

WE SAVE NO SOULS !



THE BIG COUNTRY FANZINE

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I would like to thank the following for their help, support and ideas in making this issue of "WSNS" possible. They are, in no particular order;

Darren McIlwrath, Dinet Koopman, Gerry Harper, Dominic Williams, Gordon Tosh, Stuart Arnott, Liam Davey, Liam Shand, Gerry Harper, Phil Read John Turner, Kitt Curry, Julie Wooldridge, Ray Robson, Stuart Heard from Winterland, Barry Mead Ian Grant and of course five guys named Moe ... sorry, that should read Stuart, Bruce, Tony, Chris and Colin.

Special thanks are due to Neil Rutherford, for his patience and help.

The next issue of "WSNS" will be out in early April and will contain, amongst other things, part two of my interview with Bruce Watson and, if things go according to plan, something just a little bit special. Intrigued? Then order your copy today, or better still, why not subscribe and be sure of getting your copy as soon as it is published. In future I will only be advertising in "Q" magazine as it has become too expensive to advertise in NME and the like.

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"We Save no Souls" is an independant Big Country fanzine and is not connected officially to the band or to Country Club. It does, however, have the full approval of the band and management.

The views expressed are generally those of the editor, unless otherwise stated.

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Douglas Johnson

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FROM THE ED

Hello and welcome to another fun-filled, action packed issue of "WSNS" and a belated Merry Christmas to you all. I had hoped to get this issue out just before Christmas, but time, as it so often does, ran out on me.

First, the major news. As some of you will already know, the band have parted company with Phonogram, their record label for over 9 years. The reasons for this are many and varied, but lack of promotion by Phonogram for the band's new material has to play a major part. Quite frankly, Phonogram had lost their way and didn't know what to do with the band and I'm sure that UK album sales of between 15-20,000 for "NPLH" didn't help.

Do not despair, however, as the ink is just about dry on a new contract with another major label and an announcement will be made very soon. I do know who it is, but I have been asked by Ian Grant not to say anything at the moment. What I can say is that the band have been re-signed by Chris Briggs, who signed them to Phonogram in the early 1980's, before moving on to pastures new. I don't know at this stage whether the new label will be buying the rights to "NPLH" and associated recordings so I cannot tell you whether "Ships", which was to have been the next single, will now be released. The same goes for the 4-track video EP which was also in the pipeline.

An unfortunate consequence of this was that the scheduled German dates had to be postponed at the last minute. "WSNS" has several readers in Germany who were greatly looking forward to the gigs and must be bitterly disappointed. Sorry guys.

I spoke to Bruce Watson about 3 weeks ago and from what he said, do not be surprised if we see a new Big Country album in the shops by the end of 1992. It seems the band are scheduled to start demo-ing sometime in Feb/March, with a view to recording sometime in the summer. Hopefully, I'll have some more concrete information by the next issue.

The "NPLH" UK and Irish tour went well, although some dates were poorly attended. I personally felt the tour was too long and that some of the venues were badly chosen. In particular, to play gigs at Hull, York, Redcar and Bradford on concurrent nights, when each venue is no more than 60 miles from each other seems an exercise in poor planning. I attended 10 shows on the tour altogether and enjoyed them all, to differing degrees.

My personal favourite was the second night at Dingwall Legends. I would like to place on record my heartfelt thanks to the band and especially Barry Mead the Tour Manager, for their kindness, hospitality and co-operation with me throughout the whole tour. I'm sure they're all glad to see the back of me !

Although the tour was fairly extensive, I have deliberately not filled this issue of "WSNS" with gig reviews. Why ? Very simply, about 99% of readers will have been to at least one gig on the tour (and probably more) and I figure the last thing you need is someone's account of what songs were played at Dingwall, Redcar or Bristol. I hope you agree !

I have had quite a bit of correspondence about my comments on "Beautiful People" in Issue 11. You will recall that I described it as "shite" when giving my opinions on the album, though in the same issue, I made reference to and criticism of, a Melody Maker journalist who described Big Country's music as "crap". Double standards, I hear you cry. Well, yes and no. My comments were part of my opinion of the album and were not intended to be an objective review. Bruce told me he thought I was being "a bit hard" on "B.P." and if I upset you Bruce, or any of the band with my opinions, then I'm sorry. Not that my criticism is any more valid than that of a music journalist, but I do care very much about this band and it's music, so anything I say is "from the heart" as it were. The majority of people who have written do regard "B.P." as the weakest track on the album and despite receiving a small amount of airplay on Radio One, it got no higher than one week at #72 in the UK singles chart. Lastly, you may have noticed that not only is this a "bumper" 40-page edition of "WSNS", but that the print-size has changed which means roughly 30% MORE in every issue. All this and no price increase (despite recent postage and printing price rises)

"WSNS", your better value fanzine.

Until next time folks,

Douglas



"BEGONE, BIG COUNTRY,
YOU SHALL NOT HAVE
ANOTHER RECORD CONTRACT"

NEWS

The band are to play 2 shows at Dublin Olympia on 3 & 4 January. These are the only two shows planned at this time.

The "Country Club Convention" video has just been released. As I haven't got round to ordering my copy yet, I can't tell you much about it, but a full review will appear in Issue 13.

As mentioned elsewhere this issue, the two additional tracks on the 12" and CD single of "B.P.", "Fly Like an Eagle" and "Rockin' in the Free World" were cut at the wrong speed from the two-inch digital master tape, which is why they sound slow. At first it was intended to arrange for dud copies to be exchanged at the point of purchase, but as the weeks went by, it became obvious that no "correct" versions were going to be made available. Ian Grant told me that as far as he was aware, no correct speed versions existed, but as I was going to press, reports came in of correct versions being sold by some London stores. I will try and find out a bit more and will let you know.

Those of you who are members of Country Club will no doubt be aware of their "Save Big Country" campaign. They have asked all fans to bombard Radio One with letters, faxes, phone calls and petitions to complain about the station's apparent refusal to give any of the band's new material a fair hearing. Anyone at the last night of the (mainland) UK tour at Leicester may have been approached by one of several charming young ladies to sign a petition to be sent to Radio One. This is being organised by Julie Wooldridge from Walsall and what she and I would like you to do is to give her your support. She would like readers to organise their own "mini-petitions" to be gathered into one large one which will be used at the first possible opportunity i.e. when the band next have a single out. Pester your friends, family, work colleagues etc ... and get at least one page of signatures and addresses. Send these to Julie at; 30 Rowan Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS5 4ET. Get weaving, stop our band becoming a "non-league" outfit.

I spoke to Radio One producer Geoff Griffin on 26 November about the recording of the Town & Country Club gig on 4 October. It seems that Radio One did not record it, it was done by the BBC Transcription Services for "possible future use". Radio One have no current plans to transmit the show. I will keep you informed if I get any further news. This means, of course, that Douglas won't be frantically searching the columns of "Record Collector" for the Transcription Disc, much to the relief of his bank manager !

The band did an acoustic session for Radio Clyde, which was broadcast on 30 October. Tracks aired were "Beautiful People" and one other (possibly "Chance") but unfortunately my informant fell asleep and missed the second one. Anyone have a recording of these two tracks ?

Stuart also went to Holland after the end of the UK tour and did a 5 song solo acoustic set for VARA radio with DJ Jan Douwe Kroeske who is a long time supporter of the band. The songs were recorded on 12 November for his show "Twee meter de lucht in" which roughly translated, means "two metres up in the air", a reference to Jan's height. Songs recorded were "Beautiful People" "13 Valleys", "Ships", "Just a Shadow" and "Rockin' in the Free World". I'm looking forward to getting a tape of the show.

Stuart also appeared on Radio Forth, Edinburgh, on a show called "Getting Personal", which was broadcast sometime in September. In it, he chooses some of his favourite records and talks about the band's career, early influences, growing up in Fife and the new direction of Big Country's material amongst loads of other things. His choice of music was fairly "diverse" and included Mott the Hoople, Kate Bush, Bruce Springsteen and the inevitable Leonard Cohen.

Did you know that "Fields of Fire" has been re-released ? Don't panic, it's on the "Old Gold" label, catalogue number OG 9979 and has "Chance" on the B-side. Release date, for manic completists, was 30 September. Wonder if it'll chart ?

Look out for the band on BBC TV on 25 January. They were filmed when in Ireland recently, for a programme to be transmitted on Burns night, performing an acoustic version of a song called "Killiecrankie". Other bands taking part in the programme are Hue & Cry and The Waterboys.

BIRTHDAYS

Congrats to the following "birthday boys and girls" who have impending candle-blowing out scenarios, i.e. before the next issue of "WSNS" hits the streets.

Tony Butler, 35 on 13th February
Bruce Watson, 31 on 11 March

Must also say Happy Birthday to "Kitt" Curry, our youngest reader, who is 3 on 7th January (told you I'd get you, Kitt !)

