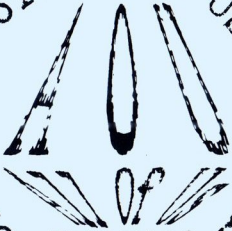


the official US
Big
Country
network



volume 3 number 2

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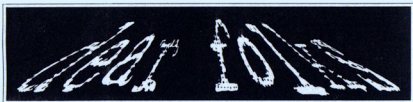
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How's everybody doing? Dawn & I are pretty good. First I'd like to apologize to those who ordered merchandise last issue - the delays were unintentional and in part my own fault for a little bad bookkeeping. There shouldn't be any delays of that magnitude in the future. Speaking of which, we're not producing any more of the original AOU tee or the Tartan tee - at this time, we're only producing our exclusive AOU Steeltown tee. This is probably our best tee yet so be sure to get yours. Details inside.

How many of you have picked up the remasters yet? I'm a little unsure if it was justified to remaster as many albums as they did. If it was in *my* lap, I would have only remastered the first four albums. As it is, I have only picked up the first two (and David Wright sent me those in trade). It's so incredibly cool to hear ALL OF US (my favorite b-side, ever since I became a fan) in a crystal clear ed sound! I really like the packaging format for the remasters also (like using the red motif for The Crossing), although I think they could have included some archive "never-before-seen" photos, and I think the photos in the Steeltown booklet are downright blurry!

I have a **lot** of people to thank here - as far as the issue goes, immense thanks go to Dawn who did 98% of the typesetting for this issue. Thanks to David and Tom for the prizes for this issue's contest. Lots of thanks go to Force management and Reprise for their helpful info on Junior Brown and Grant Lee Buffalo. And many many *many* thanks to Lowell, for a number of reasons! First, I don't know how many of you are familiar with John at Direct Product Distribution (we've advertised his service here a few times), but John auctioned off a gorgeous enamel Steeltown badge. It was the black cog, with the silver BC logo inside. I bid \$20. I didn't get it. Now what you don't know is that Lowell and I have actually had to get up with one another before bidding in auctions sometimes. I remember a Goldmine auction with 4 or 5 rare BC 7's - some were double 7's. Lowell called me up and we were both going to bid, so we had to come to an agreement on exactly what each of us was going to bid on, keeping in mind who had what in their collection already. When it all came out, he won what he wanted and I won what I wanted. Then there was the time he & I both ordered stuff from a guy at the same time and he got my order and I got his order! Anyhow, that big lug outbid me and then gave me the pin, knowing how much I wanted it. I coulda cried. I have that pin prominently displayed in my kitchen now. Coincidentally, John is currently having an auction for an autographed Chancee 7" w/photo insert - minimum bid is \$25 and bids must be in by August 24th. You can contact John at: DPD, PO _____ Omaha NE 68137

Then just recently Lowell gave me a subscription to Goldmine, as I had let mine run out. Lowell is the kindest, friendliest person I have yet to meet in my life, with the possible exception of my parents and Dawn (who puts up with me on a daily basis!). Andrea is always keeping an eye out for me too, and sending me nice things - congratulations to her on her graduation! She's been a member of AOU since it's inception! I'd also like to thank Lewis for keeping me up to date with what folks are saying on-line (I've been off since February), and for the article in this issue on Restless Natives. Thanks go to Tom and Art for their article contributions - see? AOU is what the *fans* make it! All I do is arrange the stuff into a somewhat cohesive little booklet.

Again a (sad) reminder that I'm planning to fold AOU next April. Everyone in the member listing will receive issues until that point. Remember, though, anyone is welcome to submit sample material if they'd like to take over the fanzine. Of course, *anyone* can start a BC fanzine (after all, who am I, and I did!), but I'd like to "approve" it before I let someone use the AOU name. Stan Lenkiewicz and Ed Baptista have sent me their sample of a fanzine and it looked pretty good. We'll see what transpires between now and April!

I'm sure all of you are as, well, *pissed* as I am about the cancellation of the US Tour. I guess the US simply isn't "cost-justified," which leaves US fans with a bad taste because it makes you realize that, at times, it comes down to the pound (or dollar, whichever!). Some are worried that if you didn't see 'em before, you won't see 'em at all now. And *maybe* if we buy 2 (or 3, or 4...) copies of the next domestically-released BC cd, they'll tour here...

As far as I know the "eclectic" acoustic album - IN THE SCUD [what? more bomb imagery??? - Ed] - has been pushed back. The ads in Goldmine range from mid-July to Mid-August. Ian has told me the guests on the album include the percussionists with the Page/Plant tour (including Hossam Ramzy, who's done work with many many great artists, including Bjork and personal favorites Red Box), a fiddle player, keyboardist (eh?), and 3 backup vocalists. The tentative track listing is as follows: The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, King Of Emotion, Summertime, Big Yellow Taxi, Sling It, River Of Hope, Where The Rose Is Sown, Come Back To Me, Eleanor Rigby, Ruby Tuesday, Winter Sky and The Buffalo Skinners. Stuart was recording his solo album in Nashville in April/May according to my info from Ian. He says "not so much Lyle Lovett... more a male kd Lang." Interesting. Ian also said Tony, Bruce & Mark are working on a project separately, and that the next BC album will commence (recording) "late '96." He also claims that Polygram US will be releasing "something similar" to the UK remasters later this year. Let's wait & see what turns up. Of course, Polygram plans to release Restless Natives in the UK in September, and then an "obscurities" album, with b-sides, mixes, etc.

Last, but not least, I want to send condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones recently. AOU has become like a family to me (as I hope it has for you all) and it saddens me to hear of such passings, as I'm sure it does each and every one of us. I won't embarrass the folks by naming them here, but just keep AOU folks in your prayers, ok? Next issue we have an essay on Killiecrankie, savvy tour tales and lots and lots of naked babes... oh wait, that's my *other* fanzine! Just kidding.

Thanks, until next time (OCTOBER???)

Jaw



Lowell Austin at Wal-Mart with his brand-new lawnmower!

AOU's EXCLUSIVE STEELTOWN T-SHIRT!



First off, both previous designs of our AOU tees are now unavailable. Secondly, the new tee looks much better than this diagram! If you've been a member of AOU for awhile, it's very similar to the cover for AOU Volume 2 Number 1, which also had the lyrics to Winter Sky on the cover. I'm not exactly sure how much liberty I have with BC logos and designs prior to AOU becoming official, so there's always a chance I may get tapped on the shoulder and asked not to produce any more of these, so order NOW! Each tee is 100% cotton and comes in L or XL and in your choice of either WHITE, GREY or SLATE BLUE - please indicate 1st 2nd and 3rd color choice. All tees are \$20 post-paid. Make check or Money Order out to James d Birch. And, judging by recent orders, you might allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

HOT SEAT

STUART ADAMSON of BIG COUNTRY

BIG COUNTRY singer Stuart Adamson has just released a new album, *Why The Long Face*, and has lined up a series of summer concerts. The rocker, who scored hits with *Look Away*, *Chance* and *In A Big Country*, has lived in Florida for a year but plans to move back to Scotland eventually.

CLANCY GEBLER DAVIES put him in the Hot Seat before his Saturday gig in Bath...

WHY did you move to Florida?

I wanted to be in the sun for a while and hear guitar bands on the radio.

WHO'S the first person you'd invite to your birthday party?

John Jobson, TV presenter Richard Jobson's big brother, because he's the funniest man alive.

WHO would you keep off the guest list?

O.J. Simpson and his entourage would be a good choice.

BEST party you've ever attended?

A Rod Stewart one after the Prince's Trust Concert when I got to meet Kenny Dalglish.

FAVE drink?

Arizona Iced Tea.

FAVE food?

Anything hot and spicy like Cajun and Indian.

FAVE bands?

Bebop Deluxe, Led Zeppelin, Kate Bush.

WHEN was the last time you cried?

I cry with alarming regularity. Just watching TV can set me off.

YOUR worst job?

I was a trainee accountant for six weeks.

FIRST record you ever bought?

Paranoid, by Black Sabbath.

WILDEST thing you've ever done?

