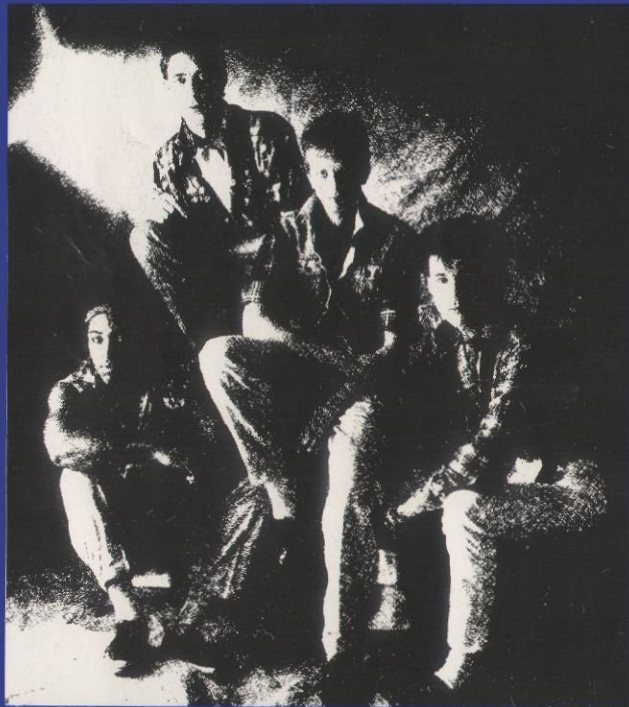


BIG COUNTRY



CROSSING
THE FALL
TOUR 1983

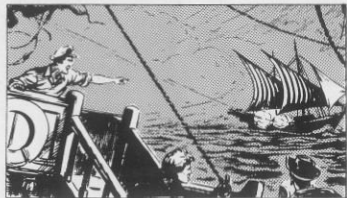


IT WAS over two years back now that Stuart Adamson embarked upon his second and greatest adventure — a band called Big Country whose brief was to boldly go where (we'd been told) no fashionable band would ever go again: into the pop charts with a guitar-based sound.

Even as late as a year ago, success for such a venture seemed at best unlikely and at worst a suitable case for considerable critical scorn. Gutless glossy pop was the order of the day. The bland led the bland and the charts were chock full of treacle boys whose awesome lack of talent was matched only by their seemingly limitless access to studio high-tech and video wrapping paper.

It would have been easy for the fledgling Big Country to have sold out to that under-whelming industry logic, to have drafted in synthesisers and all the nice-videos-shame-about-the-songs phoney baloney. Instead they stood fast by their own vision of popular music.

As Stuart told Sounds last September.



"There's not any point in having a group if you're not gonna have hit records... but it's a question of what you're prepared to do to have hit records. Having a group that plays music which is not currently popular means the only way it'll become popular is by staying out on the limb you want to be on. It's like Dexy's, what they're doing now has no relation to what was in the charts before. You have to stand by your vision of things."

He was proved right and the band's perseverance has paid off handsomely with a hat-trick of hit singles and a Top Five album this year.

'83 has been the year the monolith cracked. Even the trendiest of icons, Mssrs Bowie and Oakey, have brought guitars back into their music. While Big Country could be legitimately seen as a tartan part and parcel of a much wider anti-fashion reaction, with bands like U2 and the Alarm making similar soulful stands.

It's not a movement "movements *cramp your style and limit your creativity*" Stuart says simply but it is the mood of the time. Big Country are a vital part of a voyage of discovery (better make that *re-discovery*), they're bringing feeling, emotion and spirit back into the charts and resurrecting the role of the guitar in pop music.



BIG COUNTRY



TONY

MARK

BRUCE

STUART



Even notorious novelist and rock critic Tony Parsons, a writer noted for his shark-like bite, wrote recently *"Stuart Adamson is the only one around capable of making the guitar fashionable – a dangerous man."*

Adamson would be flattered but he'd also be the first to stress that he is just a quarter of Big Country, albeit the quarter with the most prestigious track record. Stuart first saw active service in the Skids whose glorious rollercoaster melodies, with their 18 carat Adamson guitar hallmark and Richard 'Big Yin' Jobson's he-man vocals, first raided the Top 30 in '79, three years after the band's formation in downtown Dunfermline.

Stuart jumped ship in Spring '81, distressed at the band's drift into dodgy esoteria. Big Country was the first thing he had on his mind. And just like the Skids, the band's name was important, symbolising the vast expanse of his ambitions.



Bruce Watson was the next recruit, a fellow Scot and fellow fret-board fiend who had the misfortune to have once been in a band managed by Sounds' Johnny Wall called Delinx.