DOUBLE DUTCH

Thought you might like to see a review that appeared in a Dutch rock magazine called "Oor." This magazine is the leading one of it's type in Holland, the "Times" amongst music mags. Thanks to Dinet Koopman from Utrecht for sending it to me.

You may be interested in a Dutch fanzine entitled "Stay Alive" done by Dinet's sister, Mathe. I've not seen one, so I assume it's written in Dutch, so if Mathe would like to send me one, I will review it in Issue 13. Please write to Mathe, with an IRC. Mathe Koopman, Rembrandtlaan 254, 7545 ZR Enschede, Holland.

BIG COUNTRY ● No Place Like Home (Vertigof Phonogram)



Op *Peace In Our Time* (1988) maakte de Schotse gitarenmuur van Big Country plaats voor een luchtige en ruime productie. Een ommezwaai in de muzikale koers, zo leek het. Kort daarop verliet Mark Brzezicki de band. De drummer met de onuitspreekbare achternaam wilde zich meer op sessiewerk toeleggen. Zijn vertrek zette Adamson & Co voor het blok, want Brzezicki was in niet geringe mate bepalend voor het net vernieuwde groepsgeluid. Dus gooide Stuart Adamson andermaal het roer om. Na het beluisteren van *No Place Like Home* zal menig fan zich ongetwijfeld even achter zijn/haar oren krabben, want Big Country heeft (schrik niet) de rhythm & blues ontdekt. Met een sterk Amerikaans-georiënteerde sound staat de band nu voor een nieuwe fase, waarbij het vooral zal aankomen op de acceptatie door het thuisfront in Engeland en omstreken. Brzezicki is nu slechts als gastdrummer aanwezig met een strakke, rechtlijnige stijl die nauwelijks nog herkenbaar is. Toch heb ik wel respect voor deze verrassende zet van Big Country. Het geeft aan dat de groep niet stil staat en naar nieuwe, onverwachte wegen zoekt. Al kent *No Place Like Home* geen uitschieters, de nummers zullen het live ongetwijfeld goed doen. En op het podium is Big Country nog altijd op haar best. Dus kom maar op met die concerten.

EDWINAMMERLAAN

What ! You want it translated into English ? Well, OK then. Just this once.

"On *Peace in our Time* (1988) the Scottish wall of guitars from Big Country made room for an airy and broad production. A change of musical course, it seemed. Shortly after Mark Brzezicki left the band. The drummer with the unpronounceable name wanted to do more session work. His leaving was difficult for Adamson and co because Brzezicki had a big influence on the just renewed sound of the band. So Stuart Adamson put over the helm again. After listening to *"No Place Like Home"*, many fans will scratch his/her head for Big Country has (don't dread) discovered the rhythm & blues. With a strongly American orientated sound, the band is now heading a new phase, in which much will depend on acceptance from homefront England and surroundings. Brzezicki is only guest drummer, with a tight, straight style, hardly to be recognised. Yet I do have respect for this surprising Big Country. It shows that the group doesn't remain just as it is, but is searching for new, unexpected ways. Even though there are no flukes on *"No Place Like Home"*, the songs will no doubt be perfect live. And on stage, Big Country is always at her best. So let's have those concerts"

BRUCE BLETHEERS



"You call my coat a deck chair again and I'll nut you !"

We managed to track down the elusive Mr Watson at the band's hotel in Inverness, where they were staying for the two gigs at Legends nightclub in Dingwall. After settling into comfy chairs and armed with a plentiful supply of coffee, we turned on the tape recorder ...

The Cast; BW) Bruce "Hot Licks" Watson, guitarist.
DJ) Douglas Johnson, "WSNS" Editor and supremo.
LD) Liam Davey, tape operator extraordinaire.

DJ) Can I ask you first of all about the LP, it's been out four weeks now, it hasn't done as well...

BW) Well it fucking bombed, didn't it !

DJ) Not to put too fine a point on it. You must be really pissed off 'cos it is...everyone I've spoken to say they really like it.

BW) Well I am really pissed off because I think it's the best album we've done and I'm not saying that because it's the last album we've done. I think "The Crossing" was the best album and the album that was my favourite after that was the new album. That's not to say the other ones weren't that bad, but to me this is the one. There isn't a bad track on the album as far as I'm concerned, whereas when I look back at "The Crossing" maybe "1000 Stars" didn't quite make it. To me, this is the album. I guess the reason it hasn't done as well is.. I dunno, fashions change, haircuts change, trousers change, all that kind of stuff. I don't think we're the hippest band at the moment.

DJ) There doesn't seem to be the promotion from the record company. You go in the record shops and you don't see...

BW) I could argue with you on that, because if you looked when the album came out in all your "Q's" and your "Vox's" and all that shit...the full page ads and I have been in a few record shops where it has been promoted, so I could argue ... it would be easy to blame the record company, but there has been a lot of promotion.

DJ) I can only go on the record shops in Newcastle and to the best of my knowledge HMV didn't have anything in, I didn't go into Our Price, we haven't got a Virgin...

BW) What, there's not a virgin in Newcastle, that's fucking hard to believe ! I know what you mean, I think it's just in certain areas. The thing that pissed me off, when "Reptile" came out, people were going into the shops and there were maybe only four copies in the shop and then there was no more.

DJ) I went into HMV in Newcastle last Monday to buy the new single (Beautiful People) and I bought the cassette and 7" and when I asked for the CD single, they said "no, we've sold out" I thought "bloody hell, that's good" and they said "no, the record company didn't send enough".

BW) No, they'd have only sent a couple, maybe four...

DJ) Which is ridiculous ... it just seems you don't see big fly posters put up anywhere, or anything like that.

BW) The thing is as well, Phonogram have got a big roster of bands and it's "who are we promoting this week" and then again when you think about it, they haven't exactly had much success with any of their acts. I mean, if you look at Texas, (I love them), All About Eve, Dire Straits, talking in terms of singles,

they (Dire Straits) went as high as 21, we got 37 or 38, so we done no' too bad I suppose, compared to the rest of them. I mean, Dire Straits, you'd have thought would have went higher.

LD) Well Texas' album hasn't done very well, it hasn't got as high as "NPLH"

BW) Well, we ain't in the charts anymore.

DJ) It just seems that the album came out at the time when you had a lot of other "big" names like Guns'n'Roses, Dire Straits, Bryan Adams and everyone's taken up with ... people don't have as much money to spend as they did have and they're going for the big bands ...

BW) The big, safe ones. I mean, we expected that. I guess we knew it wasn't going to be as big as stuff we'd done before. We're talking about 9 years down the line and you sort of gear yourself up for that. The beauty of it is though, we can still sell out the concert halls everywhere, we found out today that Newcastle's sold out, Redcar's sold out, they're all sold out, which is great.

LD) In Middlesbrough, for example, like you say, Redcar's sold out, there's a lot of people waiting to see you, but we just didn't hear anything about the album. I had to look for the album, there was one sleeve in their (HMV) vinyl section. That's ridiculous.

BW) That's terrible, you should write into Phonogram to complain.

DJ) Talking of record companies, what was the reason for the switch between Phonogram and Vertigo ? I know it's the same company.

BW) It changes all the time. I dunno, they just give you names, it's like ... we are actually signed to Phonogram and we've been on Mercury, Vertigo ... they just change the names ... with any luck, we might not be on them at all ! If you want to bitch about record companies, phone them up and ask them why they printed the B-side at the wrong fucking speed.

DJ) The two singles that have come off the album so far ... we won't know until next week whether "Beautiful People" has charted ...

BW) No it hasn't charted, I can tell you that ... the midweek position is 68

DJ) "Reptile" went in at 38, went back to 50-something and disappeared and yet despite getting ... I presume you heard the singles getting reviewed on "Round Table" ...

BW) I never heard "Republican" getting reviewed, I got told about it.

DJ) It got bloody ecstatic reviews, two of them made it "Single of the Week" and everyone thought it was wonderful. I thought "great, maybe Radio 1 are finally going to play the single" and of course they don't and nobody gets to hear about it. You must get pissed off that it didn't get airplay.

BW) Of course you do, you get pissed off for about a day, or two days and you really fucking hate everybody and you say "that's it, there's no point in carrying on, is there" and then a couple of days after you go "it's only some bastards opinion anyway" and you go to a gig and you play and you go "that was a fucking really good gig" ... some twat at Radio One, who gives a fuck if some producer doesn't play your record. For one day, you're really angry at them.

DJ) I know singles success isn't the "be-all and end-all"

BW) ... but album success is ...

DJ) Yes, but singles success leads to album success

BW) Well a single is a bit like having a video you know, it's like a promotional device ... to me it's a waste of money, it's a waste of the bands money ... but the thing is, when we sent out white label copies of "Reptile", we sent them to DJ's and what-not, they played them and they were saying "fuck me, this is good, who's this ? It's like ZZ Top, like AC/DC" .. then they find out it's Big Country and it's "Oh, I'm not playing that !"