Getting thrown out of a hotel after using its bed linen for togas.

WHAT would you change about yourself?

I'd have better skin. I still get spots in my 30s.

WORST nightmare?

Drowning or waking up and finding out I'd become David Mellor!

WHAT'S your car?

A Lincoln town car--it's silver and huge.

CAN you blush?

I hate it when you meet someone and you can't remember their name.

ANY bad habits?

I can get terribly crabby at the wrong times.

HOW do you relax?

Playing footie, running, chillin' out on the beach.

WHO have you got the hots for?

Geena Davis.

WHAT do you see yourself doing in 10 years time?

Not being married to Geena Davis, sadly. Probably playing in a C&W band.

Reprinted from The Star, 6/15/95. Courtesy of Ian Grant



Letters! Letters Letters



Howdy do neighbor! This letter came at just the right time, as I was just getting around to this very column of AOU!

Dear James,

It's summer and it's been a long time since I've written you. Many apologies across the board. It's been a rough '96 for me; so I thought I'd let you know that I'm still around and I care. The last AOU was superb. The fan club base is growing and so are your issues. Has anyone been able to pick up the new remastered versions of the past albums? I've checked all of my sources and I am having no luck. I just subscribed to GOLDMINE & I'm awaiting my first issue. I just purchased an older cd of a BBC live concert from '89.

Well, on my musical front I had two weeks recently to visit old school buds (and ex-band members). We did a couple of "live" shows back in my old School town of Winona, MN. We played some BC material along with everything else. We played *Porrohman*, *Angle Park*, *Fields of Fire*, *Inwards*, *Blue on a Green Planet* and *Heart and Soul*. It was fun, really fun and our audience recieved the songs with great enthusiasm. Perhaps it was the beer. I had purchased a new amp and effects system and they make me sound as if I know how to play [all guitar players out there know the feeling! -Ed]! Perhaps a get-together some day, a little jam, would be fun.

How are things going for you? I hope all is well. I'm sure you'll update us on BC's happenings soon, so I'll wait with baited breath! I probably told you before that most of my BC audio was stolen from my vehicle last year. I was only trying to move them from point A to point B. So, I'm desperately searching for more stuff. A lot of it was live tapes and a lot of import cd's. Help me if you can (extra info) please?

I'll keep in contact, perhaps a phone call could be in order.

Thanks,

Chris Raaths

PS - Could you print an apology to all AOU members on my behalf regarding my absence and lack of contact?

PS [from the back of the envelope - Ed] I'm curious to what kind of car you drive? Me - 1991 Sterling 827 SL - British cars rule!

Thanks a lot for the compliments. Each time I get an Issue of AOU together, I get myself to thinking it's just a little bit bigger & better than the last. I hope you all agree! A lot of folks are getting the remasters from what I've heard, but to be consistent, I don't think the later albums will be as popular as the early ones.

That's great that your band did some BC - my own band has included Close Action in our set list for over a year now and it usually rocks - even with teenagers! A jam'd be great - I wish we could get all the AOU musicians together for an all-star session!

I'm really sorry about your stuff being stolen. The saddest part is that the thief probably just pawned the stuff. As for "re-stocking" your collection, you've taken the best possible first step by subscribing to Goldmine! Next you might choose a few nearby fans from the AOU member list and break into their houses and steal *their* BC! Just kidding! How 'bout it? Anybody care to donate any copies of BC stuff to Chris? It'd be your "good deed for the day!"

I might be getting my phone re-connected soon - I'll probably have a new number for you all in the next issue.

And finally, I drive a 1986 Blue Toyota Tercel Wagon that I affectionately call "The Blue Turtle." And right now, it's well overdue for an oil change!

Country fashions for autumn



Reprinted from the Yorkshire Post, 9/29/95
courtesy of Ian Grant

Unfashionable or not, Big Country, quite frankly, couldn't give a damn and are quite happy to hover above the competition of the charts after 14 years, three record companies, 20 top 40 singles and eight top 10 albums to date.

Unfashionability is, however, a very marketable attribute when you consider that most bands are striving for that very status, to set them apart from the rest.

But at this stage, Big Country are more concerned with the strength of their songs than with building an image.

Stuart Adamson (vocals, guitars, E-bow, slide guitar and B-bender guitar) sits in a studio somewhere in Dunfermline, contemplating whether or not they really went away: "No, I don't think we did really; obviously we went through a bad spell in the early part of the Nineties.

"We had record company hassles and the albums suffered.

"Mark (Brzezicki) left to do some session work but came back and now it's just really special for us to have the original line-up again."

Big Country left the scene for a while with five gold albums to their name, so it's hardly surprising that the band feels under pressure to perform their trademark rousing guitar anthems.

"When you have that kind of success, it is difficult to shake those pre-conceptions made of you, but it only deflects what is happening at the moment—our songs are much stronger now.

"The songs back then sounded fine but I just didn't like the overall sound."

Back in the Eighties, Big Country were seen as an antidote to the synthesizer duo with a refreshing blend of instrumentation and that "bagpipe" guitar sound that distinguished them at the time.

Ironically, but perhaps fortunately for Big Country, synthetic music is back with a vengeance to open the gates for their return.

"The guitar riff is and always has been very much of a hook and the guitar itself has an incredible visual image, but a couple of years ago the scene was dance so it's quite nice now to see some bands coming out with original songs."

Big Country's new album, *Why the Long Face*, is not so much original as reassuringly familiar.

This is Big Country back at their anthemic best, with drum-beat introductions, the bagpipe-sound trademark and lyrics that hint at social and environmental issues.

Post Nuclear Talking Blues, for instance, is a sincere-sounding title.

"Actually it's a completely superficial title," says Adamson.

"The song is basically just about having a really bad day, but then you need to have some light and shade in a 14-track album."

My Pilgrimage



to Mecca

story and photos by Tom Kercheval

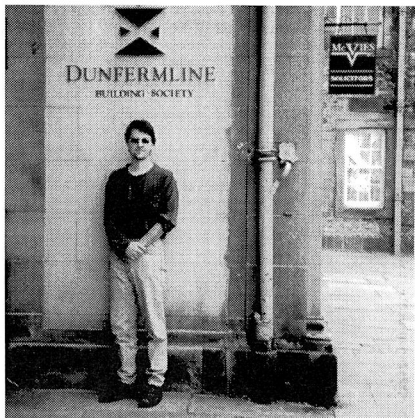
Even before the words "big" and "country" were joined together in one of music's most sacred unions, I was in love with all things Scottish. The majestic drone of the bagpipes, the lilting accents, the thought of rolling green hills, medieval castles, hallowed battlegrounds--it was the stuff of fantasies. So, when my favorite uncle informed me of a business trip he was taking to Scotland last August, and the subsequent potential that he may be allowed to bring along a guest, (namely me), I jumped at the chance. Literally. Almost jumped right out of my skin. Anyway, I know how boring it can be to listen to some idiot rant about his vacation, so I'll try to make this as brief, as painless, and as incoherent as possible, okay? Besides, James needs this asap, so I'm going to have to write by the seat of my pants. Here we go...

Flying into Scotland was a spiritual experience. I'll never forget it. The small amount of Scottish blood that occasionally makes its way through my heart began to surge, as if it knew. And I'm sure it did. The view was spectacular, a clear day that revealed the beauty of the countryside in all its ancient glory. What really struck me, though, was when, upon walking out of Edinburgh airport, I first smelled the unique scent of Scottish air. It was farm air, yet strangely different from the farm air I've been used to all of my life. It was soothing, welcoming. What was really interesting, though, was the fact that the smell continued to linger even in the heart of Edinburgh, the capital city, for crying out loud! I was in love with this place immediately.

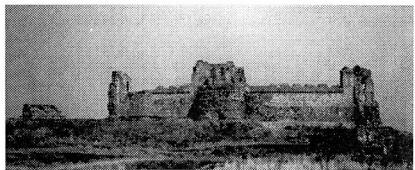
As my uncle was otherwise occupied, I was free to explore on my own, and explore I did. Our hotel was just at the foot of Edinburgh castle, a truly magnificent edifice, site of many historic moments in Scottish history and inspiration for many a traveling minstrel over the centuries. It was here where the Military Tattoo was held (which I was privileged to witness), an event which features armies of pipers, re-enactments of key moments in Scottish history, and a huge fireworks display. Quite an emotional experience.

