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OF
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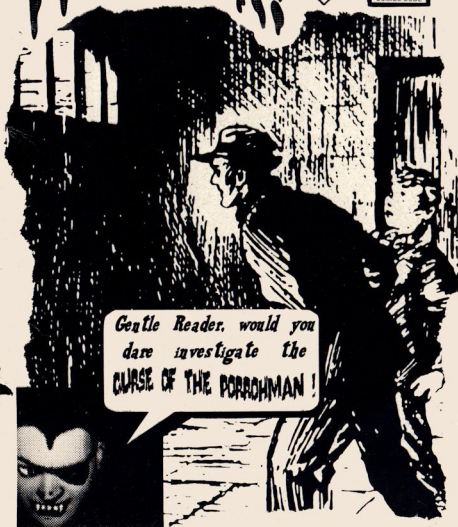
29 PAGES

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CHEAP

OCT



*Gentle Reader, would you
dare investigate the
CURSE OF THE PORROHMAN!*



DAWN FOLKS

WELCOME to the All Of Us house of weird tales! Actually, the tales aren't that weird, and I'm not much of a Vincent Price-type. All the same, it's Halloween season and seeing's how Halloween is one of my favorite holidays, I thought I'd explore the theme for an issue.

If you want real horror, imagine things if this election doesn't go whichever way you feel it should. I have enclosed a brief synopsis of my own personal political POV on this crucial election - read it, if you dare (insert maniacal laughter). If you don't dare, toss it.

Not much going on to speak of here in AOU headquarters. Haven't heard from Ian in... (brief glance at watch) ages. Probably my own fault as I also have not *written* him in ages. Wow, did I go wrong with that last contest! I apologize to each and every one who participated - it was quite obvious that while I thought I was giving you folks a real brain-teaser, it simply wasn't that difficult to translate the message - I didn't mean to insult anyone's intelligence, but I think I probably did. That just goes to show the intelligence (or lack thereof) of the guy who put it together, eh? For those who were curious, but didn't bother, the phrase that paid was "The House On Fire Holds No Shame." And the winners were Donna Miller (again?!? - that girl is on the ball!) & Howard Bryan.

Dawn continues to help me with the fanzine. It looks a ton better, doesn't it? C'mon, be honest! I can take it. We have a LOT of great bits for you to feed your brain with in this issue. One of the most exciting BC things of late is our brand new, totally full color Eclectic long-sleeve tee! It's hard to describe, but it's the absolute best BC T-shirt I think I've ever seen (barring, perhaps, some of the old early 80s tees). I know you have to hear me say that every issue, but I mean this thing is **concert-tee quality!**

I'd like some feedback on the *On My Desk* column. How many of you think I'm wasting your time (and \$\$)? How many of you enjoy it, and might even buy a disc or two because of it? How many of you have the same discs and thought I was way off? Let me know what you think, ok?

Well, we are getting closer to Christmas, which means the Annual Scottish Christmas Walk in Alexandria, Virginia. I try to attend it every year! I've made feeble attempts at organizing a "convergence" of BC fans there for the last two years, with only one person ever showing up (thanks, Cole!). Rather than make a big deal this year, Dawn, my mother and myself are going up with the idea of simply enjoying ourselves. If you live anywhere nearby, however, by all means come out Dec 7 and enjoy the traditional Scottish activities! Wear your BC shirt and if I see ya, we'll talk BC! If you're interested, write me and enclose an SASE for directions and details about the event. Serious inquiries only!

I don't know how many of you have followed me & Dawn's unending quest for stuff by the band RED BOX, but for those that have, GREAT NEWS!!! My friend David Wright in the UK recently purchased for us the super-rare, German-only CD pressing of their first album *The Circle And The Square!* It took us years, but we finally got it! I've spoken with the main singer/songwriter in the group, Simon Toulson-Clarke, and even *he* doesn't have a copy (and he ain't gettin' ours either!). Oh, those beautiful endorphins!

We are also getting closer to April, which means closing-shop day here at Apt 4 for AOU. I'm busy thinking of what I can do to go out with a bang, aside from slicing off small parts of myself and mailing 'em off with the last fanzine... sorry, Halloween theme resurfaced there. We haven't received any fan submissions in awhile, so somebody out there get your pen moving, how 'bout it?!? Anyhow, I plan to make AOU an enjoyable experience right up to the last issue! Also, I'm toying with the idea of keeping you all on a "mailing list" of sorts and perhaps in the future offering something like a BC "Annual." Sort of maybe a compendium of all the articles, reviews and other miscellaneous stuff folks send me - it'd be bigger and better than an issue of AOU, but would only be once a year. Please let me know what you think.

Until next time,

JAMES

Whatever happened to... Big Country

Big Country used to be big—as big as big Bill Mc Big Scotland's champion all-round big bloke. Then it all went wrong and they plummeted from fame. JORDAN WILLIAMS finds out exactly what they have been up to. The year is 1983. The sound of bagpipe guitars is to be heard on every radio show from John O'Groats to Land's End. The perpetrators: Big Country. And so it was that between 1983 and 1986, the half-Scott, half-English quartet enjoyed no less than 10 Top 30 singles (including their anthem *In A Big Country*, and *Fields Of Fire*, *Chance* and *Look Away*) and three top five albums—*The Crossing*, *The Seer* and a number one, *Seelton*.

With a display of tartan regalia the like no one had seen since the Bay City Rollers, the heady atmosphere at their concerts was a cross between a rampant ceilidh and an English-Scottish football match. But as the 1980s drew to a close, the hits began to dry up. The 1988 album, *Peace In Our Time*, spectacularly failed to capture their 'noses to the grindstone' spirit and the following summer saw the band temporarily break up.

When Big Country re-grouped to record the *No Place Like Home* album in '91 it was without drummer Mark Brzezicki who had returned to the session world. Reaction to the hard-edged *The Buffalo Skinners* in 1993 looked promising, but Big Country were still struggling to reclaim their once mighty commercial power.

Why The Long Face? Big Country's latest album (out June 12th) uses the original line-up of Adamson, Brzezicki, guitarist Bruce Watson and bass player Tony Butler, essentially playing live in the studio. Watching them perform in front of an invited media crowd at a show at London's Borderline, the words 'return to form' are on everyone's lips. But why has it taken them so long to rediscover themselves?

Tony Butler: "I think it was the recording of *Peace In Our Time* which knocked the stuffing out of us, at a time when we thought we would be making our best album. We went to the United States and used Peter Wolf to produce it, but he used a lot of computers and it really wasn't what we were all about."

Guitar-playing frontman and ex-Skid Stuart Adamson feels the band is back on course as a lean, mean gigging machine. "After all these years we continue to be a very energetic band, and I still get satisfaction from writing exciting and emotionally-stimulating songs. We've never dealt with clichés and we don't need to bow to fashion. We are about being real."

"Plus, we still enjoy doing it," interjects Bruce Watson. "The songs are simpler now from a playing point of view. Years ago, we would strive to do something completely original and that would have an enormous impact on arrangements. On this new album, there are hardly any overdubs and we've tried to place more emphasis on the song's communication, rather than let the music over-decorate it."

Back as a full member of Big Country, drummer, Mark Brzezicki agrees that their mature outlook is a reflection of their more sensitive musicianship. "Our music is less manic now. Stuart used to say, 'I'm a guitar player, don't call me a musician', which was an attitude left over from The Skids. But playing and writing songs for the length of time he has, you can't help but learn. Both he and Bruce have actually turned into really good, comfortable musicians."

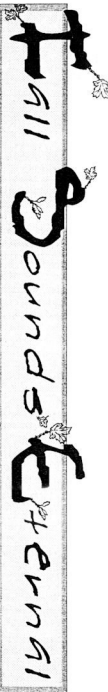
But what all guitarists want to know is: how did Stuart achieve that famous bagpipe guitar sound in *Fields of Fire* and *Harvest Home*? "There's not a lot to it actually," he says. "Just a harmoniser, a touch of delay and bags of attitude!"

