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Billy Bragg's top MP3 tracks

When punk first emerged in Britain I was 19 and living in London. At the time I was into guitar rock – Small Faces, The Who, The Jam, early stuff from the Rolling Stones – so there was nowhere else I could have gone. The Clash were it for me and still are to some extent: they seem to be the template that a lot of bands work from today. I just wish someone would take it a stage further.

I don't need the vocal trickery of Mariah Carey or the studio whizz of Girls Aloud to move me. I like Editors because that high-velocity guitar playing reminds me of The Skids. I'm really pleased there's been a return to traditional songwriting – although I've heard enough James Blunt to last me a lifetime.

Simon & Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* was the first album I bought and it threw me into the idea of writing songs. Through them I got to Dylan and Sam Cooke, in my opinion one of the

greatest pop writers of all time. He wrote *A Change is Gonna Come* shortly before he was murdered. I still play a lot of festivals and enjoy watching the other bands like any festival-goer. The rest of the time I'm at home in west Dorset, listening to new music on the radio.

Making a living out of something I love doing is important to me, but being happy is my real definition of success. ■

Billy Bragg Volume 1, a new box set comprising Bragg's early albums, is out now on Cooking Vinyl

On Raglan Road **Luke Kelly & The Dubliners**	This is a love song, yet it's about songwriting. If there were a Songwriters' Union, this would be the anthem.
Bullets **Editors**	They write a great verse, chorus and then repeat it. But they make such a fabulous noise that I forgive them.
Sadie **Joanna Newsom**	She's a great American singer who writes songs that provoke evocative imagery.
I'm The Urban Space Man **The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band**	The first of many British art college bands during the Sixties. I love their comic songs.
The Tracks Of My Tears **Smokey Robinson**	Smokey is one of the greatest songwriters. It's a very simple tune made powerful by its arrangement.
Tonight I'll Be Staying Here... **Bob Dylan**	He wrote a lot of political songs but this is a great soul song. He didn't get enough credit for writing love songs.
I Say A Little Prayer **Aretha Franklin**	She begins this track gently over the opening piano and, as the song goes on, she ramps up and lets loose. A joy.
A Change Is Gonna Come **Sam Cooke**	This song always moves me. He wrote it as his response to Dylan's *Blowing In The Wind*. It's a great political slogan.
Red Shoes **Elvis Costello**	'I said, "I'm so happy I could die"/She said, "drop dead" and left with another guy.' What a great lyric.
Garageland **The Clash**	This song reminds me of my mates. The Clash were a huge influence; they still inform my politics today.