DJ) When "Reptile" was reviewed (on Round Table) it was done as the "mystery single" and they didn't know who it was. Even Mark Goodier said he was absolutely stunned when he found out it was you, 'cos he really liked it.

LD) That's the thing, you're not hip with "the kids" anymore, like when "The Crossing" and "Steeltown" came out.

BW) That was a long time ago, you know.

DJ) Any ideas about future singles from the album ?

BW) Yep, "Ships" will be the next single.

DJ) The solo, or the full band version ?

BW) There'll be a few different formats. You ain't heard the full band version yet, have you ? The band version will probably be the main version and also there'll be the different formats with the solo version ... Stuart with the piano and maybe the "stage" version which is like a compromise between the two. That's going to be the next single in Germany anyway.

DJ) You seem to be "big" in Germany at the minute, you're doing the tour, you did that German TV thing the other week. Someone told me the other day that the German arm of the record company seem very keen on promoting you out there.

BW) We've always had a good relationship with the Germans anyway and the Dutch. They're into music across there, a bit like the Americans, they're into rock music and live bands, live musicians.

DJ) "No Place Like Home" hasn't been released in America.

BW) We haven't got a record deal in America ! They kicked us off. No fixed talent ! We're going out to America in January, probably. We're gonna go out there in the back of a Transit van, skeleton crew, skeleton band !

DJ) Can I hide in one of the flight cases ?

BW) We haven't got a flight case big enough !

DJ) Going on to the B-sides that have come off the two singles so far, can you tell me who's actually been playing on them and where they were recorded.

BW) OK, "Freedom Song" was recorded as part of the album, that was going to be an album track. It was recorded at Rockfield with Mark Brzezicki. "Kiss the Girl Goodbye" was the same.

DJ) Could we have that one live at some stage please, everyone I've spoken to reckons that's really good.

BW) Yeah, I'll mention it to the guys. That's the reason we done "Winter Sky", 'cos everybody was on about that. Yeah, I'll mention it Kiss the Girl for live, yeah, we'll do that. Good stuff, piece of piss, that one !
"I'm only waiting" was ... Pat Ahern played drums on that and was recorded at Chapel Studios, near Lincoln, as was "Return to the Two-Headed King". Those were just done as demo's.

DJ) You mentioned "Fly Like an Eagle" before, can you tell me full story again.

BW) "Fly Like an Eagle" was recorded in REL studios originally, it was a demo that I was doing when we finished touring a couple of years ago, when the band basically split up. I went away into the studio and did that. I played everything on it except the drums, it had a drum machine on it, so when we started auditioning drummers, we got Chris up and we got on well with him. I said "well I want to put real drums on this track anyway" so he came to the studio, I cannae remember the name, somewhere in North London and he put the drums down and we mixed it there. This was two months ago. Also, it was cut at the wrong speed .. "Rockin' in The Free World", Pat Ahern played drums on that, that was at the T & C. I actually produced and mixed the first one, Nigel Luby mixed the second one, but they were both cut at the wrong speed. It was either a record company fault, or some engineering fault at the pressing works, wherever that was done. Basically, it's like putting a 45 on at 33, but whoever buys the record can take it back a couple of weeks later and get it changed for the right one.

DJ) Will there be some sort of press announcement to that effect ?

BW) There will be, but by that time it'll be too late, there'll be no fucking point !

DJ) You'll find that people who bought it, they'll want to keep it anyway as a collectors piece.

BW) But you won't because it's at the wrong speed, you cannae play it, well you can play it, but it's like Joy Division on valium. The CD and the 12" are the ones that are knackered, but even the actual A-side ... that's been cut properly, but they used the wrong edit, so you're getting a short, radio version instead of a long, album-type version. The 12" is not in the shops yet, but hopefully they're going to try and rectify it. Ian (Grant) phoned me up and he said, "have you heard it yet ?" and I went "no, they haven't sent me nothing". He goes "there's something not right here, it sounds very slow". I thought, "maybe it's just a wee bit slow ... play it over the phone" I went "what !" Fucking outrageous you know, what can you do ?

DJ) Who actually decides what tracks you record go on the album and what goes on the B-sides ?

BW) We do, the band and producers decision. You usually instinctively know, so it's always been the band and producer and the record company are usually happy with our decisions/ It's like ... first single off "The Seer", it's obviously "Look Away".

DJ) In the same way that "Reptile" was the obvious first single off "NPLH". Same with the live set, I believe Stuart decides what's played live, is there any band involvement in that ?

BW) Well Stuart decides just because of the way he's singing the stuff. You sort of know what we're going to do as well, it's a bit obvious, but Stuart picks the ones he wants to do live, because there's certain songs ... going back to the "Steeltown" days, we used to do things like "Raindance", it's very high and if he was singing songs that are too high, he'll fuck his voice up, especially after that trouble we had a few years ago. He tends to pick the order, it's easier for him.

DJ) Without wishing to put you on the spot, is there anything in the live set at the moment that you would like to see dropped or added ?

BW) Nothing I'd like to see dropped, added ... "Into the Fire" but we don't want to do too many new ones, that's the thing, you can do too many new ones and a lot of people go ..."Hmmm, what's that, I'm not too sure about that"

DJ) Getting on to Chris and COLIN, how did they get involved with the band ? Chris came first I believe.

BW) Obviously after the escapade of various exploding drummers we decided to have some auditions for drummers, so I phoned up my brother, who's the drum tech at John Henry's (no, I don't know either - Ed) and said "do you know any drummers kicking about ?" He got together some names and we phoned up George, the guy who does Pearl Drums, he used to do Mark's drums and give him free drum kits and asked him for a few drummers names. We got about 10 different drummers down and a lot of them were top session guys, really good clinic guys and they're setting up the drumkit and doing all the licks and fills and I'm going "fuck me, these guys are good" So we said, "right, we'll do "In a Big Country", you've obviously heard that one ..." so they start playing and ... a lot of these top clinic guys could not play with a band. On their own, they could play and do all the fills and all the stuff that Brzezicki could do, but the minute they played with a band they fell to bits ... really really badly, you would not believe how bad a lot of these top guys were. Unbelievable. Anyway, there were two drummers that Pat Moran mentioned, one was Chris and the other one was a guy called Kevin Wilkinson ... I think he'd (Kevin) done some stuff with the Kevin McDermott Orchestra, he played with China Crisis as well.

DJ) I believe Chris was recommended by Robert Plant's former guitarist, Robbie Blunt. I was going to ask you why he (Robbie) is credited on the album sleeve.

BW) 'Cos he lent me a few guitars and he played golf with Tony ! Robbie and Pat work together quite a lot 'cos Pat uses Robbie as a session guitarist on some of his projects. Anyway, it was either Kevin or Chris, so we got Kevin down and we thought "he's fucking real good" and he fitted in well with the band. Chris came through at the last minute and he fitted in better. He's got a great nature, he's well tour-hardened as well we wanted somebody who was ... we weren't bothered about having anybody technical, we wanted somebody who was a rock'n'roller and he's been in bands, Spear of Destiny, The Thompson Twins, Gene Loves Jezebel ... he was the one that wore the trousers in Gene Loves Jezebel, he wasn't into dressing up ... he's been on the road for years and he's just got a great temperament, so he was definately the man for the job. This other guy Kevin, we thought he was good as well, but Chris had a wee bit of an edge on him.

And Colin ... Colin used to play with a band called Spiral Dance and my brother used to play drums in this band years ago. When I had my studio in my house, they came down and they wanted to do a demo. Colin was the keyboard player, this was the first time I'd met him, going back about 3 or 4 years and I thought "he's a good keyboard player ... this cannot be a local guy, there ain't many keyboard players like this kicking around"

He was living through in Glasgow, he was a nice enough guy, just one of these musicians you meet along the road. We were looking for a keyboard player and Stuart mentioned to me that there was a guy who used to play with Spiral Dance who plays with The Big Dish now and I went "that must be Colin". So I got his number and got him the job.

DJ) Let's hope he lasts a bit longer than the last one.

BW) I think there's a fair chance of that !

DJ) It's a completely different keyboard sound.

BW) Well it's using a Hammond and a piano. You see technically Josh was a great player, but he was very ... just the wrong attitude, you know.

DJ) Going back to that track "Fly Like an Eagle", Chris played the drums on that, but that's the only thing he's done and Colin has put nothing down on tape yet with the band.

BW) Yep, that's right.

DJ) Any idea of TV or radio appearances over the next few weeks ?

BW) I don't think there'll be any ! There's always local radio we do local radio all the time, but you don't know if they're going out there and then or a week later. We usually do phone-ins at home, last week I did Radio Hallam in Sheffield, it's like stick the phone in the back room away from the kiddies.

DJ) We bought a couple of local papers up in Dingwall this morning, there was an article "Big Country warn Runrig against rock'n'reel"

BW) Corn city, eh ! I still think they're gonna suffer from the same fate that we suffered from ... they're basically doing what we were doing ... they basically have got our sound from 8 years ago, there's no two fucking ways about it. They have been going longer than us, but when they started they were really folkly. They are going to fall into the same bracket, it's hard to get out of.

