

Bragg: Politics and love

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national anthem controversy to comments about censorship. A couple of times he made fun of ex-Smith members Johnny Marr and Morrissey.

But, Bragg spent most of his stage time discussing socialism. He said that, sure, he was glad that the bad parts of Communism had failed with the end of the Cold War, but what about the good parts like free health care and free education?

In an interview before the concert, Bragg had this to say about his strong ties to socialism: "Socialism may only be a utopian ideal. We may never get there, but we've got to try. I'm not saying I'm leading this, but I'm making a contribution in my own little way."

ASIDE FROM POLITICS, Bragg's other favorite subject is love. His songs about love have a way of both telling about the moments that every love affair has and making those same moments seem charged with a sense of heightened reality.

"I like to find common moments in people and put a spin on them, bend them a bit," Bragg said. "It's observing things and finding a way of expressing them that's more

evocative than just saying them." He mentioned the line describing his girlfriend as "a little black cloud in a dress."

"Instead of saying that person has a lot of mood swings, I say that her moods come over like a cloud," Bragg said. "Or in 'Life With the Lions' (on 'Workers Playtime') instead of saying 'Everytime I see you I get pissed off,' I say, 'I hate the arches I become everytime I'm with you.'"

Lyrics like these seem to ring true to a lot of people. Bragg said many people tell him that the songs seem to be about their personal lives.

"But it's much more of a broad statement," Bragg said. "What you want to do is communicate with common experience. The experiences aren't the same but, what is similar is emotional reaction to these experiences."

"I READ INTO America, take common American culture and pervert it," Bragg said. "In one song, I paraphrase a Beach Boys lyric — 'fun, fun, fun, till daddy takes you, T-bird away' — and change it to 'till daddy takes your gun away.' Besides my version rhymes better."

Bragg said being able to sing openly about personal matters is a



English folk artist Billy Bragg could do no wrong when he recently performed at the State Theater in Kalamazoo.

liberating experience. "Writing deeply about your own emotions is hard, but it also can be a great relief," Bragg said. "When the audience is applauding, they're saying 'we recognize what you're saying.' That reaction is kind of like absolution. And, by singing about these things every night, I can come to terms with it."

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

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Director Charles Burnett lets his events unfold like a play, leisurely and full of symbolism. He doesn't try to rely on Spike Lee-type hipness (no rap music anywhere), but works for honesty in situations and characters that he has obviously drawn from life.

Some of the scenes are especially

moving. Suzie, on a deathwatch for her husband, is proposed to by one of Gideon's lodge brothers. You can see the outrage and pain in her face as she kindly informs the coot, "I need to feed my dog."

THERE'S ALSO a well-drawn relationship between Babe Brother and his more responsible older brother, Junior. It's not especially original, but still effective here.

The film works best when it injects black comedy, dealing with irony and death. Burnett gives more than a slight nod to Hitchcock's "The Trouble With Harry," especially near the end.

The downbeat, realistic side of "To Sleep with Anger" has led to good reviews but small audiences. See it quickly before it leaves the Maple Theatre in Bloomfield this week.

VIDEO VIEWING

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FOR THOSE kind of dollars, Harry's willing to go along with the mistake. Soon, however, Harry begins to wonder when he discovers her boyfriend's dead body — and gets charged with murder.

All the usual tough PI versus Mr. Big clichés are included as the story works itself out. While the idea is more clever than the ways in which

it's presented, Savalas still has some of the rough charm that made "Kojak" such a success. Unfortunately, the directing is stiff and stilted so "The Hollywood Detective" lacks the impact viewers might otherwise expect.

"Eternity" is much more imaginative — and much more disappointing.

It begins with a rather enticing medieval setting as Jon Voight and

Armand Assante appear as princely brothers while Wilford Brimley is the king of this unnamed medieval kingdom. Voight is the good prince firmly committed to love and peace while Assante is the war-like one. Talk about clichés.

Voight finds a young maiden (Elen Davidson), falls in love with her and marries her. Just as she is kidnapped by some evil, enemy knights Voight awakes from his nightmare.

It turns out that he's James Harris, a crusading TV reporter who's a faithful staff and a Ralph Nader-like image. Assante is Shawn Wallace, a big corporate type out to rule things his way. Davidson is an up-and-coming performer who will "do anything to be in show-biz."

THINGS BEGIN to fall apart, however, when it turns out she's on the make in show-business with a

conscience despite her willingness to ignore Shawn's evil. There's a limit to how far a cliché will stretch.

Not far when imaginative writing and directing are missing. Clichés need new life to make them work and the clever situations never materialize in "Eternity."

Wilford Brimley is Ed, Harris' business manager. Kaye Ballard and Laine Kazan have bit parts on Harris' staff. With such a fine cast and interesting concept driving the story, it would seem that "Eternity" should be an exciting film. Unfortunately, it never lives up to expectations. The characters are so transparent and so unidimensional that after the first 40 or so minutes, "Eternity" is dull and predictable.

Mid-November was also the release date for five Greta Garbo films never before available on video cassette. They're part of a package of eight released by MGM/UA Home Video at \$19.98 each.

