

COUNTRY CLUB



ISSUE 46

OCTOBER 1999

Welcome to the new Issue of the Country Club.

Firstly, apologies for the incorrect Issue number last time (issue 49), it should have been Issue 45. So, welcome to Issue 46 of the country Club!! It has been a rollercoaster 2 months since the last issue, and here you will be able to read a large chunk of what's been going on, and what is going to happen in the future. August and September have seen the release of the "Fragile Thing" single (where the band failed to chart, due to CD2 sales being banned by the chart regulator – more on that later), the band travelling to war-torn Kosovo, the release of the new album 'Driving To Damascus', and a convention, along with much more, which we hope this issue shall bring you up to date on. Also in this issue, we have reports from the Perth gig, as well as reviews on the convention and the album, plus extracts from Bruce Watson's infamous Diary, which tells the story of the Bands trip to Kosovo last month. We also have the rumours and gossip surrounding BC from the Damascus News Desk, plus interview with Stuart Adamson, pictures and lots more.

Plus the new single 'See You/Perfect World' is released on 25th October 1999, we need all of you to buy as many copies as you can, tell your friends and family, neighbours and work colleagues about it, this 2nd single from the album is vitally important, so persuade as many people as you can to buy it.

Go out and buy all 3 formats of the new single in the first week of release and help it attain a high chart entry. Buy copies for your friends and family as Birthday presents or just as a simple present! The more copies bought (preferably in Chart Return Shops - HMV, Virgin, Tower, Our Price, Pinnacle shops etc.), the higher the band shall chart. You shall also find details of the forthcoming BC UK Tour in this issue, it promises to be a superb tour; you would be foolish to miss out! For up to date information on what's happening with the band, please check with the Big Country Phoneline on 0891 600031 (calls cost 60p per minute), or visit the Big Country Website on <http://www.bigcountry.co.uk> We welcome submission of articles, and would be pleased to hear your feedback on the CC, and any suggestions you may have. In the meantime, enjoy your reading, stay safe, stay free, stay happy, stay alive!!

Willie

(This issue of Country Club has been put together by Willie and TonyG, with help from Ali, Tara and Mazz. Also many thanks to everyone else who contributed to this issue.)

!!!!!!! NEW SINGLE !!!!!!!

CD1: See You / Perfect World / This Bloods For You

(exclusive to this format - from Rockfield recording session from album session)

CD2: See You / Perfect World / Camp Smedley Theme (exclusive to this format- HITW Recording)

7" Single: See You / Perfect World

Both CD's have postcards exclusive to each CD (2 from Nashville, 2 from Kosovo), while 7" single is available in traditional Track Records White Sleeve. The third format is a 7" single at the request of HMV and Virgin Singles Buyers, as they said they would stock twice as many as 12", and 7" singles are also considered more collectable. Both the titles HAVE to be on all formats - a CIN ruling. We hope you will support the band again and get this single into the charts, and give the band the breakthrough they need. The video cut to Perfect World has 2 versions (one with Kosovo footage), and can be seen on VH1 and hopefully other channels soon.

!!!!!!!UK TOUR!!!!!!!

6th December - Dublin Olympian

8th December - Newcastle City Hall

9th December - Wolverhampton Civic

11th December - Bristol University

12th December - London Forum

13th December - Manchester Academy

14th December - Glasgow Garage

Tickets available from Big Country Website, and Box Offices. Check local press for further details. We also hope to add a couple of extra dates, check Big Country Website, Information line, and local press for details.

NEWS, RUMOURS AND GOSSIP FROM THE DAMASCUS NEWS DESK

Welcome to the news. The past two months have been highly eventful in the life of Big Country, and in this Bulletin we hope to update you with rumours and gossip in what has happened or is alleged to have happened and also a few things that should, might or may happen in the future. Stuart Adamson appeared on BBC2's Never Mind The Buzzcocks on Friday 1st October, and proved to be a hit! A solid performance was put in, where he didn't get the p*ss ripped out of him (as is common on this show), and Stuart came out with many quips, and was captured on camera a lot with wry grins reflecting the banter than was flying about the show. One of Stuart's team-mates was Gail Porter and she came in for a lot of flak from presenter Lamaar, to the extent that he told her that she would not be awarded any more points until she took her top off. She never did, and despite Stuart's star performance, where he got all the songs in the "Guess the Intro" round among others, the opposing team were awarded 4 points per correct answer in the final round (as opposed to the normal one). Both Gail Porter and Marianne Faithful (who was on the opposing team) were firing daggers at Lamaar by the end, and apparently scenes were cut from the recording (2 hours edited to 1/2 hour) where Ms Porter was in tears from Lamaar's jibes, and Mr Adamson comforted her with a re-assuring hug, to the extent Stuart is now Gail Porter's new best friend. Marianne Faithful even told Lamaar a few times that "Stuart knows!" the answer to questions she was asked, unfortunately he was on the opposing side, and clearly didn't understand the rules, or didn't care!

Fragile Thing was on the Radio 2 play list for a total of 9 weeks (7 weeks A List, 2 weeks B List). See You has just been added to the Radio 2 C List, and it is hoped over the next week or two it shall rise to the A List (20-25 plays per week), while the Fragile Thing video was shown extensively on VH1. CD2 of See You/Perfect World has a very moving startling picture of Bruce and Stuart standing on rubble either side of a Kosovan orphan playing Bruce's mandolin, against a backdrop of war torn, destroyed buildings in Kosovo. Perfect World shall hopefully be seen on the following TV shows (either performance or video): London Today, GMTV, TFI (we are trying - all fans e-mail TFI and ask for BC), among others. Perfect World and/or See You has been added to Clyde, Forth and Radio2 play lists, and we hope Virgin Radio and many others shall pick it up as well. Call/e-mail your local radio stations and ask them to play the songs. Discussions are under way for a Japanese Tour in 2000, as well as a possible USA Tour with Simple Minds. All being well, BC should play a multitude of countries in the year 2000 all around the world. Discussions are also underway for a European Record Deal, which should see the album released throughout Europe next year. Similarly, the USA should see the new album released, possibly to coincide with the USA Tour (provisionally April/May 2000).

Big Country shall hopefully be appearing at the opening of a new HMV store in Birmingham on 28th October, and possibly doing other in-store signings the week commencing 25/10/99. BC have taken out Co-op Ads with the likes of HMV, Virgin, Our Price for the week of the Dble A-side Single release, and this shall see the band getting more prominence both newspaper-wise and in-store, thus ensuring a good chance of these chains being well stocked with the single. Stuart was to appear at NetAid introducing Stereophonics & Holly Johnson, but his appearance at NetAid was unfortunately restricted on Saturday 9th October to joining all the performers and other presenters on stage at Wembley just before the 10pm world-wide live link-up with the New York and Geneva shows for the "Moment Of Unity". Due to various sets over-running, some sets had to be cut, and in the case of Holly Johnson, removed completely. This also meant that the presenters introducing all the acts were dropped as well. Stuart did do an interview and it can be found by going to the NetAid Website <http://www.netaid.org>. It can be found in the "Concert Clips" Section, under Big Country and lasts for approx 3 minutes where Stuart talks about the Scotland For Kosovo benefit concert, the recent trip to Kosovo itself, the website, and also about DTD.

Stuart shall appear on the Popped In Crashed Out ITV Quiz Show, which shall be screened at 00.30am on Saturday 23rd October. Presented by Phil Alexander (Kerrang Editor), it also features Jacques Lucont (from the band Les Rhythmes Digitales). The winner of the show shall have their video shown, so make sure you tune in to see if Stuart wins! If you're quick, you'll be able to pick up a very limited edition of the CD (5000 have been pressed) with two extra tracks, 'Shattered Cross' and 'Too Many Ghosts'. These are from Stuart's other project, Blue Heeler. The band appeared at Key 103 Mardi Gras in Manchester on 29th August, and City Radio's "Liverpool Party At The Pier" the following day, performing a couple of tracks at each event, both events being broadcast live on the radio. Stuart has been doing radio interviews this week (w/c 11/10/99) for future broadcasting. These include ScotFM, BBC Radio Scotland, Clyde2 and Central FM. Check with them for actual broadcast dates and times. Also Stuart did an interview with "The Source" which is syndicated around the country to various Radio Stations - check with your local Radio Stations as to whether they are broadcasting this interview. Stuart has also been doing interviews with the following: ITV Teletext; Bristol Observer; Newcastle Journal; Wolverhampton Express and Star; News of Wolverhampton; Bristol Evening Post; Manchester Evening News; Rochdale Observer. We do not have publication dates of these interviews as yet.

STOP PRESS: VH1 shall be showing Perfect World video on the Paul King show.

FRAGILE THING: CD2: BANNED

Obviously something went down. It's a BIG story, long and quite convoluted. I don't expect any of you to completely get it because I don't.

