

BILLY BRAGG PLAYS ALPHABET SOUP WITH THE MM PSYCHO

GORBACHEV

POSSIBILITIES, in an area where there have been very few possibilities in the last 40 years. Time will tell whether or not he delivers. But I think his whole point seems to be to take on the bureaucracy, which is the real f***-up in the Soviet system.

KHOMEINI

EXTREMISM or fundamentalism of any kind I find very difficult to deal with, whether it's religious, political or football fundamentalism. Particularly that belief that the Muslim revolution is supposed to be a global revolution. What a person wants to be religiously is up to them, but when they start trying to tell me the way I should be, that's when I get angry.

FUN

AN appreciation of it is very necessary when dealing with a lot of the things that I have to deal with, whether it's this "hurry up and wait" lifestyle, or political reality. A potent weapon for the deflation of pomposity and absolutism.

SOLDIERS

IT'S like being a member of the ultimate male chauvinist institution, being a soldier. It was something that I had to do, and something that a lot of people do, because they run out of options. There are as many violent arseholes who are soldiers as there are violent arseholes who are stockbrokers.

FAME

SOMETHING that only exists in your head. You still have to face all the realities of being a human — and in fact it's worse, because it depersonalises things. You could, if you were that type of person, be really paranoid about it — think people only talk to you because you're famous, nobody really likes you for the person you are. I get genuinely embarrassed sometimes when people recognise me, and at other times genuinely pleased when someone says, "Such and such a song really meant a lot to me."

CHARITY

I FEEL very ambivalent towards charity. If you're sending money to people in need, then I totally agree with that. As a socialist, I feel that there shouldn't be a need for charity. Whatever people need, if they can't take part in the success of the society they're in, then there should be an agency of the Government that deals with that.

BEAUTY

TOTALLY in the eye of the beholder. I don't think there should be a formal definition of what's beautiful — it's like having an ideal in architecture, like Soviet realism. I don't buy that.

LOVE

SOCIALISM, to me, is the political extension of the idea of love, because love is about responsibility. About caring about someone and being able to surrender yourself to them.

RAP

