

*WE SAVE NO SOULS.*

THE  
BIG COUNTRY  
FANZINE

*ISSUE 2*

A NEW EDITOR...

Jeremy, in his innocence, has asked me to write a small piece about myself for 'WSNS', as he has recently asked me to be one of the co-editors. Compared to Jeremy, who is 'just a bairn' as we Geordies say, I'm positively ancient as I'm rapidly approaching my 30th birthday (30rs September, all presents, especially alcoholic, gratefully received).

I can't claim to have been into Big Country from Day 1, though I did buy 'The Crossing' not long after it came out on a friend's recommendation, and have been a fan ever since. Due to a series of inspired cock-ups, the first time I managed to see the band was on the 'Seer' tour in 1986, when I saw them three times. Since then, I've seen them a further 5(6 by the time you read this) times, once on the 'Underwraps' tour and 4(5) times on the 'Peace' tour. It would have been more as I was going to three of the seven shows that were recently cancelled. Other musical interests include Steve Earle, Robert Cray, Kate Bush, Jeff Healey and Judie Tzuke(great voice, shame about the material. Non-musical interests include drinking real ale(no, I've not got a beard and Arran sweater) and photographing trains(anyone making jokes about Thomas the Tank Engine gets a smack).

I'm always interested to hear from fellow fans and anyone living in the North-East is welcome to get in touch, especially if they've got news or ideas about the fanzine.

My address is elsewhere in the 'zine.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON.

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Crawley Leisure Centre.

We arrived in Crawley early so as to meet our heroes on their arrival, and get them to autograph some programmes. After a considerable wait, they arrived and proceeded to chat informally for about half an hour or so to the fifteen fans who had gathered. On answering a question about the Seer Tour, Stuart called it the Smear Tour for a reason seemingly only known to himself. After signing records and pictures, the band returned to do their soundcheck, but not before Stuart had called Mark a sex-kitten for a second time! The concert itself was awesome, and all the better as it was sold out, and the crowd added greatly to the rather sterile surroundings of the centre.

The opening three songs-'Restless Natives', 'Look Away' and 'Wonderland'-were impeccable, with Stuarts guitar playing on the latter being one of the most astonishing and self-indulgent moments of the whole concert. Soon after came 'Broken Heart' with it's now familiar chorus being exploited almost as much as 'Chance'. By the way, was that a tear that I saw in Stuarts eye? It was particularly good to hear and see 'Lost Patrol' again, with Bruce clearly enjoying the wonderful guitar opening. Mark, so often seeming like the odd one out tucked away behind that 'Star Wars' landscape they call a drum kit, was pleased to 'rock out' to 'River of Hope'. 'In a Big Country' now has no Stuartvocal introduction, and seemed to pass me by. A mention has to be made of 'The Travellers', and it's thrash metal outro which tonight

seemed faster than ever.

Two encores and the inevitable scratch 'Fields of Fire', and the concert was over leaving everyone drenched in sweat, and reeling from yet another show case of how good rock should sound.

Matthew Dennis.

Norwich University of East Anglia.

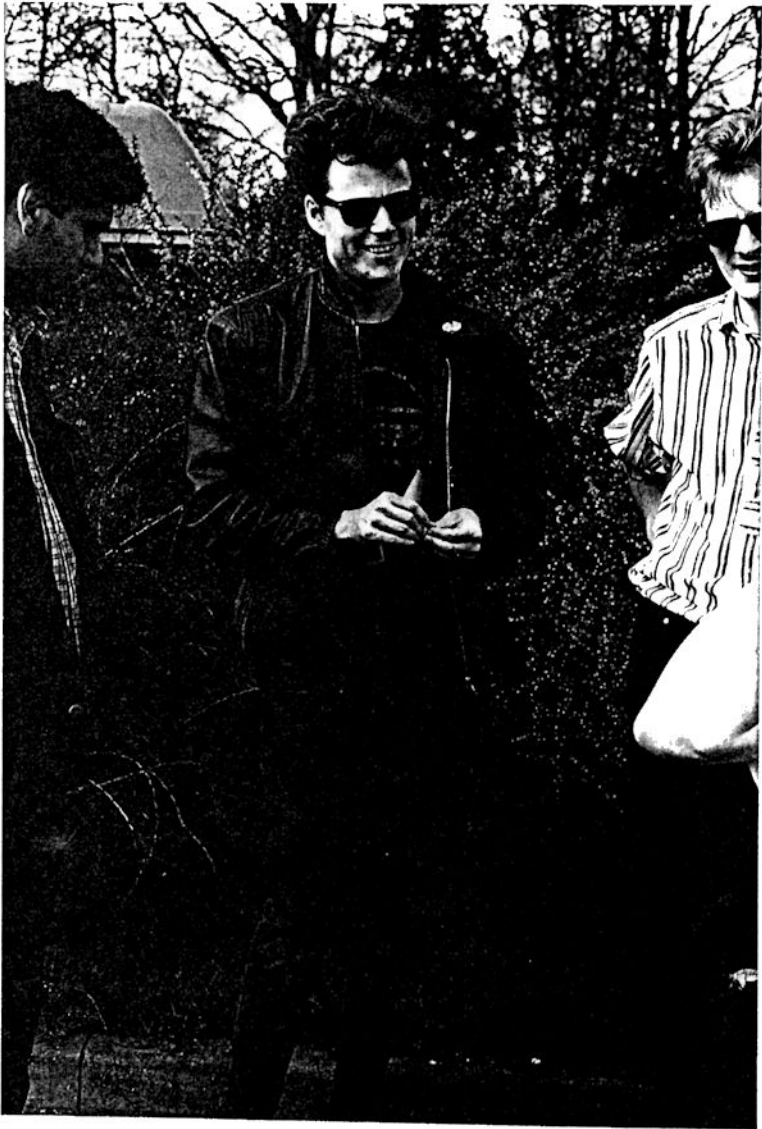
I saw Big Country at the UEA in Norwich on April 30th, but I'm afraid I drank too much to remember anything other than it was absolutely brilliant.

They opened with 'Restless Natives', which didn't quite have the same power as at Hammersmith, which was the first time that I saw them. The basic formula was the same, 'Look Away', 'Wonderland', 'The Seer' etc. I'd like to take this opportunity to apologise to Stuart for walking out during 'Come Back to Me', but I was desperate for a slash.

When I returned, they wound up with 'Chance' and 'In a Big Country', I think. I agree that these two songs may be well-known, but compared to the rest of the bands material, they are dead boring. I suppose that I'll never be satisfied until they play a five hour concert!