CIN monitor the charts on behalf of BPI and Milward Brown who publish the charts. As you know there are 3 formats permissible for the singles charts. They're various rules. No more than 20 minutes. Only 3 songs and the A side has to be on both. You can include postcards and posters but you must not have more than a single fold sleeve. I got an email on the Monday night after FT was released, from Pinnacle stating that CIN would not be including CD 2 sales in their chart computations. Why? Too many folds. I was astounded. The team when told was astonished. Too many folds? What's the problem with them and why the ruling. "You mustn't try to get the buyer into buying if the package can be used for something else or a major part in influencing them to purchase. "Rules are rules you know". "Ricky Martin had 1 second over 20 minutes on his CD but we allowed that because no-one would be persuaded to buy that because it had a extra second" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. How come you can give away posters and postcards yet they are not perceived as an enticement? If rules are rules, why wasn't Ricky Martins single banned? Well, there is an organisation called CSC (Chart Supervision

Committee) and they are made up of 6 people from industry. Paul Burger is one of them and guess what, he is also chairman of Sony and Ricky is on Columbia, owned by Sony. 5ive have been making a fuss themselves this week about this problem because they would have been no 1 if Ricky M's single was not on chart. Ludicrous eh! We considered cutting out the offending cardboard bits, even those were in shops. Why were we told on the Monday of the release? Why not the week preceding release (after all they had the singles!). We could have changed them. Why the stupid rule in the first place? Why not be considerate to a new label and warn about next time? If the stores under-ordering and some not taking any with the re-orders not getting instore quickly enough was not bad enough, the stores (well HMV in particular) withdrew both copies of the CD by mistake. We were on course for Top 40. All stores I spoke and went to (20+) have said the singles "flew out". Sorry for this story. It all sounds far fetched. It's insane that they would not include the sale because of the cardboard folds.

Ian Grant.

Track Records Press Release 12th August 1999

BIG COUNTRY DENIED HIT SINGLE BY LUDICROUS CIN CHART RULES

Big Country, who were set to storm back into the Top 40 single charts with "Fragile Thing" (featuring Eddi Reader), released on Monday 9th August, have had to withdraw the CD2 version from the stores as CIN have ruled that it has "one cardboard fold too many".

The CIN chart committee has ruled that the "jack-in-a-box" origami style lid of the CD2 format of "Fragile Thing" may entice the public to purchase the single for more than just the music. "After Ricky Martin was allowed to break the rules when his single was found to be one second too long this is ludicrous" storms frontman Stuart Adamson. The massive campaign for the single organised by the band's label, Track Records, has included massive support on the Radio Two play list, a full scale national newspaper and regional radio advertising campaign, rave reviews in the national press, a video on the VH1 play list and a punishing promotional schedule. Big Country performed live on BBC1's "Wicked Women" show in Hyde Park on 24th July with Kele Le Roc duetting on "Fragile Thing" alongside Ronan Keating, Emma Bunton, Martine McCutcheon (in whose band guitarist Bruce Watson also guested on the night), Lisa Stansfield and Republica. Last month they played a sold out show at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire and at the special request of Jacques Villeneuve appeared at his Lucky Strike Formula 1 party. They were special guests at Rod Stewart's Hampden Park gig in Glasgow and jetted off to Nashville to film the video for the single.

On Monday this week, after CIN's ruling, retailers were asked to withdraw the CD2 cardboard version from their shelves, so that Track could cut the offending extra fold off the sleeve. Many confused retailers withdrew both the CIN approved and the "illegal" version. All of the momentum the record label had achieved was immediately scuppered.

"It's like a 'district town council' or 'planning department' response. Pure, rule book 'red tape'. Is this how the 'business of music' should be run?" railed Stuart Adamson today.

FRAGILE THING: CD2: BANNED

CD2 packaging - useful ??

What can it be used for?

Test: Put liquid in it. Result: Liquid leaks out. Conclusion: Useless.

Test: Put food in it. Result: Food goes off. Conclusion: Useless.

Test: Put items such as pens, paper clips etc in it. Result: It won't stay open for you to get the items out nor will it close properly to keep the items in. Conclusion: Useless.

Test: Use to view the eclipse and protect the eyes. Result: Total obscurity. Conclusion: Useless.

Test: Put the CD in it. Result: Keeps the CD free from dirt and protects it from possible damage. Conclusion: Useful - just what it was designed for.

What can you store in it? What can it be used for? Take it along and wang it into one of the CIN suit's heads - now that's useful.

Scottish Daily Star 14th Aug99 - Gareth Morgan

"Eighties stars, Big Country have been deprived a place in the Top 40- because the cover of their CD has too much CARDBOARD.

The bands record company was forced to withdraw a version of the new single, Fragile Thing, from the shops after bosses at chart compiler CIN said the packaging "had one cardboard fold too many".

Big Country's comeback single - which also features Eddi Reader of Fairground Attraction fame - was released last Monday. The Scottish Rockers were confident of a top 40 hit for more than eight years. But their hopes were dashed when CIN ruled that the CD's "Jack-in-the-box" style cover broke chart rules.

Big Country spokesman Ian Grant stormed, "It's straight out of Monty Python. It's pure red tape, it's this how the music business should be run?"

BIG COUNTRY LIVE: PERTH 25TH JULY 1999

To say that Andy and I were looking forward to the Perth gig is an understatement - the Kosovo gig was fantastic - this was going to be better! However, having broken all land speed records to get there on time we missed the start - bloomin' rubberneckers and Sunday drivers! When we eventually arrived my initial thought was how diverse the crowd was - anyone from babies in pushchairs to seriously ageing rockers! The band were playing Fragile Thing when we got there and it really seemed to go down well - excellent! We quickly made our way to the front (only place to be, especially when you're a short**se!) and sure enough there were the hard core mentalists as usual! I thought the band were sounding, and looking, as good as ever - the guest vocalist - Stuart's daughter Kirsten - did a grand job on Chance too. (Am I really that old? - I remember her big brother Callum as a wee baby!)

From a fan's point of view, it was great to be at a smaller gig again - the atmosphere was great and the energy was amazing - all the old songs got the crowd going and from what I heard of the new stuff the album's going to be excellent. The band seemed to enjoy themselves (apart from the flying beer incident, but that particular tosser got the sharp edge of Mr. Watson's tongue! -Let's just say he's definitely bilingual - fluent in F**koff - and excellent at sign language too! A multitalented bloke! I don't think that it was a response to BC's music or anything - just that there were some VERY drunk people about! I mean, one lad was so pished he actually hit on me, and that hasn't happened in a long time!!) And the crowd certainly seemed to have a good time. I think that people who are BC 'virgins' can't help but be affected by the enthusiasm of the 'veterans' - if you see people having a good time you want to be part of it - and that starts on the stage at a BC concert! I don't think Perth was an easy crowd to play to - but the music was well received. Roll on the UK tour and BC making it big in the States - the new material will definitely go down well there!

Karen McEwing

NEW BIG COUNTRY SINGLE: SEE YOU/PERFECT WORLD: OUT 25TH OCTOBER 1999-10-18

COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE:

P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

BIG COUNTRY INFORMATION LINE: 0891 600031 (CALLS COST 60 PENCE PER MINUTE)

BIG COUNTRY IN KOSOVO

PRISTINA, Serbia (Reuters) - Kosovo swapped combat boots for ballet shoes at the weekend as thousands of residents of the strife-torn province attended a festival of dance, drama and music.

"We're all getting together, like everywhere where life's normal," British actress Vanessa Redgrave, one of the organisers of the festival called "The Return," told Reuters during a jazz and rock concert Saturday night. Redgrave was the spokeswoman for the festival, which began Friday night with a concert in Skopje, capital of the neighbouring country of Macedonia, and continued Saturday and Sunday in Kosovo.

The three-day event had sponsorship from artists and performers from all spheres of the entertainment and arts world, including pop singers Elton John, Sting and Bono, classical singer Dawn Upshaw, and dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov. Also involved were numerous foundations and many of the international or national aid agencies involved in the U.N.-led effort to restore normalcy to Kosovo after Nato's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia.

Ethnic Albanian playwright and actor Enver Petrovci, a portion of whose play "The Cursed" was performed Saturday, said he thought the festival would provide a big boost to restoring some semblance of normalcy to the arts in Kosovo. "It is wonderful that the international artistic community did not forget about Kosovo and they have brought a bit of joy here after 10 years of slavery," he said.

Other performers included a troupe from the Martha Graham Dance Company of New York, French rock singer Patricia Kass, Italian rock star Andrea Mingardi, British stars Lulu and Big Country, Canadian performers Bruce Cockburn and Tribe of One and a miners' choir from Cape Breton called Men of the Deeps. But all the programs also included some ethnic Albanian performers, which Redgrave said was by design. "Albanian culture can do a lot for us too, you know. It's a very beautiful, very wonderful and very vast culture," she said.