Seasoned session men beefy black bassist Tony Butler and lofty dipstick drummer Mark Brzezicki (try saying that after a couple of gins) completed the line-up. They'd been in a band called On The Air with Simon Townsend who'd been a Skids tour support, but their real claim to fame was their session work with the likes of Si's brother Pete Townsend, Roger Daltrey and the Pretenders. And boy are they tight! They're more together than a British Leyland closed shop.

Stuart and Bruce worked on the Big Country sound with much patience and determination for eighteen months. They wanted to make guitar-based music that was fresh and inspirational, Stuart in particular feeling that guitar music was being neglected, the guitar written off prematurely. Bill Nelson, Nils Lofgren and The Edge were cited as examples of guitarists doing more than trotting out the same tired riffs.





Even a gaggle of low-key warm-up gigs, London's swanky Membership Club was chosen as the band's official unveiling in July last year. And though I've sworn an oath in blood to avoid any gushing in this programme there's no way I can avoid saying they were breath-taking.

There were more Skids references back then than now, but the over-all sound was more mature than the Skids had ever been. The tumultuous teenage tumble had been replaced by a richer, more majestic and melodious sound. The music they made was sterling, swirling, stirring and unashamedly emotional.

Stuart's vocals were surprisingly strong while the guitar inter-play achieved moments of sheer beauty. Stuart had staked his claim for the title of thinking man's guitar hero, his playing was inspirationally individual without falling prey to Verlain-style self-indulgence.

Building on a rich celtic folk heritage the band conjured up a dazzling kaleidoscope of emotions. They were populist without being cretinous, intelligent without being inaccessible.

At last there was an alternative to that horrendous hat-trick of harpies – mindless metal, bland pop pap, and self-indulgent avante-garde. They were joyous, tune-ful, up-lifting . . . I was won over instantly. The nation's pop-pickers weren't long to follow.



Perhaps the most amazing thing about this triumph of (pioneer) spirit, was the relatively few cock-ups along the way: a couple of luckily little-known giglets with Sir Alice of Cooper which were as well received as Ian Paisley at the Vatican, the debut disc 'Harvest Home' merely scraping into the Top Hundred instead of the Dirty Thirty, and the subsequent parting of ways with producer Chris Thomas ("he didn't have a *feeling* for the group", says Tony) in favour of the more satisfying Steve Lillywhite.

I personally reckon the person who suffered most from Big Country's formative months was Stuart's lovely wife Sandra who had to put up with his bouts of midnight inspiration. "For months after I started living with him," she reveals, "he was always getting up in the middle of the night. I thought he was suffering from Diarrhoea!"

Flushed with favourable media reaction, Big Country released their second Mercury single 'Fields Of Fire' early this year. By March it had hit the Top Ten, establishing a healthy precedent.