The encore was a mere two songs, 'Lost Patrol' and 'You Know What'. 'Lost Patrol' was good, and you can guess how good 'You Know What' was!

Drunken Churl-sorry, David Cockburn.



Stuart at Loughborough.

## DOMINATION?

It seems that, from most viewpoints, most of the gigs that recently took place were a rip-roaring success, with the possible exception of Scarborough, see elsewhere this issue. Obviously, it was an upset to the fans North of the border who missed out on their treasured gigs, but they were compensated for by three gigs that took place at Irvine, Motherwell and Dumfries. These were very nastily arranged, and the Scandinavian gigs were cancelled to make way for these.

However, it's time for me to get on my high horse and complain about the gigs. I saw the gig at Guildford, and though it was good, it lacked something. Granted, the band had to play nearly fifty shows in two months, but why were the shows cut down? The reason Stuart gave is that to play two hour shows every night would be tiring. Oh then, how about reducing ticket prices, or including two support bands which many groups do today?

Both the 'Seer' and 'Underwraps' tour shows were longer than two hours, and a darn sight longer than the measly 95 minutes we got on this tour. Why, even the first half of the 'Peace' tour, that took place earlier this year lasted two hours, and they played about forty shows then! Even though Stuart was ill in the middle, as on this tour, the shows were of a high standard throughout, which is more than could be said for this tour!

When you compare this years shows, there are a few startling discoveries to be made. Both sets of shows flew under the banner of 'Peace In Our Time', so why wasn't the title track played in the second half of the tour (ie, the gigs that have just taken place)? Why drop 'King of Emotion'? After all, it is a great live track, and one of the bands biggest hits, which I presume is the reason that Adamson insists on playing 'In a Big Country' and 'Chance', both much to the annoyance of many ardent fans. I understand that

'Tracks of My Tears' has special meaning to Adamson, but it could be replaced by tracks which are better suited to live performance, such as 'The Sailor', or 'I Could Be Happy Here', but have, foolishly perhaps, never been played live. It seems to me that when Adamson plays 'Come Back to Me', he's on a bit of an ego trip, i'm sorry if that seems harsh, but in my present mood, i'm finding it very hard to be constructive. I wonder how the rest of the band took it when he said he wanted to do a solo.

On a good note, it seems that they are trying to fade out 'Chance' by encouraging more audience participation during 'Broken Heart', which could easily replace the former.

I'll get murdered for the next statement, but here goes... It appears that the band is being dominated by one member, who I don't really need to mention. He has always refuted this by replying to these claims with some very well worked out statements, many of them futile.

Most of the gig sets are either completely made up of group or Adamson compositions. There are the joint compositions such as 'The Sailor', 'Song of The South' or even 'Winter Sky'?

Don't get me wrong, my love of the band is still immense, and always will be, but a little bit of disillusionment is presently creeping in.

Note I said 'band'.

JEREMY CARTER.

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On a serious note, we haven't had any artistic contributions. I'm not asking for brilliant portraits of the band, maybe just little carttons, and things like that. I'm sure that there must be some of you who can do the job for us.

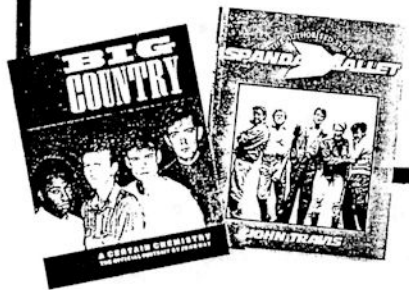
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## GATHERING DUST

Worst-selling rock books on sale at Virgin Megastore

- 1 **Quiet Riot** (Heavy Metal compilation) Phil Tene (Rubus £5.95)
- 2 **Tears For Fears: Tales From The Big Chair Will Hall** (Zomba £3.95)
- 3 **Big Country: A Certain Chemistry** John May (Omnibus £5.95)
- 4 **Dead Or Alive** Jo-Anne Greene (Bobcat £3.95)
- 5 **Sade** Mark Bego (Columbus £4.95)
- 6 **ZZ Top: Eliminator** Dave Thomas (Omnibus £4.95)
- 7 **Paul Young** John Merrill (Bobcat £3.95)
- 8 **Chris De Burgh** Dave Thompson (Omnibus £7.95)
- 9 **Spandau Ballet** John Travis (Sidgwick & Jackson £6.95)
- 10 **Daryl Hall: Dangerous Dancers** Nick Tosches (Sidgwick & Jackson £2.99)

Big Country and Spandau Ballet: they shall not be moved.



'Q' no.24

record  
mirror

## BIG COUNTRY 'The Seer' (Mercury MERH 87)

I once attacked Big Country's 'Steeltown' LP as a bland metal affair containing some rather naive, modern (non) working songs. The band has since had a breather and a think and has come up with a far more palatable offering in 'The Seer'. It's more straightforward in intent and execution, more melodic, poppy and fun.

Lyrically, Stuart Adamson's got away from the crisis of capitalism and realised that there are hills to be stood upon, rivers to cross, forests to hide in — something he seems more comfortable writing about after a respite from limos, Holiday Inns and Lear jets. The most welcoming factor on this LP is the plethora of good tunes. 'One Great Thing' must be the best singalong the band has ever come up with, and at last they have the confidence to follow up with a beautiful ballad in 'Hold The Heart'.

Those guitars have been treated with a little more restraint this time round, though you 'bagpipe' fans won't be disappointed. Why, even Kate Bush puts in an appearance on the title track and it's touches like that which add the extra dimension Big Country has needed in the past. We'll ignore the blatant Thin Lizzy 'Emerald' tribute on 'Red Fox' and salute the gentle pop/rock of 'The Sailor', with its neat guitar run which sounds like something Bach would have been proud of.

Then there's the characteristic Celtic rush of 'I Walk The Hill' which harks back to the former delight of 'TV Stars' — short, sharp and right on the button. Big Country have shown (as did the Smiths last week) that a new LP can retain the band's sound and character while subtle new moves introduce a welcome extra dimension. This is my favourite Big Country record since 'Harvest Home', so come on, Stuart and the band — take a(n) E) bow! ■■■■

Andy Strickland

■■■■■ a heady brow  
■■■■■ stays sharp  
■■■■■ too gassy  
■■■■■ completely flat  
■■■■■ the dregs



## BIG COUNTRY

### Glasgow Apollo

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS of the Ibrox kind. It feels like a football match, swaying and chanting on the terraces of the circle, a warrior nation reduced to fighting on the pitch, in the street, bristling with belligerence or simply opening up their lungs and howling at the stage. Sha!!!