ITSFALL again, and that means pretty leaves, football season [I myself don't go for sports], brisk, clear mornings, gorgeous autumn sunsets, hayrides and spooky tales told by firelight and cider-kick. But if you're like me [and I know you are] fall also rings in a **whole new season** of sounds - cassettes and CDs get the annual dusting off to provide the **aural sound-scape** of the changing of the natural guard. I hope you'll enjoy romping through the crunchy **fallen leaves** of my musical collection . . .

Waterboys - anything and everything, especially Self-Titled, A Pagan Place, and This Is The Sea. When I was about 15, I couldn't afford to buy all the great tapes I saw at the local Sound Odyssey in the Dover Mall. Sol had this nasty habit of telling dad I was going to the movies and instead spending the money on tapes, just walking the mall for two hours and making up some cheesy review of a movie I hadn't seen. One time in particular, dad's "movie money" went toward an import cassette I'd been eyeing up, one with a dark cover and a long-haired fellow with a guitar just barely visible among the shadows. An image that appealed to me. C'mon! Admit it, you've bought at least one album based on the cover - you know you have! And, no, fellas, that new Jennie McCarthy surf tribute cd doesn't count! So I took this tape home and it was just something quite different! A lot of soul injected in it - like BC. The only thing I had trouble with was the saxophone, till I realized it was similar in style to another favorite, the Psychedelic Furs. From then on, I was a bona fide Waterboys fan.

For a crisp, fall or winter day, *This Is The Sea* will not let you down. My favorite track on the album is *Be My Enemy*, an angry blues tune on rock-n-roll steroids, the intro is incredible and technologically hard to match; a slow crescendo of synth notes, each with a strange white noise attached, follows a majestic march melody slower and slower until it reaches the final note, which is held for an extended period - long enough to hear that when as the note extends, the white noise is actually the whistling, applause and cheers of a crowd as the band ascends the stage. Doesn't sound like great fun in print here, but to listen to it is inspiring. This song was also the backdrop of a speed-boat chase scene from that 80's TV icon, *Miami Vice*. Anyone who likes *All Fall Together* would also enjoy *Red Army Blues*, from *A Pagan Place*.

As I said, "anything and everything," so I certainly wouldn't neglect their later material - *Fisherman's Blues*, *Room To Roam*, and maybe even *Dream Harder* (a slightly weak spot except for die-hard W-boys fans). Mike Scott returned to his traditional roots for *Blues & Roam*, assembling a huge army of talented folk to make some great, more rootsy Celtic fare. I mean, there's even all-out Irish & Scottish JIGS on here, people! Some even include backwards accordion! Also released, quite recently, was a great disc called *The Secret Life Of The Waterboys 81-85*. This is a dream disc for fans, with alternate takes, rare B-sides, and live track or two. 15 cuts with nary a dud in the bunch. And you get to hear a raucous, adrenaline filled version of the dreamy originally slower track, *This Is The Sea*. As you can see by all this advertising, I really think BC fans would wholeheartedly enjoy the Waterboys - often a forgotten band.



Icicle Works - Self-Titled... As with so many of my teenage-acquired bands, I grabbed this album up after Friday Night Video's airing of Whisper To A Scream. I think a lot of folks my age think that song is probably all they were good for - NOT TRUE! This album is front-to-back excellence! Ian McNabb put all his cards on the table and left no stone unturned when they recorded this one. It's one of those albums where I wouldn't change a single thing. The songs also refer a lot to the fall season, which makes it excessively appropriate - "The Autumn is the finest time, the finest of them all" we hear in Chop The Tree. Very insightful lyrics, coupled with a more-than-adept bass (with lots of chorus on it, just like Tony used to do!) ringing, shiny guitar and intricate percussion, this disc is a must-have. If you've never listened to this album, I strongly urge you to get a copy... however, good luck in finding one! It took me years to find it on cd, and when I did, it was an import. My UK cd deletes the song Waterline and adds Reaping The Rich Harvest, which is good enough to be included here. Domestically, it's "Out-Of-Print" (don't you love that phrase?!?). For anyone in central Jersey, though, I happen to know there used to be a copy at Vintage Vinyl in Eatontown for about \$10.

Echo & the Bunnymen - Ocean Rain, Porcupine, Self-Titled... I'm not sure exactly when I picked up on these guys, but I don't think it was until Bedbugs & Ballyhoo. Out of these three, Ocean Rain would be my favorite. It and Porcupine have such a tremendous range of songwriting and instrumentation (what other band can claim it rode all the way up the charts with an Autoharp?!?). You might listen closely for E-bow on the self-titled album. The first time I heard Crown Of Thorns, I thought Ian (what? another Ian?!?) was just a little too "out there," but nowadays you'll hear me chiming right along with him - "C-c-c-cucumber, C-c-c-cabbage, C-c-c-cauliflower!" This band was never afraid to try new things in the early days and today it certainly holds a candle to the typical grunge-guitar/bass/drums monotony. This band is chinese buffet to their 7-11 big bite with nachos.

Kate Bush - The Dreaming, Hounds Of Love, etc... Lowell helped me to love a lot of bands that I normally wouldn't. Back in the early '90s, I was a Pixies fanatic (not that I'm ashamed), and, for some strange reason, I just couldn't dig girl bands or female performers. It wasn't that I was sexist - although I have been called that, even from other BC fans! Lowell, on the other hand, was way ahead of me and sent me some great stuff - Lush, This Mortal Coil (excellent!), and, yep - Kate Bush. This, by the way, opened me up to a multitude of great bands and performers. Mind you, I'd obviously heard a tune or two already, including Running Up That Hill. But from the first time I heard Suspended In Gaffa, I was hooked. I'm not a big fan of her older older stuff, but The Dreaming and Hounds Of Love are just absolute perfection! My favorites are Houdini, Get Out Of My House, The Dreaming, Cloudbusting, Hounds Of Love, etc. Listen to The Big Sky while driving up your favorite stretch of back road on a clear sunny day and you'll see. Now if only she'd included lyrics with the cd's...

OTHER GREAT ALBUMS FOR FALL EXPLOITS -

Skids & BC - the Dunfermline compilation, Crossing, Steeltown,

Wonderland (esp.), BC is pretty much year-round!

Magnetic Fields - The Charm Of The Highway Strip

Grant Lee Buffalo - anything, esp. Fuzzy

Inspirial Carpets - The Beast Inside

Uncle Tupelo - anything, esp. No Depression

R.E.M. - Lifes Rich Pageant

a-ha - Hunting High & Low, Scoundrel Days

Randy Travis - anything, mostly pre-1990

Arcadia - So Red The Rose

U2 - Boy, The Unforgettable Fire



Eclectic



H O L Y C O W !

Folks, I do it every time! Each issue, I advertise a t-shirt. And each time, by the time the orders start rolling in, I've designed something better. Well, since the last issue, I've designed TWO great new shirts! One is pictured here - the mind-blowing, eye-popping, FULL COLOR Eclectic long-sleeve tee! When Dawn & I saw the 1st one, we simply flipped. This shirt is as good as any you'd buy at a concert - heck, most of BC's shirts are 50/50! This is a 100% cotton long sleeved tee in the color "natural" (looks sorta tan, sorta cream), with elements from the cover of the Eclectic album. Once again, don't trust the above diagram, as I have trouble trying to show the design with the limitations on the computer. If you consult your Eclectic album cover, you'll see the two parts we use - the cascade of colors with the white BC logo, and the fire against the night sky. If you buy one BC t-shirt from AOU, THIS is the one to buy (well, until I come up with something better)! This fantastic new tee is long sleeve only and is just \$20.00 postage paid!

