



# **CLUB COUNTRY**

**ISSUE 1  
2019**

# Introduction

The Country Club magazine was the official Fan magazine for the band and was used to communicate with members of the Big Country Fan Club.

Country Club No1 entitled 'Harvest Festival Edition' was issued in 1982 for the pricey sum of 55p including postage. The magazine was edited and published by Jackie Whitburn, with various fans taking over that mantle through the years.

The magazine went through various transformations, published in A4 format initially then down to A5 with the final issue, No 49 (or was it 47, or was it 48) being published in October 1999. Or at least this was thought to be the final issue, when the magazine appeared on one last occasion in January 2011 with former secretary Martin Warner writing a few words. No 50 was published just in time to go alongside the mini tour with Mike Peters taking on the vocals and Jamie Watson joining his Dad on stage.

If you have never read the County Club publications, drop on over to

<http://www.bigcountryinfo.com/countryclub/index.htm>

where John Gouveia has tirelessly scanned all the copies in PDF format, to be read and enjoyed.

It would be fair to say that technology, in particular social media has made huge advances since 2011 with the creation of many Facebook sites celebrating various aspects of the bands former and current line ups. The sites vary in their approach and complement each other very well.

After a chat with various Site Administrators it was agreed, for old times sake to be a bit traditional and create a one off magazine, celebrating the various aspects that the sites concentrate on. However, utilising technology by creating an electronic publication, basically an online magazine.

So this electronic magazine is a one off with contributions from Administrators of the following Facebook sites:

*[Through A Big Country](#)*

*[The Great Divide – The Big Country Podcast](#)*

*[Big Country Dream – A musical tribute to Stuart Adamson](#)*

*[The Big Country Trading Post](#)*

*With extra special thanks to Keith Lewington for the editing, design and publication of this fanzine and the teaser videos used on the Facebook fan groups to promote it.*

*We hope you enjoy this little bit of history being resurrected*

## THIS IS NOT THE COUNTRY CLUB



# No Place Like Balmule

Set in Rolling hills just 3 miles north of Dunfermline, Balmule House stands in over 30 acres and this listed building was once home to Stuart Adamson.

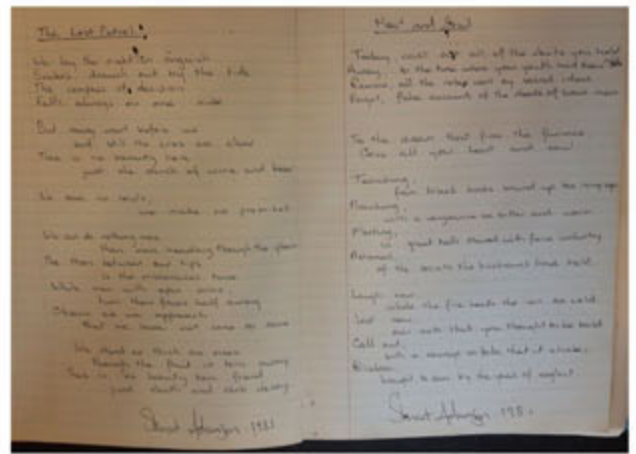


With the success of *The Crossing*, Stuart was able to move his family from a one bed flat in Townhill to this 12th century stately home in the Dunfermline countryside. The driveway is so long Stuart would leave the house light on to see it in the distance. To this day, you can still see the studio where the band rehearsed the *Peace In Our Time* album, the iron gates designed by Stuart with *The Crossing* logo, look through *The Seer* window and stand in the spot where the *Look Away* cover was photographed.



The current owners who purchased Balmule House in 2008 turned it into a luxury boutique guest house where fans can stay and experience waking and walking in the former home of our hero.

In 2015 I did my own pilgrimage to Dunfermline to see the Stuart related sites, needless to say, it was an emotional journey and inspired by photos and posts, interest was triggered for others to visit and meet up. There was talk of a monument of Stuart in Dunfermline, and the Adamson family were approached, this culminated in a meeting at Balmule House in 2016 where the attending fans were honoured to be able to hold Stuart's red ESP, read his lyric books, see other personal items and hear stories from his family.