Sunday Mail, 19th September 1999: ROCKIN' IN THE RUBBLE

If they make records for the next 20 years, Scots rock star Big Country will NEVER play a more bizarre concert. Singer Stuart Adamson and his group are the toast of Kosovo.. After a gig in war-torn Pristina. But they'll never forget the night they performed in dilapidated sports hall-right next to a bombsite. They were invited to headline The Return Festival - a free concert Stuart, guitarist Bruce Watson and bass player Tony Butler were escorted over the border from Macedonia in a UN troop military convoy. The concert came three months after they starred in the Sunday Mail's charity gig at the SECC FOR Kosovan refugees.

The latest event was organised by actress Vanessa Redgrave, who is an UNICEF ambassador. She should have asked Mickey Rooney for a few tips on how to put on a show. For the only other pop act was Scots legend Lulu. The rest of the line-up was a weird mix of Albanian rappers, Italian opera singers and a choir of Canadian miners!

But, in terms of entertainment, this was the biggest thing to happen for weeks in a city where nothing seems to happen anymore.

After the sound check, Big Country and I went for a wander around Pristina. And nothing could have prepared us for the sheer devastation. But they got a warm welcome. Some kids joined them for a kickabout with a ball. Then we went to an art college which has become mission control for a squad of Royal Marine Commando reservists. They're part of the UN peacekeeping force in Kosovo and it's their job to help the locals get their lives back together. Sergeant Major Frank McKenna, a schoolteacher from Glasgow, said; " There's never a dull moment. We get 300 people - homeless, poor, the maimed, the bombed in our door every day. " They all need help. So we try to assist them."

Word has spread fast that there was a pop group in town. It seemed that everyone turned out to see Big Country.

First they had to endure a series of Vanessa's thank-you speeches which would have put Gwyneth Paltrow to shame.

Then she introduced Peruvian flute players, opera singers and rappers. Next, Braveheart actor Angus McFadyen recited a poem and got the slow handclap.

The kids of Kosovo just wanted to rock. Luckily, Lulu was happy to oblige. Then Big Country hit the stage, and the audience leapt around. And their finale, Keep on Rockin' In The Free World, was so apt.

Stuart said; "We hope this has brought some fun back into the kids' lives. "It was unbelievable and we won't forget it for a long, long time."

- Note three pictures also appeared with this story of Stuart, Tony, Bruce on stage 8 x 6, inch plus survey of ruins and locals kids 4x4.

NEW BIG COUNTRY SINGLE: SEE YOU/PERFECT WORLD: OUT 25TH OCTOBER 1999-10-18

COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE:

P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

BIG COUNTRY IN KOSOVO

A quick summary on the recent Big Country visit to Pristina, Kosovo.

Conceived by Vanessa Redgrave and co - arranged by Bill Kenwright, Big Country returned from Kosovo on 13th September with an experience under their belts never to be forgotten.

Having arrived on Friday 10th in Skopje, Macedonia they drove under United Nations / Kfor escort to Pristina on Sunday 12th for "The Return" concert. The event was launched on Friday 10th with an introductory concert in Skopje featuring Philip Glass and followed by a reception arranged by the British and Canadian ambassadors.

The trip to Pristina was an eye-opener. Having gone through the newly constructed border between Macedonia and Kosovo the band witnessed a cement factory commandeered by the Serbs that had been raised to the ground by cruise missiles. Then row after row of burnt out houses and a constant stream of Kfor vehicles but, the most shocking of all was seeing a group of people huddled over what they were told was a freshly found grave.

On arriving in Pristina after soundcheck they were introduced to an under 12 football team and had photos taken, only to be told after that these boys were all orphans. As Bruce Watson said afterwards, the "emotional rollercoaster" had just begun. The band saw many sites for themselves showing the dramatic and shocking results of cruise missile, tomahawk and smart bomb attacks. The first one seen was what was The Serbian Secret Police headquarters. Then a visit to the Royal Marine Commandos (who were mostly Scottish) for some serious talk about the war and light relief for both parties in sharing a few beers. These soldiers have only been visited by Tony Blair and Prince Charles (the day after BC) and the band. So they rather appreciated the impromptu visit.

Then the band stumbled across more bombings including what was the communications centre and post office that the Serbs took over. None of the band or those with them had seen anything like it. Not only was the huge building mangled but so were most of the surrounding houses. A night-watchman appeared and offered to take all the party into the building and up 10 floors to witness the devastation. The band were shocked to say the least. More so when the escort gave his version of the Serb invasion when he and his family were given 2 minutes to leave their house.

The gig itself was somewhat bizarre. A real mixture of music and even poetry. Opera from Albania, Pop from France, a troupe from Chile, and many others. But it was "rock music" the audience was waiting for. Lulu paved the way and was quite remarkable. Hardly looking any older from her heyday of the 60s.

But it was Big Country who woke the whole event up. The audience went wild and the band turned in a brilliant performance. Billy Sloan of the Scottish Sunday Mail said "I have never seen the band in such good form, they were absolutely brilliant". The crowd loved every minute and were still chanting "Beeg Cuntry" when leaving the hall to go home.

The whole three days were documented by a camera crew and we have some stunning pictures as well as digital camcorder footage throughout the entire weekend.

The band have a very personal take on what they witnessed in Kosovo. Last Sunday a half page picture of Vanessa Redgrave giving the band a plaque to mark their participation in the Scotland for Kosovo gig in Glasgow at the end of May, appeared in the Sunday Mail.

Ian Grant 15/9/99



Bruce Watson Diaries: Kosovo

Day 1

After a two-hour flight from Munich to Skopje our charismatic yet unlucky singer Stuart gets pulled by Macedonian customs officers and is given a full body search. This included the dreaded 'Digit up bum' procedure that scares the hell out of Rock bands the world over. Cries of 'Didn't they buy you a drink first'? And 'You lucky bastard' echoed around the tour bus. On the road from the airport to the hotel we pass cornfields growing on either side. The farmhouses in the fields are basic shacks and there is a strong military presence here with two Apache helicopters hovering above us. A convoy of KFOR and aid vehicles drive by and in the distance we can see the high mountain ranges that lead to Kosovo. Our base for the weekend is the Hotel Continental in Skopje, which according to the brochure has 'State of the art service by provided by highly competent staff'. This is of course a complete lie as two days after I accidentally break the flusher in my bathroom it still hasn't been repaired. In fact the sanitation was so bad that when guests asked directions for the toilets they were simply told, 'Just down the corridor mate, follow you nose'. Billy Sloan and Ronnie Anderson (photographer) from the Sunday Mail are out to do a story about the band over the next few days. Also here is the West End theatre impresario Bill Kenwright, who along with Vanessa Redgrave has organised the event.

In the restaurant I was introduced to the 'Men of the Deeps' Canadian Miners Choir who coincidentally worked in the same pit that my dad worked in back in 1962 (small world). These guys take a ten-week break from mining every year and go out on tour singing about life down the mines. Their songs are quite heart rendering and their cheeriest song 'Dust in the air' contains the chorus. 'Dust in the air, all through the mine. It's concrete on your lungs and you're old before your time.' In the foyer we were presented with a plaque from Vanessa on behalf of the Sunday Mail for performing at the Scotland for Kosovo gig in Glasgow. Vanessa has the energy and enthusiasm of a small child and talks non-stop. She invited us to a modern jazz concert in the evening where Phillip Glass is performing. Modern jazz is not my bag and Stuart said it just made him chuckle but we decided to go along and show face anyway. After a twenty-minute speech



from Vanessa, which then had to be translated for the locals, Philip took to the stage. Things were going along just fine until he introduced an avant garde clarinet player to accompany him. The second he put his 'bugle' to his lips and 'farted' out the first note Stuart and I just creased up laughing hysterically. We immediately covered our mouths with our hands to stifle our guffaws but this made it even worse as we couldn't breathe properly. Every time the clarinet player 'tromboned' another jazz lick it just cracked us up. Tears poured from our eyes, snot bubbled out our noses and both of us started sweating profusely. At one point I had to pull my jersey over my head. I immediately tried to think about mundane things like hoovering or watching a Pars game to take my mind off him, but that didn't help. All of a sudden for some insane reason I thought about starting a Mexican wave and that was it. My under pants were now damp as I was losing control of my bladder. When Philip and 'Bugle Boy' brought the music to a climax, the crowd rose to it's feet and applauded, Stuart who was now under his seat crying, got up and ran out with me right behind him. He would never listen to the clarinet again. Back at the bar we banged into Lulu whose bandleader, Alan Derby comes from Dunfermline. Also in attendance is Angus McFadyen who appeared in Braveheart as Robert the Bruce whose body was buried in Dunfermline. Is that a link?