The second design (not pictured) is our first ever PHOTO tee! A great, head-to-toe 8 1/2"x9 1/2" b&w photo from the Crossing era, with the guys standing in a garden walkway, with trees in the background. Everyone's wearing their flannel plaid shirts! How can you resist that? The BC logo appears in the upper left hand corner. Here's the cool part about this design - YOU can customize your own shirt! All you have to do is give me your 5 favorite t-shirt colors, in order of desire, and using descriptive words like "dark" & "light" and such. Also choose 100% cotton short sleeve or long sleeve. Then you can choose the color of the design itself, black or deep blue. For example, the deep blue looks really nice on a long sleeve gray shirt. I'll do my best to send you exactly what you want! You can't really go wrong. This shirt is also \$20.00 postpaid, regardless of options! These are two great shirts to have for fall & winter. Speaking of which, you can get either design, in the same color options, as a sweatshirt for only \$3.00 more!

make check payable to James d Birch

Contest



Well, it's time for another contest! This time, we're giving away a really appropriate prize - a copy of the Trouser Press magazine that featured the BC article reprinted here in this issue! It's got a great cover photo too!

There will be two winners - 2nd prize is a copy of the Big Sampler promo cd. You can find out immediately if you've won! Out of all AOU members, 2 randomly chosen members have an extra insert with vintage horror comics on it. Finish the title of this story - "The Wall Of _____," and send me the answer.

You can send your response by either a post-card or a regular letter.

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MAYBE NOT.

I COULD BE WRONG.

Country Squires

by Les Wiseman

Reprinted from Trouser Press March 1984

Call this a triumph?

Big Country's first full-scale North American tour got off to a very shaky start with two sold-out shows at Vancouver, Canada's grand old Commodore Ballroom. A capacity crowd of one thousand watched singer/guitarist Stuart Adamson lead his band through a sluggish [sic] rendition of "In a Big Country" that bore little resemblance to the hit single. Although the song was number four on local record charts, all but the most easily pleased were having a serious rethink at the Commodore. Few danced. When the tune degenerated into a drum solo with pointless chanting, the audience turned their backs on the stage and hit the bar at the back of the room.

But then Big Country launched into "Chance," its latest single, and started to pull the show out of the dumper. Adamson's vocal filled the corners of the hall; the dual guitars synchronized. The grandiosity that is Big Country's trademark materialized with an impact that set the audience bopping joyfully, finally getting what they paid for.

A couple of tunes later, "Fields of Fire" erupted in glorious pandemonium, drums and guitars pummeling the audience into mass resonance. By the time Adamson and company ended their second encore with a reprise of "In a Big Country," the song's grandeur had been restored--and without any senseless clan chanting to pad it out.

Lining the footlights, band members linked arms to take their encore bows. Guitar held high overhead, Adamson moved politely to the microphone. "Thanks, Vancouver, for letting us share a song with you." The country gentleman.

That well-mannered conduct, a large part of the Big Country image, extends even to the press. Bassist Tony Butler, 26, is lounging in the band's hotel interview suite on the day of the show. He has on a fleecy-collared brown bomber jacket and is quietly singing a parody of Pete Townshend's "Exquisitely Bored in California," alternating the location to current coordinates. He and rat-faced guitarist Bruce Watson, 22, are checking out frosty downtown Vancouver from the balcony picture window and chatting with a record company rep about the nearby snow-crowned mountains. Adamson and drummer Mark Brzezicki are absent.

Splaying himself as limply as possible over a chair, Watson signals interview commencement by staring blankly at the wall and occasionally at his sneakers. The Townshend song seems a good jumping-off point, as the London half of Big Country played on Townshend's **All the Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes** album.

Extremely soft-spoken, well-mannered and easy with a smile, Butler recounts the tale of knowing the Townshend family since he was a child in Ealing, West London. He had played music with Simon, Pete's kid brother, for years. When they advertised for a drummer, Brzezicki joined to form what became On the Air--a group whose apex achievement was touring Britain with Stuart Adamson's band, the Skids. After On the Air signed off, Butler and Brzezicki became a session team known as Rhythm for Hire. Through their friendship with Simon they were hired by the elder Townshend.

"We literally just went in, did our parts, got paid and left," Butler says, puffing on a Bidi. "We didn't see the production through to its completion, which is the

normal way session musicians work."

Very well, but the the [sic] meat of the matter: What was Townshend like? He has confessed to heinous excesses and a hard-fought battle back to the straight and narrow. Was he seeing iguanas crawl out of the walls?

Craftily, Butler smiles, apologizes and refuses to comment on Townshend's personal problems. The country gentleman. Later though, he admits that his own disdain for the star system is based on seeing the perks of celebrity dissipate Townshend.

While I'm getting nowhere fast, Brzezicki, 26, shambles into the room, complains to one and all that he can make his guns bleed at will, and dourly fills up a small divan. He too is wearing a leather aviator's jacket, likely from his previous job as an aircraft fitter. The ashen-complexioned drummer listens to Watson answer the inevitable questions (already a sore point) about guitars sounding like bagpipes.

"There's nothing technical about it at all. I make up a lot of the chords myself. I don't even know half the names; I know an A, a G or an E, but the rest I'm not too sure about." (Have fun with these guys *Guitar Player* magazine.)

"In actual fact," Butler interrupts, "Stuart got that man over there"--he points to a recumbent highland piper the record company has had parading in front of the Commodore--"to play the melody of 'Fields of Fire' and it sounded nothing like the original. So we've disproved it!"

As if on cue, Adamson, 25, enters, drops into a couch and lights up an Embassy No. 1.

"I've been out losing my golden locks," he grins, ruffling the new trim of that bumpkin flat-top he sports like a dare-to-be-nerdy anti-trendiness statement. Today he has foregone his trademark working man's checked shirt. The unknowing sap is wearing a promotional T-shirt bearing the call letters of Vancouver's dorkiest AOR station. (Big Country tunes are revolutionary on said frequency.)

Though in fact born in Manchester, Adamson considers himself fully Scots-blooded; his family moved to Dunfermline before he was a year old. His brogue, at least, is authentically near-indecipherable. He's grinning like a man pleased with his current lot, but shifts into humble when asked how it feels to be the next big thing.

"It's not something we ponder upon a lot. We're mostly concerned about getting the best out of our songs, and to treat people who are interested in us with as much respect as we can. We go about our business in an honest manner rather than go about feeling we're anything better than anyone else because we're selling a few records here and there." Indeed. The country gentleman.

There you have the spearhead of Big Country's thrust: that common touch. They dress in "normal everyday clothes anybody can buy," Adamson says, adding that they're "comfy to wear and look quite smart." They sing songs of homespun, elemental imagery: "Who saw the fences falling / Who broke the ploughman's bread," runs a typical couplet (from "Harvest Home.") Their positive outlook is the antithesis of fashionable doom-mongering. "Dignity" is the buzzword here.

Case in point: Big Country takes the Commodore stage at about 11:30 for their second show of the night. They face a new audience, one that hasn't seen them hobble through 40 minutes before getting good. About eight bars into the first song, "1,000 Stars"--before their lame smog machine even hits its stride--Adamson stops the show. Like some Celtic Kissinger, he hauls onstage two ***** who've been fighting up

(Continued next page)

front. (This takes a few minutes.) He puts his arms around their shoulders, draws them close to him and makes them shake hands before allowing them back into the crowd. *Then* the show continues.

(This is fairly impressive for Vancouver, where severely critical crowds becan performers offstage at the slightest opportunity. Sorta lends the band an air of credibility, don't it?)

Standard rock-critic procedure is to yell "hype" whenever a band sells a lot of records and gets a lot of airplay with its first release. Despite one New York writer comparing "Harvest Home" to T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*--gimme a break--Big Country is already taking shots for being a shuck.

Well, let's face it: **The Crossing**, Big Country's debut LP, has some great songs. It also has its share of drag-*** material, and a lot of the appeal is novelty. "The Storm," for instance, is an electric sea chantey that come on like the Irish Rovers. The underlying musical there of "Chance" seems to be "Chopsticks"! And those dual guitar parts--you know, the ones that really do not sound like bagpipes--are a keen way to establish a radio identity but can become cloying. The videos too--"In a Big Country" 's *Hard Day's Night* silliness, "Chance" 's stuffed crotch focus--leave much to malign. (The "Fields of Fire" clip is wonderfully arty though not too coherent.)

