

THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO TOURING

30 watt mixing amplifier:
"like two telephone directories stuck together with knobs on".

Essential left-wing "Ken Livingstone/Labour" sticker.

Connector box: "another thingy with knobs".

Microphone with goose-neck stand.

Clamps for attaching speakers to haversack frame.

Loudspeaker with detachable stand:
"sometimes this comes loose and the speaker shoots down and hits me in the earhole".

Graphic equalizer pedal:
"don't understand how it works but it makes good noises".

Handy electric blue haversack with Velcro body straps.

Billy Bragg – useful device for operating Portastack.

Capo – useful device for altering guitar pitch.

Burns Steer guitar: "it's green".



"I have this very strong, albeit wonky, belief in live music," says **Billy Bragg**. "I hate going to record shops and autographing albums when I could actually be playing." Nowadays, however, he has no difficulty in mounting a live performance whenever the urge takes him. For, with Bragg in mind, boffin Rick "Alamo" Sarson has devised the Portastack which represents "not quite the last word in electric busking systems." Slip 12 HP2 batteries into place, secure the rucksack to the back, twiddle a few knobs and – hey presto! – a sturdy racket is soon pouring forth from the speakers.

Having tested out the Portastack on his recent American jaunt, Billy Bragg has become a satisfied user and speaks glowingly of the system's star points:

- ★ "It looks a bit silly and I feel quite silly, and very vulnerable, wearing it"
- ★ "It's quite uncomfortable and rather heavy (about 35lbs). If someone gives you a shove, you topple over and go flying"
- ★ "The batteries run out after about half an hour and there's no way of monitoring the sound"
- ★ "It's very hard to hold a conversation with one of these on your back"
- ★ "The speakers start feeding back if you walk through a door – but you can't go through most doors anyway because the speakers are about 7' 6" off the ground"
- ★ "You can run it off a wall socket – but I don't fancy going up in smoke"

Watch out for this amazing scientific breakthrough – coming to an unlikely locality near you soon!



Photos: Andrew Catlin