Lulu is over here to sing her big hit 'Shout' and Angus is going to do a poem about death. Angus may be a great actor but his pool playing and sportsmanship leaves a lot to be desired. He was severely thrashed by Shorty and didn't take it to well. Lulu looks great and has a fantastic bubbly personality. Angus on the other hand has a face like a flitting and no personality. In fact Angus is so dour he makes Victor Meldrew seem positively happy. If Ghandi were alive today he would surely strangle him.

Day 2

We boarded the buses at 08.00 and prepared ourselves for the long drive to Pristina. The Italian Carabinieri are escorting us. On the way Aid trucks are held up trying to get through the border as the queue is around five miles long. We pass a lot of burnt out farm buildings and abandoned cars. Our convoy arrive in Pristina around midday and we are ushered to the gig which is right next door to the police headquarters that was bombed during the war.

As usual we got our priorities right and set of to find a football. Once procured we got a game going with Angus and some of the local children. Not only did they hammer us but they also stole the ball.



Billy organised a meeting with some of the guys from the Royal marine commandos. Their head quarters were opposite the derelict building and they welcomed us with open arms. They were mostly from Scotland and had had a visit from Vanessa Redgrave the previous day and were expecting Prince Charles the next day. As you can imagine they were extremely pleased it was a bunch of fellow jocks who were visiting them today which meant they didn't have to dress up, hide their scud books or mind their language in front of more 'luvvie darlings'. Suddenly a heavy Glaswegian voice from the back of the room bellowed forth. 'Vanessa Redgrave ye say, I thought it was fuckin' Vanessa Phelps who wis comin'. Big Mick was as wide as he was tall and like all the lads in the squad had a great sense of humour. I suppose you would need a large one if you had to deal with the problems these guys have to face. On the wall of one office were Polaroid's of children. It didn't dawn on me at first, but these were pictures of missing children. Like myself, most people I know who have young children worry like mad if their bairns are a few hours late or if one goes missing in a busy supermarket. Most of these kids have been missing for months. A few more horror stories were intertwined with some of the funniest jokes I have ever heard and I must salute Mick, his squad leader Frank and all the rest of the guys out there as they are extraordinary people and do an excellent job keeping the peace.

Through the office window we could plainly see the bombed out Police building, a young lad around the age of ten popped up from a hole in the ground and threw out a spent shell casing. Up on the top of the dangerously crumbling building were two teenagers collecting scrap metal. After soundcheck we decided to go and check out the local market, which was so big, it made the Barras look like a car boot sale on a wet Saturday morning. The market specialised in fruit, fags and dodgy Levi's. Ronnie the Smudger bought a pair only to discover that the pockets hadn't been stitched up, unlike his good self. Further into the city centre, the pavements were choc a bloc with young entrepreneurs selling everything from bootleg cassettes to flick knives and laser pens. We must have walked about a quarter of a mile when suddenly in front of us stood the remains of the post office. It was quite a high building and I was amazed it was still standing. There was a huge gaping hole in the middle of it. This was the main telephone exchange so it was one of the prime targets. Just as we were about to take a closer look a young man came out of the building and started speaking to us in pretty good English. It turns out he used to work in the post office but was away in Dusseldorf when the shelling

Day 2 continued

started. He was now employed as a security guard and invited us in to the building to have a look round. It was still very unstable but he knew the safer areas. We carefully climbed the stairs to the top of the building, most of the time the banisters were missing so it was a sheer drop. At the top we could see most of the surrounding damage. The air conditioning unit that was once housed on the roof of the post office had been blown off and was now residing on the hotel roof across the road. Further to our left was a washing machine embedded in a wall. The middle of the building had a huge hole that ran from the top to the bottom where the missile had struck it. False ceiling tiles hung by their wires and burnt out circuit boards littered the floor. Ronnie shot some film off and we made our way back downstairs.

We invited the security man over to the Pink Panther bar for a drink with us. He told us his house had sustained some damage after the bombing of the post office. When he returned from Dusseldorf to find his family in a partially destroyed home he decided that he should make some plans to take refuge. He asked his neighbour who was a policeman to help him get his family out of there. His neighbour took him to the police HQ and was told by his superiors that he should take him back home and shoot him. Luckily he decided to let him go and he and his family escaped to a refugee camp and spent months living in a tent. He is now rebuilding his life slowly but surely and I wish him all the happiness in the world.

Back at the gig Lulu is posing for photos with squaddies while Angus is alone in a tent rehearsing his death poem. Vanessa takes the stage and starts reciting another speech that was so dull and monotonous that I was forced to give her a damn good listening to. Various clog dancers and Jazzers get up and strut their stuff which really warm the audience up, not! Angus is up next with 'The poem of Death' which incidentally goes down like a cruise liner hitting something large and frozen in the middle of the Atlantic. He wasn't impressed, but then again neither was the audience. It is only when Lulu gets up and sings 'Shout' that the place goes nuts. Big Country are up next and when Bill Kenwright introduced us as 'The best rock 'n' roll band in the building' you just knew he wasn't wrong. On the return drive back to the Macedonian border everyone with the exception of Vanessa and Lulu decide to get off the bus to do what comes naturally. Five minutes later everyone gets back on the bus totally relieved. That is everybody except Angus who had the entire bus in stitches when he slipped in the biggest puddle of raw sewage I have ever seen.

And they said tragedy is dead.



BIG COUNTRY: The Problems They Have

As a lot of people here know, BC have a problem. When they first came on the scene, they were welcomed with opened arms into the music world. Along with the likes of U2, The Alarm and Simple Minds they were tipped for great things. The music these four bands (and others of the same ilk) generated was LOVED my millions around the world. Don't get me wrong, all these bands worked their socks off to get to that stage, constant touring and recording getting them there. BUT the music they played was lapped up by so many, Record Stores stocked their releases by the barrowload, Radio Stations fell over themselves to play the material, the music press ran article after article on them, and from this exposure the music buying public bought the albums and singles, and such was the demand these artists could have released an album of them farting, and still loads of people would have bought it.

As we all know, U2 hit the Big Time after Live Aid, and every album since has sold millions of copies around the world, and virtually every single has made the Top 10. (Latterly, I would have preferred to hear Bono & Co. release an album of farting, as opposed to the (IMHO) drivel they have released recently). Interestingly enough, it is rumoured that the new U2 album will see a return to the Mid-80's "sound" (Unforgettable Fire, Joshua Tree, War - arguably their best 3 albums). Simple Minds also saw a similar "explosion" at Live Aid (just after Don't You Forget About Me had been released) and the subsequent album Once Upon A Time was a huge selling album, and although other albums never quite reached the same heights, they all sold well. The ALARM came close, but never quite made it (unfortunately), and by 1991 they were no more.

BC didn't get the same breaks as SM and U2.

They had Record Company problems, due to those that believed in them leaving the Record Company and being replaced by people on a fast track to making a quick buck and climbing the Industry Ladder. Coupled with the fact that some producers were NOT the right choice, a drop in promotion (Radio, TV, Posters, Mailouts etc) as the new "powers-that-be" did NOT believe in the Band, and too many other background factors, BC saw their sales, and consequently, their fan base dwindle. Moves to other Record Companies did not work out, due to several reasons (lack of funds for instance for promotion).

The amount of people who ask me "Are they still going?" or say, "I thought they split up years ago" highlights this fact. And that's what it is - A FACT.

Big Country HAVE a mountain to climb. I think we would be kidding ourselves if we thought otherwise. BUT we have seen through website recently, and with the release of FT and DTD, that there is AN AMAZING amount of people out there who are interested in the Band, and want to hear the new material.

Now, at the end of the Century, things are beginning to fall into place. The band now have the following: -

- 1) A Record Company that believes in them.
- 2) A Manager that believes in them.
- 3) The best promotional team the band have had in many years plugging the band, and they ARE making inroads.
- 4) Record Stores seeing a demand they are Genuinely astonished at.
- 5) Heavy airplay of FT on Radio 2 (the most listened to Radio Station in the UK) in the UK (which has an audience of 11.5 million DAILY - incidentally higher than Radio1)
- 6) Media attention (admittedly thru' the CIN FT situation)
- 7) A brilliant album, well produced, and containing the best songs the Band have recorded in years.
- 8) An amazing fan base, still loyal to the band after all these years.

Combine ALL these factors together and BC are in the BEST position they have been in years. Now there is an awareness of BC which has not been known for many years. The Internet has played a large part of this, and shall continue to do so, as technology moves forward. But, the awareness of Joe Public has not been raised enough. It needs to be raised even more.

That is why we have to UNITE as FANS and get behind the Band. It's in your hands.....