The first chance I got, though, I headed straight for a record store. I couldn't wait to see what it would be like to look in a Big Country bin and actually see something besides *THE CROSSING* and *GREATEST HITS*. Sure enough, as soon as I stepped into the local Virgin establishment, there was prominently displayed, a large assembly of Scottish artists on cd, among them Runrig and, of course, Big Country! I picked up an extra copy of *STEELTOWN*, as well as the *IN A BIG COUNTRY* compilation. I was close to heaven.

continued. . .



Tom K standing in Dunfermline



The next day however, gave me quite a financial scare. You see, I learned that there was a record show coming to town, and, of course, I had to be there. You should have seen it. I swear, if I was a weaker man, I would have spent every last pound I had. There were so many Big Country items that it was virtually sickening. Sickening because I could not have them all!! I did manage to pick up some cool 12-inches for myself and James, as well as some other nifty items. I saw a Fields of Fire 7-inch formed in the shape of Scotland, but just had to draw the line somewhere!

But no, I did not spend all my time in Scotland looking for Big Country material. What kind of freak do you take me for? I also had homemade scones at dawn by the sea, visited the quaint village of Crammen, listened to pipers at sunset, visited pubs by night, traveled to the fields of Falkirk and Bannockburn, paid homage to the image of William Wallace, discovered cider beer, hiked towards the Highlands, day-dreamed by the lochs, stood alone atop a small mountain, the city of Edinburgh laid out before me, "Belief in the Small Man" playing through my headphones. I even, dare I say it, bought a set of the old pipes for myself. I've always wanted to play them, and by golly, I'm going to. It ain't easy, though, let me tell you, especially for a diehard guitarist like myself.

Okay, okay, so I also visited Dunfermline. No Stuart sightings, though. He was off playing in Germany somewhere, I believe. Anyway, it's a sweet little town, not too small, not too large, and where the remains of Robert the Bruce are said to reside. As for the people of Scotland, well, they seemed initially shy but inevitably quite friendly. Extremely friendly, actually. I loved them. They seemed more close-knit, more concerned with the welfare of their fellow countrymen. Of course, I could just be imagining all this, as I was admittedly pretty enamored by the whole experience. By the way, it's amazing how a Scottish accent can affect a female's level of attractiveness, at least for me. I fell in love too many times to count. I guess I was just on sensory overload. I'll always remember Jackie, though; a shy, beautiful maid at the hotel. She had the loveliest smile...

In closing, everyone reading these insane ramblings must, at some point, make a pilgrimage of their own to this precious pearl of a country. You won't want to come home, at least for a while, and I guarantee that you'll never listen to Big Country in quite the same way again. Do yourself a favor, though, and leave your official Montgomery Scott Star Trek uniform at home. They're not too keen on Scotty over there.



BIG COUNTRY

DRUMMER MARK BRZEZICH SAYS "WE'RE JUST FOUR IDIOTS PLAYING TOGETHER."
THOUSANDS OF FANS DISAGREE. NEIL TENNANT BOARDS THE BIG COUNTRY TOUR BUS

IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH.

There's one sure way of annoying the members of Big Country. Ask them how they manage to make their guitars sound like Scottish bagpipes.

"It doesn't sound like bagpipes!" exclaims bass player Tony Butler.

"It's a comparison I've never been able to see," affirms guitarist and singer Stuart Adamson. "I think it just comes subconsciously from my style of playing rather than us striving to be the Sound of Young Scotland or something."

Whatever, it's the exhilaration, folkish melodies played on Adamson and Bruce Watson's dual lead guitars that distinguish Big Country from their contemporaries and conjure up the freedom of wild, open spaces.

"You're sort of brought up with it, really," says Stuart, 25, of his upbringing in Scotland. "People have gatherings at their houses and you really grow up with old Scottish and Irish folk songs right from when you're very young. I think it's also because I'm self-taught on the guitar; I've never tried to copy anyone else. It's come out of that. I still cannot see how it sounds like bagpipes, though."

Another myth about themselves they are anxious to put to rest is that Big Country are an entirely Scottish group.

"My grandfather was Scottish," says London-born Tony, 26. "Stuart was born in Manchester. Bruce was born in Ontario, Canada, and Mark was born in Slough (England). It's just a media hook; it's romantic, attractive to say we're a Scottish band. People think of pipe bands and kilts, they don't really think of rock and roll as coming out of Scotland. At our first show in Vancouver, the promoters had a piper walking up and down outside advertising the second show!" He shakes his head in disbelief. "That's never going to happen again."

It's two years now since Stuart Adamson formed Big Country. Raised in Dunfermline, Scotland, he comes from "just a normal, working class family." His father was an engineer in the local coal mines who later took his engineering skills to the Merchant Navy. "In that area you're brought up with a sense of family and a sense of community and that's all there is to it." As he talks to me on Big Country's tour coach, on an overnight haul from Cleveland to New York, his young son, Callum, squirms beside him.

When Stuart was 13, his dad bought him a guitar and pretty soon he was playing "with mates in the village" in a band called Tattoo, bashing out cover versions of current pop hits. When punk hit Scotland in the late '70s, he was a fervent convert. "There was a great sense of positive action amongst young people at that time," he remembers, and punk gave him the chance to play his own songs on stage without embarrassment.

His first punk band, the Skids, achieved national success in Britain with a stream of hit singles and albums and constant tours. Stuart's unique style of playing developed as one of the rallying cries which attracted a large and loyal following to the Skids before Stuart left in 1981.

"All the spirit had gone out. I was really disillusioned. I thought, bugger it,

continued. . .

I may as well be writing songs myself." So he retreated to Dunfermline and put together the original Big Country line-up with local boy, Bruce Watson, a fan of the Skids who'd been messing around in various bands. "I'd always liked his ideas and stuff so I just asked him if he wanted us to start working together. I didn't set out with any master plan or preconceived ideas. I knew it was important to get the right people."

Someone who'd also been impressed by the Skids was Tony Butler who'd toured with a band called On The Air (fronted by Pete Townshend's younger brother Simon) as support to the Skids. Every night he witnessed the "triumphant feeling" the Skids aroused in their audience and vowed that "if I was ever going to get in a successful group, it was going to be something like that, that kind of feeling."

Tony comes from Ealing, a suburb on the western outskirts of London, where his family were neighbors of the Townshends. While Pete was tackling the problems of massive success with the Who, Simon and Tony "used to knock around on the streets and in youth clubs and just carried on from there."

After slogging away for about five years, they advertised for a new drummer and acquired Mark Brzezicki, now 26, from Slough, a young veteran of numerous bands and a determined technical player. "I completely missed out on the punk thing," Mark admits. "I was trying too hard to be a musician at the time."

On The Air was, he says, "the most technical band I ever played in--all 9/8 timings." But after two albums they realized they were "getting nowhere fast. I think we sold about 130 records," laughs Mark, "and I must have bought about 30 of them for me Mum and Dad."

Mark and Tony decided to pool their resources and established themselves as Rhythm for Hire, a top session team in London. They played on dozens of obscure singles, as well as on Pete Townshend's two solo albums, and Tony filled in on the Pretenders' single, "Back on the Chain Gang."

"We made a little name for ourselves," says Tony, "but it got a bit boring." Then came a phone call from Stuart Adamson asking the duo to play on the demos he was recording in London for his post-Skids band. As a group, Stuart, Bruce, Mark and Tony jelled right from their first rehearsal. "I just knew right away it was totally right," recalls Stuart. Big Country was born.

Over two years later, they can look back on months of solid touring and their first album, *The Crossing*, with pride. A large following has gradually built up, bigger than the Skids but without any "backbiting" within the group. A respect for their audience unites Big Country

Tony: "My attitude on stage is to enjoy what I'm playing, play it to the best of my ability and try to share it with the others standing in front of me. When it all blends and meshes into one, it's an amazing creative force and it gets into the audience.. And it's the audience feedback going backwards and forwards that makes it all worthwhile."

