



Brendan Croker enjoys a refreshing light ale in his local, The Cardigan Arms, Kirkstall: "You work more hours than any other bugger, but it's all magic and it's all yours."

GARRY F. LINDSEY

# The Regular

**A dependable sort of bloke is Brendan Croker. When superstars of taste require a support act, he's the man they call for. When he makes an album, the same exalted names will drop in to lend a hand. And they won't want paying, either. What is it about Brendan Croker? "Search me, pal," he tells Phil Sutcliffe.**

**C**ertainly his face is not his fortune. It wouldn't launch a thousand ships, it wouldn't launch a million sellers. It resembles a King Edward, though fringed with scrubby stubble. "Yeah, I'm not goin' to stun anyone visually, there's no point in workin' on that," he says, dropping every terminal g and initial h as resolutely as Fred Trueman on Test Match Special. Unconcerned, he swigs draught Lowenbrau and settles into the familiar warmth of his local, the Cardigan Arms in Kirkstall, Leeds. A happy man just now, and not surprisingly when he and his band, The 5 O'Clock Shadows, have just finished an album featuring guest appearances, and therefore public endorsements, from Mark Knopfler, Eric Clapton and Tanita Tikaram. This following a series of support spots with formidably discerning musicians like Dire Straits, Robert Cray, John Hiatt and Los Lobos.

Why is it then that such megastars gather round a man whose name really is Brendan Croker?

"Search me, pal."

He was born in Bradford in 1953, son of a mail order warehouse foreman. "It was nice growing up there," he says, "but I never did anything. I was fairly dormant." He stayed that way for the most part while he studied sculpture at art school, and then mooched through several years as a dust-

**"What I like is cheap poetry. Waterloo Sunset. It's quick, it's nice, it's moving and everyone knows what you're on about. You don't need a wine and cheese party to launch it."**

man and British Rail guard until he moved to Leeds and a job as stage designer at the Playhouse fell into his lap. The early stages of his late development began.

For years he'd strummed and sung a bit, graduating from his bedroom to pubs and the odd folk club. But in Leeds he met spirits of kindred