I had never seen Big Country live before so I was unprepared for the spell they were to weave on the audience with their rather blatant fusion of patriotism, melancholia and optimism. In the past I had sniffed at their Protestant Rock Ethic, smirked at Slade taking the piss out of their earnest traditionalism so successfully, and split my sides at their philosophy. (Life may be tough for the working class - what working class? - but put a rousing tune to it and it'll be alright. Hope will be restored in time for the third chorus.)

What I hadn't banked on was that they mean it. That makes a difference.

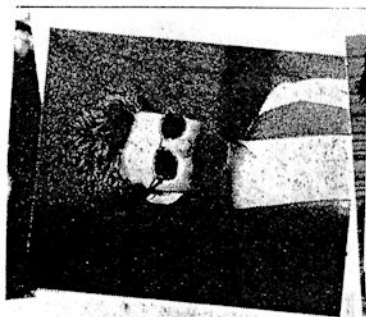
Surprisingly little of the new LP was featured in the set. Apart from the title track 'Steelton' and the single 'East Of Eden' which had the whole building shaking, there was only a song called 'Where The

Rose Is Sown', which flowed into a sort of Scottish Celtic rock 'Purple Rain' which may have been called 'Come Back To Me' and which featured some of the dodgiest mock-heroic lyrics - "I was so young and full of pride/And you were so wild and strong". For the rest we were on familiar ground, 'Wonderland', 'Harvest Home', 'In A Big Country', all the hits and more, with 'Chance' providing the highspot of the evening with a delicious wallow in misery, enough to bring a tear to a whisky-filled eye.

The crowd were of the type that have made the Glasgow Apollo famous, very vocal, dedicated and enthusiastic - but then Big Country fulfill the pop fantasy better than most. That's the one that starts 'that could be me up there' and ends with Adamson as a sort of local boy makes good and favourite big brother simultaneously. The fans are proud of his success, and Big Country though it may sound, Stuart Adamson does have an obvious and genuine affinity with them. I can't knock him for two good reasons. Firstly, Big Country are miles ahead of their Celtic rock kindred when it comes to writing a good tune, and secondly they are sincere. Like Adamson said, "Here's tae us, wha's like us, an, they're all deid."

— Andrea Miller

New Musical Express 20th October '84 (Matthew Dennis).



## 2. BIG COUNTRY

THE worst band to come out of Scotland, with the possible exception of Silk, started out life as a William Wyler movie which starred big butch Charlton Heston as a quick-tempered ranch foreman who gets duffed up a lot. There were no pissy bagpipes in the movie but Stuart Adamson soon put that right. Great movie, terrible band. Steve Sutherland is the only man who claims to lift his kilt in sympathy and he was having a brain haemorrhage at the time. That's what he claims anyway.

Guess where this came from? MM.

9





THE long-awaited Big Country tour comes to the Civic Hall, Guildford on Friday (June 2) and this week I spoke to bassist Tony Butler about the band's success and its plans for the future.

Big Country was formed in 1982 when Stuart Adamson left The Skids and linked up with guitarist Bruce Watson, drummer Mark Brzezicki and Tony Butler who was then supporting the Skids with his group "On The Air."

The new band launched into a guitar-based sound which was a far cry from the synthesiser-influenced music that dominated the charts at the time.

"We never put the band together as a backlash against electronic music. It was just a sound that we all enjoyed and we felt it had a lot of potential. How it would fit in with the general climate we did not know and it didn't really matter," Tony said.

The first singles, Harvest Home and Fields of Fire, quickly gained the

group cult recognition and commercial success followed with the release of *The Crossing* to critical acclaim.

Although Big Country had achieved success it was constantly striving for new direction and its next album, *Steeltown*, marked a significant departure from its traditional sound and into a stronger more political vein.

"The last thing we wanted to do was to make another 'Crossing'," Tony said. "We're not a political group like the Style Council, as we all have different political views. We do believe in 'human interest' subjects, but primarily we are here to make music."

After *Steeltown*, the group took a lengthy rest or "sabbatical" as Tony referred to the period in which turmoil was rife that the group had split up.

"We had a tremendous workload but we decided to take a break rather than tour and make records just to keep the commercial success of the band going. The music industry didn't like us for that!"

The group reappeared at Live Aid and then sup-

ported David Bowie on part of his massive Glass Spider tour in 1987. Last year Big Country appeared at the Glasnost Festival in Tallin, Estonia in the Soviet Union. "We were the first band of our ilk to play there, and now it appears the door has been opened for other to go there."

Tony added that the invitation to play in the Eastern bloc came after the band had been seen in the comparatively progressive venue of East Berlin. "Perhaps now we can go the other communist nations like China — if we are asked."

In the meantime, the group will continue its British tour which includes Guildford.

"I remember playing at the Civic Hall several years ago and it was my home gig because I was living at Sandhurst at the time. It's a nice place." But a long way from the Soviet Union though.

## Competition

Three copies of Big Country's new album *Peace In Our Time* and three pairs of tickets for the group's forthcoming Guildford gig can be won

by the first three people who can tell us why the group is called Big Country.

Entries must be sent to: Pop Scene, *The Times* Series, Martyr Road, Guildford, GU1 4LQ.

Please include a daytime telephone number with each entry. They must be received by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, May 30.

Michael Jones

# Big Country in Guildford

BRIXTON ACADEMY.

Since today of all days London Regional Transport decided to hold a lightning strike, my mate Mark and I took the plunge and drove to Brixton. After a spot of bother with the map reading and an unplanned forray into Fulham, coupled with the main car park being closed, and trouble finding the venue itself, we finally arrived at 7.35 pm. One thing that I didn't anticipate was the frisk on the door by several coloured gentlemen who looked as though they were Frank Bruno's sparring partners.

'Cry Before Dawn' were already on stage by the time we got in, but having seen them at Crawley I wasn't too worried that we had missed the first few numbers. I should point out that this was the fifth Big Country concert I had been to since 1986 so I had come to expect to see some good support bands, with the exception of Balaam & The Angel. Cry Before Dawns music I found very pleasant to listen to, but Brendan Wade's a bit of a poser on stage. They played for a full 45 minutes. What I especially liked was Brendans subtle digs at Radio One and their reluctance to play their kind of music.