Willie

NEW BIG COUNTRY SINGLE: SEE YOU/PERFECT WORLD: OUT 25TH OCTOBER 1999-10-18

COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE:

P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

BIG COUNTRY CONVENTION: 18th September 1999

The first time I saw the Royal Holloway it seemed perfect from just about every perspective; a proper venue for the gig, a wonderful main building, cheap accommodation, and last but not least they seemed genuinely enthusiastic about holding the convention. This had certainly not been the case with every other potential venue I had contacted. I got a range of responses from a polite decline to virtually open hostility! Willie and I went to see the venue again a few days later and I think he was equally impressed, so it was all systems go. The job of liaising with the venue was handed over to Willie, and I took a back seat with only the occasional involvement, up until about a week before the event, when it was all hands to the pump to make sure things were organised. The CC committee met on the Saturday before the convention and we left feeling reasonably confident that everything was going according to plan....how wrong could we be! I was away in Brussels on the Monday and Tuesday, but when I got back all was not well. We had been given a bit of a run-

around all along by the Uni. over catering. The idea had always been to have a Barbecue in the courtyard of the Founders Building. I won't bore you with the details, but basically by the Tuesday night the whole thing was a mess, not of our making but of the UNY's. Basically, we didn't have any catering! I told Willie that I would get involved, because I really wanted the food to be served in the Founders Building so everyone could enjoy the magnificent surroundings. I contacted the Uni. and put my foot down, and they finally agreed to provide a buffet in the Founders Building.

In hindsight, I think I antagonised a certain person in the Uni., and from then on our troubles mounted! There had been an ongoing problem between the Uni and us, regarding finalising numbers, and providing names and addresses of people attending.



This was critical for the Students Union as the S U Hall did not have a public entertainment licence and everyone attending had to be made a temporary member of the S U. The university had given us a deadline of Wednesday night to come up with this information, but for many reasons we couldn't achieve this. By Thursday morning things were going nuclear! The Uni. was threatening to cancel the event! I agreed with Willie to pop down to the Uni. at lunchtime to deliver some posters to use around the campus, and when I was there to see if I could smooth things over. When I arrived the buggers were waiting to pounce and I was surrounded by 4 people wanting answers to questions I just didn't have! By this time we had provided a lot of names.... the entire cc database plus everyone who had booked via the web, but this was not good enough apparently, and I had to get the balance of the names to them by 4.30pm or the event was off! Not only that, but payment had to be made in full (no cheques please, cash or a bankers draft only!) and a signed contract returned by first thing on the Friday morning. This was especially tough, as we had never been given a draft contract, so it was kind of tough to sign something you didn't have. We failed to hit the 4.30 deadline, but I assured the Uni. that we would have everything they required before start of business on Friday. After many conversations with the Uni., Willie and Ian Grant, I finally called the Uni. again on the way home at around 7.00pm and they cancelled the event!! I was driving down a country lane at the time and nearly came off the bloody road! **If I could have got down on my knees and begged I would have!** I rang Ian and Willie, we agreed to carry on and get the additional names required and hope that we could change the UNY's mind in the morning, whilst at the same time consider a contingency plan. Thursday night was hectic, highly alcoholic and long; finally falling into my pit at around 2.30 am pissed as a fart, but unable to sleep. The data the Uni. required was finally sent at around 10.30pm that night by Ian Grant, together with an appeal against the UNY's decision. I agreed with Ian that I would make myself available for the whole day on Friday, so I could react to whatever needed doing. Friday morning I went into the office and booked the whole day off (this confused a lot of people!). Ian and I had a conference call with the University, and he was brilliant! Measured in every word with just the right amount of aggression. By 12.30pm on the Friday the event was on again, providing Ian signed the contract by 2.30 pm and had the money to Uni. before the end of the day. This was a bloody tall order since Ian still didn't have the contract. I was due to meet Willie at the Uni. late in the afternoon, so I went home to get my gear. Needless to say the 2.30pm deadline wasn't met and the Uni. cancelled the event again at 3.00pm! By this time I decided to go to the pub! More frantic negotiations and the event was on and off more times than a whore's knickers. It got to the stage where I was waiting in a Fish and Chip shop in Egham at 5.30pm on the Friday waiting for someone to confirm that the event was on again! At 5.35pm the call came, the event was definitely on and I enter the Uni. and start work! Willie and Ali arrived around 7.00 pm and we eventually finished all that we could do that night by 8.30pm, so we decided to hit the pub, and start again in the morning. After all this, it still amazes me to this day that the event went as smoothly as it did! There was of course the odd problem: The only people who didn't have the accommodation they booked were the couple from Peru. The Uni. was completely full, but luck was on my side when Fiona (Ian Grant's PA) rang in sick.

BIG COUNTRY CONVENTION: 18th September 1999 Continued

The guys from Peru were happy to share a single room so that drama was over. The producer of the PW video announced he needed more time than was available to shoot, and demanded an extra half an hour with menace. That coupled with the signing session taking longer than expected meant we had to cancel the video. Ian announced that he wanted to do another convention ASAP, and was somewhat taken aback by my look of abject horror. Some people had no food at all as it had run out! My eldest son, Robert, got completely pissed and annoyed virtually every female (and quite a number of their male partners!). At the end of the convention he whined "Dad, someone threatened me", to which I replied "No, I don't believe it, surely you were threatened by more than one person! "

I have to say that the thrill of watching the band performing live at an event that I was involved in organising was such a huge thrill, it really made up for every anxious moment we suffered!

I would LOVE to be involved again.... but not for a little while, Ian!

Tony Greco

After being hounded for weeks by a certain Mr. Willie Tocher to come to the convention we had to give in - he's a persistent wee bugger! Our weekend started at 5.00am on the Saturday morning as we dragged ourselves from our pit to catch a flight to Heathrow, (I don't care what anyone says, it's not natural flying - I spend the whole time waiting to die!) We arrived about 8.30am and thanks to Willie's excellent directions etc. caught the bus which took us to Royal Holloway University in Egham, the venue for this extravaganza. The Uni. was amazing - the main building was massive - fabulous architecture - turrets, stone balustrades the lot. It was, as it turned out, one of the halls of residence too, and where we were to be crashing out at the end of the day. The rooms were basic, but clean and warm - what more could a gig weary body ask for? We sorted out our room and headed for the Student's Union and, yes, you guessed it, the bar. We were greeted at the door by the lovely, bubbly but thirsty Tara - and issued a dinky pink wrist band and we were in! (It was after 11am by then and I was beginning to flag a little - but a couple of voddies and Red Bull later and I was raring to go!!) The whole thing kicked off at 12 with a quiz - now, Andy and I thought we were BC fans - but no - we just quite like the tunes!! Some of the questions were a tad obscure to say the least, and what amazed me more was that some people knew the answers!! But it was entertaining - and interesting to learn the correct answers - one chap was walking about saying things like "Can I phone a friend? Go 50/50?" I knew how he felt! Those that got through to the next round answered some more questions until a winner was found - well done that man! - and prizes - posters, 12" etc. - were dished out by the band.

Next, one of the highlights of the day for me, a Q+A session with SBTM. What a laugh - they are 4 very funny guys - and it was great to get an insight to what they like, think is funny, are inspired by etc. By this time I was several drinks down, on an in-flight breakfast, (one burp and yer empty), so everything was funny!!!! Stuart told some hilarious stories, Mark disnae know the words to BC songs, Bruce got a LOVELY hat and Tony - well TB was just the epitome of cool! I really enjoyed this bit and I think everybody else did too. Then came the signing session before we all took a break for a buffet - and a wee rest before the album play back and the gig. Unfortunately there was no time for the video play backs - which Andy was disappointed about - as he said, you don't see BC videos that often. There was a bit of a lull in the proceedings while the shooting of the video for Perfect World took place - we managed to see this through the glass doors of the hall - I was singing that song for days afterwards - they had to play it so many times! When we were let back in to the hall the playback of Driving To Damascus started - and all I can say is that it rocks! This album is definitely right up there as one of the best - our appetites were well and truly whetted. Then Willie, Ali, Mazz and Tony drew the raffle, loads of prizes on offer - but no prizes for us this time - but never mind, the best was yet to come!