The first-time release include "Conquest" (1937, 112 minutes) with Charles Boyer as Napoleon and Garbo as Polish Countess Walewska.

"The Painted Veil" (1934, 83 minutes) was loosely based on a Somerset Maugham novel. Herbert Marshall, George Brent and Boulton Bondi star.

CLARK GABLE appears with Garbo in "Susan Lennox: Her Fall and Rise" (1931, 76 minutes).

"As You Desire Me" (1932, 71 minutes) stars Erich von Stroheim and Melvyn Douglas with an appearance by Hedda Hopper. Based on Luigi Pirandello play, the film features Garbo as an amnesiac who returns to her husband even though she doesn't remember him.

Garbo's first talkie, "Anna Christie" (1930, 90 minutes), derived from the Eugene O'Neill play, rounds out this selection of first-time-on-home-video selections featuring Garbo in some of her best roles.

The three previously released titles in this package also are well worth viewing. "Camille" (1936, 108 minutes) co-stars Robert Taylor and Garbo as co-stars Robert Taylor and Garbo as a best actress nomination. "Anna Karenina" (1935, 95 minutes) with Fredric March and Basil Rathbone supporting Garbo in Tolstoy's famous story is excellent entertainment as is "Mata Hari" (1932, 90 minutes).

All these Garbo films are in black and white and unrated. Given the standards of those days, however, and the control exerted by the Hays Office, viewers will not be offended.

GRADING THE MOVIES
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film's activities strain one's credulity and certainly Kevin's vast advance to a reclusive neighbor is a bit much. On the whole, however, it's pleasant holiday entertainment and there's nothing offensive. Wow, a real family film!

STREET SENSE

A time to say thank you

Dear Readers,

In this week of Thanksgiving, I want to give a most sincere thanks to all of you, especially to the many of you who have taken the time to both write and comment on this column. The energy that you have expended has helped others. I thank you for this assistance.

A friend called me two months ago and said that she had been at COTS (Coalition for Temporary Shelter) in Detroit, a downtown Detroit shelter for the homeless, and had seen my picture on the bulletin board. She was more than surprised to see a suburban column in the middle of Detroit.

After speaking to her, I called the director of the shelter and she told me that the column in question was the one written by Cheryl Betts, director of the Rose F. Kennedy Respite Center in Westland, regarding handicapped children. She said that many of the women at COTS in Detroit were mothers of children described in the letter and that it had been both inspirational and educational for them.

My gratitude to the unknown mother of the cerebral paised children who wrote the initial letter and again to Ms. Betts for helping so many with her kind and enlightening words.

The second vignette is also important. Another friend came to me and thanked me for the column on the family leave bill. She said that her daughter had had many angry feelings about the inability of our government to pass such a bill.

The letter, written by E.C., who wrote more than once this year and thus repeatedly helped others gain greater insight. Thanks also to Jackie for initially bringing the subject to our attention.

All issues are multi-faceted. Any time there can be an open, friendly exchange of ideas, we are making our world a better place in which to live. My life, too, has been enriched by our continuing exchanges. My gratitude to you for the personal growth and development I have experienced from your letters.

A warm toast to all of you. Without you, this column would not be



possible. May you have much to be thankful for.

Barbara

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

SCREEN SCENE

Continued from Page 2

Middlebelt, Livonia. Call 478-1166 for information. (Free)

"42nd Street" (USA — 1933), 10 a.m. Nov. 20. The classic musical stars Ruby Keeler as a young understudy given her big chance when she is asked to go on in place of the star. With Dick Powell, Warner Baxter and Ginger Rogers.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4155 W. Maple, Bloomfield. Call 855-9090 for show times. (\$5.50 general, \$3.50 twilight)

"Henry and June" (USA — 1980). The first film to receive the controversial NC-17 rating is the story of writer Henry Miller (Fred Ward) and his bizarre relationship with his wife (Uma Thurman). Directed by Phil Kaufman.

"To Sleep with Anger" (USA — 1980). When Harry (Danny Glover) shows up on the doorstep of a pair of old friends, trouble begins. Charles Burnett's family drama unfolds leisurely, but is well worth the effort.

"Jesus of Montreal" (Canada — 1986). The controversial film premiered at Cannes a couple of years ago and finally makes it to Detroit. An Actor who portrays Christ in the Passion Play finds it difficult to separate himself from the role.

TELE-ARTS THEATRE, 1540 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 983-8690. (\$4, \$2.50 students/senior citizens)

"Sherman's March" (USA — 1966), Nov. 23-25 (call for show times). When filmmaker Ross McElwee's documentary about the Civil War

goes awry, he turns his camera on the women he knows. He literally mounts the camera on his shoulder and films exactly what he sees and hears. Hilarious personal documentary predated "Roger and Me" by a couple of years.

— John Monaghan



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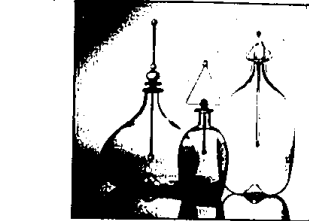
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Month by month

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