Around 8.30 pm the lights dimmed, the crowd roared, and Bruce Watson appeared from the shadows playing a riff 'Restless Natives', followed by each of the other members of the band until Stuart came on and played one of his



## SIMPLE MINDS "REAL LIFE"

(Virgin LP V2660 MC VST2660 CD CDV2660)  
Review by Steve Lowes - Editor of Thunder & Rage

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"Quit dreaming this is real life baby" - Jim Kerr has always been referred to as a relentless dreamer yet on the title track of this album he throws his dreams out of the window - "Quit dreaming this is cheap life baby".

"Real Life" is Simple Minds' 10th album (depends whether you count compilations, live LPs or free albums...) and is their first since 1989's "Streetfighting Years". The album is over 50 minutes long and there are 12 songs on here so it looks like the band have been working hard in the two year gap. You will all know the first single to be lifted from this collection, "Let There Be Love", which heralds Simple Minds' return to the more simple music of 1984's "Sparkle In The Rain" and 1985's "Once Upon A Time" LPs so does "Real Life" reflect this?

Well, there isn't the global conscienceness that could be found on "Streetfighting Years" and instead Jim concentrates on writing about things which affect him personally. This means a return to the glowing romanticism of "Alive And Kicking" and "Sanctify Yourself". There are some brilliant lyrics here which only Jim (or Stipe from REM) could get away with.

The best songs are difficult to pick out but I'll have a go. The title track is a monster with a crashing chorus that seems to pause for breath before crashing back in. The lyrics to this remind me of Prince's "Sign O' The Times" and the Prince influence is most definitely apparent on "Woman" - a quiet, bongo-driven piece which features a beautifully restrained vocal delivery from Jim, somewhat reminiscent of his whispers on the "Streetfighting Years" album. "Woman" sounds like the Minds' early work ("Film Theme" etc) and it is my second favourite track on the album. My favourite is "Rivers Of Ice" - a haunting ballad that proves power doesn't come from volume. It has an almost jazzy feel to the drums and bass and for once the band resist the temptation to come crashing in half way through.

Of the rockier tracks the better ones are "Travelling Man" - a U2-ish train journey through the States that sounds not totally unfamiliar to "Waterfront" - and "Stand By Love" - a gospel laced sing-a-long that should have the stadiums roaring when the band tour later in the year. "Let The Children Speak" is a reworking of the Minds' classic "Themes For Great Cities" with the addition of vocals, although it doesn't come close to the original for sheer groove. The second single, "See The Lights" (currently climbing up the US charts) is another classic which flows along in the same way that "Mandela Day" did although it is predictable Minds and it won't change anyone's view of the band in the same way that "Woman" would.

So after all that glowing praise, are there any weaknesses? Sadly, yes. "Ghostrider" has absolutely nothing in it - just some crashing drums and naff vocals - a sort of sub-INXS stadium filler.

The worst moment is after the beauty of "Rivers Of Ice" we get the anti-climax of "When Two Worlds Collide". I don't understand why this sub-standard track is tacked on to the end of the album, spoiling the effect of what should have been the last track, "Rivers Of Ice".

So as a whole, a brilliant album and one which any fan of the band, past or present, should have. I don't think that it will significantly increase the Minds' fan base in the same way that "Don't You", "Alive & Kicking" and "Once Upon A Time" did but it is certainly their most accessible work since then. I personally can't wait until the tour later in the year but until then this album will be constantly my stereo.





# BIG DAD

**BIG COUNTRY** are back on the road this month, and **STUART ADAMSON** is in a quandary. Performing live in front of the band's loyal and dedicated fans has always been important to him, part of the process of breaking down the barriers between stage and audience. But, as he told **DAVID CHEAL**, touring also drags Stuart away from his beloved Scotland and his equally beloved family.

**B**IG COUNTRY were shooting the video for their latest single, *Hold The Heart*, in a community arts centre in north London. My appointment with Stuart Adamson was scheduled to come at a convenient break in the filming, at an unspecified time during the course of the afternoon. I couldn't sit in on the shoot because it was in a room with mirrored walls, and hangers-on were excluded — they might creep into the shot.

So I sat downstairs, drank several gallons of coffee and leafed through a fascinating EMI Festive brochure until Stuart finally appeared clad in a stylish, expensive-looking suit (with cuffs turned up) and a porkpie hat. A tuft of spiky hair bristled out in front of the hat's rim. Stuart lit a cigarette, took his hat off and placed it on the table next to my tape recorder. I half-expected the tuft of hair to remain attached to the hat, but it stayed firmly on his head.

Stuart spoke in a gentle, lilting Scots accent, by no means as incomprehensible as I feared it might be. He's a very thoughtful bloke, a member of that rare species, the intelligent pop star. Stuart avoids the platitudes and clichés which make up the vocabulary of the average music celebrity.

It's been a good year for Big Country: an album, three successful singles, two tours in the UK, the second of which is currently underway. They've also just started to break into the American market, following their successful US tour.

'We have a good live following over there,' says Stuart. 'It's not mega-platinum status but it's good, a lot of people buying records and coming to gigs. Our show over there is pretty much the same as the one over here; we don't do a different stage show because we're in America or Japan or whatever. We tend to get pretty much the same reaction wherever we play.'

Does he find that Big Country attract similar audiences the world over?

'We get a much more varied audience than a lot of people think, a mixture of ages and cultures, and if our audiences are the same the world over they're the same because we get the same sort of mixture of different people.'

Their album *The Seer* is still doing the business, too. Was he pleased with it?

'I was ecstatic. Every aspect of it — musically, lyrically, and live, it's something that's been an absolute joy to work on. There's a lot of space and a lot of atmosphere in the album, and it's brought out a lot of subtleties in the group that were always there but never quite came through before.'

It also brought out a lot of subtleties in Kate Bush, who's featured on one of the tracks. Stuart explains how she came to be involved.

'I've been a big admirer of hers for a long time. We were working on *The Seer* and because the song itself has a woman as a central character we thought it would be nice to have a woman singing it. We've used a girl singer in the past — for some reason it seems to match up quite well with my voice. I don't have a traditional gravelly rock 'n' roll voice, it's a bit more straight than that.'

'And because Kate has such a vast range of vocal styles and because of the way she arranges her own stuff vocally, I thought it would be smashing if she could do some work for us. So I called her up, sent her a tape and she really liked the song. We didn't want

to tell her what to do; we just wanted her to be Kate Bush, so she worked out her own arrangement and came in and sang for 12 hours straight. I was quite in awe of her, actually.'