We were also informed that Stuart's guitar would be going into a permanent display in the new Dunfermline Library and Museum when it opened the following year. Naturally we decided to plan Balmule 2017 around this opening.

So in 2017 we had the date of the gathering all sorted, everyone had booked rooms and transport when we heard the opening of the Museum had been pushed back a couple of weeks, we were gutted but The Adamson family once again came to the rescue and secured us private access before it opened to the public. It was very special to see the tribute in place in the town and we spent the rest of the day seeing the other Stuart related sites around town and enjoyed swapping tales and photographs in Tappies with the juke box blaring.



Realising 2018 would have been Stuart's 60th, we couldn't let it pass without marking the occasion so before we left we booked Balmule rooms for 2018. At this point we had no idea what we would do but we knew it had to be special. The group page "Big Country Dream - A tribute to Stuart Adamson" was the perfect platform to reach out to fans to gauge interest in a larger event, and after seeing The Buffalo Skinners perform at Big Country Irish Fans gathering a crazy idea was born by Robert Bayley.



Rob and I took a chance and fronted a lot of money to stage a live concert at Balmule House, where once again Stuart's music could ring out in his former home. We had no idea if you would come, but you didn't disappoint. We made a full day of it, starting with a free guide and tour of the Stuart related sites around town and ending with a night of celebration of music at Balmule House. The raffle held on the night, with donated prizes, raised £200 for the charity Kirsten Adamson had nominated. People came from all over the world to attend, they left with mementos of the evening, big smiles and wonderful memories of a truly magical evening.

We thought an event on this scale would be a one off and we would return to our little group the following year, but you beautiful people wanted more, so after talking with The Buffalo Skinners, who had now become firm friends, and Balmule owners, we started planning 2019. Again, we were hesitant as all costs had increased and we knew we couldn't make up the difference again, so we once again took a chance and you, the fans, came through. April 2019 grew into something amazing, we hosted a tour around town again and Tappie Toories was utilised for a free evening gig on Thursday 11th April, where both the Buffalo Skinners, and also a new duo, Shattered Cross played live.



The Balmule gig was on Friday 12th April, and a special guest brought Stuart's blue Levinson Blade guitar, which we proudly displayed for everyone in the entrance.



During the evening, to everyone's surprise and joy, the Blade was played by Ronan McCabe, tears flowed and hearts soled as a medley of Stuart's famous riffs erupted from his own guitar in his own home.

We got to hear Come Back To Me finally sang as it was meant to be by the wonderfully talented Hannah Slater. With Bruce and Jamie Watson singing and dancing as hard as the rest of us, it was a sight to see and an experience none of us will forget.



So how could we not do another, we knew from people's reactions interest was high for another year, we looked at larger venues to accommodate more people but after being refused by one and realising another would be financially and logistically unfeasible we all had a long chat and realised there's 'No Place Like Balmule' although costs increase every year and capacity is limited, moving anywhere else would lose the personal touches that makes it so special. Balmule 2020 sold out in minutes! Whether you have been once or every year from the start of these gatherings, if you paid for a room at Balmule, gig ticket, raffle ticket, donated your time or an item, or even if you've just commented or liked a post THANK YOU. You truly are Beautiful People for giving us your money and your trust to once again allow us to bring you an event to celebrate Stuart's birthday. Even if you can't be there in person, we always try to make you feel part of it on the day via the group page. This is a fan community I'm immensely proud to be part of. Next April, we will work as hard as ever to bring you an event to remember for a man we will never forget. By fans for fans, we are Big Country ... and we're from all over the place. Come Up Screaming

Andi Pledger

## Big Country - Return To Steeltown Tour 2019

### SEPTEMBER 2019

- 12 THE CAVERN, LIVERPOOL
- 13 THE ROBIN, BILSTON
- 14 THE ACADEMY, NEWCASTLE
- 20 THE MET, BURY
- 21 LOWTHER PAVILLION, LYTHAM
- 24 MOJO'S BAR – FREMANTLE, AUSTRALIA
- 25 ROSEMOUNT HOTEL – PERTH, AUSTRALIA
- 26 THE GOV – ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA
- 28 FACTORY THEATRE – SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
- 29 LIZOTTE'S – NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA

### OCTOBER 2019

- 1 THE NORTHERN – BYRON BAY, AUSTRALIA
- 2 THE ZOO – BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA
- 3 CORNER HOTEL – MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA
- 5 TUNING FORK – AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND
- 6 SAN FRAN – WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND
- 10 THE WELLY, HULL
- 11 STYLUS, LEEDS
- 12 THE GRAND, CLITHEROE
- 17 THE DORKING HALLS, DORKING
- 18 CONCORDE 2, BRIGHTON
- 19 DREAMLAND, MARGATE
- 24 WATERFRONT, NORWICH

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### NOVEMBER 2019

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### DECEMBER 2019

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ROADMENDER, NORTHAMPTON

THE LEADMILL, SHEFFIELD

THE JUNCTION, CAMBRIDGE

CITY HALL, SALISBURY

MICK JAGGER CENTRE, DARTFORD

THE FLOWERPOT, DERBY

THE BUTTERMARKE, SHREWSBURY

THE LEVEL, NOTTINGHAM

GORILLA, MANCHESTER

THE PHOENIX, BLYTH

THE LIVE ROOMS, CHESTER

THE GLOBE, CARDIFF

THE GUILDHALL, GLOUCESTER

THE PHOENIX, EXETER

THE FLEECE, BRISTOL

THE BROOK, SOUTHAMPTON

THE TOWN HALL, OXFORD

ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY, LONDON

SALTIRE FESTIVAL, MUSSELBURGH

BREWERY ARTS CENTRE, KENDAL

THE MILL, BIRMINGHAM

KING GEORGES HALL, BLACKBURN

MEMORIAL HALL, INNERLEITHEN

# Big Country Tribute Band Special Feature

Over the next few pages you will find articles regarding bands that pay tribute to Big Country by playing live gigs across the UK and Ireland. If they are playing in your area, go and see them for excellent live performances.

## Restless Natives



Restless Natives are a new tribute band who came together in early 2019, coming from “all over the place” around central Scotland with Fife as our rehearsal base. Between us we have decades of live experience in different bands, Tommie Paxton (guitar, vocals) with Lothians/Fife covers band Highway Jones, Andrew Buchan (drums) with StillMarillion and Maiden Scotland and Derek Dodds (guitar) as a solo singer.

We were formed when Tommie contacted Andrew on the back of his impressive YouTube drum videos which featured several Big Country classics. It was clear they both had the same ideas in mind, each had harboured the idea of a dedicated Big Country tribute for years, so now was the time to finally do something about it. Shortly after their first get together, after an appeal to find “Bruce”, they were joined by Derek, another lifelong BC fan, After a few rehearsals under our belt and an extensive search, the line up was completed by Ross Cunningham on Bass and we have now captured the authentic Big Country sound.

The band have all witnessed the spectacle of Big Country live, including raising the roof of Edinburgh Playhouse, singing along with over 100,000 people at Queen’s mammoth gig at Knebworth, and being front row of the Final Fling at Glasgow Barrowlands, Our ultimate objective is to bring that live experience to like-minded fans.

Using classic live recordings as our template, we work hard to recreate the detailed sound of crowd favourites from classic performances. Although only together a short time, thanks to the BC fans we have gathered considerable interest through our Facebook page “Restless Natives – A Tribute to Big Country” and our “homework” videos on the various BC pages, as we share our progress online and prepare our live set-list of BC classics, we are looking forward to lining up live dates over the coming months and we really hope to see you there.



**Tommy, Andrew, Derek, Ross: Restless Natives**

<https://www.facebook.com/RestlessNativesTribute>

# The Buffalo Skinners



We are a 3 piece acoustic, multi instrumental band paying tribute to the many years and music of Big Country. We were all raised with Big Country cassettes and vinyl playing, which exposed us to the band from a young age so it's only natural that one day we'd begin playing their music. We formed the band in 2017 to perform as the opening act at the BCIF event in our home town, what started as a once off bit of fun for the three of us developed into the opportunity to travel to Stuart and Bruce's home town of Dunfermline, Scotland and perform annually in Stuarts former home 'Balmule House' and his former pub 'Tappie Toories'.