DJ) Have you any idea what Pat, Mark and Josh are doing now ?

BW) Mark tried to get the Simon Townsend band back "on the air", that's another pun. They did a tour of America and a few dates, I think, in Britain, they've done a lot of recording in Britain. I dunno if they're gonna get anywhere or not, they're 14 years down the line since they were doing it. They just tried to get a deal in America, the same basically as what we're doing. I cannae really say whether they'll be successful. Mark's away playing with Procul Harum just now.

LD) Do you know if he'll be touring with Fish ?

BW) No, Fish and him parted ways, shall we say ! Good luck to Mark, I still like him, he's still my mate. I mean, he never phones me and I never phone him, but when we bang into each other on the road, we're still mates, still sit down and have a laugh about all those nights up the Reeperbahn !

DJ) So you're looking forward to going to Germany ? Is it small venues you're playing over there ?

BW) I look forward to going everywhere. Similar sort of places to here. A lot of these gigs are like, City Halls and across there they're more like rock clubs, maybe about three times the size of the place we played in Dingwall last night, maybe 1000 or 1500. They're more like rock clubs in Germany, whereas here they're all City Halls and a lot of sit-down places, but they still go mental.

DJ) It's a funny tour, it seems you're going from one extreme to another, like last night (Dingwall, Legends) ... I couldn't believe the size of the place when we went in, I thought "what the fuck is this, where's the other room ?" It was good in that I much prefer smaller venues, from the audience point of view, it makes it more intimate.

BW) I prefer ... I thought it was good yesterday, but maybe just a bit small ... to put on a semi-decent production, I mean we were only using two lights and a couple of 4 x 12's at each side for the p.a. It must have been a bit on the uncomfortable side for a lot of people ... I like it a wee bit bigger than that, Newcastle City Hall, Manchester Apollo, Barrowlands, Edinburgh Playhouse ... they're the places you should be playing gigs, not Wembley, that's fucking shit. I've played them before, but ...

LD) Did you enjoy the atmosphere at the T & C ?

BW) It was brilliant, aye, but I'll tell you, after 3 nights it just got a bit bizarre, it was too much like a residency. Three nights would have been fine, it just became like ... I dunno how Eric Clapton could do all those nights at the Albert Hall. You see, I like being on the road, I like getting out of my bed, going down having my breakfast, sometimes, get on the bus and go somewhere and see the motorway, water towers, blocks of flats going past. You get to the gig, you soundcheck and you have you're own wee routine. But when you're doing a residency, you get up in the morning and you've got to wait until 9 o'clock at night, you know.

DJ) Presumably you don't soundcheck every day if you're doing two or three nights in a row at one place.

BW) No, especially if you're doing 5 nights on the trot, you're not going to soundcheck Stuart's vocals every night 'cos it's more songs for him to sing, we don't want to strain it. I just go to get my dinner and muck about with my guitar and that's about it !

I was talking to a couple of punters outside the T & C, I think it was night 3 or 4 and they asked if we were going to change the set tonight because they'd been to every night. I said "no" because there might be people coming tonight who haven't been on other nights, it might be their only night, so you can't leave anything out, just because they've been to every night.

DJ) There's a little bit of flexibility just creeping in, I noticed you varied the set list last night, you didn't play "Hostage" and you added "Mannish Boy"

BW) It's a bit more spontaneous now, you know. We are trying to vary it a wee bit, but when you're doing 5 nights on the trot you try to hold back a wee bit, especially toward the end. We will be varying it. Obviously at soundchecks we'll be trying out different songs, we'll try "Kiss the Girl" as well.

DJ) We were listening to the soundcheck yesterday and there was all sorts of stuff coming out ... "Green Onions" by Booker T ..

BW) The only reason we started doing that is because Colin started doing it on the Hammond, it's the first song you learn to play on the Hammond ...

DJ) You started doing "Mannish Boy" at soundchecks, didn't you ?

BW) Yes, we first started that at the T & C last year, just for a laugh. Probably around the time the Levi's ad came out. That version was the best version, the Johnny Winters produced one, 1977 that came out originally.

LD) Is that your personal music taste ?

BW) Yeah, I listen to nothing but blues now. It's something I should have got into years ago ... to me, 10 years ago, blues was like ... Status Quo. I like Status Quo, but it's a bit samey after a wee while. They're actually brilliant musicians, Status Quo, they are fucking stunning musicians. Anyway, it's just now I'm getting back into blues, I have been for the last two years, just listening to the blues, 'cos that's where all modern rock guitar playing comes from anyway. At first ... Robin the guitar tech ... he's a big blues man, he's been into the blues for years. He started to get Stuart into the blues as well and Stuart would go along and jam with Robin at gigs in pubs an' that. You get into it, right back to Robert Johnson and even before him.

DJ) I've heard some of the recent Robert Johnson set and some of it is wild ...

BW) I'll tell you what fucking hit me was wild. I was coming back from Rockfield and you know on a Sunday afternoon they play the Top 20 from 1960 whatever ... Alan Freeman ... the year was 1966 or 67 and I'm sitting in the car with Butler and we're driving along and it's Lulu ... Englebert Humperdink ... Tom Jones "Green Green Grass of Home" with violins and string sections. Next minute ...

Bruce then does passable imitation of the opening riff of Hendrix "Purple Haze"

BW) ... even when you hear it now when you're in a club or whatever ... it just seems like it was recorded yesterday. Axis; Bold of Love, have you heard that, great album.

LD) Even now it just strikes you, knocks you to the other side of the room.

DJ) When you think what it was recorded on, basic four track ...

BW) Not even four track, two track that would have been at that time ... live as well.

And that is where we leave the conversation until next time. It will be concluded in Issue 12 and among the topics covered, will be bootlegs, the forthcoming UK tour, touring "The Seer" in America and loads more.

**IT'S MOD WEEK AT
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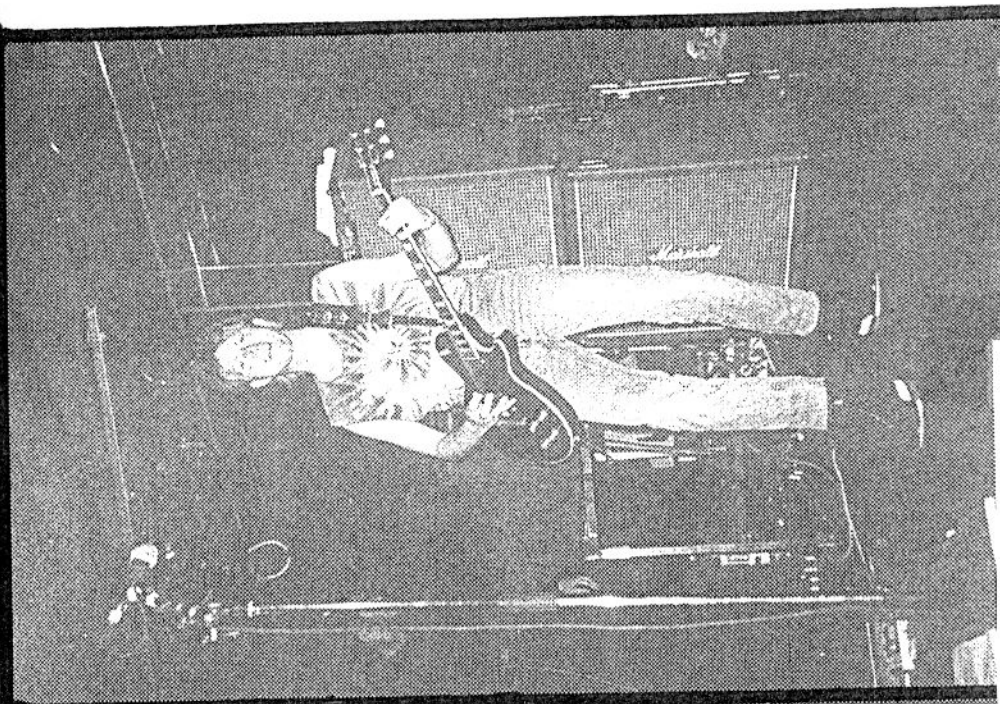
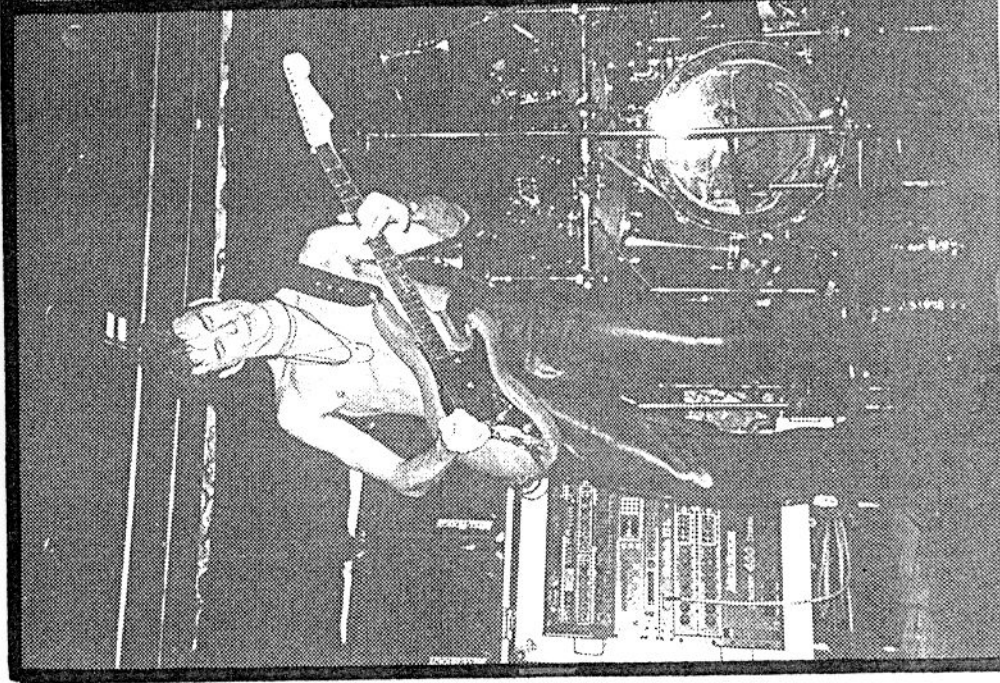
Mod Week ? Does this mean we'll all have to wear parka's and drive round on Lambretta's in future ?