Mark: "I think too many groups go on stage with the mystique of them being up there and those lot being down there. They're manipulating the audience, acting like demi-gods after gigs, rushed off into a long, black limousine with dark windows, being unobtainable. It's not treating people with respect. That's the reason why, if we can, we meet people after the gigs. Because we're just as normal a bunch of people as they are."

Their respect for people also inspires their songs. A "sense of community" is how Stuart Adamson puts it. "It's a concern for other people rather than just yourself. The same thing always happens during times of recession when right-wing governments come to the fore: people become more insular and selfish and much more interested in looking out for number one, when those are times when they should be looking toward other people. I think in the past, when times of hardship struck, they struck everybody and everybody did pull together. But now there are people who are totally safe from it. That probably includes us now because we've sold so many records."

Nevertheless Stuart still lives in Dunfermline with his wife, Sandra, and son Callum and "draws inspiration" from the place. "I like the spirit of the people there. I love the area, the countryside." His "sense of family" is still strong: his parents and his wife's parents live close by and Sandra and Callum have accompanied him on tour. "Basically because I'm sick to death of spending so much time away from them and they are very important to me. More important than music is, I think."

Big Country's big success in America has left him level-headed: "I'm not excited by it or surprised; I'm just satisfied. I just see myself as someone who lives in Scotland and who is a bit pissed off with some of the things I see going on there. I don't see myself as an artist at all—I just feel the need to communicate and songs are the best way for me to do it. You know, I find it really hard to understand why so many people seem to think that, because they're in a group that sells a certain amount of records, it makes them one of the most important people in the world. To me, every single individual is important."

Tony Butler's experience in the rock business has helped form *his* anti-rock star attitude. Working with Pete Townshend "opened my eyes to a lot of what goes on in this business," he says, and witnessing the sad fate of his friend, the late James Honeyman-Scott of the Pretenders, "strengthened my attitudes against rock and roll."

"He was just like me, playing in a band. They did American tour after American tour and he started believing he was a star, being approached by people who shouldn't be in the business, giving him bad drugs. Coming back to England, he realized he wasn't that important anyway, having to find the drugs he's been fed over there, going home to Hereford, realizing what a boring existence that is and not being able to handle it. It really cut me up when he died. I want to make it clear that those type of people, commonly known in the music business as 'liggers,' can stay well away from us because they won't be entertained."

At the Agora in Cleveland, I watch Big Country summoning up the feeling to inspire the feedback between themselves and their audience. It takes a while but group and audience get there in the end.

"Basically in this group," explains Tony, "we've got Stuart and Bruce who've come out of a punk background, and myself and Mark who've come from a very musical background: the crossover's been terrific. I've realized that I can go onstage and play what the hell I like when, at one time, my attitude was that I had to play perfectly. It's the emotion that counts and not the expertise."

Mark is the most down-to-earth. "We're not trying to live out some planned rock and roll dream," he insists. "We're just four idiots playing together."

On My Desk

Here's the picks of the musical litter for this issue!

JUNIOR bRoWn

seMi-cRazy

CURB RECORDS

My good friend Kevin at MSA Studios turned me on to this musical genius of country music. I only pursue a few country music artist's material, and Junior Brown is number one and steady right now.

A few days before his publicity company's bio arrived, I was pondering exactly how to explain to 90 or so people who probably don't care for country music - whether it be the "tear in my beer" redundancy of older country or the *this-close-to-rock-n-roll* blast of today's newer country - that Junior Brown is country music for people who don't *like* country music. Of course, the bio came and the very first lines summed it up quite nicely. "A lot of people tell me they don't like country music, but they like what I'm doing," says Brown. "I hear that line more than anything else." His music combines the soul of country and the spirit of rock n' roll. However, "crossover" is not synonymous with watered-down or light-weight. "Just about the time they label me as some old-time honkytonk singer, I throw something new in there that surprises them. And then they'll appreciate the traditional styles of country music, too. Do something to wow them without ruining the roots of country and they end up accepting the music that they would have been prejudiced against."

Brown's first three releases on Curb Records, 12 SHADES OF BROWN, GUIT WITH IT and the ep JUNIOR HIGH, have helped to establish him as a crowd favorite from Texas roadhouses to the hippest clubs of New York City and Europe. SEMI CRAZY was released the end of May. To help facilitate his dexterity on both the standard 6-string and steel guitars, Brown invented his own guitar hybrid, the "guit-steel." "I was playing both the steel and the guitar, switching back and forth a lot while I sang, and it was kind of awkward," Brown says. "But then I had this dream where they just kind of melted together. When I woke up, I thought 'You know, that thing would work!' They made double-neck guitars and double-neck steels, so why not one of each?" A quick call was made to guitar maker Michael Stevens, whose expertise made the dream a reality, and the guit-steel was born. Brown's really the Jimi Hendrix of country, the way I see it, in that he knows his instrument inside and out, backwards and forwards. In his solos, he alternates between the two necks and just amazes you.

In lesser hands, the guit-steel might become a flashy gimmick at best; in Junior's it's clear that it's merely a tool, a means to an end - the end being some of the hottest, most heartfelt playing heard in years. He also does this really cool de-tuning thing (mid-solo) on a number of tunes that exemplifies exactly how much knowledge and control he has over the instrument. As for his basic sound, it's very traditional country and Junior has a warm, mellow baritone voice that'll drive you nuts. One thing I've always held against a lot of country music is that most artists do not write their own material. Not so with Junior, the exceptions being a cover song here and there. Also he has a terrific sense of humor - take the first lines to "Party Lights" (from GUIT WITH IT), a song about the ills of drinking and driving - "I'm a guy who likes to party/And stay out late at night/I love those party faces/And those pretty party lights/But there's another kind of party lights/That I can't stand to see/When there's a man in that patrol car/And he don't wanna party with me." He's a low-profile kinda guy off-stage, but definitely an extrovert when it comes to his music.

His talents have led major magazines like MUSICIAN to herald Brown as a genius, and declaring "Junior Brown has already proven he's more than the keeper of anyone's flame or the 90's version of so-and-so. When people talk about him 50 years from now, it will be in the same breath as names like George Jones and Merle Haggard." LIFE magazine honored him as the only contemporary musician included in their "All Time Country Band" and GUITAR PLAYER magazine's 1994 "best of" saw him #1 lap steel player, #2 country guitarist, and #3 country album (GUIT WITH IT). The Los Angeles Times recently said "In his music and videos, Junior Brown exudes the sweet, simple feel of someone who would be right at home on a bus bench next to Forrest Gump. He could fit right in, as himself, in a TV remake of Andy Griffith's old Mayberry show." If you can respect a traditional country feel with some rockabilly and surf injected, you too will enjoy Junior Brown's music. And believe me, I wouldn't waste this much ink on paper if I didn't think each and every one of you should go out right now and plunk down some hard-earned cash for some amazing music (for starters, try GUIT WITH IT) that will brighten your day, get your toe tapping, make you laugh and maybe even bring an appreciation for a genre you might otherwise overlook.

grant lee buffalo copperopolis

SLASH/REPRISE RECORDS

As a lot of you already know, these guys have been my "2nd-favorites" for about 2 years now. This is their 3rd album, and while it doesn't quite match up to the first two, FUZZY & MIGHTY JOE MOON, it's a great album on it's own.

Explaining the title, guitarist-lead vocalist Grant Lee Phillips claims it's a real place, once a thriving copper-mining town and still home to a small population. "There's a general store and a church and a school," says Phillips. "I grew up close to the road that led there and I always had an attachment to that name."

Grant Lee Buffalo's songs begin with a profoundly intuitive process. "I think when I sit down to write, especially in an unconscious way, there's an attempt to yield to some kind of inner voice, or higher voice," Phillips contends. "And I can't always put it into logical terms why certain lines are delivered." But, he quickly adds, "It's not a Sermon On The Mount, it's just a vent."

As with the first two albums, this one was produced by bassist, keyboardist and backup vocalist Paul Kimble. For Grant, the producer's role is "part mechanical and part witch doctor," and the trio could scarcely trust an outsider to help them capture their unique chemistry [perhaps a little foursome we know could benefit from this example! - AOU ed.].

