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“STYLE”

Words by Iain R. Webb

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* **BARKING-BORN** Billy Bragg, who has recently been something of a 'flavour of the month' in the music press, talks about the flavours he favours himself...

... The quote from *Busy Girls buy Beauty* - 'What will you do when you wake up one morning to find that God's made you plain in a beautiful person's world' - it's very similar ideology to the Stranglers - 'It's only the children of the fucking wealthy who tend to be goodlooking!' - "... Who grow up to be beautiful, yeah..." Right, do you really believe in such inverted snobbery that there is something wrong with being goodlooking?... "No, no, no, there's nothing wrong with being goodlooking, it's knowing that you are, and using it that's wrong... with the song I'm having a go at glossy magazine stereotypes... 'The busy girl buys beauty, the pretty girl buys style' - the fact that you can actually buy style, when actually style's not that important, it's the quality of your life as opposed to the fucking style of it... I mean some people have to worry about surviving, let alone being fucking stylish with it"... What would you see in place of those magazines?... "Nothing. Why does there have to be anything in their place. The fact that they exist is enough to wind me up. Life would be much more boring without them. I'm not somebody who wants to see drabness, I'd rather see originality..." On the same track you wrote the lines, 'What was Anna Ford wearing? what did Angela Rippon say?'. What do you think about the media myth, the media people?... "Running around and doing

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nothing other than being media people..." Yeah, and the fact that everyone is interested in what they do... "It manifests itself worse in people actually believing *Coronation Street*... I think for the readers of the Sun, *Coronation Street* is more real than real life. What does it matter what Angela Rippon, and Anna Ford say, and who they throw wine over... It doesn't matter. You shouldn't try to live their lives, you should be trying to live your own..." So what do you feel now that you might be put in that position yourself... "That's daft. Stupid. I don't see why making one little seven track LP - and doing a few gigs should put me in that position..." So where do you fit in? Define your personal style. "I've never really thought about it. Functional I suppose. That's why I wear these boots and this jumper, because it keeps me warm, and are cheap..." Do you have any favourite articles of clothing? "Yeah, this grey sweat shirt, because it's grey and has nothing on it... short sleeved... my mum bought it for me..." You don't know where from? "Petticoat Lane. It's functional, it's grey, it doesn't make any great statement..." So do you tend not to wear things that do? "White T-shirts I wear a lot, and on stage I wear these jeans. I don't spend much time thinking about clothes. I buy on impulse. I like things which are fashionably non-descript. Like this jumper from a 'War-on-Want' shop." Do you have any favourite best dressed people? "This is a very strange question... Let me think. Trevor Brooking always looks well turned out." On the pitch? "No, on the pitch

he's a bit standard but when you see him actually in real life he looks quite good. Whoever sorts out his suits for him has got his head sorted out. Other than that, middle Americans I quite like. Maybe that's why I go down to Flip quite a bit, to find out what Middle America is wearing and steal some of that..." Has being a pop personality affected the way in which you buy clothes? "No, I still go and buy from the same stupid stores as I did before. I'd like to wear something a bit different on stage, but without being flash for flash sake. I do try to be different from what people think or expect... If I spent anytime thinking about what I was going to wear I'd be wasting my time." So people with true style don't think about it? "Yeah, it comes naturally. It doesn't to me. You don't have to be thoroughly original, and wear wacky clothes and be Steve Strange." You say you don't have style, but because you are happy with what you wear, therefore you feel at ease, therefore you present an image which is correct. "Yeah, my style... Bill's style is just basically functional, and keep warm, and... don't die."

Most expensive clothes ever bought: "Shoes, I don't mind spending £20 on shoes..."
Wardrobe includes:-
- jeans, £6.50 a pair. Bought four at a time - "the problem is the pockets wear out."
- brown cord sheepskin trim jacket: "I haven't got round to wearing it yet... it makes me look like a member of Crosby, Stills and Nash... and it needs a button."
- raincoat: "When it rains I wear this because it's a raincoat... but the good thing about it is that it's really handy for shoplifting..."
- red, grey, black and white patterned shirt. £13. "I used to wear it until I saw a member of UB40 wear one Top of the Pops - then it was straight out the window..."
- "The famous thirty bob suit - everybody needs at least one for do's."
- a selection of hats and ties (mostly unworn).
- "... and I wore a check shirt once -

ever since, people have been giving me loads... and I hate them all."
* Favourite stores: Flip; War on Want; Help the Aged; Monty Christy in East Ham High Street; Jumble Sales.

Photos by Sally Boon



* **VIVIENNE** Westwood suggested girls wear their bras on the outside; Jean-Paul Gaultier made them into full-length dresses; and Chantal Thomas gave us glimpses of them from beneath her smart secretarial suits... Here we show the most popular version of overground underwear dressing as seen in almost every nightclub. A deep V-neck sweater (worn back to front); a lacy brassiere; and a silvered corsage pinned tightly to the breast. Inexpensive glamour, without looking cheap...

Black under-wired bra, Marks & Spencer £4.50 - black v-neck sweater, French Connection £26.95 from Jane Norman, Top Shop and other chain stores - silver floral sprays, Woolworth 25p each ** Model: Hilde Smith; hair: Stuart Moore; make-up: Lesley Chilkes; photo: Adrian Peacock.