(Before you all write to complain, I know that the "Mod" is a Gaelic music festival)



LEGENDS NIGHTCLUB, DINGWALL 10/10/91





LEGENDS NIGHTCLUB, DINGWALL 10/10/91

THE NEW BOYS



"The Condemned Men"

I finally managed to pin down "new boys" Chris Bell and Colin Berwick backstage at Newcastle City Hall on 22 October, after the band had soundchecked. This is what they had to say for themselves.

OK boys, lets get the trivia out of the way first.

Colin Berwick, 9/9/61, born in Fife, St Andrews area originally but I've stayed in Dundee and I'm living in Glasgow now. Single but close to marriage.

Christopher Bell, born 26/8/60, born in London, live in London, Shepherds Bush, always lived there, single.

So how did you get involved in the music "biz", then boys.

COLIN) "I started off piano lessons when I was about 8, rebelled against my piano teacher when I was 14 ! Started playing guitar at the same time, just joined loads of different bands. I've always wanted to play in bands, so that's what I've always done"

CHRIS) "I came straight out of school and went to art college and got on a degree course and lasted 6 weeks, 'cos I'd just had enough of institutions. I auditioned for a band, which was the Thompson Twins, so I was with them for about 3 years. After that, went on to the first album with Spear of Destiny and did about a year with a really mad... "sex, drugs and rock'n'roll" tour with a band called Specimen, a glam rock band who sacked their drummer the week before they went to the States, so I stepped in on that. Then worked with Gene Loves Jezebel on and off for about 5 years"

What about previous bands for you, Colin ?

COLIN) "Loads of unknown local bands trying to make a big break for success, getting record deals and stuff. A couple of them have been quite close...support tours...went on a Bhundu Boys support tour. Love and Money and the most recent thing was The Big Dish. We had some chart success there"

I've heard the name "Spiral Dance" being mentioned.

COLIN) "Yes, that was a local Dunfermline band, some of Bruce's friends, so I really got to know Bruce by being in Dunfermline"

Hanging around Sound Control ? (local music equipment store, one of Stuart and Bruce's haunts)

COLIN) "Well, pubs mainly ! Pubs and nightclubs. I left that set up to go to Glasgow 'cos I thought I'd meet more people there and get on a bit better and it turned out quite good in the end"

So how did the Big Country connection come about ?

CHRIS) "The reason I got this job was 'cos Pat Moran, who's just done this album, was up for doing a Jezebel album once and he came down to see us and I met him like that. Pat Moran was the one who referred me for the audition"

I've heard the name Robbie Blunt mentioned as well.

CHRIS) "Yes, I did a session with him and he lives literally a stones throw from Rockfield and they're (Robbie & Pat Moran) good mates. I've known Robbie for about 3 years now. That was how it all came together really, I got a 'phone call from Ian Grant who said "do you want an audition" and I said "yes"

And you went along for the audition and the rest is history. What about Colin, how did you get involved with Big Country ?

COLIN) "Just at the end of The Big Dish when the record company didn't take up the option to go and do the next album, I was asked to give Bruce a call because there's a space coming up for a keyboard player to go out on this tour, so I gave him a call, had a blether and that was it"

OK boys, what about your own musical influences and preferences. What sort of bands do you like ?

CHRIS) "I'm not into sort of all the techno or jazz. I like all the stuff like The Rolling Stones and....my favourite drummers are people like Charlie Watts. I don't know, rock'n'roll really"

Real musicians as opposed to computers and stuff ?

CHRIS) "Yeah, I suppose it's what you grow up with as well, they tend to be your favourite stuff. I was a big Alice Cooper fan at one stage, Billion Dollar Babies and all that. That would be in my Top 10, definately. Not now though, the old 70's stuff like School's Out. Stuff you grow up with, it stays with you. I hate jazz fusion, I really.... it's horrible, it's just boring, it really is. Soulless"

How have you enjoyed the gigs so far ? The crowd reaction has been really good.

CHRIS) "It's been great, Barrowlands was a killer"

COLIN) "An excellent gig"

CHRIS) "No, it's great... it's a great band to work for, I don't take it too seriously"

Have a laugh along the way ?

CHRIS) "Definately, you probably saw that at the soundcheck. Some of the bands I've been in, the people are just so serious, it's ridiculous"

COLIN) "There's a lot of pressure, most of the bands I've been in, just to get your fashion together and you have to be a certain way and everything's got to be exact on stage, which puts a lot of pressure on the live performance at the end of the day. With this set up it's great"

CHRIS) "If something goes wrong with a song, Stuart says "right, stop, start again" and the punters tend to really like it 'cos it's real, it's not contrived or anything like that. It's really cool"

It seems the whole crew and everybody are like a really happy family, everyone seems to have a good laugh and there's no hassle.

CHRIS) "No there isn't, it's just free and easy going. It's a bit freaky actually, there's normally some sort of fuck-up's"

So what sort of interests do you have outside music. Sport ?

CHRIS) "I like rugby a lot"

So we're going to take the mick out of Stuart on Saturday if England beat Scotland at Murrayfield ?
(They did, but we didn't)

CHRIS) "Time will tell, it's going to be a hell of a game"

So what about you, Colin ?

COLIN) "My ambition is still to jump off high structures"

On a piece of elastic ?

CHRIS) "In your rubber pants !" (obviously an in-joke)

So have you ever actually done anything like that ?

COLIN) "I came really close to it last year. I was in Austria for a while and I got the chance to do some para-gliding, but it just didn't come about, for one reason or another, but I'm definately going to go and do it this year"

So you're not on for jumping off the Forth Bridge with one of those elastic ropes ?

COLIN) "Well, if offered the right money I might ! I might get sacked as well"

Surprisingly enough **BIG COUNTRY** still haven't got themselves day jobs. Their latest release, *No Place Like Home* (Phonogram), continues their leisurely journey into MOR. They've added some country/blues on the way, but this is going nowhere and not very quickly - it must be twenty years since "Fields Of Fire".

Tower Records
"Top" magazine

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SC 0085

Big Country big new successes

I'VE never been a Big Country fan, but after two hours of Celtic rock at the Civic Hall, I was! The energetic threesome burst on to the stage with the first track of their latest album *No Place Like Home*.

We're Not in Kansas, a toned-down version of their former glories, marks a mellow phase in the group's career. Their country swing style, however, is just as welcome as the go-for-the-jugular *Fields of Fire* and *Look Away*. Old style or new the audience, a sea of hands and heads, loved every minute of it, bobbing and singing along; their energy and enthusiasm was only matched by lead singer Stuart Adamson's.

Memorable moments came with *Rocking In The Free World*, *Just A Shadow* and Adamson's solo *Peace In Our Time*, where he showed off his virtuoso skills on the guitar.

But the highlight of an exciting evening was the final encore with *Chance* — just what the audience had been waiting for.

"We've had a brilliant night in this hall," shouted Adamson.

Yeah, me too!

Whirled (formerly *The Whirly Blues*), winners of a *Beacon Radio*'s support band competition, started the evening off with some mediocre rock.

Their noisy, *Pink Floyd/Hawkwind*-inspired sound was appreciated by the crowd even though some bright sparks shouted: "Get off, we want *Big Country*."

Was this repetitive and unimaginative music the best *Wolverhampton* had to offer?

I think not.