GLB began forging this chemistry in Los Angeles in the early 1990's - after the breakup of Shiva Burlesque, which featured Phillips and drummer Joey Peters [the most down-to-earth guy I've ever met in music - AOU ed.]. The group placed their song "Fuzzy" on alternative rock idol Bob Mould's Singles Only label in 1992, a record deal with Slash Reprise soon followed. 1993 saw the release of the album FUZZY and live shows that made alternative granddaddy Michael Stipe hail them as the best live act he'd seen in a long time. In 1994, they toured the world with Pearl Jam. They barely had time to step off the touring merry-go-round to record MIGHTY JOE MOON, and even went on the road in the middle of that project.

The highs of playing live in support of MOON - GLB opened for REM in various far-flung locales - were tempered by some serious lows, like Phillips getting a cup of coffee and returning to find the bus gone. And the very next day having the bus broken into and their luggage, stereo equipment and CD masters of material stolen. 12 hours later, the bus blew a tire and the band found themselves stuck on the autobahn without a ride.

The album starts off with the first single, *Homespun*, a driving tune all about the "dwarf militias" that seem to be springing up here in the US. From that we go to a beautiful, lush track called *The Bridge*, with soulful piano and talk of metaphorical bridges we all must cross in our lives. Then its *Arousing Thunder*, with its sea of ambient guitar, voice and mellotron, which Phillips remarks "...is about people patching things up. It reflects a skeptical optimism that comes naturally to me." Even *The Oxen* speaks of compassion and the cost of sustaining convictions in the face of opposition. *Crackdown* is reminiscent of GREEN or OUT OF TIME-era REM (but, arguably, better); a socially-minded tune asking you to recall the Japanese exchange student incident in Baton Rouge, among other unsettling undercurrents of recent America (Phillips also detailed the Waco ordeal in *Lone Star* from MOON). *Armchair* has sort of a Neil Young feel, and it's understandable, as Young is one of Phillips' professed influences. Then *Bethlehem Steel*, a falsetto-filled tale of the lives affected by the old mill. Phillips claims it's "...a romantic pastoral vision of an industry and, more importantly, the people that brought life to it. It attempts to juxtapose divine aspirations with earthly triumphs and by sheer coincidence recalls soul music of the early seventies. I think of it as rollerskating music because that and Blue Oyster Cult is what they played at the skating rink when I was a kid." These lines should strike you as somewhat familiar, I think: "There was a light/Blue as welder's torch/It used to shine over the field/And all the wise men, strong men were drawn for miles/Followed a star to Bethlehem Steel/Our mother's father worked here in World War Two/On the main floor, operating the drill/and in his open palms little splinters remind him of/The booming days of Bethlehem Steel."

All That I Have was, Grant says, "written on tour during a mandatory tachometer stop in the timberland of Sweden. Joey and I went traipsing into the woods through a faint drizzle and found a log to sit on. I brought along a guitar and a Walkman recorder. Joey had a tabla and most of the song is just me relating to those surroundings, all green moss and toadstools." *Better For Us* regards an oak tree Grant grew up with, and how it's now "grown old. (&) it threatens to fall." Phillips explains, "The song also revolves around the idea that endings are as essential as beginnings. As childhood ends, adulthood begins. The transformation is painful but none of us are strangers to the task." *Two & Two* (my personal favorite) is about feeling "misunderstood and inarticulate." *Comes To Blows* is a socio-political tale of a young man's growing realization of the problems in America and his reactions. Phillips notes, "This song isn't so much a prediction of what's to come, but a reflection of the anxiety and anticipation of the present day." The last song, *The Only Way Down*, was written "in Australia after a long and humid day, crawling and clawing through the rain forest. The physical exhaustion that goes along with such a journey inspired the lyric. The gist of the song is that sometimes the hard road is the only road: the only way off the mountain is up and over. Paul added pump organ and mellotron in the studio and when we heard that, we all knew it was the grand finale."

This album is more polished than the previous two, and at times, I think that's what dilutes it in comparison to them. They spent more recording time in the studio with this one, also. If you think you want to try some GLB, my first suggestion would be MIGHTY JOE MOON, but as I said before, this album does indeed stand on its own and has a tremendous lot to offer in these days of three-chord, muddling trash bands who shouldn't even be signed, let alone getting radio airplay.



Dread Zeppelin un - led - ed & the fun sessions

IRS and Imago Records

Gary Putman of the band sent me a copy of *The Fun Sessions* to get to Stuart. He toured with BC back in 1986 when he was with the band *The Prime Movers* (who I had no knowledge of until Andrea sent me a tune of theirs on which Stuart plays E-bow). I being a sleazy kind of guy wrote Putman back and asked if he could spare me a copy as I have always liked what I've heard of Dread Zeppelin. He indeed did and I enjoyed this new DZ disc thoroughly! Just in case you're not familiar with DZ all I need to say is cheesy Elvis impersonator heading up a band who does reggae versions of classic Zeppelin (and other classic material). A lot of people I think have a problem with DZ whether it be they can't take the kookiness or they feel it's a murder of the classic Zeppelin of yore. I myself love Led Zep immensely and still see no problem with DZ - and believe me I can handle kookiness (well up to about the *Chocolate & Cheese* album by Ween and then I start getting a wee disoriented).

One thing a lot of people can't understand is that from a musician's perspective it takes a lot of love and respect to transform the songs the way they do. They have to really get inside a tune to understand what they can do with it. Bala O'Reilly is terrific with Tor Telvis (the Elvis guy) at one point substituting *Teenage Graeceland* for the usual *Teenage Wasteland* (I know we have some die-hard Who fans out there - stop grumbling!). Putman was originally the bassist when they released their first cd *Un-Led-Ed* but now mans the lead six-string. *The Fun Sessions* has reggae slants of the Beatles *Deep Purple* (CR Lynyrd Skynyrd the Doors Cream and more. *Un-Led-Ed* is totally Led Zep covers. Both are great and if you have a penchant for classic rock *and* a sense of humour I'd say dive right in! And thanks to Gary for sending me the disc.

superdrag
regretbully yours

ELEKTRA RECORDS

Wow! I *love* this band! I saw that *Sucked Out* video on MTV's 120 Minutes, and the first time I thought it was kind of annoying. The second time it got stuck in my head, and I *had* to have the album! As a matter of fact, I kinda got in an argument with the record store manager when I went to buy it (I swear, the sign clearly says "If we don't have it, 20% off special orders!"). I've been listening to this album in my car non-stop since I bought it!

What you have here is the result of a tour bus crash - if the *Urge Overkill* tour bus hit the *My Bloody Valentine* tour bus, the four guys emerging from the wreckage would be, collectively, *Superdrag*.

These fellows have a great grasp of sonics, harmony, and rhythm. You'll find yourself anxious to listen to the cd again, something that doesn't happen with every cd you buy, right? The bass carries and plods with a great 60's feel and the guitars are a perfect balance of tone and feedback. The drums are right there in the room with you.

I realize a lot of you aren't into recent music, and I can respect that. But, really, don't get so far into that "nothin'-after-1985" attitude that you overlook some great modern music, like *Superdrag*. My favorite tracks - it's honestly hard to choose! - would be *Slot Machine*, *Phaser*, *Cynicality*, *Truest Love & Nothing Good is Real*. Do yourself a favor and check out this band, they aren't like "all the rest!"

A QUICKIE WITH... STUART ADAMSON . BIG COUNTRY

Reprinted from Hot Press, 4/6/95

courtesy of Ian Grant

What was the first record to send a shiver up your spine?

I was lucky because compared to most my friends, my parents were pretty hip. My mum worked in a record store when I was younger and I remember saving up my pennies to buy Billy Fury's 'Halfway To Paradise' which I still love. Then, in the '70s I got into Led Zeppelin, T. Rex, Mott the Hoople and David Bowie, who was a big hero. At the same time, we had these family get-togethers where everyone would sing folk and country songs and I think that's sneaked in since as a bit of an influence.

What was the last album you either bought or blagged?