"I'm not a hype," Watson snarls. "I'd like them to go and say that to my mom and dad," he adds, as the rest chuckle.

Adamson's squinty eyes narrow even more. "There's nothing manufactured about us at all. That's a really stupid thing to say. Bruce and I have been writing songs for the better part of two and a half years. Nobody called us a hype when we were sitting in the basement of our community center writing songs with a four track tape recorder. Anything that we've got is something we've put a hell of a lot into. We do take a lot of care about what we do, not only musically but lyrically as well. And for anybody to call that hype is barking completely up the wrong tree."

The other band members grunt their encouragement. On a roll, Adamson continues.

"We've never been part of any fashionable group, any bandwagon at all. If there is any bandwagon, it's one that we've started." There is the next buzzword in the Big Country equation: Pride.

Bandwagon-minded writers lump Big Country with U2 and the Alarm. The common element in these groups, aside from a taste for guitar heroism, is the positive attitude they purvey in contrast to "new romantic" gloom and punk nihilism.

"We've never really tied ourselves up with any other group or movements," Adamson says, though he doesn't object to the company of the above bands. "We just decided to do the music we felt was in us without regard to what anyone else was doing."

Regarding the positivism, he continues, "It's just our natural attitude to life. All of us have been through situations that we wouldn't care to have other people go through, and I think we've come through them with our heads held high. I think for Bruce and me it's a basic Scottish trait, being positive in the face of abject misery. And I think it's all connected with a sense of humor."

Maybe, but there seems to be more between them than that. Is it a bond of the U2 variety: Christianity?

The enquiry is greeted with groaning and laughter. Brzezicki, goggle-eyed and scowling, launches into a sermon with evangelical fervor: "Do you believe?!! Have

you seen the light...?!" Adamson and Butler adamantly deny the idea. Brzezicki, after settling down, notes, "We've all got our personal things, but we don't bring it into the band."

"I think there is something very spiritual about the group," Adamson says at last, pulling the interviewer's bacon out of the fire. (No, he was not kidding!) "We know something special happens when we play that doesn't come just from us, it comes from the interaction of the four of us."

The magic first gelled when Adamson and Watson jettisoned Big Country's original rhythm section and hired Butler and Brzezicki as session players for demo recordings.

"We put down three numbers and we just realized at that moment in time that we were a group," Butler recalls. "Nobody had to tell us that, the music just shone through. It could be described like blowing up chimneys or having your best orgasm."

The linchpin was Adamson. He was the seasoned veteran of the moderately successful Skids, a Scottish group birthed in, and inspired by, the punk upheaval of 1976-77.

Adamson had sung and dabbled with synthesizers on the Skids' second album, **Days in Europa**, but had his unusual guitar stylings defined by that band's sound. On some tunes, his guitar parts even sounded a little like...bagpipes! But the Skids weren't the populist band Big Country has become. When vocalist Richard Jobson started preening, their days were numbered.

"I wanted to communicate with people on a much more personal level," Adamson recalls. "Rick was much more into building himself up and selling himself as a media character, which is something I've never been particularly interested in. I got fed up with Rick's prancing about and all his bull****. There was nothing left between us in a creative sense.

"It would have been very safe and easy to go on being the Skids for another few years and keep on drawing your wage and getting a wee bit of royalties here and there. But for me that's not what it's about."

What it was about for Adamson was making "the crossing"--and therein is the Big Country epiphany. He wanted performer and audience on the same level, to connect (figuratively) eye-to-eye.

"I am idealistic," Adamson states. "I don't believe in the star system at all. That's a carry-over from Hollywood days. People deserve more respect than that." The country gentleman.

So, back in hometown Dunfermline, he wrote some songs, read some Celtic history, settled into a family life with a bonny son, Callum, and connected with a guitar-playing former dockyard worker.

Adamson had known Watson ever since the latter's various bands occasionally opened shows for the Skids. Together they woodshedded new material and formed a band called Big Country; the name came from a lyric Adamson was working on. At a couple of early gigs, opening a few English Alice Cooper dates, the new band was greeted with "passionate dislike," according to Adamson. The lesser players were relieved of duty shortly thereafter. When Phonogram Records agreed to fund a demo session, Adamson remembered a phone call he had received from London bassist Butler, offering his services after the Skids ended.

Studio work cemented the spiritual links, and the real Big Country came to be. A debut single of "Harvest Home" didn't exactly ignite the charts. Rumbings

(Continued next page)

persist to the effect that its lack of success was due to producer Chris Thomas (who hasn't hurt Paul McCartney, Townshend, Elton John or the Pretenders), but "Harvest Home" isn't half of the song "Fields of Fire" or "In a Big Country" is.

"'Harvest Home' did its job in a way," Butler muses. "It was a good introduction to the British public. But I think at the back of everyone's mind we wanted Steve Lillywhite to produce us in the first place. He wasn't available because he was working with U2 on *War*." When Big Country did get Lillywhite, the result was *The Crossing*, one of the better albums of 1983 and a massive debut success.

The North American tour shuttles east to New York. On *Saturday Night Live* Big Country's modified highland-fling choreography must have raised a few viewers' eyebrows. Five weeks after touching down in Vancouver, the band headed home; Butler and Brzezicki back to London, Adamson and Watson to Dunfermline, where they'll work out new material to record in April. "The next album won't be *The Crossing Part 2*," Adamson promises, aware that some material is wearing thin with massive exposure.

So what has this all added up to?

"The brass-tacks of it," Adamson laughs, "is we get 100 pounds per week, flat."

"And five dollars per day *per diems*," Butler adds. ■



Big Country

Stones Euro Tour Tales

Big Country, whose new single "You Dreamer" was released Tuesday 29th August, have just finished an incredible successful European jaunt with the Rolling Stones. In Germany alone they played in front of over half a million people while in Holland the crowd demanded encores and as the entourage observed to the band aftershow this was a very rare occasion. Stuart's personal highlight of the tour was when he was invited onstage in Berlin by the Stones to sing backing vocals on "Sympathy for the Devil".

It is in fact surprising that Big Country ever finished the tour at all, given their adventures along the way.

* In Leipzig, Ronnie Wood's son Jamie saved Big Country's dressing room from burning down. A pile of 12 towels had been left on 2 hot plates. The towels went up in flames after someone unwittingly turned the hot plates on. Jamie saw smoke pouring from the dressing room and went in and saved all of Big Country's belongings as they soundchecked.

* The band decided to visit the infamous Colditz castle and guitarist Bruce Watson went missing for over an hour...the rest of the band found him locked in one of the cells and set him free.

* The band played an acoustic club show in Leverkusen and it was so packed that they couldn't make it to the stage. After much thought it was decided that the only way to get to the stage was from outside. The band procured a ladder and scaled the outside of the club and reached the stage via a small window. Unfortunately one of the guitar technicians had to sit on the window ledge some 15 feet up for the duration of the show as there was no room for him in the club. As one can imagine the gig was totally wild and for an encore Stuart Adamson traded places with Mark Brzezicki with Stuart on drums and Mark singing...the band left the club the same way they entered--via the window!

* The day after the club show in Leverkusen, Big Country, Management and crew played a football match against Bayer Leverkusen (ex players and juniors). Big Country lost the game 6 - 4 and Mark Brzezicki was hospitalised after he twisted his ankle during the game. It always seems to happen to Mark. He was the one who threw up on Jimmy Page's amps in Dublin when Big Country were special guests...things can only get better for Mark!

August 31st 1995

Reprinted from Rock/Work Hard Enterprises Public Relations release
courtesy of Ian Grant

On My Desk

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

Big Country Eclectic

I like it! I really like it! For new members, that may not seem so surprising. For veterans of AOU, it might be a shocker. See, I have a track record of being pretty darned critical when it comes to reviewing BC material. I consider it sort of "equal time," considering the vast number of rosy-eyed BC fans out there who feel BC can do no wrong. I must take exception with this disc, though. It's an entertaining, unique BC experience like none other - to put it bluntly, it's eclectic.

