

k.d.: "Lesbians have been the rudest to me."

BY ADAM BLOCK



Guys don't sing plaintive pop songs about getting fucked. Or that's what I thought until I heard Billy Bragg croon, "He's already been inside me, and he really didn't say/And I really didn't ask him/I just hoped and prayed." The song is

"Trust," a chilling plaint in the voice of a gay man (or a woman) facing down the specter of HIV after sex. "Trust," along with "Sexuality," anchors Bragg's most ambitious and accessible album to date, *Don't Try This at Home* (Elektra). On the buoyant British hit single "Sexuality," Bragg insists, "Your laws do not apply to me. . . I demand equality" and "Safe sex doesn't mean no sex, it just means use your imagination."

Asked why, as a happy hetero, he'd penned those tunes, Bragg countered, "Why should only gay bands write about what's going on in the gay community? The gay community is part of my community. If we really are going to stop AIDS, then unfortunately, until there is a cure, you have to treat everybody as if they were HIV-positive." That's smart talk from one of the most endearingly enlightened voices in pop.

Other singers have been raising their voices lately in the battle against AIDS. Jimmy Somerville hit these shores for two concerts—one in Houston, the other in New York—to benefit the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. Performing to tracks with backup singers, the sturdy Scottish imp was in his usual unearthly voice and spunky spirit.

The Red Hot + Dance benefit, filmed at London's Brixton Academy, featured the lady Rasta rapper MC Kinky, the ubiquitous Crystal Waters, drag legend RuPaul, rapid diva Lisa Stansfield, and a show-stopping performance by Seal, whose haunting hit "Crazy" delivers on all those promises made for Terrence Trent D'Arby.

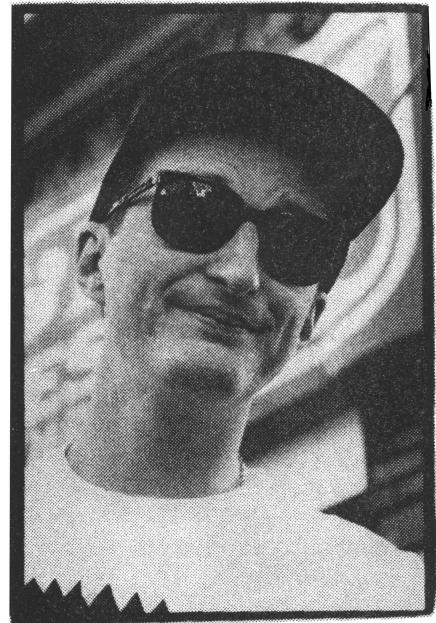
Jim Bailey, the legendary "female illusionist," closed out the year with a run at San Francisco's Plush Room (one week each of Phyllis Diller, Barbra Streisand, and Judy Garland). Three nights were devoted to benefits for AIDS charities. Bailey doesn't traffic in camp mimicry; his tributes are total immersions in character by a skilled actor with wicked pipes. The results are often quite eerie.

Those who've never seen his act ought to check out a canny video compilation, *The Jim Bailey Experience*, which highlights 20 years of work in television and film, along with generous helpings of his Streisand and Garland shows at Carnegie Hall. There is an intriguing subtext to the tape in the array of film roles offered to Bailey as a cross-dresser: four psycho killers and one proud hetero transsexual. At the end of the tape, Bailey talks about trying Madonna and offers a tantalizing clip of himself in costume. (For a copy of the tape, send \$20 to SCM, P.O. Box 69422, Los Angeles, CA 90069.)

Bailey may be a bit unnerved at attempting to impersonate a singer who uses drag so radically herself, but I'd love to see him take a crack at k. d. lang. She delivered a stunning set at the American Foundation for AIDS Research's recent tribute to Madonna in Los Angeles after expressing her ambivalence about queer activism to London's *Capital Gay* newspaper. "If you march around screaming 'I'm a lesbian' what good is it? I'm much more involved with animal rights than gay rights," lang admitted.

"Lesbians have been the rudest to me on the road," she claimed. "They think I owe them something. They want me to go out to a club with them, but I don't like clubs, gay or straight. I've been to lesbian and gay conferences. I've worn a pink triangle. Where did it get me? I admire gay activists, but I'm an artist."

New York performance artist Dudley Saunders takes an intriguing look at queers in the independent music scene in the latest issue of *Option*, a national alternative music magazine. Saunders notes that rocker Bob Mould declined an interview, claiming it might "distract from the music." But folk-



MARC GELLER

Singer Billy Bragg

"Safe sex doesn't mean no sex."

singer Phranc, crooner Glen Meadmore, King Missile keyboardist Chris Xefos, queer 'zine *J.D.*'s editor Bruce La Bruce, Amoeba Records prexy Keith Holland, New Yorker Chris Cochrane of No Safety and Gay Nation, and New Music composer Bob Ostertag all discuss the power and cost of the closet—even in their alternative subcultures—as Saunders grapples with the notion of what constitutes queer music.

There is a touch of hyperbole in Saunders's claim that "after a contentious interview with a radical gay journalist, Charly Brown of the group Voice Farm avoids the gay press." You can read that interview in this issue of *The ADVOCATE* [page 64], and Brown is still returning my phone calls.

REMIXED AND MATCHED

While David Bowie's *Tin Machine* has been churning out scrap, the neoindustrialist 808 State has tooled a winning remix of his 1977 cut "Sound and Vision."

KLF pulls off one of pop's wiggliest duets, hiring country queen Tammy Wynette to croon the preposterous "Justified and Ancient" over choruses of "all on board for Mu-Mu land."

The duet I'm waiting for, however, is the recently recorded collaboration by Sandra Bernhard and Adele Bertei—a cover of the Human League's "Don't You Want Me, Baby?" That ought to illuminate any dance floor. ▼