I used my flexible-friend to buy the new Radiohead record which is brilliant but my favorite album at the moment is Offspring. I stole a copy off someone a couple of months ago and haven't stopped playing it since. I prefer them to Green Day who are a bit too cartoonish for my tastes but I'd rather that than Boyzone!

What shite jobs did you have before becoming a full-time musician?

I was a trainee environmental officer which sounds dead posh but was actually quite smelly. After that, I became a production control supervisor in a factory which I hated because everyone there was so boring. Thankfully, The Skids came along to rescue me and I haven't done a proper day's work since!

Who or what convinced you to sell your soul to rock 'n' roll?

The thing for me was seeing Mick Ronson play with David Bowie. In those days, riffs were like hooks. If you think back to 'Ziggy Stardust' it isn't so much the chorus you remember as Ronno's guitar. An example of someone doing that now is the bloke in Oasis. He's ***** excellent.

Most shaggy rock star?

Again, it has to be Ziggy-period Bowie when everything was kind of blurred. As for the female side of things, I wonder if Geena Davis can sing?

Most memorable gig?

That has to be the *White Riot* tour featuring The Clash, Subway Sect and The Slits which I saw in 1977 at the Edinburgh Playhouse. I know it's cliché but Joe Strummer and all that lot really did change my life.

The most embarrassing thing that's happened to you?

I did an interview in the States with a network TV programme called *Entertainment Tonight*. This thing goes out peak-time, so I was dead chuffed with myself and bragging about it to all the lads. Anyway, the show comes on and they're using subtitles because they can't understand a word I'm saying!

Biggest fashion faux-pas?

A pair of purple loon-pants which had extra triangular pieces sewn in to make the flares even wider.

If you were going to form a tribute band who would be the object of your adoration?

I'd go and find myself a nice smoky cocktail bar and do an hour of Leonard Cohen. What a lot of people miss is that his lyrics are actually quite funny. Not in a 'ha ha ha' way but there's a lot of irony which I know certainly makes me smile.

What musicians would be in your dream band?

John Bonham on drums, myself and Mick Ronson on twin lead guitar, Glen Matlock on bass and Kurt Cobain on vocals. The Beatles wouldn't get a look in!



An Historical Perspective

By Lewis Crow

"There's one legend that says the heroes aren't dead at all,
just sleeping underneath the hills. And one day they'll come back."

-Ninian Dunnett

Restless Natives

In many ways, "Restless Natives" is Big Country's most Scottish song. Whereas other narratives like "The Storm" or "The Red Fox" explore one particular part of Scottish history, "Restless Natives" is unique in that it encapsulates the past, present and future of the great Gaelic nation. It does so by speaking to the core of the Scottish psyche, summarizing the despair and dreams of a people.

To properly analyze "Restless Natives," we must for the moment completely detach the song from the movie of the same name. In good time, however, we will return to the quirky Scottish comedy.

The song begins with the now-familiar strains of e-bow and bagpipe guitar. This creates an aural landscape of Scottish moods for the listener. The first stanza is an almost-but-not-quite literal recitation of the 14th stanza from William Wordsworth's narrative poem "Rob Roy's Grave:"

ALONE AMONG THE HILLS AND STONE
THROUGH SUMMER SUN AND WINTER SNOW
THE EAGLE HE WAS LORD ABOVE
AND ROB WAS LORD BELOW

In quoting Wordsworth, Stuart Adamson paints a deliberate picture of Scotland's "glory days" when the nation was prosperous and the clan system was at its peak. Noble chiefs like Rob Roy ruled over great expanses of beautiful land. Life was good.

All that has changed by the time we get to the second stanza:

240 YEARS
WE LIVED WITHOUT HOPE AND WITHOUT PRIDE
SO WHO WILL KNOW WHERE THEY COME FROM
WHO RAISED A TORCH FOR THOSE WHO DIED

This requires a brief explanation of Scottish history. Although the nations of England and Scotland had been united more than a century earlier, by 1745 the desire for Scottish independence was not quenched. So it happened that Bonnie Prince Charlie, who considered himself the rightful heir to the throne of Scotland, launched the last and most celebrated attempt to set Alba free. His rebellion was a failure, ending in defeat at the Battle of Culloden Moor.

The English response was severe. So severe, in fact, that even the playing of

continued. . .

bagpipes and wearing of tartan were forbidden! All traces of nationalism were stamped out. Hence, the first two lines in the second stanza of the song. As Stuart was writing in 1985, the time was indeed 240 years since Culloden. The attitude of despair shows that in some quarters at least, the Scots have never recovered from their defeat. They are a people longing to feel hopeful and nationalistic once more.

Back in the days before the clan system was broken, each clan had a bard, an oral historian who memorized, recited, and occasionally embellished the clan's historical deeds. A key part of the storytelling was the belief that better days were just around the corner. The bards would speak of a day to come when heroes would rise up and restore the clan (and Scotland, by implication) to its former grandeur. These anonymous heroes are the "they" Stuart writes of in line three. Line four expresses concern over the loss of tradition. Who in this day and age will render honor to the ones who gave their lives in defense of the land?

The third stanza, the chorus, is a telling one:

I WILL BE WITH THEM
IN THE SUMMER SUN
AND THE WINTER SNOW
THEY WILL COME AND CLOUDS WILL GO
AND SHOW THAT WE ARE PROUD AGAIN

Here Stuart assumes the role of the clan bard, stating his identification with "them" (the heroes) and prophesying their return. The dark days will be gone, and the heroes will restore lost pride.

Stanza four proves somewhat enigmatic:

THOUGH ALL WE LOST IN AUTUMN DAYS
CANNOT BE BORN AGAIN
STAND HERE BY ME
UNTIL THE WAYS OF AGE AND YOUTH
ARE ONE AND SAME

Autumn may refer to the time of the beginning of the end of Bonnie Prince Charlie's rebellion, or it could be a metaphor for the waning days of Scotland's greatness. It is curious that, while in stanza three Stuart speaks very idealistically, in number four he seems to acknowledge that what is gone can't be recaptured. Even with this admission, he conveys a tone of optimism. The call for his people to stand with him and for the old and the young to be united is at once visionary and elusive.

The next stanza, a repetition of the chorus, serves to bolster the realistic optimism of his challenge in stanza four. The last stanza repeats the first, and we end where we began: Scotland in a time of strength.

What of the song's title? The natives are restless, waiting for their nation's redeemers. And the movie? Two restless Scottish youths take to robbing tourist buses dressed as a clown and a wolfman. They develop a Robin Hood-like reputation, which only underscores the irony. Like Bonnie Prince Charlie, their "revolt" against the established order is doomed to failure despite whatever popular support it may have. When compared to the heroes envisioned in Stuart's song, these two prove to be a pale, low-grade imitation and a most ironic contrast. Scotland will have to wait a lot longer to be set free.

As with all of his finest work, Stuart Adamson created a complex, multi-layered portrait in the song "Restless Natives." It does what all good art should, namely capture the spirit of the people it seeks to portray, and does it in a way that is only matched or exceeded by the complex tapestry of Scotland itself.



Stuart's Big Booze Battle

By Clancy Geder Davies

Daily Star, 8/25/95
courtesy of Ian Grant

Big Country singer Stuart Adamson has revealed how alcoholism nearly destroyed his life.

The musician, who became a star after scoring hits such as *In A Big Country* and *Fields of Fire*, joined Alcoholics Anonymous when he realised he had grown to hate himself because of his drinking.

"I could try to think of a lot of artistic reasons why I drank so much, but basically there weren't any," admits Adamson. "The truth is I drank because I wanted to."

His alcohol consumption first raged out of control when he found fame as a teenager with TV presenter Richard Jobson in new wave band *The Skids*. "I come from a rough area of Scotland," he explains. "I was in a successful rock n' roll band at 19 years old. The world was my oyster and I was pretty wild."

Manhood

"We did a lot of hard drinking, but it was always that way for me. I grew up in an area where it was socially acceptable--you proved your manhood by drinking lots."

It was during the Eighties that Stuart's drinking problem escalated and became an open secret in the rock world.

"I didn't drink constantly," he says. "But when I did drink, I would drink really heavily."

