

# 'It's good to see the young bands step up to make a contribution'

## The 5-Minute Interview

### Billy Bragg

Musician

*Billy Bragg is the patron of War Child, who are making an album involving 20 artists to mark the 10th anniversary of their CD "Help!"*

#### What made you get involved with War Child?

To make some headway on the political side of things. One reason I'm attracted to War Child is that it has achievable aims. They've set up a couple of drop-in centres. The thing

about Make Poverty History is it's a laudable aim, but with War Child you know exactly what they're trying to do.

#### How will War Child and this 10-year anniversary help?

There's only so much you can do. You can raise people's consciousness, which Bono and Bob Geldof do well. What's different about War Child is they go into very difficult places. We seem to have done so many negative things with regard to war-torn countries. War Child gives us the opportunity to make a contribution, not just the bands, but the public.

#### What do you think of the bands' support?

I'm very pleased these bands have stepped up to give support, especially young bands such as Bloc Party and the Kaiser Chiefs. Sometimes these albums can end up with the same old people. Someone like Bloc Party are singing quite angry lyrics. I'd like to



Bragg: 'Ford factory in Dagenham was like Hades' DAVID SANDISON

see them do something to reflect that.

#### Who inspired you to become a musician?

My careers master. Every year the school took us to the Ford Motor Company in Dagenham. It was like Hades. When I said I didn't want to work there, he said you've got three choices: the Army, Navy or Air Force. That's when I hatched an escape plan.

#### Who would you have voted for in the Mercury Music Prize?

I hadn't heard of Antony and the Johnsons until I saw him making that little noise. I'd have voted for Seth Lakeman.

#### Have you been watching the cricket?

No, sadly. I'm the sort of person who thinks cricket is to be endured, like a Conservative government. There it is in the paper every day, like John Major. Then suddenly it's football season again, hurrah!

#### Are you feeling depressed following our defeat to Northern Ireland?

Yes, I was depressed. It's the English disease. We're good on paper, but it doesn't matter how good you are on paper.

#### What makes you angry?

Children being harmed in any way, particularly as a result of war. Children who have lost parents whether in Iraq or in the Underground [bombings].

#### What do you think about electoral reform?

The best way to encourage people to participate in democracy in significant numbers again is not tinkering with text voting, online voting or voting in Asda. You've got to make people's votes worth it.

#### What was the happiest moment of your life?

When my son was born. I'm a great one for trying to think on the bright side of life.

Elisa Bray