At last, what we were all impatient for - GIG TIME - We were right at the front (nowhere else to be is there?) directly in front of Stuart and it was fantastic! I got squashed to hell, sweaty, hoarse, deafened and completely knackered - and I've NEVER had such a good time - the band were outstanding, as usual - the new stuff live is unbelievable - particular favourites of mine 'See You', 'I Get Hurt' and 'Dive Into Me'. They played loads of oldies too, including 'Look Away', 'Just A Shadow', 'Chance', 'IABC' and an extremely well received 'Tracks Of My Tears' (an unexpected one that!) In total over 2 hours of sheer bliss. And just when you think it can't get any better - out pops Willie again (heh heh!). Guess what - they want to shoot more of the Perfect World video - so he tells everyone to move forward and squash right up (eh? what's been happening for the last 2 hrs if it wasn't squashing up?!!) so now my feet ain't on the floor at all, I can't move my arms, which are above my head and Perfect World gets into full swing - and THIS is mental and totally mind blowing. My shirt came completely undone at one point and I could do NOTHING about it - had to let it all hang out (apologies to anyone I offended!!) Personally, I thought it was a wrap(!)- but no Mr. Follically Challenged Director chap says we can do much better - and blow me if we didn't!!! Can't wait to see the results of that! Then the disco - with Fatboy Slim - or rather Fatboy (TonyG) and Slim (Willie) dj-ing - with special guest Bruce Watson helping out! -Well done guys - the music was great - next time I won't dance on my own - Tara look out!! And that, as they say, was that! What a ball! I was knackered but happy and Andy felt the same. It was a very special event - very special people - band, organisers and fans. Thanks to everyone involved, and commiseration's to those of you who couldn't make it - see you at the next one!

Karen McEwing

BIG COUNTRY CONVENTION: 18th September 1999 Continued

We both liked Big Country back in the 80's but had lost track of them until IanS started talking about them again on OV, so we were feeling a bit like impostors going to a fan convention - but it was only £15, including food, and only 15 minutes down the road from where we lived, so we thought "what the heck!"

The venue was the Students' Union at the Royal Holloway Uni. in Egham. First on the agenda was a BC Mastermind quiz - and I actually got two right! The first four questions were to name the town and country of birth for all the four members of BC. Well I'd recently read that one of them was born in Slough (just down the road from us) so we put Slough for the first four questions. After that I just answered Stuart to all the questions - so I got another right! Anyway, judging by the fact that only 10 out of 230 people got over 12 right we didn't do that badly!

After the quiz the band came out to award prizes to the top 10 winners. They then stayed on stage for a question and answer session. They were four lovely, funny blokes - and Stuart has the sort of Scottish accent which makes you go all funny inside. They told some very amusing anecdotes - especially Stuart Adamson - who told a tale of a video he'd seen on US TV - where some keepers were clearing out an elephant enclosure and an elephant sat on one of the keepers - whose head went up the elephant's ARSE!!! The poor bloke was trying to get out and the elephant was in shock so his anal muscles spasmed!! We were creased up - you can imagine what the poor keeper did as soon as he finally got free! Yuk!!!

I asked the lads about how they felt about the internet and if they thought it was bringing new fans on board (we already know Bruce - and I noticed that Bruce and Tony had replied personally to several messages on the BC Bulletin Board). Mark, said he was a real technophobe - but the others are obviously big fans - guitarist Bruce Watson said he spends up to six hours at a time on the Internet given the chance!

Afterwards we were able to buy merchandise and queue up to meet the band, get autographs and have photos taken. Next it was time to vacate the Students Union and go and EAT! (We were starving - having missed lunch and breakfast!) Whilst the band did a video shoot. Unfortunately that went on rather too long - and we were left mingling for a couple of hours in a very smoky bar (hence the migraine!). After that, we had a preview listen to the new album, Driving To Damascus (out on 27th September - plug, plug) - which is BRILLIANT!

Once that was over, it was time for Big Country to take to the stage. The moment we'd been waiting for! And we weren't disappointed! They were brilliant. We were jumping around and dancing for two whole hours - I was surprised how many of the songs I knew and loved, and the stuff from Driving to Damascus was excellent live. We did like them already - but after that performance they're definitely on our A list! Once the set ended we all had to stay in the hall whilst they filmed us for the video for the next single "Perfect World" - look out for us pogoing at the front by Tony the bass player.

The evening finished with a disco by Fatboy Slim. We were intrigued - I'm not a great disco person - but I wanted to see him. But the joke was on us! The two convention organisers were "Fat" Tony and "Slim" Willie - and they were the DJ's. I don't know how they kept going all day - especially Willie - who was pogoing around non-stop throughout the live set. The people there were really friendly as were all the Country Club people. There were people there from as far afield as Peru, New Jersey, South Africa and mainland Europe. Rooms were available at £20 per night bed and breakfast in the Uni. Halls of Residence, which was excellent value - although when they found out that breakfast was being served between 8 and 9 on the Sunday morning I got the impression that there weren't going to be many takers!

JaneA

Convention Set List: courtesy of Mazz (the soberest of the Organisers) I THINK..... (anyone want to correct me here) that they played.....Damascus / President / Look Away / Just a Shadow / John Wayne's Dream / Perfect World / Fragile Thing / I get Hurt / You Dreamer / Spirit to me / Dive into me / See You / I'm not Ashamed / Somebody Else / Chance / In a Big Country / Tracks of my Tears / Rocking in the Free World / Perfect World (mimed to for the video) BUT.....I fear I may have dreamed all of this, or left some out! **Mazz**.

NEW BIG COUNTRY SINGLE: SEE YOU/PERFECT WORLD: OUT 25TH OCTOBER 1999-10-18

COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE:

P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

BIG COUNTRY INFORMATION LINE: 0891 600031 (CALLS COST 60 PENCE PER MINUTE)

Convention: Some Words from the Country Club

Thankyou to everyone.....

I would just to take this opportunity to say Thankyou to EVERYONE connected with the convention.

Firstly, thankyou to my wonderful girlfriend Ali, who has been a star throughout, assisting in every way she could, both preceding the event and on the actual day. There is a story behind this Convention, see TonyG's story of the Convention earlier in this issue.

I'd also like to say Thankyou to Tony Greco: my main partner in crime in organising the Convention, the man is a true friend; Tara and Mazz: two wonderful ladies who did a superb job not only on the day, but also in assisting in the organisation of the Convention. And to their respective partners, Russ and Graham who helped out brilliantly, and probably have put up with a lot from Tara and Mazz in the 4 weeks to organise it all! Thanks also to Paula Finn for her assistance on the day. And of course, a special mention to Cath Greco, long-suffering wife of Tony, it was a pity she couldn't make it - sort out a baby-sitter next time guys!

Thankyou to Ian Grant for asking me to be so involved in organising and running the Convention, it has been a privilege and an honour to be so deeply involved with this event.

Thankyou to Stuart, Bruce, Tony and Mark, 4 guys who worked their socks off all day, and who were, simply out of this world - they were superb throughout, as if the schedule we had organised for them wasn't hectic enough, they managed to fit in a video shoot as well, and were still full of energy at the end of the evening.

Thankyou to Everyone who turned up, it was a pleasure seeing you all there, I truly hope you all enjoyed the day and will attend the next one.

Thanks to Fiona at IGM, Debbie Grant, Jim Gilligan, the BC Crew, Video Crew, and everyone else who helped make the day the success (I think) it was.

Once again thankyou to my fellow CC Convention organisers - Ali, TonyG, Mazz and Tara.

As a BC Fan of over 17 years, to have been asked to be part of a team that put together the Convention, has been an incredible experience. To be able to have given both the Band and Fans a day I hope they all remember favourably, is my way of giving back something to the Band for the musical pleasure they have given me for 17 years - I feel have humbled by all your comments both on the day, and since, via the website and internet.

Thankyou all.

Willie

Writing this the day after the Convention, still exhausted, and feeling a mixture of awe and also sadness that it is all over - for now anyway. Every muscle I possess aches, tummy, back, arms, and as for the legs - don't think they belong to me, walking like Steptoe, when indeed I can walk at all.

Thank you so much to Willie and Tony for their stress, total commitment and endless energy. A special thanks to Mazz, what a lady, when I was on the merchandise stand surrounded by what seemed like 5 million people, I missed the 'signing', and what a terrific surprise when she turned up with a signed poster for me later - thoughtful and the very least. Thanks to Ali, 'behind every man is a great woman' here here to Willies previous statement, and what great fun. Not to mention Graham and Russ, both of whom you could say were dragged in, only for the fact that neither complained, so I think they both enjoyed helping. And thanks to Paula, who kept the queue on the front door moving when at times I was busy greeting people (Spook, H, Peter Hornberg, Paul Bratley and his brothers in law, and far too many others to mention).

Thank you most of all to the Band, Bruce (bit of a tip for you, if you keep taking the mickey out of the dancers, your career as a DJ will be short lived!), Stuart, Tony, and Mark, what great guys, who were all committed to the day, and gave everyone a chance to meet and talk with them, and who I think had a great time too. The gig was the best I have ever seen, thank you so much.

For all those people that didn't make it this time, can't wait to meet you at the next.

It was a day I will always remember, as has been said by many others.