"I drank phenomenal amounts of beer and whiskey because that's what I'd grown up on," he admits.

"When I was drinking I'd be really lairy and could be spectacularly unpleasant to people."

"I was never a violent drunk, but maybe if I had been I would have stopped more quickly because someone would have beaten me to a pulp and I would have been forced to stop."

"In the end, I decided I had to cut it out because I liked the sober me."

"I realised that it was easier for me to achieve the things I wanted to do without drinking."

Ditch

"Nothing terribly dramatic happened when I decided to ditch the drink. I just woke up one morning and was fed up with having to worry about what I had said the night before."

Stuart joined AA—and swears he hasn't touched a drop since.

"The weirdest period of my life was just after I'd given up drinking. I didn't go through the horrors that some people get—but I was worried it would affect my creativity," he says.

"I wondered if the drinking was where some of my ideas had come from, but then I started writing again and I knew it wasn't true."

Now Stuart has returned to his native Dunfermline with his wife of 15 years, Sandra, and children, Callum, 13 and Kirsten, 10, after spending a year living in Florida.

Big Country are heading for a comeback after being handpicked by *The Rolling Stones* to join them on the European leg of the *Woodoo Lounge* tour and releasing their new single *You Dreamer* on Tuesday.

Happy

"I'm a happy man now," says Stuart.

"I've had a great summer performing at festivals and staying at home with my family."

"I'm enjoying my life. When people offer me a drink, I just smile and tell them they wouldn't if they'd ever seen me drunk."

Big Country

Why the Long Face

Album review by Tom Kercheval
reprinted from The Slate, February 13, 1996

Way back in the early 80s, there were three bands—U2, The Alarm and Big Country—who were regarded as the revolutionaries of a new, guitar-driven, spiritually-minded, musical movement.

While The Alarm no longer sounds, and U2 has become a bloated money-making machine of Hindenburgh proportions, Big Country has weathered the years with their integrity fully intact, as well as their often peerless high standards of songwriting.

As proof, check out their newest, and possibly best, release, *Why the Long Face*, a collection of sixteen songs that attests to the ideals and ambitions which have fueled this Scottish band for nearly fifteen years.

Although Big Country has always prospered in the U. K., most American music-lovers remember the band solely for their 1983 smash single, "In A Big Country," still a consistent favorite on many alternative playlists.

Unfortunately, though, sporadic U. S. touring over the years, as well as a continuing game of musical record companies, has reduced the band's stateside profile to just a notch above obscurity. But Scots are known for their perseverance and, with *Why the Long Face*, Big Country seems intent on reestablishing themselves in a big way on these star-spangled shores.

The instrumental ferocity of the album's first single and opening track, "You Dreamer," is matched only by the manic desperation of guitarist/vocalist Stuart Adamson's lyrics, as, in lines like "How can someone find me / if no one knows I'm lost," Adamson renders a harrowing tale of lives misspent and potential unrealized.

Big Country has dealt with themes of loss and struggle before, but usually from a broader more worldly perspective. This time, the songs are less anthemic and much more personal, confronting subjects which are rarely considered within rock-n-roll's often cliched vernacular.

"Charlotte," for instance, delivers a heartbreaking portrayal of a bulimic woman's futile quest for love within the confines of an abusive relationship. From another perspective, "One In a Million," despite the trite title, offers a refreshingly mature view of the inherent difficulties in maintaining a loving, long-term relationship, as Adamson asks his long-time companion, "Are you one in a million / or just some baggage from my youth?"

But lest you think that sorrow and moody introspection are the only items on this menu, the band also manages to offer up the occasional slice of humor. In "Post Nuclear Talking Blues," for example, Adamson takes on the character of a comical, mishap-magnet, who just can't seem to find his place in the world. "I fall down every time I drink / I wash and all my whites turn pink / I always come home with someone else's pants."

As always, Adamson's lyrics are insightful, intelligent and often quite moving, but the big generator beneath this album is the music.

The trademark Big Country wall of sound is as rousing as ever, led by the innovative, Celtic-tinged guitar work of Adamson and Bruce Watson. Tony Butler's majestic bass lines move with the grace of wild deer and the inimitable drumming of Mark Brzezicki is the perfect combination of technical precision and raw aggression.

Add some mandolin, guest appearances by The Pogues and an all-around superlative production and *Why the Long Face* becomes a tidal wave of inspiration and originality in the often stagnant waters of the music world. It's really something to hear, and is a reminder of where newer bands like Live and Superchunk must certainly have derived some of their early inspiration.

But perhaps writer Martin Scott said it most poetically, when, in the U. K. magazine *Making Music*, he stated, "This album urinates over most of the [newer bands' material] from a great height."

So, with Mr. Scott's thought in mind, the next time you purchase the latest release from the newest cardboard-cutout guitar band, choosing to once again ignore that beckoning Big Country bin, you might want to remember to wash your hands when you get home.

You might also want to remember to keep an eye out for Big Country's U. S. tour this spring. Their live shows are legendary in the U. K. for good reason. You don't want to miss them.

Contest Corner

Contest Results

In our last installment, we found our heroes battling it out with the US Postal Service in an all-out postcard war on AOU headquarters! We got all *kinds* of postcards! A notable one was Bill Holliss' futile attempt to win me over with a "Malibu Shores" (an NBC show, it says "Dreams. Danger. Desire.") postcard featuring a semi scantily clad blond female and what appears to be several rejects (?) from "Friends." He's got guts, though, I give him that! Also Donna Miller's "Little Man of Shiloh (Tenn)" postcard with an 8" tall stone pipe in the shape of a Native-American "Thinker." The artifact was found buried with it's deceased owner and when you whistle the theme from My Three Sons next to it, it plugs it's ears and winces... ok, I made up the last part, I admit. Anyhow, the onslaught was tough but, armed with a hat and much courage & determination, I separated those who would prevail from those who would be fallen. And when the dust cleared, it looked like this:

Donna Miller - A Certain Chemistry & Chance UK 12"

CJ Kitsos - NON! UK ep cd

Andrea Weeks - King Of Emotion UK boxed cassette

I might also mention that I got a very special postcard from Joel Zaborny. If postcard content *did* count, this guy would have wrapped it up in a heartbeat! Joel sent me a 13-yr old color Big Country postcard (reprinted elsewhere in the issue)! He wrote (*on* the 13-yr old postcard!) that he hated to part with it, and I can certainly understand. So I'm sending the postcard back to him - along with an *autographed* copy of the UK I'm Not Ashamed #2 cd.

nEw ContEst!

This issues' contest is a toughie! You'll really have to get out your super-duper monochromatic all-purpose guaranteed Thinkin' Cap! If you read a newspaper, and do any of the puzzles, you probably know what a **Cryptogram** is. If you don't read a newspaper, you're probably saying to yourself "ugh - if this involves dead bodies and the postal service, count me out on this one!" No dead bodies, I promise. What you must do is decipher the phrase below by decoding the "alternate alphabet" that I have used to create it. Naturally, the easy way is to tackle the small words first, then apply what you know to the rest of the words. Here's the phrase:

UVR VHQTR HW ONJR VHXFT WH TVKGR

It's a phrase from one of BC's earliest, biggest hit singles. Here's how the contest works - the **first two** postcards I receive *with the correct answer* will win, respectively:

Steelton UK limited Gatefold LP

Hold The Heart UK Gatefold double 12" with BC interview

Both are great pieces to have, so please, if you win and already have it, pass it on to someone who doesn't!

These prizes were donated, respectively, by David Wright in the UK, and Tom Kercheval (who bought the double 12" on his trip, detailed elsewhere here). I'd like to thank them for their selfless spreading of BC collectibles.

THE fickle nature of fame is a concept that could have been invented for bands like Big Country.

In the right place at the right time for chart success, then other things come along and our lads go back to playing before a smaller albeit passionate audience.

Even someone in this office, and a fellow Scot to boot, was surprised to see that this lot were 'still going'.

Yet listen to the opener, the disillusioned and sympathetic 'You Dreamer', with its metallic sheets of guitar and earthy committed vocals. If this was Bob Mould and Sugar, which it easily could be, our heroes would be on the front cover of unpleen magazines, not relegated to the footnotes.