JUSTINE FLAVELL

Wolverhampton Advertiser

Rousing rock and Blaydon Races too

BIG COUNTRY
Newcastle City Hall
By PETER KINGHORN

ONE of the signs of a good band is their ability in concert to give records an extra dimension and oldies a freshness.

Big Country did that and more last night for a packed City Hall which responded in kind, more than once with a chorus of *Blaydon Races*, the ultimate *Geordie* accolade.

It prompted singer and guitarist Stuart Adamson to declare: "Next time we go on tour, I don't think we'll bother moving from place to place — we'll just play Newcastle City Hall and lay on buses to here."

Their guitar based rock no longer relies so much on rampant chords — whether new songs or reworked oldies — but it's no less rousing.

At one point Stuart was left alone on stage with his guitar and earned tumultuous applause for *Just A Shadow*, *Broken Heart (13 Valleys)* and *Peace In Our Time*.

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MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS

BIG COUNTRY

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Newcastle Evening Chronicle 23/10/91

MY YEARS OF HELL AS SECRET JUNKIE



"Bruce... 'chunks of my life have vanished'"

By Big Country star BRUCE WATSON

By ALLISON JONES
SCOTS rock star Bruce Watson last night lifted the lid on his years of hell as a secret drug addict and alcoholic.

The Big Country guitarist told how he was hooked on cocaine, whisky and sleeping pills — and that he can hardly remember ten years of stardom. During his time in a horn Bruce, 38, would hit the bottle at breakfast and break into hotel bars at night to feed his craving.

And in a bid to kick alcohol, he turned to the now banned sleeping pill Halcion.

Soon he was hooked — and still suffers terrifying memory losses three years after weaning himself of the pills.

Former dockie Bruce said "I was 20 when we hit the big time.

Wreck

"I was mingling with stars like Michael Jackson, Bob Dylan and Grace Jones and it blew my mind.

He soon found he couldn't handle fame and fortune.

Bruce said: "I was hyper all the time and had to drink to keep my adrenaline running.

"I couldn't eat, I had no appetite, I stopped sleeping and I kept losing weight. I was a complete wreck.

And it was only when the six-footer weighed in at seven stone that he tried to sort out his life.

Friends

"All the guys in the band knew I had a problem and it was causing a rift in my relationship with my girlfriend Sandra, who's now my wife.

They kept it quiet without the help of my friends I would never have pulled through.

Six years ago he gave up whisky and started taking Halcion.

The dad of two said: "To begin with they were great and I could sleep at night.

ROCK EXCLUSIVE

"But the next day I wouldn't be able to remember a thing. I had complete blackouts.

"Today when the guys ask me if I remember something we all did in Phoenix three years ago

I'm stuck. Whole chunks of my life have disappeared."

But he can recall being violently sick after taking the pills and waking up on stage during a concert in San Francisco after a blackout.

"I just woke up and thought 'where am I? What am I doing?' I had passed out and it had nothing to do with drink."

A frightened Bruce stopped taking the pills but said: "Sometimes I still can't remember something I read in the paper last week.

"I'm completely clean now. I even gave up smoking in March. My body is free from chemicals and I feel great.

Big Country are currently touring Britain and Europe.

The Sun 25/10/91

END OF ERA FOR BIG COUNTRY

I WAS glad to meet up with BIG COUNTRY last week as the lads launched their new single. They told me their Greatest Hits package is the end of an era, and fans should realise the band are moving in a different direction.

I reviewed the album here a few weeks ago and repeated listens since then strengthen my view it's their best work for a long, long time.

As the band got ready to play on the TV show we were doing together, guitarist Bruce

Watson noticed he'd lost his plectrum. Although a new one was found for the recording, Bruce rehearsed for the director by strumming his guitar with a false tooth!

Another band spotted gallivanting in built-up areas without a thought for public safety is **BIG COUNTRY**, whose outdoor set outside Glasgow's Tower Records attracted such large numbers they spilled out into the road, blocking traffic for three hours. This wouldn't have been so bad had not a particularly ardent fan decided to climb on top of a shiny Mercedes for a better view. Eventually the police forced Big Country to cut short their set or risk coughing up for a fleet of replacement motors.

P.J. used to chain smoke grown-up cigarettes (Marlboro); he doesn't even indulge in that vice, any more — just the occasional weedy-looking cigarillo for him. He has settled down comfortably into marriage, wealth and fame: he's actually so famous now that terrible rock groups include his words in their terrible repertoires . . . well, Big Country have made a song called Republican Party Reptile, anyway.

"I haven't heard that song. Big Country, Large Country, what is it? You say they're the worst group in the world? Oh, well, it's very flattering anyway.

"Q" magazine

Big Country warn Runrig against rock 'n' reel tag

WHAT have Big Country to do with the collapse of Communism?

It's a question for historians to ponder, but is it coincidence that Eastern Europe embraced democracy shortly after the Country rocked the Iron Curtain countries?

This week it's Dingwall's turn to play host to the band that left the Reds reeling. The first contemporary Scottish band to hit the big time play the second of two gigs at Legends tonight.

"They've come a long way since" Stuart

Adams' songs and Bruce Watson's dixie five "bagpipe" guitar blazed a trail across the charts in the early 80s.

Adapting to personnel changes and absorbing new musical influences have evolved their style, as their sixth album, "No Place Like Home" reveals.

"All our albums have been different," Bruce commented. "It's only the singles that have a common thread running through them - the bagpipe guitar thing. People make too much of that."

"We didn't set out to be a Scottish band - only two of us live in Scotland."

"I love Scotland and I still live here but once you get tagged like that, it's really hard to get out of. At the time it's great but when you want to do something different, it's a pain. Runrig are going to find themselves in that trap if

they're not in it already."

Dunfermline-based Bruce is very satisfied with "No Place Like Home": "Our first album has always been my favourite but this ranks alongside it," he revealed.

"Producer Pat Moran basically let us be Big Country on this record. I would say I'd like to do a song in a certain style and he would advise me to go away and listen to somebody in that style - Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young or Redbone, maybe. Pat's not exactly a household name but

to me he's a real producer and we hope to continue the working relationship."

Big Country launched a 40-date tour at London's celebrated Town and Country Club last Thursday night.

"We're not a big venue band," Bruce declared. "We play city halls and universities, our biggest gigs are Edinburgh Playhouse or Glasgow Barrowland."

Foreign tours take up a considerable part of their year and record sales dictate when the band visit America or Europe.

Launching their "Peace In Our Time" album at the Russian Embassy in London led to a concert in Moscow but the event was not a success.

"It was weird," he recalled. "It was the weekend and they turn down the power because everybody's at home and nobody's working, so we had



Big Country ... at Legends in Dingwall.

technical problems. It was a bit of a shambles.

"They asked us back but they wanted us to play in the square instead of a stadium or arena where there would be more control. They're just not geared up on having rock festivals!"

The 1988 occasion was a

considerable letdown after the band's appearance with Bryan Adams in East Berlin.

"That was in response to Michael Jackson's concert in West Berlin," Stuart commented. "The East Berliners couldn't get through The Wall, so we decided to do a concert for them."

Big Country have also played Estonia but Watson

was as unimpressed as he had been with Moscow. "Estonia is not the place to go and play yet," he declared. "They still have to learn about things, we take for granted in the West - like freedom. It must be quite hard to adjust."

Inverness Courier 11/10/91

ERRATA

My apologies to Ralf Kirschnick for a little error that crept into his review of the Bonn Biskuithalle gig in Issue 11. On page 22, line 5, the word "anything" should have been used instead of "everything". Just wishful thinking on my part!

Apologies also to John Loter from New York, for not giving full credit for his superb caricature of the band featured on page 26 of Issue 11. The band thought it was superb, they absolutely loved it and very kindly signed the original, which I have sent back to John. Got any more like it, John?

Also, in the review of the gig at the Fan Club Convention, mention was made of Tony missing the intro into "Beautiful People". This should have been "Winter Sky".