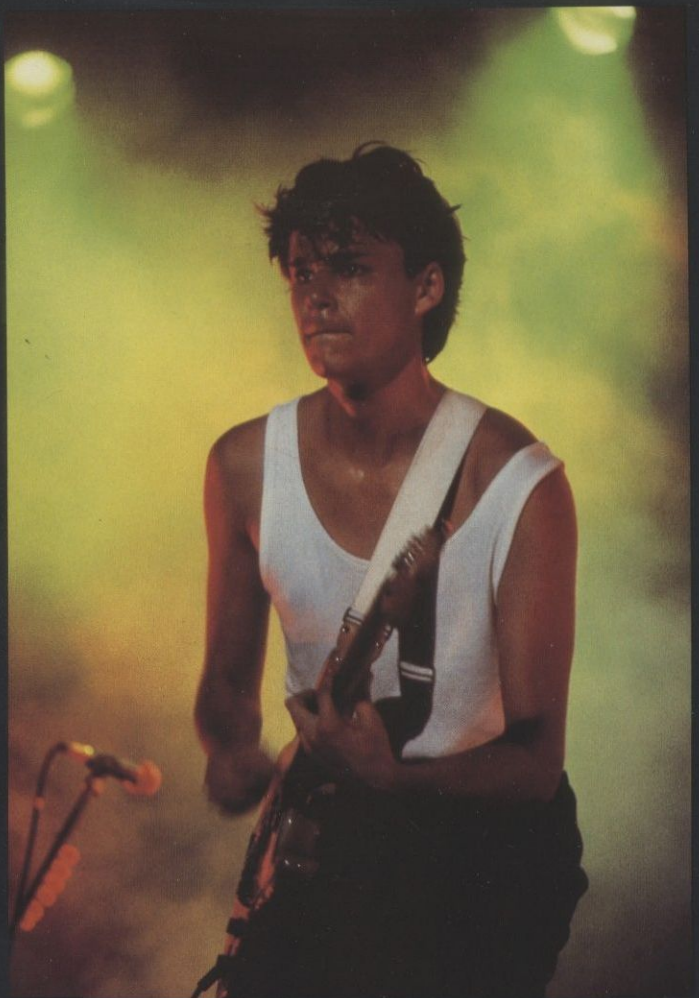
Stuart Adamson

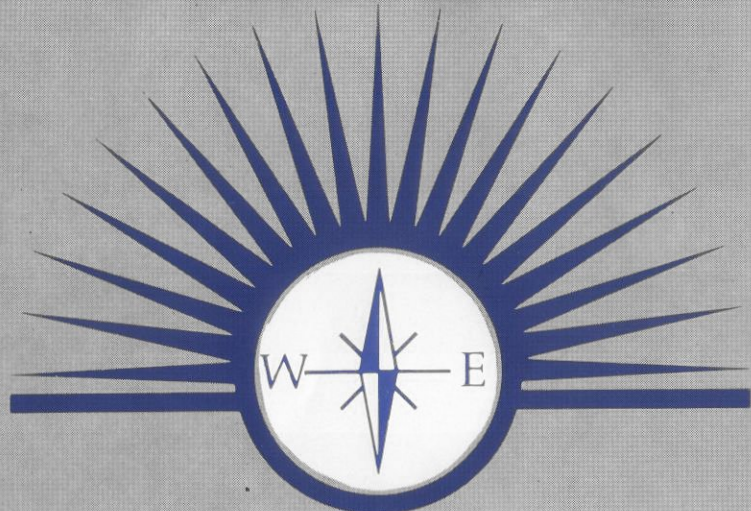
David Bell

Mark Bennett

Chris Tomlin







BIG COUNTRY

First Album

THE CROSSING

includes 'Fields of Fire' & 'In a Big Country'

Produced by Steve Lillywhite
CHROME DIOXIDE CASSETTE

includes 4 extra tracks 'Angle Park' & 'Heart and Soul'
plus 12" mixes 'Fields of Fire' & 'In a Big Country'
not on the album



Their debut album 'The Crossing' followed suit in July, blasting a passionate path into the Top Five. Chewing on a restraining bit to keep superfluous superlatives at bay, I'll content myself by saying 'The Crossing' is a fine showcase for the myriad musical strengths I've touched on before. It makes for a sparking statement of intent, a first instalment of what I'll predict will be a long series of increasingly innovative platters. This one ranges from the Springsteen feel of the single 'Chance' to the gentle sweep of 'In A Big Country' the contagious bounce of 'Close Action' and the epic ending of 'The Storm'.



The lyrics are equally wide-ranging, at times intensely personal as on 'Inwards' and at other times strictly global as with the anti-nuclear '1,000 Stars' - 'Now we play our final hand/Move in closer, understand/This time like never before/Only the black queen scores/A card so high and so wild/We should burn it'.

"I'm not going to sit down and preach," Stuart says. "But I think music can possibly be more than mere entertainment. And if by us talking about things like that it makes others think about the issues then I'm glad. We might have helped in a small way. And if we can cut down the bullshit about the star system at the same time then maybe that helps as well."



"We always try and make the effort to talk to people," he adds, "We always stay behind at gigs to sign autographs. It's great and it's also important to have that contact and show people that there's nothing magical about groups - or the people in them anyway - and that they're just very ordinary fragile, stupid human beings."



TOUR DETAILS

13th September, 1983	Bristol Gaumont
14th September, 1983	Birmingham Odeon
15th September, 1983	Sheffield City Hall
17th September, 1983	Aberdeen Capitol
18th September, 1983	Edinburgh Playhouse
19th September, 1983	Glasgow Tiffanys
20th September, 1983	Newcastle City Hall
22nd September, 1983	Liverpool Royal Court
25th September, 1983	Manchester Apollo
26th September, 1983	Nottingham Playhouse
27th September, 1983	Oxford New Theatre
28th September, 1983	Southampton Gaumont
29th September, 1983	Hammersmith Odeon

*NOTE: Dates may change and additional dates may be added.



With the likes of Leonard Cohen amongst his admitted influences, it's obvious Stuart is serious about what he's doing - "I do treat it seriously because I put a lot of myself into it. But I think you can be serious without being po-faced."



He's also very sincere. He and Bruce have already bought a cheap van to rent out to local bands for just petrol costs and when the money comes rolling in they plan to set up a club in Dunfermline complete with rehearsal rooms and studios. Exactly what Joe Strummer promised to set up when he was starting off in '76 but never did. My money says Stuart will keep his promise.



In the meantime this British tour is chased by some States dates. There's very little doubt that Big Country have got the potential to follow U2 into the Billboard Top Thirty.