We've always felt lucky with the support of the Big Country community in what we do and how we approach the music. From early on we decided to perform as a tribute to the music rather than trying to replicate the unique Big Country sound, our conscious decision to use traditional instruments rather than just guitars came easy as we wanted to take the songs we love, tear them apart and put them back together, to perform them in a way that was developed with our passion for the music and hopefully that shines through. We have a lot of respect for Stuart, Mark, Bruce and Tony and when adding songs to our set we often turn to Rarities and B sides as they are the often unheard jewels of the catalogue and we try to bring our own angle to the music.

We often mention we are just fans playing for fans which is true as every song we learn we have a personal love for the track no matter how rare or unheard it may be and we know the Big Country audience understand and appreciate our outside the box song choices.

With gigs unfolding and studio time on the horizon we're prepping for the sold out 2020 Balmule event 'No Place Like Balmule' which is a true statement as the amazing setting and history can set up such an atmosphere that turns an intimate gig for fans into one of the loudest intense gigs of our year.

[http://Instagram.com/thebuffaloskinners\\_official](http://Instagram.com/thebuffaloskinners_official)

<http://YouTube.com/c/TheBuffaloSkinnersBigCountryTribute>

<https://Facebook.com/thebuffaloskinners>

<http://Soundcloud.com/thebuffaloskinners>





# Angle Park

The first & short-lived incarnation of the band was put together in June 2016 in Belfast by die-hard Big Country fan Johnnie Grattan (guitar & vocals), a drummer from near Londonderry & a bass player from Birmingham, but Johnnie quickly realised that the geographical layout would present a problem & so went in search of new members closer to Belfast.

The band got up & running properly in March 2017 with a locally based bass player & drummer. Several weeks of intense rehearsals followed & by May, they had a full set-list established & were ready to gig. Their debut live gig was in June of that year at the Big Country Irish Fans event near Dublin. The band were joined on stage for an encore by none other than ex-Big Country bass player; Tony Butler.

Numerous local gigs followed in the rest of 2017 & a 2nd guitarist joined the band.

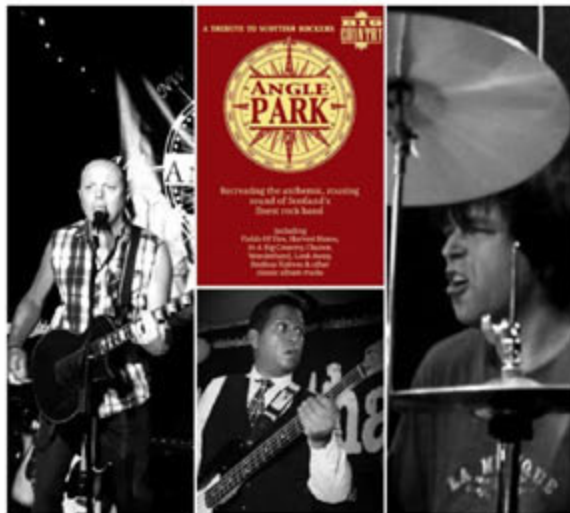
2018 saw the arrival of a new drummer in Neil O'Brien, originally from near Bridge End, Wales & a former Queen tribute guitarist on 2nd guitar. The band resumed a series of intense rehearsals & gigs, including a sold-out Belfast gig at the end of July.

The band then took a break from October, during which time they parted company with the bass player. The rhythm/2nd guitarist also left, due to not being able to fully commit to the band.

