11 TC-GETI-11
2	2	He Waiaa Mo Te Iwi Aotearoa	JAY-327 TC-JAY-327
3	1	Attack From Down Unda Various NZ Heavy Metal IMPORT	RRLP-103 RRLC-103
4	7	Reggae Blasters Vol. 1 Various Artists	GETI-10 TC-GETI-10
5	9	Robert The Record	ROBERT 1/500
6	3	13th Anniversary Live in Japan The Residents	AIM-1006
7	12	Just Friends Rodger Fox with Bill Reichenback & Gary Grant	CIRCULAR-9 TC-CIRC-9
8	8	Mona With The Children Doug Cameron	SNAP-1203
9	13	This is a Mans Mans Mans World/ Jailhouse Rock The Residents	FAN-004
10	5	Fay Lovsky Fay Lovsky	JAY-325 TC-JAY-325
11	20	Sings The Blues Jimmy Witherspoon IMPORT	AIM-1005
12	NEW	Sweet Bitter Love Martha Griffiths IMPORT	TRIS-94
13	6	Walkin' Together Rodger Fox with Mike Booth	CIRCULAR-10 TC-CIRC-10
14	17	Buckle In The Rail Chad's Tree	FINE-1
15	11	The Legend (incl. free poster) Marilyn Monroe	CC-0016 CC-0016c
16	19	Make Room Luke Hurley	JAY-324 TC-JAY-324
17	10	A Reggae Christmas Various Artists	RRS-004 TC-RRS-004
18	NEW	I Gave Myself To You(This Is Not A) Disco Song Snake Finger	FAN-005
19	15	Weird Culture Weird Custom National Student Radio Compilation	NSR-001 TC-NSR-001
20	14	Electrical Storm Ed Kuepper	HOT-1020

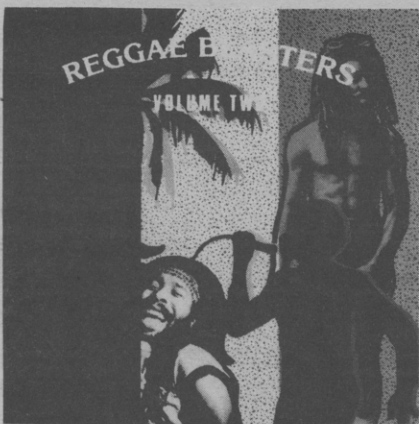


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