The album's lyrics continue Stuart Adamson's mythical, mystical, storytelling style of songwriting.

'It's a lyrical style that interests me a great deal. It's a way I feel I can put not only human situations but moods and emotions and intangible things like spiritual things across, rather than just sitting there saying 'I felt great'. It's trying to create a mental landscape, a mental picture that can re-create the mood or emotion in the listener. On *The Seer*, the idea ground which the album revolves is one of learning from the past not to make the same mistakes again in the future.'

The song itself drew on a story I'd heard about a sort of Scottish Nostradamus who lived in the 12th century. I thought it would be nice to use that with modern ideas. The *Red Fox* was about a guy who was in charge of the English forces in Scotland and was shot by someone, and no-one knew who had done it and it was like an historical act of terrorism. And it was using that idea to show how people's frustrations at their own situations can spill over into violence.'

There are obvious parallels with the 20th century and with unemployment, something about which Stuart has gone on the record with particularly strong views. And it's typical of his attitude that what impresses him is that the frustrations of the unemployed have not spilled over into violence on a large scale, despite the most devastating of circumstances.

Where I come from, we've got the second highest unemployment rate in Scotland. A fifth of the workforce is out of work. But people still seem to have a sense of humour, and I think that's something that's worth believing in.

I was reading Bob Geldof's autobiography, and there's one passage in it where he says that when people are at their worst they're at their best, and I think there's a lot in that. In the area where I come from, we've got the second-highest unemployment rate in Scotland. A fifth of the workforce is out of work. It's farcical, a ridiculous situation. But people still seem to have a sense of humour, and I think that's something that's worth believing in.

What helps the people back home through this rough period is their strong sense of community, believes Stuart. This concept is a strong thread throughout his work, and growing up in a small community near Dumfries has taught him the advantages of living your life among people you know and trust.

I find it very sad that we seem to be developing more and more into a nation that subscribes to the 'I'm all right, Jack' theory. Maybe it's nostalgia, but I did grow up in a close-knit community and I think it's something special, it gives you a sense of purpose



and a sense of belonging, and a sense of being part of something. When they get to their own devices people tend to turn on themselves and become unproductive. But I don't believe a great deal of hostility between people, and unless you look for people's feelings and attitudes, and unless you understand them, you can't understand them.

**Q** To say that my family is important to me would be an understatement. I'm very important to my family, too, and that's a nice situation to be in, there's a mutual dependency. I think it's important not to teach children how to learn or how to grow up, but to help them, because they do it themselves.

Stuart still lives in the town where he was brought up, and seems to be at his happiest there, surrounded by the most important people in his life, his family. Stuart is now the father of two young children. He still makes his responsibilities as a father very consciously.

**Q** To say that my family is important to me would be an understatement. I'm very important to my family, too, and that's a nice situation to be in, there's a mutual dependency. I think it's important not to teach children how to learn or how to grow up, but to help them, because they do it themselves. Also the band wasn't a company within a family, it's something that's important for kids.

Stuart once described himself as a depressed optimist, but bringing up a family has altered this view. Children give you a sense of naivety, and I mean that in a nice sense. In that kids do see the wonder of things, and can see hope in things, and don't look always at the negatives. I see it in people's faces. I think four basic average human beings is a pretty good person, and I think you have a zeal or hope for the human spirit.

Prolonged absences from his family have altered Stuart's attitude to writing, now ambivalent.

It's something that's very much a part of me, the actual physical act of playing in a band is something that I derive a great deal of fulfillment from, and it's something I feel very lucky about. I do earn a living out of doing something that I love doing, and no many people can say that.

But it does get a bit of a bind sometimes, and I do suffer very severely from homesickness. But we've tempered that this year by going three or four weeks on and then three weeks off. It's a much more civilized way of doing things, particularly since three out of four members of the band now have families.

The continued success of Big Country surprises some, but not Stuart. He believes that the Big Country success story is largely attributable to the control they've maintained over their lives, their careers, their music, and their integrity, remaining true to themselves rather than adhering to an idea of what might be commercially successful.

We've been successful by doing what we

want to do and by keeping control of it. I don't think the group would last very long if we started doing stuff that was aimed specifically at a commercial market, we obviously wouldn't be successful because I don't see any reason in working in a commercialized form and playing to myself, my family and my living-room, but it's important to us to do stuff that we are committed to. You do have a certain amount of clashes and arguments, and we do listen to what other people have to say, but when you do have fixed ideas about whatever it is that you want to do you have to stand by them.

It would be a very vituperous form of success if it all was done on someone else's conception of what the group should be. I'm not interested in success for success's sake, it's a too narrow a concept for me to find any great lasting satisfaction from.

What is success? Finding myself deeply committed and deeply satisfied by my work, finding that the responsibilities I have as a father are repaid, and finding that I do what I do without looking too much of a prat. That's what it's all about.

Another important element in the Big Country success story is Stuart's refusal to present himself as a pretty regular sort of guy, because that's what he is.

I'm not really into hero-worship. What I do through my work and through the way I live is something that just goes to make up part of me as a human being, and it doesn't set me apart from other people. I find it disorienting when people do look upon me in that manner. People that are interested in the group come up to us and talk to us and don't feel inhibited, and it could be like that for anybody. I think it's just a matter of how you view yourself. I don't have a stage persona that I can just turn on; Stuart Adamson, the songwriter, guitarist, singer, Bus-

band and father is all the same person.

People where I live are pretty straightforward and don't make a great deal of fuss about it and just see it as my job. It is a very expressive and emotional form of work, but work it is, it's what I do to make my living. I don't think it's a matter of taking something special and making it everyday. I think it's seeing what there is special in the everyday. I think that's the magic.

Finally, there's the group itself. Musically, personally, politically, they all clicked from the word go and have gone on without any major conflicts.

We have something very special between the four of us. I don't know quite what it is, whether it's something in the cut of our trousers or what, there's something there, it's something that's more than the input of each of the individuals. We do play and write with a great deal of spirit. It's something more than just sitting down with a guitar and strumming a few chords. It's a very intangible sort of thing, but it's part and parcel of what goes to make up the group.

