

DAILY ECHO

Bragg to front

7:00pm Tuesday 25th November 2008

HAVING done his bit to propel America towards the polls with a short tour just before the election, Dorset singer-songwriter Billy Bragg is back on the road at home and plays Southampton Guildhall on Sunday.

A long-time champion of various left-wing causes, as expected, he was delighted with the election of the liberal Barack Obama.

"There's been a sea change in America and I don't think it's too much to say the 21st century starts here now that the USA has decided to re-engage with the forward-thinking, progressive presidents from Lincoln to FDR to Kennedy," he told me the day after the election.

Tired but elated, he said it was about time the Left lost its reflex inclination to condemn all things American.

"I'm very lucky in that I get to go to America, but I get tired of kneejerk anti-America sentiments. They no longer stand up anyway.

"America is made up of many different traditions, just like our own country, and we shouldn't confuse ordinary Americans with their administration."

Billy is touring in support of his latest album, Mr Love & Justice, which was released to widespread acclaim earlier this year.

Released as two discs, the album came out in two versions – one with his long-time backing band, The Blokes, the other just echoing Billy's very first releases in 1983, featuring just his voice and guitar.

"The actual album is the band record, the solo stuff is just bait – it's what I can do to encourage people to buy the album because there is no flashy video, I can't dance and I'm never going to get Justin Timberlake to be in my song!

"I'm out on my own for this tour because last time it ended up costing me money to tour with The Blokes.

"I'm not going to bleat about the credit crunch because I know it affects a lot of people's lives, but it comes down to simple economics."

- Read a full interview with Billy Bragg in the new-look Magazine with your Daily Echo on Saturday (November 29).

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