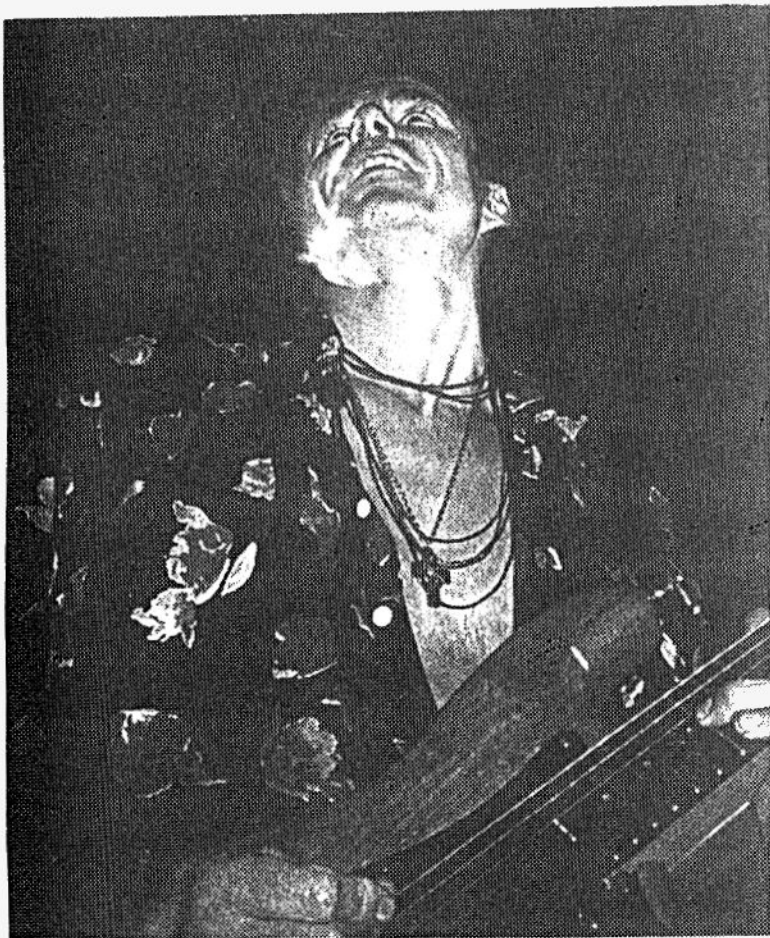
SPOT THE BOGEY COMPETITION

Roll up ladies and gentleman for the great Christmas "WSNS"

SPOT THE BOGEY COMPETITION

Simply place a cross on the picture where you think Stuart's bogey is situated. Send your entries to arrive no later than 29 February 1992 to the usual address. Only one entry per person.

(Anyone who actually enters this competition definately needs his/her bumps feeling)



MUSO'S CORNER



In the first of an occasional feature about the band and the technicalities of the music they create, we hear from Stuart about the guitar sound on "Reptile" and how it was created and from Bruce about E-bows and radio mikes and why the band have stopped using them.

First Stuart, on "Reptile"

"The way we did that, we were working with a producer called Pat Moran, who knows all about these traditional-style instruments and guitar sounds and stuff. What you do is ... you have these old-fashioned Marshall pre-amps in a lot of studios ... and you send the sound from that out to your own amp, I used an old 1960's Marshall 50 watt amplifier for the slide stuff and then back in through the studio and crank the level up that's going to tape so high so that it's not showing anything except red and record it. It comes through will all that natural compression and distortion on it, it's almost like a harmonica when you do it like that, it goes right into that range ... just completely overload that tape"

OK Bruce, how come you stopped using the E-bow on "King of Emotion" ?

"Too much hassle, going back, picking it up, stick it on, going back, it's only just a wee bit, you know!"

And the radio mikes ?

"Aye, it sounds better with leads ... I use a lead all the time now. What happened was, on the last tour I was using the radio ones for 7 years and they just packed in, so I plugged a lead in and "fuck me, it sounds so much better". It sounds more live, more ballsier ... it's just another thing to go wrong, at least if a lead fucks up you just stick another one in. I've cut right back on the gadgets, they just fuck the guitar sound up. In reality, you're better just sticking with a guitar with a lead into the amplifier"



LETTERBOX



Well, why not, I thought. I get so many letters from you asking about all sorts of things related to Big Country that I thought it was about time I devoted a couple of pages in the 'zine to illustrate all the rubbish (sorry, wonderfully interesting stuff) that you write to me about. So be warned, anyone writing to me is liable to see their name in print if I think it's funny or of interest to other fans.

First letter out of Postie's sack this issue is from Yeovil, in Somerset, from the pen of TINA HUTCHINS. She had a bit of bother getting home from London after the T & C gig on Saturday 5th October. I'll let her take up the story.....

"The gig was brilliant - even though it took me 7 hours to get home from London. I missed the last train from Waterloo, so rather than go to a hotel or wait at the station for the next train (9 hours !) I decided to try and get to Salisbury where my car was, via Southampton. After several hours travelling by train and coach (due to men working on the line) I arrived at Southampton station at 3.30 am on Sunday morning to find the station all locked up. I had no choice but to spend £30 on a taxi to Salisbury. Then to cap it all, my car broke down at 5.00 am. I finally crawled into bed at 7.00 am. Some night ! Next gigs are Poole and Bristol, I hope they will be less traumatic."

It's nice to know that I'm not the only mad fool who spends all sorts of hours travelling around following the band. Hope your journey back from Leicester on the last night of the UK tour was somewhat less eventful. I've had a few letters from people asking about merchandise from the tour and whether any is still available. KAREN NANKIVELL from Shrewsbury wrote to me about the gig at Wolverhampton Civic Hall.

"...I always collect their programmes and was very upset when I went to buy one as they had run out, especially so as it was my birthday on the same day. Can you let me know if there is any way I can get hold of one".

Sure can, Karen (and anyone else who is interested). If you get in touch with Winterland Productions, 37 Soho Square, London W1V 5DG. Their telephone number is 071 434 4503. They told me that they have "loads" of stuff left over from the tour, but although there's no reduction in the price, they don't charge extra for postage & packing. Ring them for details of what's available.

I've had a letter from MARK KIMBERLEY from Great Barr, in Birmingham with a query on a 12" single he owns.

"Please could you tell me about a 12" I own. It has a plain white label and has "In a Big Country" on Side 1 and "All of Us" and "In a Big Country" on side B. Is this a rare record ?

Well Mark, not really. What you have there is what is called a white label or test pressing of the standard 12" of "In a Big Country". They are sometimes released as advance copies of a new single to radio stations etc... and most of them seem to find their way on to the collectors market. As to it's value, well probably not more than £5.00, but it depends on so many things, not least of which is how much a prospective purchaser is prepared to pay !

Lastly this issue, a quick one from ALAN GIBSON from High Wycombe.

"Can you possibly answer a question for me - who decides what comes out on single, is it the band or the record company and why did they release the weakest track on the album as a single"

Well Alan, as far as I am aware, the choice of singles rests with the band, subject to the record company's approval. As to the release of "Beautiful People", well that was Stuart's own personal choice (see page 13 of Issue 11 of "WSNS").

Well that's all for this issue, we'll have loads more letters next time, that is, if you lot out there send me some.

GET WRITING !

DOUGLAS JOHNSON'S CONCERT TIPS FOR

HOURS OF TROUBLE FREE MOSHING

1. Don't borrow a camera from someone at work and then go "up the front" at Barrowlands with it in your pocket. If you do, it will magically jump out of your pocket during the opening bars of "Kansas" to be trampled underfoot by the sweating multitudes.
2. If you are foolish enough to ignore this advice, be sure you have a spare £80 to buy a new one.

Ouch !

BITS 'N BOBS

The videos for "Reptile and "Beautiful People" were shot in Elstree Studios, Hertfordshire and Peckham, London respectively. They were both directed by Roger Pomphrey.

The publicity pics of the band looking mean and moody as used in the tour programme and other places, were shot on the banks of the River Thames, down by the Thames Barrier. The photographer was a guy by the name of Pete Anderson.

The boys even managed a mention on ITV's "Hale & Pace" comedy show on 29 September. For those that didn't see it, the gag was; "We went to see the Rolling Stones.....and we got stoned"
"We went to see Wet Wet Wet.....and we got wet"
"We went to see Big Country.....and we got lost"

Los Angeles based DCC Compact Classics label have started to issue "King Biscuit Flower Hour" radio shows on CD. Initial releases will be compilations, but hopefully, full live shows will follow, subject to the individual bands permission. I know of 3 Big Country shows recorded by "King Biscuit" and these are Ritz Club, New York, August 1983, Barrowlands, Glasgow, New Years Eve 1983 and Tower Theatre, Philadelphia, November 1983. It would be great to get one/all of these released, as from what Stuart tells me, there will never be a live Big Country album as far as he is concerned.

On a similar note, Windsong Records have started to release old "Radio One in Concert" albums, recent releases being Wishbone Ash, Sensational Alex Harvey Band and Family from the 1970's.

Congrats to long-time "WSNS" reader Ian Drain from Portsmouth for getting his review of "No Place Like Home" on Channel 4's Oracle teletext service on 23 October.

Whatever happened to the Country Club's "regularly updated" 0898 (i.e. rip-off at cheap rates, extortionate at other times) news update service? As far as I am aware, it hasn't been updated for at least two months and is still promoting the "new" single "Beautiful People"

N.B. The comments above relating to charges are levelled at British Telecom, not Country Club. Just in case you wondered.

Ever wonder what the band talk about in the dressing room after a show? Well, if York is anything to go by, topics included Paul McCartney, sausages and Bruce posing naked for a future issue of "WSNS" (I kid you not !)

Thanks to eagle-eyed (and eared) reader Mark Kimberley from Great Barr in Birmingham for pointing out a couple of errors in the Japanese boxed set. On the "Steeltown" disc, the track listed as "All Fall Together" is in fact "Giant" and on "The Seer" disc, the writing credit for "The Sailor" is given as Robinson, Moore and Tarplin, who of course wrote "Tracks of my Tears".