I'll get the negatives out of the way early. The only track I'd flat out omit would be "Summertime." All I can say is "Why???" It simply has no redeeming value by my tastes. Not to be nasty, but if you want to hear a good version of "Summertime," grab some bootleg of R.E.M Christmas singles at the next record show - it was on the 1990 fan club Christmas single. Their version is really moody, with hammond organ and a very dark gothic southern flavor. I have to admit I'm not a big fan of Kym Mazelle. Anyone here remember the Cephus & Reece skits from In Living Color? The flute's ok - it reminds of Vince Guaraldi's Charlie Brown compositions. I might also knock "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." Not musically - heck no! Great harmonies, great instrumentation (I personally haven't heard the original - Dawn says she heard it the other day at work on the radio, and that BC's version is much less scary)! No, my argument is in musical statement. Don't know what I'm getting at? Well, hold the lyrics to this little Confederate tune up against oh, say, "Song Of The South." See what I mean? OK, I think my last complaint is something that's been evident in BC's releases since, near as I can trace it, the "Save Me" single in 1991. It's a G. A G that has crept into Stuart's vocals where it doesn't belong. I don't mean the note "G." I mean an unnecessary hard G sound. I bet a bunch of you are jumping up and screaming "Ha! I'm not going nuts! Someone else noticed it!" The other half are raising an eyebrow at them and me. Let me explain. Stuart has conveniently picked up more of a "brogue" where it's not needed. The word "sky" becomes "sky-gee." Consequently, "high" becomes "high-gee." On this album, I can't even count the occurrences. The worst has to be in "The Buffalo Skinners." The line "I no longer hear her" has evolved into "I no longer geargur." In "Winter Sky," you might note the phrase "...in places that were never yuggung. I have counted every wuggun." This is getting not only a little weird. Stuart, it's starting to get on my nerves! It's just distracting! Please cease & desist! If I'm wrong, people, let me know.

Alrighty, enough negatives! Let's be positive! While I would gladly have traded "River Of Hope" & "King Of Emotion" for a plethora of other tunes, the interpretations here are bright and crisp and certainly worthy of being here - the format brings something fresh to these less-than-favorite tunes. "Big Yellow Taxi." Yeah. Okay, that's the song I hear every single time I go shopping! I cannot stand this tune. It's so damned happy (and yet very utopian in it's complaining lyrics). This take on it is what makes it listenable. Neither Dawn nor myself like the original in the least, but we don't skip the tune while listening to this tape/cd. I especially like Tony's intro riffs and the Indian percussion. "The Buffalo Skinners" is excellent. I adore the slide guitar - it's very appropriate for the song and it reminds me of Grant Lee Buffalo's (also) moody southern feel. The violin is a great addition to the track. "Summertime" I've already aimed and fired at. "Dixie," too. "Eleanor Rigby" is absolutely amazing. Everything about it is perfect. I love the pumping bassline, the mandolin (or is it piano/keyboard? or both?), and the wonderful percussion and chorus vocals. "Winter Sky" seemed slightly slower and more tame, just a little too mellow for me, but otherwise it's great (I'm so glad they put the studio version on the remasters). "Sling It" is a unique change of pace. I was glad to see BC sit back and let other musicians have a crack at the vocals (like in "Big Yellow Taxi," also). You want to know what this reminds me of? Mid-career Waterboys. Particularly the "Fisherman's Blues" album, which had a very similar feel to it (any of you with that album, go punch up the track "World Party" and tell me I'm wrong).

and yet very interesting

weird noises that I haven't quite been able to identify from Jim's compilation!!!!

Lyricaly, "Sling It" reminds me of "The Storm." The chord progression is a sped up variation of "All Along The Watchtower." I'm thoroughly glad this track is on the cd, whereas I'm sure there are those of you out there who would have omitted it. I especially like the part where he says "Sling it again in 5/4(time)" and this leads to the flanged violin outro. But seriously, folks, if you like this song, go pick up the Waterboys' "Fisherman's Blues." It features a lot of great rich Celtic instrumentation, and great musicians like violinist Steve Wickham (he did a little guest thing on that U2 "Sunday Bloody Sunday" number). "I'm On Fire" is a Springsteen song I've always loved. BC's version could be a big hit on country radio. It's a great take on it, although there are some changes. Not just lyrical (Springsteen's "skull" became Stuart's "soul"), but musically as well. "Where The Rose Is Sown" is terrific, great show of harmony from Tony (etc?) to keep it consistent. The mandolin/violin combo is a nice brittle skeleton to Tony's thick bass and the guest percussion. The middle drum/percussion break is kinda mesmerizing. "Come Back To Me" features some deep throbbing toms from Mark and less buzzing from Stuart (see my review of this tune from the Live 1989 cd). This version captures the solemn feel of the original. I might've added some (more?) echo and reverberation to Stuart's vocal. The all-chime-in feel of the "I will wash the bloody hands" line is chilling. My only complaints here would be 1) the sarcastic? melodramatic? whisper of the title at the end & 2) DAMMIT! They never ever do the tumultuous outro to the song from the original on Steeltown! Please, guys, it's the coolest! "Ruby Tuesday" (for someone who thought opening for the Stones was merely "ok," we sure do like to play their tunes, eh, Stu?) is true to the mark with the original, I think. This song contains the only naked solo guitar work from Stuart on the disc and it seems just a little too naked. Fine harmonies give this song a nice full sound, as does Tony's apregiated chord-bumping bass work. I would have sung the "Still I'm gonna miss you" at the end one more time, with all the backup vocals I could grab. I was disappointed to hear no musician introductions or benediction at the end, it kinda left me hanging.

You may have noticed I didn't mention the keyboards. That's a good thing. What I mean is, they're nice and in-the-background, so they don't detract or distract, they just help fill out the sound, which is what they're supposed to do!

So that's it. Great overall album! Maybe you went and picked up Without The Aid... or Live 1989 and were disappointed by one or both and therefore hesitant to lay out import cost for this disc, but I personally assure you you'll be happy with this cd overall. In other words, buy it if you haven't!

cd

beautiful freak

DREAMWORKS RECORDS

You might note that this is the first album to be released on Geffen's new label for up-and-coming bands. The first I ever saw of these guys was the *Novacaine for the Soul* video on 120 Minutes. I really dig that little video, what with all that floating and stuff. The little hooks from that tune, the tinkly bell, the opening drumbeat and the silent break all add up to one of those great songs that is short and packed full. The chorus effect on E's voice (yep, another weirdo with a goofy stage name!) really puts the icing on this well-mixed cake. As for the rest of the album, it's sort of like if Beck ditched (99% of) his samples and stuck to actual songwriting, backed by a drummer (butch) and a bassist & backup vocalist (tommy). *Susan's House* would be the best example of that. The entire album is quite catchy, while nothing really compares to *Novacaine*. Don't you hate that? When you buy an album because of the first single and you hope the remainder has some tracks even better than it, but they just don't surpass? Well, I certainly don't mean to say that the rest isn't listenable - by all means it's worth a listen. It's one of those albums you give a second chance and end up being glad you did. The instrumentation runs the gamut from organ, piano, guitar, bass, drums, and some weird noises that I haven't quite been able to identify yet. The first half is the best stuff, with *Rags to Rags*, the title track and *Not Ready Yet*. The second half is a little more laid-back, but kinda jazzy and melodic - the obvious exception being *Mental*, which kind of reminds me of Nirvana or it's spin-off, the Foo Fighters. The title track features E doing what I consider a really good Shane McGowan (you know, of The Pogues) on a 7 on the inebriation scale. Your Lucky Day In Hell reminds me very much of Steely Dan. Of course, as a conservative-kinda guy, the best thing about this album was the \$7.99 price tag (at Tower Records, whether it's a nationwide distributor price I don't know, but it *did* have a factory label on it decrying it's "stupid low price"). All I can say is if it is \$7.99 in your local store, and you have a five and 3 ones (plus tax), give this disc a spin!