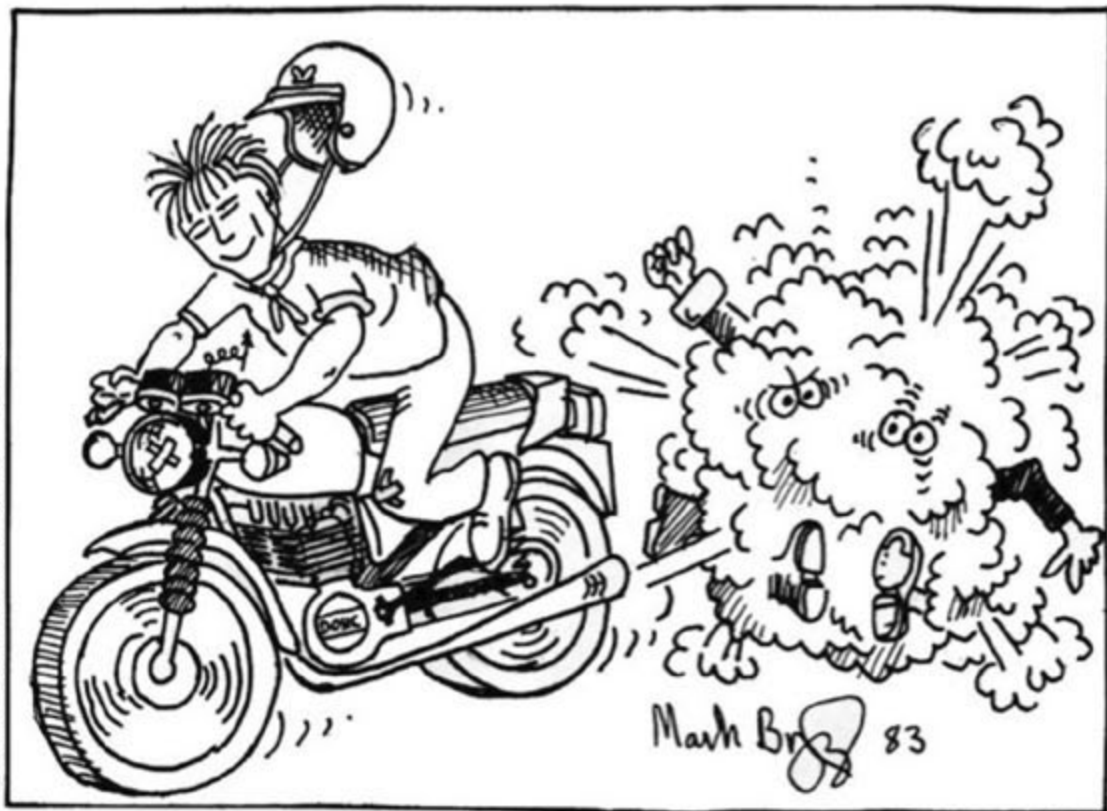
April 2019, the band returned with a new bass player in Rhett Keene, originally from North London & have recommenced rehearsals. New gigs are coming up from mid-August in both Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland & the band are also hoping to play in the rest of the UK.

**Johnnie Grattan – guitar & vocals**  
**Rhett Keene - bass & backing vocals**  
**Neil O'Brien – drums**

<http://www.facebook.com/Anglepark2016>



Mark Brzezicki drawing from CC 03



# Shattered Cross



Shattered Cross comprise of acoustic duo Eoghan Tegerdine and James Darcy, their set consists of Stuart's music from all 3 of the bands he was involved with.

They formed in the summer of 2018 after Eoghan had been invited to open for Buffalo Skinners and Angle Park in Dolans Limerick for the annual Irish Big Country fans event.

James Darcy had spent many years performing and gigging and was the perfect teacher and mentor to a 14 year old who although had performed lead in many school musicals, playing the music of Stuart Adamson in front of people who knew his music backwards was a different matter altogether.

They try to cover the songs that do not get a live airing any more or have never had one.

After a warm up gig in Navan with the Buffalo Skinners it was onto the iconic Dolans in Limerick to open the Big Country Irish fans event in Oct 2018 for the Buffalo Skinners.

From this came the invitation to perform in Balmule at the annual gathering celebrating Stuart Adamson's birthday in front of his most loyal fans and even Mr and Mrs Bruce Watson which came as a bit of a surprise.

Next up is the Big Country Irish fans event in Dublin this Oct 12<sup>th</sup> in the Grand Social.

Check out our facebook pages for more information:

<https://www.facebook.com/Shattered.Cross/>

<https://www.facebook.com/JamesDarcyMusic/>



## The Lost Patrol

Mark Brzezicki drawing from CC 01



# The Yankee Bloviates — The Rise Of WKW

## WKW

BRUCE WATSON: VOCALS, GUITARS, E-BOW  
JAMIE WATSON: VOCALS, GUITARS  
THOMAS KERCHEVAL: VOCALS, GUITARS, BASS, DRUM PROGRAMMING

**SEVEN SWORDS** (3:56)  
(WATSON, WATSON, KERCHEVAL)

**THE RIVER STAYS THE SAME** (4:55)  
(WATSON, WATSON)

**ROSE RED SUNSET** (4:46)  
(WATSON, WATSON, KERCHEVAL)

ALL SONGS WRITTEN AND RECORDED IN  
DUNFERMLINE, SCOTLAND AND VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES.