Tara

Should be in my pit recovering, the day after the Convention, but I just had to add my bit. It was a complete thrill for me, especially to be involved with this event. (Anyone get the feeling I like the sound of my own voice?!). Thanks to everyone who attended. Thank you to everyone for their kind words on the night. The band were awesome in every way! Thank you, guys. Thanks to Ian Grant, particularly for coming to our rescue (more on that some other time!). Collapsing.....now....zzzzzzzzzzzz!

TonyG

Convention: Some Words From the Country Club (Cont.)

A lot of people worked very hard to get this convention up and running, and I would like to add my thanks to everyone too. I would also like to thank Willie and Tony. They were magnificent in all that they did, before and during the convention. You all have no idea of the hours put in by these two!! At the start of the day, Willie was very nervous at the thought of having to speak in front of a lot of people, but by the end of the night, you couldn't stop him! And he did an excellent job of dj-ing with Tony. In case anyone doesn't know, Tony was "Fatboy" and Willie was "Slim" !! Well done guys and Ali and Tara, it was a pleasure to work with you all.

Also thanks to Russ and Graham. They got roped in to sell raffle tickets and man the door respectively, all done willingly, and as Willie rightly said, Graham has had a lot to put up with in the 4 weeks from when Ian Grant asked us to organise a Convention to the actual day ! :-)

I'd also like to say thanks to Spooky. We'd had a nightmare journey to the convention, arriving later than we wanted to, and he immediately bought me a drink..... I only wanted water, but it went down well! (He insisted on buying me a "real" drink later too!) He also took a turn in selling raffle tickets, so many thanks Spooks!

I just wish that more people had come up to me and introduced themselves. Most people know who I am now, but there are still a lot of names from here that I didn't get to meet. Next time eh?

This BC "family" was so much in evidence on Saturday; it was really wonderful to be part of it. If you didn't make it to this one, you MUST come to the next one! Just ask anyone that was there! As Willie said, it was a humbling experience for us, one that we shall always treasure. Thank you.

Mazz

Convention: Some Words From Bruce Watson and Ian Grant

It's the day after the convention and I am absolutely shattered, got up at 7.00 a.m this morning to shoot the rest of the video, what a night we had. It was brilliant. You are indeed the best fans in the world, either that or you are mad. I Salute you all.

Bruce

What a lovely bunch of people. It was such a pleasure to see so many Big Country fans enjoying themselves yesterday. I was still a little under the weather but I really was impressed with how cool everyone was. It may appear to be patronising but I really do think you lot are nice people. Thanks for coming and a BIG thanks to Willie and Ali, Tony, Russ & Tara, Mazz, Paula and all those who helped. Few of you will know but the event was nearly cancelled at the last moment due to an obnoxious person at the college.

However, the rest of the college people were nothing but helpful on the day. I will not put my version of the day's events here but leave that to those that were there to do so. I left as the party started and I can't help but think there will be a lot of sore heads this morning. (The band had to be up at 7.30am to resume the video shoot). Your enthusiasm helps make the job worthwhile and I hope we can do more of these kind of events elsewhere soon. We did discuss the possibility of another convention next year. And, we MUST get the US one together sooner than soon. Will start to look at it shortly. Promise!. Thanks again to all involved and all those who attended.

Ian Grant

IG I agree ' we should do a convention in the States quite soon and while we are at it every gig should be like a convention, it was so much fun.

Bruce

NEW BIG COUNTRY SINGLE: SEE YOU/PERFECT WORLD: OUT 25TH OCTOBER 1999-10-18

COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE:

P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

BIG COUNTRY INFORMATION LINE: 0891 600031 (CALLS COST 60 PENCE PER MINUTE)

DRIVING TO DAMASCUS: THE ALBUM

Driving To Damascus (A/Br/W) (3:56)

Dive Into Me (A/Bu/Br/W) (5:02)

See You (A) (3:50)

Perfect World (A/Bu/Br/W) (4:02)

Somebody Else (A/Davies) (4:03)

Fragile Thing (A/W) (4:34)

The President Slipped and Fell (A/Bu/Br/W) (2:56)

Devil In The Eye (A/Davies) (4:13)

Trouble The Waters (A/Br/W) (4:10)

Bella (A) (3:34)

Your Spirit To Me (A) (5:13)

Grace (A/Bu/Br/W) (5:08)

Limited edition bonus cuts:

Shattered Cross (4:00)

Too Many Ghosts (4:10)

Driving To Damascus - As Mark's galloping drums kicked in on the driving (pun intended) riff near the 10 second mark, my face split into a wide grin that seemed to be stuck there for the next 50 mins or so. Such a thrill to finally hear some new BC, and it to be this good..! I've always had a thing for the big thumping drums (a'la River of Hope, Blue on a Green Planet), so it's a blast to hear those again. Great guitars, catchy chorus.

Dive Into Me - Very good, much improved from the "Scud" version. Also the solos are most reminiscent of the BC sound of old in this bunch of songs. I can't quite decide yet if the changed lyric in the chorus is an improvement or not.

See You - I actually like this one a lot. It has a very catchy melody and poignant lyrics. This could very well become a hit, given airplay. However, I can see how the strings might upset the "purists". ;-) Although I do agree that the string break midway through the song sounds overly dramatic.

Perfect World - Another brilliant rocker, right up there with the title track. Has an energetic "twin guitar attack", and... what was that phrase again? Oh yeah, riffs like crazy!

Somebody Else - BC goes Del Amitri, both musically and lyrically. Combines upbeat music and a sad subject matter with sort of light-hearted lyrics, and it works like a charm. Has a cool bouncy guitar lick.

Fragile Thing - Still a great, hauntingly beautiful ballad. Eddi fits in perfectly.

President Slipped - I wasn't expecting much from this after having heard the live version from last year, but to my surprise I liked it immediately - there is a melody to this song after all! The hardest rocker on the CD has some very good guitar work from the dynamic duo. :-) A song about the media's desperate hunger for more and more outrageous and absurd 'news'. (?) I do think the "yeah yeah" part sounds a bit awkward, though.

Devil In The Eye - Interesting change of style/sound. At first I thought this was only included because of the Davies involvement, but after a few listens I think it has its place here. Took a while to get into, but grows on you. One thing though, the distorted vocals bit doesn't work for me, although I can see they were going for extra effect there.

Trouble The Waters - Very interesting rhythmically and has a good melody. I was a bit at loss about the lyrics at first, so thanks to Xian and others for telling what the song is about! I really like how Stu again contrasts such sinister subjects with upbeat music. Also good to hear some mandolin by Bruce "Well he's the best mandolin player in this band!" Watson...

Bella - This is the only one that doesn't do much for me, sounds like b-side material. A simple song that, as others have pointed out, seems like the guys are just having fun in the studio. I would have chosen "Living By Memory" (I still can't believe they did not make a true studio version of this!) or "I Get Hurt", or "Loserville" instead.

Your Spirit To Me - Simply stunning. This one almost brings a tear or two into my ole' eyes. Has a great atmospheric feel with a simple melancholic guitar lick which somehow connects deeply with me... maybe it's the Nordic character in me. Wonderful lyrics too, and I like how the song builds momentum towards the end. Simply stunning (did I say that already? :-)

Grace - A very strong song to close the album with. Great crunching guitars all around, and Tony and Mark really warming up too. (Side note: I think "Loserville" would've made an excellent final track as well) Is that Rafe on backing vocals towards the end? ("Into the heart of me, to every part of me...")

All in all this is a fantastic album, easily among their best. To say it's better or worse than, say, Steeltown is rather pointless - they are so different, yet both are bloody marvellous! I really like the production on the album as well, Rafe McKenna has done a great job. The CD booklet design is very good too (btw, looking at the bar pics, has Stu started smoking, or is it just a prop?). At the moment my fave tracks would be Spirit To Me, DTD, PW and Somebody Else.

This album has so much potential to be a HUGE success, if only the general public were given a chance to hear the songs. But the attitude of people in radio etc. is just too much for us mere mortals to understand: IG said on a recent post on the bulletin board that when "Perfect World" was offered to UK Radio 1, the response was that "if this was by a young band, it would go straight to our 'A' play list!" [i.e. but because it's BC, we'll not play it] Boggles the mind.

Simo Neiglick, Helsinki, Finland.

DRIVING TO DAMASCUS: THE ALBUM

Slightly similar guitar sound thru most of the album - most like Wildland In My Heart/Message Of Love from WTLF - but slightly more rough guitar sound overall.

There is a lot for BC fans to take away here - I have a feeling much of this will grow on me, perhaps even more than WTLF did.

The bonus tracks are welcome; a slight problem is that they slightly detract from the album ending impact - a bit like the bonuses on the US version of WTLF. But they do make me want to hear more BH stuff. With the exception of "Bella", the album gets better as it progresses on, which I find more rewarding than the other way round.

Listening again to Dust on the Road and Loserville, their sound would have fitted fine on the album - so, for me, BC maintain their knack of ditching some classics to obscure B-sides!