Yes folks, if you haven't listened to BC for a while, the so-called bagpipe guitar solos are largely absent, and the OTT imagery and rhetoric has given way to personal realism.

Whatever the reason, BC are unhappy with life (fear, despondency, fury at betrayal of old values) although, as ever, they've a way with a winning chorus that keeps even we optimists on side.

Despite the odd experiment, this is standard Big Country—a solid, occasionally inspiring, hard rock band. And as such, worth this hour of your time.

Review reprinted from
Bury Times 6/23/95
courtesy of Ian Grant

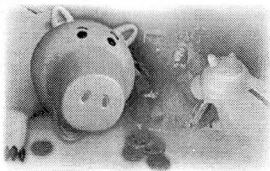
I wouldn't bet too much on a Big Country revival. Even in their heyday, they were widely derided for their workmanlike sub-anthem guitar rock, and they are now possibly the least fashionable group in the universe. To my ears they were always struggling after their first album (the one with two songs I always liked, Chance, and In A Big Country, although I would never have told my friends).

Their last big hit was years ago, and mediocre groups tend to get worse when they get desperate, so it was with minimal interest that I put on their new album, and with astonishment that I heard tune after tune of the sort which if they had released them in 1987, would have saved their career (particularly the first song, You Dreamer). And so I must type the words I thought I could never type: new Big Country album, rather good.

Review reprinted from
Daily Telegraph 7/22/95
courtesy of Ian Grant

TOY STORY

Coming on
video
October 30th
from
Disney Home
Video



Big Country/Greenpeace

The NON! video: Post Nuclear Talking Blues

Concept Document

29 September 1995

To: Jeremy Azis/Ian Grant

Having watched a lot of the raw footage from which the video will be constructed and having drawn up a shot list, here are my conceptual thoughts on how it might fit together.

1. The key footage to use, I believe, is the recent stuff from Moruroa and the key theme is action. This should be the core of the piece. I have marked most of this material with a single or double asterisk.

2. There are a number of key types of footage as follows:

- Sweeping and fast-moving footage of the Greenpeace ships and the inflatables in action. Some of the best is shot from helicopter.
- The French test itself. This is a dramatic sequence and could repeat throughout the video. I am a bit wary of using the other explosions. I think we need to see the men in the control room too.

We should also bear in mind that another explosion is due literally any day. We may need to cut that in at the last moment.

- The demonstrations. We should intercut the banners, masks and signs from Polynesia with the material from the Netherlands.
- The footage of the Rainbow Warrior bombing and the RW underwater.
- Other footage of the earlier voyages and the beating up by French commandoes.
- The most recent footage of the armoured commandoes storming the bridge of the ship and other marked shots.

3. In terms of order and edits:

I would start and finish with the latest test pictures and use that "flash" as a motif throughout. (New idea: could begin with the man blowing a conch shell - see later, then the explosion)

I would come into the film on a helicopter shot and then pick up that sweeping rhythm throughout, which fits the pace of the song.

One wants the story to show the two forces who have been fighting over this issue for almost 25 years.

The figures of the demonstrators, the man on stilts, the man with the sign round his neck, the man blowing the conch shell, the demonstrators in the skull masks and capes could appear and reappear throughout.

continued. . .

The Maori dance is also very good and could be fitted to the rhythm of the song.

The shots of the Rainbow warrior should be used in sequence, wherever they appear.

First: the ship leaving London, then the early actions (on Ecology in Action tape as marked). Then bombing. Then RW underwater.

The material on Vega should come in before the Rainbow Warrior material (1972 / Ecology in Action tape)

So there is some kind of chronological sequence but these past-elements are background to the current material.

4. That's all folks. Any further meaningful thoughts I will fax through later. Will call you Saturday anyway. Hope this is of assistance.

Best wishes

John

**Reprinted from a Xerox of the actual document [a fax]
courtesy of Ian Grant**

Madness in Moscow

Stuart Adamson acknowledges the lowpoint of Big Country's career was a disastrous junket to Moscow pre-perestroika to launch the Peace In Our Time album in 1988. But even that is turned into something positive by the upbeat guitarist: "I feel a strange sense of pride at being involved in one of the biggest public relations disasters in rock history," he grinned. Two hundred journalists lurched around the capital of the old USSR, the band played a hall with less atmosphere than the moon, and everybody complained about the food.

"I am seriously planning a reunion for some of the folk who were on that trip," says Stuart, adding ruefully, "But it certainly won't be in Moscow."



Joel Zaborny's 13 year old BC postcard!

this is... all of us

RITCH & DIANE ADAMS -
DAVID ANDERSON -
LOWELL AUSTIN JR -
EDWARD BAPTISTA -
JOHN BERKEY -
MICHAEL BICKLEY -
SHEA BROADERS -
HOWARD BRYAN -
ROB BYS -
DREW CAMERON -
STEVE CHAPMAN -
JEFF CETOLA -
CRAIG CLARK -
ED CLARK -
JEFF CLARK -
ANDREW COOPER -
LEWIS CROW -
ROLAND CYR -
CAMERON DAVIS -
STEVE DEASLEY -
PHILLIP DIXON -
LANCE EAGEN -
ERIC ETHIER -
MICHAEL FISCHIO -
DIRK FLUCKIGER -
RHONDA FULLER -
CHRIS GALLAGHER -
JIM GANNON -
BILL GOLDSMITH -
JOHN R GOUVEIA -
CARL GRYZBEK -
JOHN C HARPER III -
KEN HASTINGS -
BILL HOLLIS -
GREG HUGHES -
LAURA JANKOWSKI -
DOUG JENKINS -
DANIEL JOHNSON -
ANDY KASPARIAN -
LAURENCE KEOUGH -
TOM KERCHEVAL -
CJ KITSOS -

COLE LAUBER -
STAN LENKIEWICZ -
ROBERT LINGAUR -
ART LOVE -
CHUCK LUTHER -
PAUL MCALLISTER -
JENNIFER MCCARTY -
NORA MCHUGH -
MARGARET MACLACHLAN -
ROMAN C MANGAPIT -
RUSS MARLOWE -
JEFFREY MARSH -
KYLE MATSUYAMA
STEPHEN H MAUDLIN -
ROB MEEHAN -
DONNA MILLER -
DYLAN MYERS -
FRANK J NOONAN -
MR LYN NORICKS -
TIM O'HANLON -

JONI ORR -
ERIC ORSECK -
JEFF PATTERSON -
MARK PEARSALL -
MICHAEL R PETERSON -
CHRIS RAATHS -
STEVE RIST -
DAN RIVERA -
PETER ROCHE -
LES SCHRIBER III -
JAMES SCHUBERT -
SALLY SCHWARTZ -
FRAN SEAL -
HOWARD SHAPIRO -
TOM STIEBER -
BARRY STRICKLAND -
MARK TAGLIATELA -
GREG THIELE -
BEVERLY TURNER -
DANIEL VANDIVIER -
SHERRY WALLACE -
ANDREA WEEKS -
JOHN WEIGEL -
JERRI WILMORE -
LUKE WILSON -
ALLAN WRIGHT -
CLIVE YOUNG -
JOEL ZABORNY -

*please inform me of any corrections
or change of address - James*

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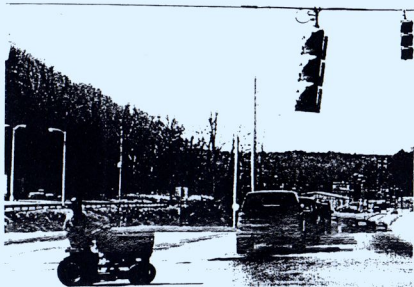
2) "Rockpalast"

March 1986 German live show, terrific sound -
on 1 Maxell XLII 100-min cassette, this one includes
"Rain Dance," "The Storm," "Where The Rose..." and many
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*Send letters, orders (made payable to James d Birch),
complaints and submissions to:*

ALL OF US



...and here's Lowell driving his new mower back to his home in the mountains of Alabama. A very fitting goodbye for this AOU.