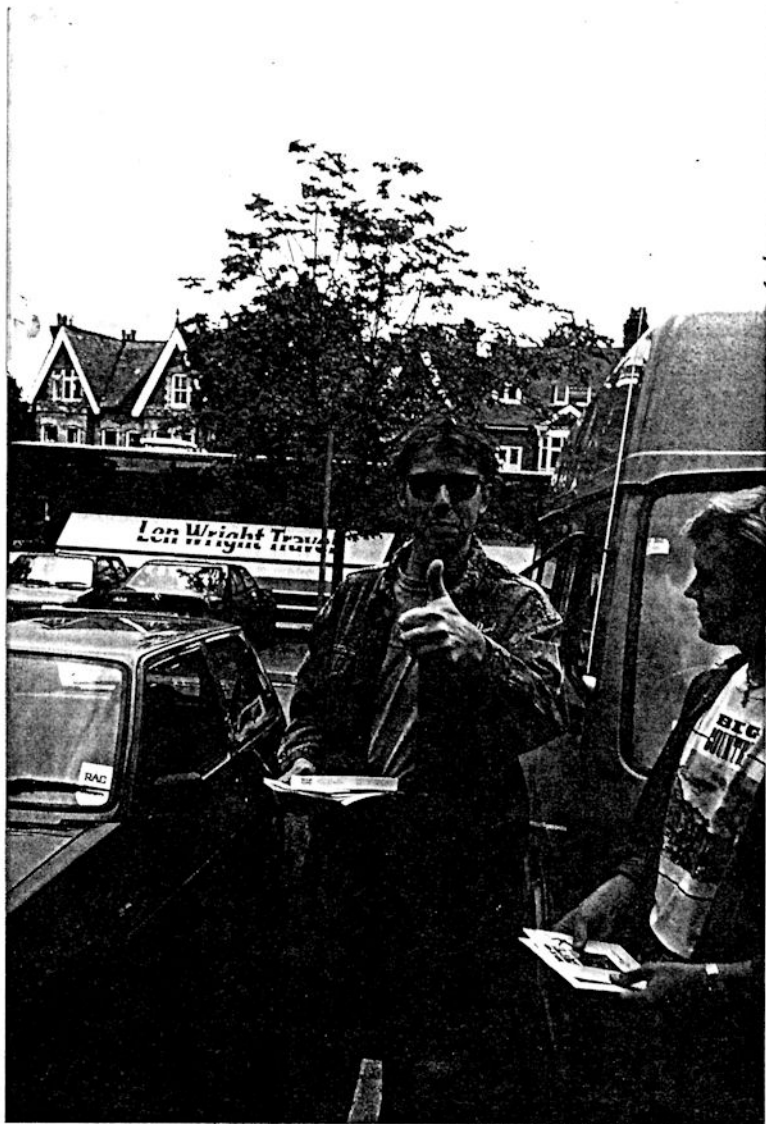
Suddenly it's time to go; Stuart has a photographic session to attend, then the sleeper train back up to Scotland. We talk about the film *Restless Natives* for which he wrote and recorded the score: I liked the discipline of writing to illustrate someone else's pictures. I'd like to do more of that, he says.

He's an ambitious man, but not in the traditional sense of the word. Ask most men what their ambitions are, and they'll talk to you about work, careers; most pop stars would mention unfulfilled yearnings to be novelists, film directors, poets or racing drivers. Stuart Adamson's greatest ambition is more realistic, but given his views on children and families as an expression of hope in the future, perhaps it's more important.

I'd like to be someone's grandfather. I think that would be a fine thing to be.







Mark at Guildford. Friday June 2nd.

Scarborough Futurist Theatre.

This was the bands first trip to Scarborough, but unfortunately it was marred by crowd trouble-more of which later. The signs were all there for a good concert, a small intimate theatre and a noisy crowd. As the house lights dimmed, there was a mad rush to the front of the hall, and no attempt to stop it was made by the security men. I suppose they are more used to dealing with Ken Dodd fans! Bruce was first onstage complete with what looked like a new guitar and started playing the opening riffs of 'Restless Natives'. This really is a superb song and gives lots of scope for improvisation. He was soon joined by the rest of the band for a thundering opening to the concert. 'Look Away' was next, then 'Wonderland' with the by now familiar middle section. '15 Valleys' was introduced with the familiar Adamson Adamson request to "not be afraid of giving everything you have"- time to change the patter Stuart, it's wearing a bit thin. '1000 Yard Stare' from the first tour had been dropped and replaced by 'Just a Shadow', followed by a blistering version of 'The Seer', probably my favourite BC song. Unfortunately in the crush at the front of the Theatre, the sheer weight and force of the over-enthusiastic crowd meant that some of the seats had been smashed and the security men kept appearing at the front of the stage to remove chunks of seat to the wings. The odd cushion was thrown out of the crowd onto the stage, just missing the band. 'Come Back to Me' and 'The Travellers' slowed the tempo for a while, though the fast reprise even had me jiggling about. 'River of Hope' was next, with Mark's drumming sounding even louder than ever. I'm convinced he has some depth charges hidden somewhere in his kit. To finish, yes you've guessed it, the obligatory 'Chance', and 'In a Big Country'. I was awoken from a deep sleep

during 'Chance' by two things, a slightly different arrangement, and when someone decided it would be a good idea to throw a seat at Stuart. It appeared to hit him on the leg and he, with the rest of the band, stopped playing and left the stage. They returned a few moments later for Stuart to berate the audience, or rather the very small section of it responsible, to roars of approval from the rest of the crowd. 'Chance' was continued though the incident seemed to have knocked the stuffing out of the rest of the band, especially Bruce, who seemed very pissed off by proceedings from then on. This was not helped by one fan, seemingly unconscious, being dragged out in front of him by the security. The first encore was 'Lost Patrol', the second, the terminally tedious 'Tracks of My Tears', and the superb 'Fields of Fire', still capable of ripping the roof off any concert hall, especially with the scratch intro. (Did I catch a sound of the Rolling Stones 'Brown Sugar' in there?)

So there we had it, 1 hour and 55 minutes, a reduction of about 25 minutes from the previous tour, mainly bought about by the dropping of three songs from the previous tour, all from 'Peace'. I wonder why that was, as this was supposed to be a tour to promote the album, albeit several months after the release. BC still possess the power to move me greatly, especially during songs like 'Restless Natives and the Seer', but I'm afraid songs like 'Chance' and 'In a Big Country' are sounding very tired and should be pensioned off.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON.

BIG COUNTRY-HOMELAND.

This is an album which I bought at a local record fair in Newcastle a few months ago, and is something of an oddity. It's a clear vinyl 12" L.P. with a completely black label. The sleeve has an early photo of the band, judging by Bruce's and Tony's haircuts, and carries the name "Jukebox Records" London". I suspect it is of American origin as the date of the concert is written as 12/31/83, which is the American way of writing dates.