Various tracks (or bits thereof) heard being played at sound checks on the "NPLH" tour included "Green Onions" by Booker T and the MG's and Led Zeppelin's "Over the Hills and Far Away" "Heartbreaker" (previously heard in the 1989 live "scratch" version of "Fields of Fire) and "In my Time of Dying". Quite brought a tear to the eye of an old Zeppo-phile like myself to hear Stuart playing the licks of "Riffmeister" Jimmy Page.

When Bruce's wife Sandra recently started a tele-sales job for a double-glazing firm, her first call was from someone claiming to be a Father O'Shaughnessy, who was interested in replacement windows for his monastery ! It seems that someone was taking the piss.

Synchronicity or wot. I found out recently that I went to school with Ian Calder, or "Chip" as he is better known, the guy who has done Big Country's stage lights for some years. We met again at Newcastle City Hall after a gap of over 14 years. I did say to Ian that I wouldn't mention the trainspotting, so I won't.

British tennis Wightman Cup player Sarah Gomer was spotted in the crowd at the first night of the T & C "residency". There is no substance to the rumour that Tony is to be recruited as coach to the British Women's tennis team. New balls please !

"WSNS" to the rescue. A chance remark made to me by Bruce when I was at Rockfield earlier this year, revealed that he didn't have a copy of the red sleeve 12" of "In a Big Country" (COUNT 313) Enter "WSNS" reader Stuart Arnott from London, who managed to track down a copy in mint condition, which was duly presented to Bruce at the HMV Oxford Street in-store signing in September.

As a follow up to the above, Stuart has also uncovered a cerise (that's bright pink) sleeve of the above 12" at a recent record fair. That's definately a new one on me, if anyone else has got one like it, would they please let me know.

"I definately prefer yours to the other one...theirs is a bit... strange....and I'm not just saying that"
I'm sure Bruce's comments on "WSNS" weren't in the least bit influenced by the fact that I was giving him a lift from his hotel into Inverness on the afternoon of 11th October !

A number of people have asked me about the Dublin show referred to by Stuart in Issue 11 (page 11), where the band supposedly played songs that they had never played live before, or since. Well I do have a tape of the show, but it doesn't contain any of the "extra" tracks - presumably whoever was bootlegging the show didn't take enough tape !

It was announced on 14 November that Stuart had been beaten into second place by Radio One's Nicky Campbell for the honorary position of Rector of St Andrews University, Edinburgh. Third place was Viz comic's Billy the Fish !

"Beautiful People" did manage an entry into a BBC Top 40 after all. On 6 December it stood at no. 36 on the Heavy Metal/Rock chart, as announced on Tommy Vance's Friday Rock Show amongst such luminaries as Metallica, Nirvana et al ...

Some of you may remember that in an previous issue of "WSNS" I made mention of a racehorse called "Big Country". Well, John Turner from Pontefract, who works in a bookmakers, has sent me details of a greyhound with the same name as your favourite band.

Ox 4-55 450 M 11TH

- 1 BIG COUNTRY**
- 2 SPIRAL BENNY**
- 3 GOBBINSTOWN FOX**
- 4 GREENANE YANK**
- 5 BOLD RELATIVE**
- 6 BEARAS SWIFT**

John says ... " ...I can report that our favourite hound ran absolutely nowhere, a bit like Big Country singles these days really !"

A huge "thank you" to the brainless cretin who decided it would be a good idea to "gob" on Stuart midway through the set at Redcar Coatham Bowl on 26 October. Stuart was furious, stopping the song and berating the individual concerned, suggesting that he would be better off in the gutter where he belonged.

Some of you may have noticed Tony's lethal looking scar on his torso when the band stripped for action at the end of some of the hotter gigs on the recent tour. Well, it's not a knife wound, it apparently dates back to when he was a kid, an appendectomy I'm told and the scar has grown with him. As Bruce put it ... "it's a fucking lethal scar, but he still doesn't pick up the chicks, does he "

It seems that Pat Ahern, former drummer of this parish, is now driving trucks for a living. Let's hope he handles a truck with a bit more assertiveness that he did his drum kit.

A busy night for the Cumbria Constabulary on 17th October. Not only was some cash nicked from the production office backstage at the Sands Centre where the band was playing, but your law abiding "WSNS" Ed was stopped (and breathalised) for having a defective rear light. With the police so busy, the sheep rustlers must have had a field (sic) day.
P.S. The breath test was (of course) negative, by the way.

It seems your "WSNS" Ed doesn't have much luck with cars. When he went down to London for the T & C gigs, as he was staying in Reading with a friend, they decided to go to Portsmouth to see their football team give Newcastle Utd a good stuffing. However their car decided that it wasn't going to start after the match despite coaxings, pleadings and "Basil-Fawlty" style beatings. Thanks to the AA, we managed to get back to Reading by about 9 o'clock that evening, but by then it was too late. I gather the Saturday show was the best of the five as well. Bugger !

WANTS 'N SWAPS

GORDON TOSH of

is trying to get hold of a video of last years T & C show as broadcast by BSB. He does have the facility to copy videos if someone would lend him an original and he promises to take great care of it.

ALEX CARTER wants to correspond with anyone aged 18 or over who lives in the North of England or Scotland who are "totally mad on Big Country". As she puts it ;

"I'm surrounded by techno, The Smiths, Morrisey and thrash fans in these halls but guess who's got the most powerful amp and speakers !"

You can contact Alex at

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

(From York Barbican Centre dressing room, post gig.)

Bruce; When are you going to start printing stuff like this in the fanzine ? (pointing to "page 3" type girlie-pic from one of the tabloid newspapers)

Douglas; When you agree to pose naked for me !



HARD + STYLISH = CHICKS + BEER

Hey guys ! Do you want to hear about the latest line in fashion accessories, absolutely guaranteed to impress the women in your life. Well, it's here. The "WSNS" T-shirt. Made from 100% cotton and available in all sizes, each shirt is individually hand printed with the "WSNS" logo. It's the only thing you'll need this winter. And how much is this incredibly desirable example of haute coiture ? Only £6.50 (inc p & p).

Cheques payable to "D.R.Johnson" and please state size when you order. Allow 3 weeks for delivery.

(The Editor would like to make no apology whatsoever for the extremely sexist nature of the above picture and advert)

Some of you know that I operate a "Country News" envelope system similar to (well, alright, a direct copy of) Country Club's "Hot News" service. All you need to do is send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope and if I get any advance news of gigs, single releases etc.... then I will let you know. Dead simple.

Why not take out a 5 issue subscription to your favourite Big Country fanzine and take all the worry out of your life. With a subscription, each issue is delivered steaming hot to your door, fresh from the printers. No more do you need to scan the small ads in the music press each month, making your fingers black'n'inky in the process. The cost of this panacea (look it up - Ed) is as follows;

UK - £6.50

Europe (inc Eire) - £8.00

Rest of World - £9.50

Payment should be by cheque or P.O. payable to D R Johnson.

If you must send cash or coins, then be sure the envelope is strong and secure. A good idea is to sellotape the coins to a piece of card.

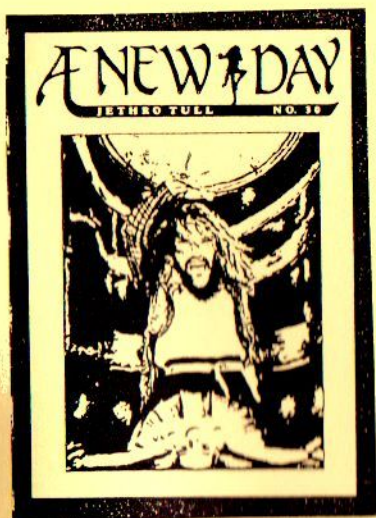
If sending money from abroad, then please send cash (sterling) or an IMO only, I cannot accept any other forms of payment.

I'm sure you'll all be delighted to know that I now have a plentiful supply of all back issues of "WSNS". What's more, I can now offer all back issues at the amazingly low price of £1.00 each (inc p & p). How does he do it? Don't delay, order your back issues today while stocks last.



THE OTHER BIG COUNTRY FANZINE...

"Inwards" is available from Jason Allen/Andy Maule, . Currently £1.50, but I believe it's going up to £1.75 from the next issue.



A NEW DAY - THE JETHRO TULL MAGAZINE

An excellent 36-page glossy 'zine absolutely packed with stuff on Jethro Tull and its various off-shoots. The editor makes reference to their new album's poor performance in the charts, lack of airplay, complaining about Radio One etc ... Sound familiar?

I don't claim to be much of a Jethro Tull fan, but it seems that a "unique" or original sound such as theirs (or Big Country's) counts for nothing in today's dance-orientated, (c)rap world of chart music. Well worth a look.

£5.50 for a 5 issue subscription, from:
David Rees,