I'm real glad that the quintet of songs: Trouble The Water, Grace, Loserville, Dust On the Road and Your Spirit To Me have emerged, with Fragile Thing coming up to join them rapidly. For me, these are all classics- excellent pieces of songwriting and music, and a direction that I hope will grow. Not the old BC sound - which may well have finally past away - but damned fine. I'm looking forward to the tour!

Steve Bullman.

Q REVIEW - NOVEMBER 1999 ISSUE

"Tennessee, God and Ray Davies shape Scots rockers' first studio album for four years.

WE LIVE IN STRANGE TIMES. FIRST, STUART ADAMSON LEAVES SCOTLAND FOR NASHVILLE. THEN HE UNDERGOES A SPIRITUAL REBIRTH (chronicled in Spirit To Me). AND LAST YEAR THE BAND TOUR WITH THE ROLLING STONES (most songs here were written on that tour). THE RESULTS, IT MUST BE SAID, HAVE BEEN MARKEDLY BENEFICIAL. OVERT COUNTRY TOUCHES ARE FEW - FRAGILE THING, FEATURING EDDIE READER, COMES CLOSEST - AND ADAMSON STOPS SHORT OF MENTIONING GOD BY NAME, BUT THE SONGS ARE STRONGER, TIGHTER AND MORE ENERGISED. THE SOCIAL CONCERN (now more Americanised) IS STILL THERE, BUT THE LYRICS ARE MORE DIRECT AND PUNCHY. THERE ARE SURPRISES TOO - TWO SONGS WRITTEN WITH RAY DAVIES (about a splitting couple dividing up old possessions, and the siren call of alcohol) - AND THE ROUSING TITLE TRACK - AN ODD MIX OF HARD ROCK AND GARY GLITTER- MIGHT EVEN GIVE THEM A HIT. THERES LIFE IN THE OLD DOGS YET. 3/5'

Ian Cranna.

Plus picture and caption.

BON APPETIT: The EP

Bon Appetit is a 4 track CD available in the merchandise section, containing the following songs:

BIRMINGHAM / LIVING BY MEMORY / DON'T YOU STAY / SUN AND MY SHADOW

The four tracks are not available elsewhere.

The artwork couldn't be more different to "In The Scud", with multicolours on front sleeve (9 different coloured images of Ally MacLeod with his head in his hands, World Cup '78).

The inner liner notes are some of the funniest ever written by Mr Watson; it's worth buying just for them!

The songs are mainly acoustic with electric guitars overdubbed. Once again, this Web site EP gives an amazing insight into the stripped down Big Country, hard at work, honing their creations with love and tender care. If you haven't ordered it yet, we recommend you get it, for it holds another 4 classic BC tracks. You will not be disappointed!!!

NEW BIG COUNTRY SINGLE: SEE YOU/PERFECT WORLD: OUT 25TH OCTOBER 1999-10-18

COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE:

P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

BIG COUNTRY INFORMATION LINE: 0891 600031 (CALLS COST 60 PENCE PER MINUTE)

Interview with Stuart Adamson

Channel 4 Teletext 14th October 1999. Title: BACK TO THE BIG COUNTRY

Not a million years ago Big Country were the biggest thing since, well, U2 - anthemic rock of a tartan persuasion roared around the world's stadiums.

Stuart Adamson was a Premier League rock god, full of strident political opinions and stonking tunes. And then it all went quiet over there. Four years of quiet. What happened?

As Big Country resurface with a new album *Driving To Damascus*, Stuart Adamson tells us where he's been....

"I went to Nashville....." says Stuart Adamson, as if this explains why we haven't heard a peep from Big Country in these long, lonely four years.

Odd to think of a mad Scots rocker let loose in the country music capital of the world but Adamson loves it. He even has a hair salon there with the Dixie Chicks among his clients.

"I don't do any hairdressing myself but its great. I love the climate. I went to do some songwriting and stayed"

Stuart Adamson spent all Saturday at NetAid waiting on the nod to go on stage and introduce the next guest. The nod never came. George Micheal's set overran, apparently. So it was "Sorry Stuart, thanks for flying in from Nashville but we just don't have time for you, mate, okay?" Stuart was furious, right?

"Och no, I didna mind, it was great just hanging out seeing a bunch of people. I thought Bowie was amazing."

Big Country have a brand spanking new album *Driving To Damascus* in the shops - is it any good then, or what?

"Oh aye" says Stuart Adamson, perhaps a tad predictably. "I'm really proud of it. My songwriting has improved so much since I went to live in Nashville and I think that shows."

Do you wear rhinestones now? "Noooo!! I just fell in love with the place. I was brought up on Hank Williams and Patsy Cline. And I love the weather!"

Last month Big Country, arriving in an armoured car, played a benefit gig in Kosovo, organised by Vanessa Redgrave.

"It was unbelievable. It brings it home to you about precision bombing. Next to the stadium there's a sports centre and all these other buildings, and in the middle of it there's a hole where they bombed the Serbian secret police HQ."

"The people are phenomenal and the gig was crazy. It made me ashamed of man's inhumanity to man," he said.

Was Stuart Adamson scared when he arrived in Kosovo for his recent gig there with Big Country?

"No, we were in the hands of the forces and one thing I have learned is that British squaddies are more than capable of looking after you," he said.

"It does bring it home to you, though, seeing the damage. We drove up through Macedonia and seeing the refugee camps you realise this is the reality of people's lives."

Stuart Adamson is still smarting over the way the last Big Country single *Fragile Thing* was banned from the charts for having too much cardboard!

"Och I dunno ... the chart people CIN have these rules and decided it was illegal 'cos the packaging had more than four folds. It was upsetting 'cos it was selling well. Utter Madness!"

Do you keep up with all the trendy new bands on the block, Stuart?

"Och no! Now why would I wanna do that?"

Merchandise

MUSIC - Big Country

Big Country In The Scud EP (Internet Only Release) £8.50

Bootleg cassette (Internet Only Release) £5.00

Bon Appetit Website EP (4 track demo CD) £5.00

FRAGILE THING feat EDDI READER – (CD1; CD2; 10") each £2.99

The Crossing (CD Only) £11.00

Restless Natives & Rarities £13.50

Steeltown (CD Only) £11.00

The Seer (CD Only) £11.00

Why The Long Face £11.00

Eclectic £11.00

Peace In Our Time (CD Only) £11.00

No Place Like Home (CD Only) £11.00

Through A Big Country (CD Only) £11.00

Driving To Damascus (CD1; CD2) each £12.99 Cassette £5.99

TOUR MEMORABILIA

Passes 98' (Guest pass or Backstage pass) £2.00

AAA £3.00

Personalised AAA £5.00

NON BIG COUNTRY ITEMS

Wild Blue Yonder (Bruce Watson Project) (CD Only) £8.50

Other music available

Divers single Format: CD (3 tracks) (Track records artist) £3.50

Snowdogs single Format: CD (3 tracks) (Track records artist) £3.50

Other Artists (featuring Mark Brzezicki)

Prime Time People(CD) £10.00

Vampire Love (CD) £3.50

Days (CD) £2.75

Days (Cassette) £2.25

Great West Records

Albums :

The Great Unknown (CD) (Tony Butler project) £12.00

Feed The Paranoid(CD) £12.00

Mini Albums :

5 (CD) £6.50

Glorylands (CD) £6.50

Forever Green (CD) £6.50

Fuzzy (CD) £6.50

EP's :

One Day To The Next (CD) £6.50

Clothing (Limited Rare Stock)

Why The Long Face Polo Shirt £20.00

Restless Natives UK Tour 98 T-shirt £14.00

Restless Natives T-shirt £14.00

T-shirt (Stag) £14.00

Polo shirt (Stag) £20.00

Restless Natives UK Tour 98 female T-shirt £14.00

Restless Natives Skinny T-shirt £14.00

Stag Sweatshirt (a) Colour: Grey £28.00

Stag Sweatshirt (b) Colour: Navy £28.00

Rugby shirt £28.00

Fleece £38.00

Bomber Jacket £50.00

Shepherds Bush Empire T-shirt £14.00

BC sportshirt £20.00

Internet

Members Section Subscription (Website)

Annual Subscription £10.00

Web site mouse mat £8.00

PLEASE STATE SIZE OF CLOTHING WITH YOUR ORDER

POSTAGE AND PACKING CHARGES :

For UK Add 10% to Total value of Order

For Overseas Add 15% to Total Value of Order

SEND CHEQUES / POSTAL ORDERS TO: COUNTRY CLUB MERCHANDISE, P.O. BOX 107, SOUTH GODSTONE, REDHILL, SURREY, RH9 8YS

PLEASE ALLOW 28 DAYS FOR YOUR ORDER TO BE PROCESSED AND DESPATCHED