This date, 31/12/83, is of course, the famous Barrowlands concert, which is also available on both video and CDV.

The track listing is:

Side 1

1000 Stars

Angle Park

Close Action

Lost Patrol (Last Patrol on sleeve).

The Storm

Side 2

Wonderland

In a Big Country

Chance (Change on sleeve).

Inwards

Fields of Fire (Field on sleeve).

The sound quality for a bootleg, is pretty good. There is an American radio show L.P. of the same concert, though I suspect that Homeland is not merely a bootleg of this, as it appears to be an audience recording, albeit a fairly good one. If anyone knows anything more about the album, I'd be interested to hear from them, especially as to the value.  
Douglas Johnson.

We are trying to compile a list of albums etc., that have a Big Country connection. Any details, contact Douglas.

If you've got an eagle eye, you will have recently seen Mark on an advertisement plugging the ITV network. On it, he is seen larking around behind a Mr. P. Collins who is being presented with a 'This Is Your Life' thingy.

You may also know that Mark is on the newest charity single, which is protesting about the destruction of the rainforests, in Brazil in particular. BBC 2 showed the making of the song one evening, and Mark was seen to be messing around with Fish and Stratomaster Dave Gilmour of the Floyd.

More can be found out about this, which is something we should all be concerned with, from: The Rainforest Foundation, 5 Fitzroy Lodge, The Grove, London N6 5RU.

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A big thank you must go to Matthew Dennis who is supplying us with press cuttings from prehistoric copies of NME, Melody Maker etc.  
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INTERVIEW WITH STUART ABOUT TALLIN.

INDEPENDENT LOCAL RADIO NEWCASTLE.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE).

INT:Let's turn to the new album 'Peace In Our Time'. Quite an apt title considering you've just played your first gig in Russia, and it went down very well. Was it just a coincidence that you've got a series of gigs in the Soviet Union and the album seems to be suggesting, through it's very title- 'Peace Between Men'.

STU:Yeah, there is a quality in the album title, that it can be interpreted as an ironic type of statement aswell. I like to have that kind of ambiguity in my work, and yeah, it really is a coincidence-we've been trying to come to the Soviet Union and the east, since, well, not long after we started gigging...you know...and for some reason, probably because of the perestroika and glasnost that Russia, or the Soviet Union, is opening itself up a little bit more to Westerners and we are losing a little bit of our suspicions, as are they. And it's not been until this year that we've actually got any concrete replies from people on coming here to play.

INT:'King of Emotion' which is the current hit in England, the first single you've had in the charts for nearly two years; what on earth have you been doing for two years.

STU:Quite a lot actually. What happened was our contract in the US was up at the beginning of last year, and so because of the nature of the band that we are, it's important for us to get to know the people that we actually work with, so it took until September of last year to actually decide that we were going to sign with Warner Brothers of America. And by that time, Peter

Tony concludes: "There's things on the last album that could have gone better as you all must know, but that's the way it is and you can't go back on it".

As a conclusion, I think it's fair to say that Big Country have now 'learned their lesson' when it comes to choosing producers and that in the cold light of day, "Peace.." was not the album that both the fans and the band thought it would be. But that's all part of this great learning process that some like to call rock and roll. As a final word, Stuart sums it perfectly:

"I still think the band's really young because all the mistakes we've made are there on record. We don't hide things away from people, and I think that's great". I second that emotion - may they all grow 'old' gracefully.



# INWARDS T-SHIRTS



## INWARDS T-SHIRTS !!

AT BLOODY last we hear you all cry! Two very exclusive designs of shirt are soon to be available (pictured here). They are in heavy cotton, black on white and are all XL. Cost will be £5. In order to know how many to get printed, let us know if you will want one. The T-shirts will only be printed if there is sufficient demand so DO let us know. If you don't, you may miss the chance of a lifetime to be the proud owner of one of these surefire collectors items. We want to see an army of INWARDS T-shirts at the Town & Country Club gigs in September, so let us know NOW!!



"There's day wear, night wear, summer wear, winter wear and underwear. There's the dark side and the light.

If you want something no expense should be spared."



"NO PLACE LIKE HOME"



we felt comfortable playing you know...oh it was bloody great, it was a really...I have to say it was very special, the tour that we did in clubs because it was so intimate and really...and people who over the past few years had only seen us in big halls were able to come and see us in a very close environment, and um, smell the sweat of our armpits as it were, and it was really great and the gigs that we did were brilliant. I mean they were all great, but the things we did like, that's the first time in my life i've ever played in the Newcastle Mayfair.

INT:Super club-The Mayfair.

STU:Outrageous venue. I don't know why we've never played there before, it was brilliant.

INT:Are you gonna come back?

STU:We're definitely coming back to Newcastle, I don't know whether it will be The Mayfair, but The Skids never even played there, and I don't know why not. It's a great venue.

INT:'King of Emotion'-single number one. Have you any idea what single number two might be?

STU:I can tell you exactly, but i'm not going to!

INT:On go on!!!!

STU:OK. It's going to be a song called 'Broken Heart' or '13 Valleys', the same song but the titles in debate at the moment.

INT:What's your favourite song from the album? All of them, go on, say it, all of them!!

STU:I really like 'Broken Heart' and 'Thousand Yard Stare', they're my current favourites. But I am very pleased with the whole album. I think that for the first time all the tracks work as songs in their own right. You know, we can take things off the album that can stand up on their own. Sometimes, with previous albums, if you took songs out of context, they wouldn't really



work.

INT: Let me ask you just one final question about the album-'Peace

In Our Time'-do you think it's your best album as a band so far?

STU:No. I KNOW it is. I know without a shadow of a doubt that it's our best album. Because I think the bands better now than it's ever been before. I think we're playing better, brimming with confidence and just...and things are working un, like things are coming so naturally at first you just wouldn't believe, just instinctively knowing how to improvise. We really have a great relationship within the band, not only personally, but musically aswell.

INT:Will you hedge your bets that it could be a number one album?

STU:I'm not really fussy if it is or if it isn't. I'm happy with the record, and that's success as far as I'm concerned.

And there we have it. A new interview will be in the next edition.

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The record chain, ECV, are selling two 'Peace' tour T-Shirts. One is the black 'flag' shirt, minus tour dates, the other is a white shirt with the album cover on front, and the tour dates on the back. Both are selling for £7.99. (DJ).

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Does anyone know enough about The Skids to do a short article about them in the 'zine? If so, contact Jeremy.