Tony Butler could have been somebody. He could have been a Pretender.

It all started last year when Butler, a renowned London session bassist, went into the studio with his new band, Big Country, to cut its first single, "Harvest Home," with producer Chris Thomas (who manned the boards for the first two Pretenders LPs).

Chris asked if I wanted to put a backing track on the new Pretenders' single ("Back on the Chain Gang"), 26-year-old Butler recalled in a telephone interview from London, "They'd just sacked Pete Farndon that particular day...a few hours later, James Honeyman-Scott (Pretenders' guitarist) came to see me and asked me to join the group. I chewed it over for quite a while."

But he didn't bite. Butler and partner-drummer Martin Brzezicki—who billed themselves as Rhythm for Hire—stuck with guitarists Stuart Adamson and Bruce Watson and became Big Country. He made the right choice.

While The Pretenders have suffered two tragic setbacks (Farndon and Honeyman-Scott died of drug overdoses last year) and have been forced to claw their way back onto the charts. Big Country has been uniformly exalted by critics and fans who are proclaiming the four-man band as rock's heroic soldiers triumphing over the evil synthesizer forces.

The group's debut album, "The Crossing," already has spawned two hit singles/videos ("In a Big Country," "Fields of Fire"). And the slicing, twin-guitar barrage that powers Adamson's potent anthems about believing in yourself have become a Big Country trademark.

Comparisons to U2 and The Alarm—two other acts that use guitars and positivism as weapons against apathy and fads—abound. But Big Country's message is more subtle, buried in folk themes ("Harvest Home," "Chance") with Celtic overtones.

"All we try to offer, really, is good songs. There's never a message or political stance set up in our music," Butler said. "I believe in a good song—it's an old fashioned way of thinking...Stuart deliberately writes them in a way people can interpret them in whichever way they feel."

And most of their fans would agree that "The Crossing" is one of 1983's most important releases: not only because of the raging and roaring guitar lines (which also resemble bagpipes) but also because of the album's finest moments—"In a Big Country," "Inwards," "Lost Patrol"—seem to be driven by passion and hope that can only come from a band whose chief goal is to move mountains.

Producer Steve Lillywhite, best known for his work with U2 and XTC, deserves much credit for the album's booming sound, and he suits Big Country better than early producer Chris Thomas.

"Steve does bring out the best in the artist he's working with," Butler said, "Chris Thomas is more of a Stylized producer in that he's got certain pre-conceived sounds...He wasn't really bringing what was in the

group itself. It turned out to be a bit contrived."

And that's one quality that Big Country thankfully lacks, owing mostly to the band's roots in the '77 punk scene.

Lead singer-songwriter Adamson, born in England but reared in Scotland, started out in 1977 in a punk act called The Skids, where he discovered how easy it was for bands to play for audiences as equals instead of idols. When that band broke up, he started working with guitarist Watson and went through a brief and unimpressive incarnation as Big Country before scouting out studio players Butler and Brzezicki.

Both were fresh from playing on Pete Townshend's landmark "Empty Glass" and, "All the Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes" LPs and working with the band of Townshend's younger brother, Simon.

"I've always been a group person," Butler said. "I only did session work when I was basically broke...It was a way to earn a living, keep the girlfriends happy and pay rent on the apartment...I was not intending to fall into another (band) without knowing it was the right one."

Big Country is a metaphor for Adamson's vision of an ideal world where "dreams stay with you."

His determination shows in the song's bridge: "I thought that pain and truth were things that really mattered / but you can't stay here with every single hope you had shattered."

Such ideals amplify the group's admirable goal of following their dreams while avoiding the trappings of stardom.

"All I know the four of us want to do, individually and collectively, is not let the ideals of rock 'n' roll stardom go to our heads and destroy us," Butler said. That's why Big Country purposely is playing only small halls and colleges on this tour. That's why they turned down offers to open for David Bowie last year and Yes this year.

"We needed a rest," Butler said, explaining why they said "no" to Yes. "We could have blown it for ourselves."

As it is, the four haven't had time to start work on their second LP. Butler said they forced themselves to go into the studio and record "Wonderland," available here only as a 12-inch import single, so that fans in England wouldn't forget about them while they toured in the United States.

The fans are important to Big Country, not only because they buy the records but also because many groups "feel they are more important than the average man in the street, which I totally disagree with," Butler said.

He says he's shocked that many performers allow themselves to be carted around in limousines.

"If I thought that was my standard of living, I'd be fooling myself," Butler said. "If I started riding around in limos just to look big, I'd be doing myself a disservice...People in groups are set up in a way to be different, they're expected to be seen as different.

"People know us here in England as ordinary boys who got together and fortunately made a great album. They don't expect us to be gallivanting around like Boy George and becoming media faces."

By David Okamoto

reprinted from The Tampa Tribune, March 15, 1984

Big Country Helps Crowd Cross Over To Unified State

Concert review by David Okamoto

reprinted from *The Tampa Tribune*, March 17, 1984

ST. PETERSBURG—Stuart Adamson has a vision of the whole world as one big country.

And the young leader of Big Country, one of the most exciting new acts to emerge from the British rock scene, made several references to "bringing people together" during the group's knockout concert at the Bayfront Center Theater Thursday night.

Opening with "1,000 Stars," the four-man band ran through every song from its debut LP, *The Crossing*, and also tossed in a few B-sides ("Angle Park" and a breathtaking version of Smokey Robinson's "Tracks of My Tears") and new songs ("Wonderland").

All doubts about Big Country's ability to live up to the mammoth wall of sound production that Steve Lillywhite (who worked similar wonders for U2) brought to its album were doused Thursday.

Backed by an elaborate set that included mountains, clouds and a fake ocean, the group performed with a winning combination of high energy and politeness.

Adamson, guitarist Bruce Watson and bassist Tony Butler frequently danced while they played, while drummer Martin Brzezicki pounded away at his drum set.

Their enthusiasm was infectious, influencing the crowd to bob and weave to such anthems as "Inwards," "Fields of Fire" and "In a Big Country."

One look at more than 1,700 fans in attendance proved that Adamson's vision of a big country may not be a dream. Big Country did bring fans together Thursday, not necessarily different races or religions, but different musical tastes (which is even harder to do).

There were listeners of WYNF, WRBQ and WMNF; clubgoers from The Roadhouse and Mark Twain lounge; junior high school, high school and college students; older folks (that is, anyone over 26), preteens with their parents in tow; '80s new wavers and former '60s hippies. Rarely does a group achieve such crossover appeal.

Faring equally well was Wire Train, the San Francisco-based act that opened the show with a fast paced 40-minute set which included songs from its debut album, "In a Chamber."

Led by lanky guitarist Kevin Hunter, Wire Train plays a hypnotic, guitar-dominated brand of pop. Most of the songs like "I'll Do You" and "Slow Down"—were expanded with instrumental passages that lent a harder edge to the group than the album suggests.

" Don't be frightened, Brucey.
It's all part of my
rock n' roll fantasy...
said the sweaty beauty, and
hobbled back out onto the moors.



BIG COUNTRY & GREENPEACE SAY NON TO CHIRAC
STOP THE TESTS
NOBODY WANTS AN ATOMIC PARADISE



BIG COUNTRY have linked up with Greenpeace to rush release an anti nuclear EP - "NON (Stop the tests)" on October 16th and are dedicating their entire UK and European tour to Greenpeace and the campaign to halt the French nuclear testing programme at Moruroa.

As news broke yesterday that a *fourth* Greenpeace ship has been seized and today that a second nuclear explosion has taken place in the South Pacific, Big Country and Greenpeace are launching this new initiative to add energy to the movement and to try and raise much-needed funds.