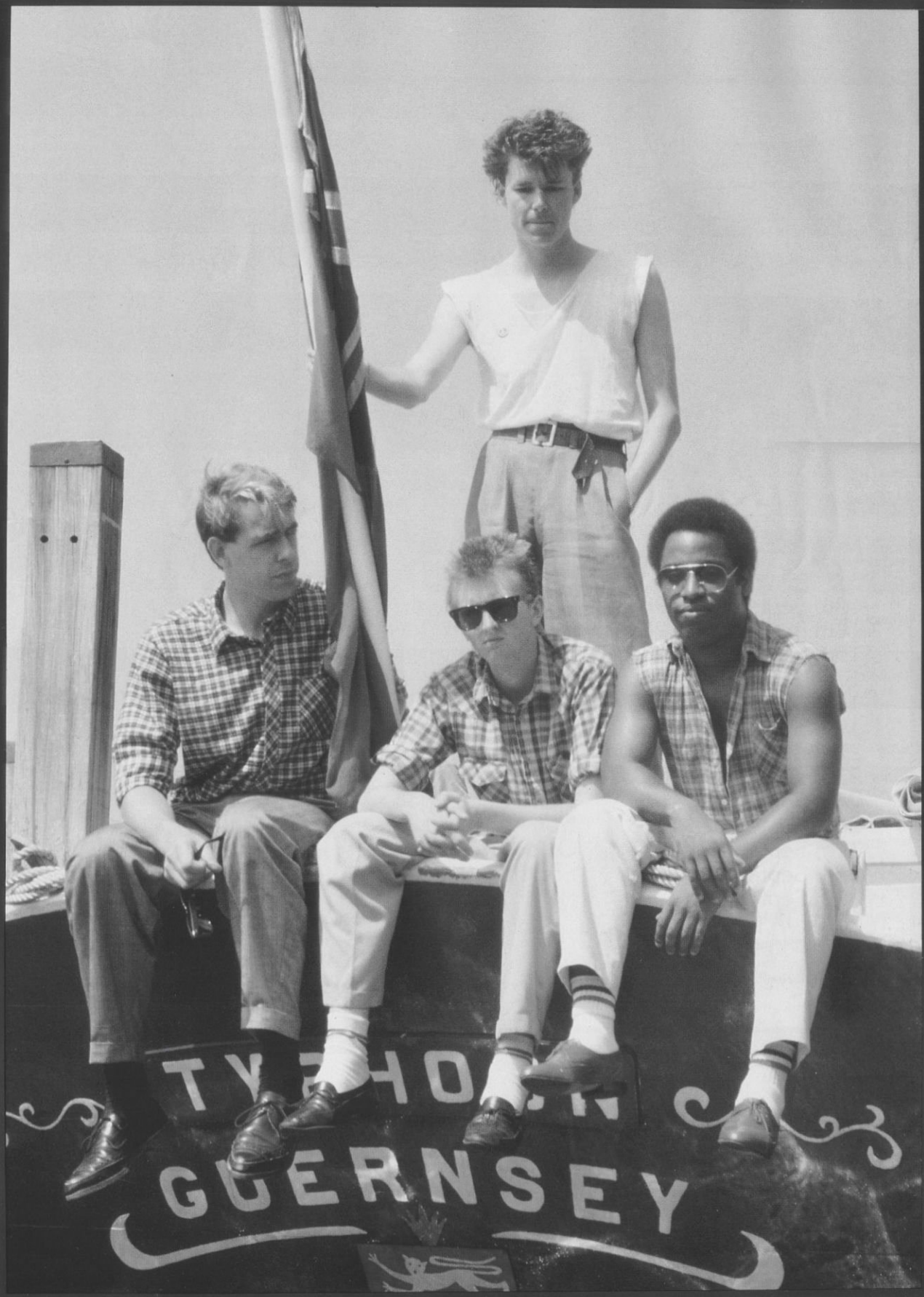
"The Americans loved us when we did the clubs in New York," Mark says referring to a short previous jaunt, "I think they could really take to us."



As long as they don't take you away from us that's fine. In the meantime whenever someone asks you what Big Country are up to remember there's only one answer. They're up to date, mate, stand on me.

Garry Bushell







BIG COUNTRY

Management: Ian Grant for Grant-Edwards Management
Crew: Tour Manager – Jeoff Trumps
Sound Engineer – Sheds Jackson
Lighting Designer – Peter Barns
Backline – Les King
Bob Lopes
Monitors – Little John
P.A. – Entec
Lights – Chamelion
Trucks – Transam
Minibus – Vansam
Travel – Trinifold Travel
Catering – Home Cooking
Agency: TBA International
Record Company: Mercury/Phonogram
Country Club: Martin and Jacky
25a Crawford Street
London W1
Merchandising: ATP
26-40 St Andrews Street
Northampton
Designed: Chris Pork, Phil Garner
Photos: Sheila Rock, Paul Cox
John Blackmore, Justin Thomas
Printed By: Grosvenor (Northampton)
Text: Gary Bushell (Sounds)
Special Thanks to Hugh Birley