Does anyone have issue 18 of the excellent 'Jamming' magazine?

The issue in question has a picture of the toothless Jerry Dammers on the front, and carries a 2 and a half page interview with Bruce Watson. I only want a photocopy of the interview, not the whole magazine. If you have a copy, contact Jeremy.

## *MEDIA SHOW.....*

Friday 26th May.

Guardian Newspaper carries a story that Big Country have split due to being in the red due to the Russian trip last September/October. Article includes quotes from Stuart and from Ian Grant. (DW)

Wednesday 31st May.

Blue Suede Views(Channel 4's Rock and Pop Teletext service), says the following:

"In spite of rumours put about by the Guardian newspaper last week, Big Country have not split.

A spokesperson for the band told us that the reports were unfounded, and that they had even made up their quotes to back up their story.

The bands frontman, Stuart Adamson, has now been declared 100 per cent by doctors, and the band re-start their UK tour tonight at the Studio, Bristol, and continue at the St. Austell Coliseum tomorrow."(JC)

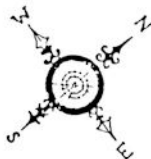
Wednesday 31st May.

Pictures of Stuart in both Melody Maker and Sounds.

Bits of writing underneath say about gigs being cancelled.

Also in HM's TTT column, the following appears:(GL).

WHAT the hell is wrong with **STUART ADAMSON**? Big Country have cancelled their tour for the fourth time because of some strange asthma disease. By the time they finally get around to playing their date at St Austell, Cornwall, the venue will have closed down...



(By the way, the venue at St. Austell is due to be demolished shortly.)(JC).

Wednesday 10th May.

Melody Maker carried a very favourable review of the gig at Leeds University. If I can find it, i'll print it next issue.(JC).

miles "as the crow flies", eh?! What a sport! Now here's the challenge. Have you travelled further than Eddie all in the name of B.C.??? Did you swim the channel in a potato sack just to catch the "boys" play their infamous Peace tour date in Jersey? Did you travel overnight from Dundalk to Moscow using nothing but 45 local bus services, carrying a pregnant sheep on your back wearing NOTHING?! (O.K. Jas, calm down). Come on, let us know how mad and nutty you are and to what lengths you are willing to stretch to quench your undying thirst to see Big Country... hell, make it up if you want (we would! - eds). But remember, Eddie did his "fantastic voyage" alone. If you travelled 600 miles with 3 friends, divide the miles by the number of people. You did 200 miles. Get the idea. If that hitch-hiker that you picked up on the way suddenly mutated into a rabid donkey, then add an extra to your passenger total. The best letters we get will be printed next ish. Send them to the "BETHLEHEM OR BUST" department at the usual address. And don't forget, a fiver in envelope will almost guarantee inclusion in a future issue!

Finally, I was 'chuffed' to find my postie had delivered a letter from a certain Mr. Lee King from Swindon. "Wow!" I hear you all shout in unison, "whoopie fucking woo etc. we are so pleased for you!!!" Well listen up matays. Y'see, Mr. King happens to be an old school-friend of mine who I haven't seen for years. Further to this, he was responsible, single-handedly, for introducing me to the wonderous rapture that is Big Country. Yes, during an A-level geography field trip to the Lake District in May 1986, I was forced to listen to 'The Crossing' for a whole week. The thing was, I hated Big Country without ever really hearing the music, so hearing 'Chance' for the very first time was quite an experience, one that caused me to check out the entire back catalogue within a week of returning home again. So this letter that came in from Lee was a nice surprise because, as I said, we lost contact over three years ago. If anyone else out there either knows me or owes me money, write in and make my day. Who knows, you too could be immortalised in these very pages!!

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#### BIG COUNTRY - WHY?? by DAVE CHINERY, POOLE

*BIG COUNTRY...I'd never even heard their name mentioned until Jan '86. A friend said that they were playing locally. I agreed to go and, well they completely blew me away. I couldn't tell you WHY, but songs such as 'Porrohman' and 'The Storm' stood out live, bearing in mind that I'd never heard a B.C. record. After that I went about collecting all their back catalogue which was easy as most of it was in the Cheapo Rack (loads of doublepacks).*

*Considering my musical tastes are normally on goth bands such as The Mission, Fields Of The Nephilim, Sisters Of Mercy etc. why do I like Big Country? Well it's probably something to do with the whole atmosphere that surrounds them. When I go to a B.C. gig, I get totally excited beforehand and can get very emotional during a gig. I laugh and I cry.*

*I get the piss taken out of me for liking them, but when they tour, you will see the same old faces telling the same old stories of when they met Stuart and how he signed their whatever it was. Yes, deep down, anybody who has seen Big Country live will go again and again. I DO.*

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## BIG COUNTRY, SMALL TOWN BOY

● Stuart Adamson (32 on the 11th) has never had any desire to leave Crossgates, Fife, where he grew up. The singer first performed in public at 14, in the local Miners' Welfare Institute.

"When I was 18 I thought there was more to life than a small village," he says. "I went to Amsterdam, realised it was just the same as home, turned round and came back."

Since then he's become a well-travelled man but admits to homesickness.

"After a gig, when I'm just drifting off to sleep, I know I'd rather be home with the bairns on my knee watching telly."



We wanna compile a list of EVERY concert that the group has ever played, and the songs played at them. Contact Jeremy.

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Does anyone know the exact date and venue of the Big Country concert featured in the Westwood One Radio Show Series? It is thought that it is Manchester in either April '83(JC), or April '84(DJ). Contact either of us.

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The following people have audio recordings of the band for sale or swap:

Dominic Williams, 18 Drowry Road, Keighley, West Yorkshire, BD21 2PU.

Phil Read, 18 Mill Crescent, Kingsbury, Tamworth, Staffs.

They're both nice blokes, so get in touch with 'em.

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Big Country are shortly to go into the Studio to record their 5th album, over a period of six weeks(no pissing about over 4 months this time). Better be more of a group effort-JC. Hopefully it'll be released by December to tie in with the possible BIG dates being mentioned by Tony. (ie, NEC, Wembley Arena, Whitley Bay, SECC, and the G-Mex Centre.(JC &PR). That's about it for now.

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Remember, although we are the editors, it doesn't mean we know everything about the band, so if you hear anything that you think we should know about, get in touch...

One final point, does anyone know what happened to The Prime Movers, Zerra I, and The Anti-Knowhere League. Then again, who gives a shite, they were all crap.