"The message of this record is: Get Active, Get Involved, Be Aware, *Do Something*, *Every Record Is Action*". Of the tracks we had on our "Why The Long Face" album, "Post Nuclear Talking Blues" and "Blue On A Green Planet" seemed the most fitting. We have been on tour all summer so unfortunately the time wasn't available to record any new tracks," says Big Country's Stuart Adamson.

"We know that other bands around the world are getting involved—that's why we are also creating a site on the Internet to link them up—but we were astonished to discover that no one in the UK at least, had acted on the idea of creating an action / awareness record for GREENPEACE and against the French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. All royalties from this EP will go to Greenpeace" continues Stuart.

As a result of their most recent actions, four of Greenpeace's ships and a helicopter representing well over ten million pounds worth of the organisation's resources, have been seized and impounded by the French.

"If their actions are to continue, Greenpeace need massive public support. The level of public opposition to the tests suggests that, if *everyone does something*, then a body of opinion can be turned into a wave of change. Public pressure *can* change the course of events" states Adamson.

At every date on Big Country's tour (which kicked off 26th Sept. in Belfast and continues through Britain until November 6th) there will be a Greenpeace presence, with extra features, events and actions being added as the tour progresses and the campaign develops.

TAKE ACTION - STOP THE TESTS

October 2nd 1995

Reprinted from Rock/Work Hard Enterprises Public Relations release
courtesy of Ian Grant

Big Country: Highland reelin' and a-rockin'

By Philip Bashe
reprinted from Circus

Stuart Adamson is only half kidding when he says Big Country makes "music to move mountains by." But there is something majestic about the Scottish-English band's soul-stirring sound, with its martial drumming and Adamson's battle cry to create a better world.

After just one LP, *The Crossing* (Mercury), Big Country have already established several musical trademarks. On songs like "In a Big Country" and "Fields of Fire," you can hear echoes of the Celtic folk songs band leader Adamson, 25, absorbed while growing up in Dunfermline, Scotland. "None of the melodies is taken from an actual piece," he explains in a near-impenetrable brogue. "It's just that the music was all around me."

The band's strikingly original guitar work has drawn the most attention: Adamson and co-guitarist Bruce Watson stretch single notes into stinging, sustained lines that sound much like a bagpipe's drone. It's a style Adamson developed while leading a late 70s punk outfit called the Skids. Though that group's career was undistinguished commercially, Adamson's playing influenced several young guitarists, among them Bruce Watson, then just a teenager, and U2's The Edge.

Opening for the Skids on one tour were On the Air, a trio led by Simon Townshend, younger sibling of Pete, which had current Big Country members Mark Brzezicki and Tony Butler on drums and bass.

"I didn't like the Skids at all," the 26 year-old Brzezicki admits sheepishly, "but I thought Stuart and his guitar playing were wonderful."

Yet, the drummer came close to turning down the offer to join Big Country two years ago. After the breakup of On the Air, he and Butler went on to become a standout studio rhythm section in London, playing on albums by Pete Townshend, among others. Of the two, Brzezicki especially was making a lucrative living, doing TV commercials and recording with the likes of Roger Daltrey. While Butler was so keen on linking up with Adamson and Watson that he even spurned an offer to join the Pretenders, Brzezicki had reservations.

"Yeah, I was the one least interested in joining," he laughs, "although I shouldn't be admitting this, should I? I loved the group, but I didn't want to get trapped in a situation where I couldn't do outside projects, 'cos I tend to get itchy feet. Everything's worked out—and I probably sound like a fool talking about this—but at the time, I had to be cautious."

Like U2 and the Alarm, Big Country are a rock band with principals, though their idealism never approaches the often starry-eyed naivete of those bands. And unlike the Clash, they rarely address specific issues ("We're not political," Adamson stresses) but sing about the politics of humanism; "of not being a @\$%head," in Stuart's words. The British punk movement soured for Adamson when it became "a fashion thing which I hate," when the bands became as frivolously nihilistic as the incumbents they sought to replace. So Big Country are unusually conscious of avoiding the catch-22 that often accompanies stardom.

"It's easy to think 'O.K., the pressure's on' and get carried away by your own press clippings," Brzezicki says thoughtfully. "But I look at the good side of it: A year ago we were playing local bars in England, and now here we are across the Atlantic."

"For me keeping a sense of reality is easy. I mean I used to be an aircraft engineer, and I used to work a lot harder doing that, believe me. Sure, there's pressure and whatnot, but all in all, we've really been very lucky."

in MEMORIAM

Saturday, October 19th - 12:30 pm

Friends, I just this hour received some very saddening news. Tim O'hanlon has sent word that one of our own has passed over The Great Divide. I apologize if I get melodramatic here, but as I've said in the past, you folks are like an extended family. Tim himself took the time to put his thoughts to words for us and I think he did so eloquently and lovingly:

James -

I wanted to pass on some very sad news. My best friend and fellow All Of Us member Michael R. Peterson passed away on October 14th at the age of 27. Mike and I grew up together in Lincoln, Nebraska where we started listening to Big Country in junior high. Mike is a legend in Lincoln because he knew everybody. Not everybody knew his real name but everybody knew who "Pete" was. Mike was a teacher and coach in Lincoln for the past 4 years. Mike was very passionate with everything - including his love for the music of Big Country. A lot of people are fans of their music in Lincoln because of Mike.

Life teaches us too many cruel lessons. Life is never as bad as it appears & it is never as good as it appears.

Sincerely,

Tim O'hanlon

I'm sure each and every one of you is prone to the same lump in your throat right now. I believe I recall a phone call from Michael at the beginning of his membership. He spoke very enthusiastically of Big Country and other bands that he appreciated. While I don't remember much of our conversation, it's one of those things where you remember where you were standing at the time, and I was in the bedroom, sitting on the bed while talking to him. I'm sorry that this, along with an address, is all the memory I have of him. I'm forwarding the message to Ian & the band - maybe they could dedicate a song to him some night soon. Just for the record, I got this news too close to the deadline to change any of the Halloween theme, so please understand that it was certainly not meant in bad taste. I ask that each of you say a little prayer for Michael's family and friends. I'm sure he will be greatly missed.

James

"And, inbetween all the things we might have been,

o let me, o get me through" - Simon Toulson Clarke, Red Box

Killiecrankie

by Cameron Davis

Scotland's "national poet," Robert Burns (1759-1796) wrote the song, "Killiecrankie" to commemorate Scottish bravery against the British in the Battle of Killiecrankie, fought on 27 July 1689, in the Pass by the same name. Just a minimal translation of the lyrics into modern English indicates that Burns's intent was to inspire Scottish pride by poking fun at the British forces and by issuing a tribute to the "Jacobite" rebels who fought to repel the rule of King William of England. Here are the lyrics, incorporating translations, followed by a brief historical explanation.

I.

Where hae (have) ye (you) been sae (so) braw (dressed fine), my lad?
Where hae ye been sae brankie (spruced up, dapper), O?
Where hae ye been sae braw, my lad?
Cam (came) ye by Killiecrankie, O?

Chorus:

An (if) ye hae been where I hae been,
ye would na (not) be so cantie (cheerful), O!
An ye hae seen what I hae seen,
on the braes (heights) o' Killiecrankie, O!

II.

I faught (fought) at land, I faught at sea,
At hame (home) I faught my auntie (aunt), O,
But I met the devil and Dundee,
on the braes o' Killiecrankie, O!

Chorus

III.

The bauld (bald) Pictur fell in a furr (furrow, gap),
an Clavers gat (got) a clankie (knock), O,
Or I hae fed an athole gled (hawk),
on the braes o' Killiecrankie, O!

Chorus

Repeat Chorus
Repeat Chorus


To more fully understand the lyrics, one must understand the battle itself. The (Scottish) Jacobites, led by General Dundee, widely reputed to be a highly competent soldier, were outnumbered by the British forces loyal to King William. Still, the small band of rebels battled courageously and tirelessly, resulting in the retreat of the "Williamites." Then, just as the defeat of the British, led by Major-General Mackay, seemed final, the Scots stopped pursuing. Mackay reasoned that Dundee surely would not have relented in his pursuit unless something had happened to him. Based on that speculation, Mackay re-grouped his forces

and counter attacked, at which time the Scots, having indeed lost Dundee, were forced to retreat.

The song takes the form of a conversation between two Williamites in which two thoughts are portrayed. First, the hard fight that the Scots put up against superior force. For example: if you had been at the Battle of Killie Crankie, you wouldn't be so cheerful, and likening fighting the Scots to fighting the Devil himself. Second, through the use of sarcastic humor, one of Burns's most classic delivery vehicles, he exposes the feebleness of the Williamite forces. For example, one soldier boasts of how he was, indeed, fighting...he was fighting with his aunt at home, and another soldier, Clavers, getting a knock on the head; also portraying the Williamites as clumsy...the soldier named Pictur falling into a crevice.

This last reference also gives some insight into the remarkable terrain of the battlefield. It is comprised of steep, rocky bluffs overshadowing the River Garry, just north of the town of Pitlochry in Scotland. The battlefield is preserved today by (I believe) the National Trust for Scotland. It includes some of the most magnificent landscape in Scotland, with plenty of trails for hiking and climbing. There is a visitor's center that gives detail on the site and the battle. Well marked on the site is the "Soldier's Leap," where one Jacobite, pursued by counter-attacking British, successfully jumped from one side of the River to the other...an enormous feat given the distance and jagged rocks.

Big Country recorded the song only on video in the early 1990s as a tribute to Burns and as an expression of Scottish heritage.



Tartan Anthems--Big Country/Balaam and the Angel

PARADING delights for the ears, if not the eyes. Balaam And The Angel are not such a daft choice for this support slot as some would have thought. Their politeness, fiery guitars and keyboard-coated melodies remind me of a boy's own Altered Images--honest. It's only a pity that tonight they were restricted to a bitterly short set and a few feet in front of a thick curtain drawn across the stage. One day my boys, one day.

Among the secrets behind the velvet veil was the Big Country back-drop: an uncanny recreation of the charred remains of the Rover's Return. Not that Stuart Adamson looks much like our Bet, Whisky is nearer the mark.

With an air of apprehension Adamson's mob thundered head first into "Wonderland" and "Fields of Fire", pausing only to cringe at the less diplomatic sections of the audience chanting football anthems--reminders of the on-going Mexican saga to find *the* big country.

Not that *this* Big Country had much to worry about. The punters were all sporting their "I'm so happy I could *****" badges, reeling in the aisles as they were led through such merry Jacobean traditional songs as "Look Away", "In A Big Country" and "Steel Town" [sic]. The new single, "The Tea Chest" [sic], passed almost unnoticed and with little comment, all and sundry preferring selections from the history books and opportunities to exercise their lungs with the likes of "Chance. You pays your money, you takes your cue.

Three encores saw Big Country finish the evening as a relaxed, effective unit, daring to include an hilarious version of "Honky Tonk Women" and an appalling "Tracks Of My Tears". If musical homicide were a cardinal sin, here were two clear cases for eternal damnation.

But what the hell? Nobody cared, least of all Big Country. Here's a band who know what is required of them and who can entertain to saturation point and beyond. They provide. Offering no surprises, fulfilling all expectations, their working themselves up to be a Status Quo for the Nineties and somehow it doesn't seem to matter.

Concert review reprinted from Melody Maker June 28, 1986

**Big Country are Stuart Adamson,
Bruce Watson,
Mark Brzezicki and
Tony Butler,** formed

over a decade and a half ago and still performing storming two-hour gigs.

Back in the 80s Big Country were looked upon as a ground-breaking band in what is now considered a high spot in the Brit pop era with their unique and easily recognisable Celtic brand of rock.

Out on the road once again to promote their current album *Why the Long Face?*, front man Stuart Adamson said: "We may not now be regarded as one of today's hip groups or get as much air play on the radio as we would like but our album has seen steady sales and we always pull a good crowd"--which the entire band obviously gets a big buzz from even after 15 years judging by their show last night.

Big hits from the last decade including *Look Away, Look Away* [sic] and *Fields of Fire* with their familiar "clangy" guitar riffs were nicely mixed in with more recent material such as *You Dreamer* and *I'm Not Ashamed*.

There is a serious note to Big Country's music these days as they openly publicise their support of Greenpeace and disapproval of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Tracks from the new album, *Post Nuclear Talking Blues* and *Blue and Green Planet* [sic again!], demonstrate this whilst Stuart says: "Bruce and I grew up in the shadow of the shipyards on the Clyde and I am aware of the social and environmental implications of the nuclear age. This is our way of protesting against the French government's policy of carrying out needless nuclear tests in a post-nuclear age."

Big Country release an EP on November 20 with all the profits from the record being donated to Greenpeace. Recent lack of chart success may have eluded them but with their diehard following they will be rocking for many a good year yet.

Big Country had about 1,500 ardent fans dancing a Celtic-style jig in the aisles. From start to finish.

And by the time their two hour stint reached its climax everyone was calling out for more.

A great concert with intriguing animated screen graphics in the background. I can't wait to see them next time!

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 -
KEVIN DAHLENBURG

CAMERON DAVIS -
STEVE DEASLEY -
PHILLIP DIXON - 2810
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 -
CRIS HART -
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 MAULDIN -
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 - 1969 - 1996
CHRIS RAATHS -
STEVE RIST -
DAN RIVERA -
PETER ROCHE -
LES SCRIBER 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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By John Quinn

Life in Big Country goes on, and on, and on. And the band's members are certainly not complaining.

Almost a decade and a half down the line, the original line-up is going strong, with no intention of splitting up. Ever.

"When you find something you love doing you don't feel any desire to stop," says singer and songwriter Stuart Adamson.

"Sure we take breaks from each other, but when we all get together again it's a magic feeling. It's like we're bonded in some way."

S h y

Yet in terms of longevity, the foursome are mere beginners compared to the Rolling Stones, who they recently supported on a European tour.

"They do the most decadent thing I've ever seen, and it was nothing to do with sex or drugs either," Stuart admits.

"They have a spooker roadie, and the only thing he does on the tour is set up the table, wear a tuxedo, and act as referee when Keith and Ron play each other."

Latest album *Why The Long Face* (title taken from an Erno Phillips joke) is... well, it's Big Country. You know what they sound like.

And they always improve on their records when they play live, according to Stuart the culmination of everything they represent. See for yourself at Sheffield City Hall on October 10.

"I grew up as a live musician. I was a shy teenager and I used to think if I got upon stage I'd become a cool dude who was attractive to women," continues Stuart.

"It didn't quite work out that way, but being on stage is a wonderful experience. I can remember every gig and I've done over a thousand, so they must be something special to me."

Reprinted from *The Star*, September 30, 1995.

Courtesy of Ian Grant



THE COUNTRY

Back when I were a lad, it didn't take the discerning rocker long to suss out that getting a girl was often hindered by greasy hair and a love of Witchfynde.

Enter Big Country, whom it was okay to like. And although they weren't the hard rock band of today, they still rocked and the lads enjoyed singing and drinking beer to them before trying to give it to the ladies (who seemed more impressed than if you'd been playing air guitar to Saxon).

Big Country '95 are a different proposition, having developed (after a dismal 'No Place Like Home') into a fully-fledged hard rock act.

'Why The Long Face' is all muscular riffs,

rock solid rhythms and a singalong chorus that'll raise a few eyebrows with its sheer power.

An opening salvo of 'You Dreamer', 'Message Of Love' and first single 'I'm Not Ashamed' set out the band's agenda perfectly, rousing hard rock in the finest British tradition that remains evergreen and peerless.

There are a few snatches of the old bagpipe-style guitars on 'God's Great Mistake', but overall 'Why The Long Face' rocks more solidly than BC have ever rocked before.

Review by Jerry Ewing
reprinted from *Metal Hammer* 6/95



photo by Jose Avila



old Country Club
membership
8X10 photo