MIXED BY THOMAS KERCHEVAL AND BRUCE WATSON  
ENGINEERED BY THOMAS KERCHEVAL  
COVER ART BY TIM ELDRED

Bruce & Jamie Watson  
present

**WKW**  
WATSON KERCHEVAL WATSON

HANDS ACROSS THE OCEAN

Hello again, scab pickers! Ever so sorry for the slightly enormous gap between columns. Seems like 25 years ago! This old fanzine was different then. Who knows where all our days go? I swear, some seem to stay a thousand years, others pass like the flash of a ... great ... flashing ... thing. So, where have I been all this time? What have I been doing? I'm sorry, what did you say? You don't give a good goddamn? Well, OK, then. It's good to know where I stand at the outset, so thanks for your honesty, brutal and barbaric as it may be. OK, forget all that, then. Let me talk a bit about where I am today.

Where is that exactly? Well, it's right in the middle of a Watson sandwich. Acronymically speaking, of course. That would be "WKW", a new band made up of Bruce Watson, Jamie Watson and me, Thomas Kercheval. This isn't just your average, run-of-the-mill, "let's get a basement practice in next week" kind of band, however. This is a band that only the technological advancements of the aforementioned past couple decades could've made possible, a band whose members are separated by the vast expanse of the Atlantic but who, nonetheless, have managed to just about finish work on a 9-song album we're hoping BC fans (among others) everywhere will love. I know of one already who loves it, and that's the cretin writing this very sentence.

So, what is this "Bruce and Jamie Watson Present: WKW" project? How did it come to be? What should one expect from the music the beast will spew forth? How does it feel to be writing and recording music with members of the very band that inspired you to write and record your own music way back in the days when the Stegosaurus roamed free? Well, I've been coaxed from retirement to try to answer some of those very questions in the long-winded way to which I've become accustomed. So sit back, kick off your pants, and allow me to regale you with tales of derring do. Or ... don't.

Although the seeds for WKW were sown earlier (I originally wrote "Planted" there before remembering I was writing for an audience of BC fans), they began to really blossom back in the heady days of 2018. The world was different then. I had just finished work on an EP of my own called "Rail", my fifth solo release. Give it a search and a listen, won't you? You can find it on any digital platform, and it's only five songs, so I'll wait.

<https://thomaskercheval.bandcamp.com/album/rail>

Thanks for that. Anyway, as you just heard, the music has the undeniable (not that I'd ever want to deny it) influence of Big Country seeping from its nether regions. That's because — as is the case with most of you, I'm guessing — the music of BC connected with me early on like no other music ever has. It touched something in me that seemed to already be there, just waiting to be awoken. I've never consciously tried to replicate that sound when writing my own stuff; it's just what comes naturally, albeit through my own unique

filter of other influences. Still, the roots of that sound and that approach to songwriting are part of my DNA (which, only in context of the preceding sentence, does not stand for “Dirty Nutbag Asshat”).

I was really proud of “Rail” when it was finished (still am), and I decided to share some of the songs with Bruce to see what he thought. That wasn’t a complete first; I’d shared some of my music with him before. Heck, I used to share it with Stuart back in the day, too. He even reviewed my first album, “Valiant”, in one word: “Neat.” (Better than “Shit Sandwich”, I reckon.) Anyway, sharing music with established musicians, let alone personal musical heroes, isn’t something to be taken lightly. I didn’t want to make Bruce feel obligated to respond or make him feel uncomfortable by sending him something he didn’t ask for. But I felt OK about it at this point because, over the preceding five years or so, we’d formed a bit of an acquaintance, beginning around the time I started “The Great Divide” podcast. We did an epic interview with Bruce early on, one that spanned the band’s career and kept him on Skype for nearly a full month.

He, Jamie and I also recorded a version of “Peace In Our Time” around that period, with Bruce and Jamie on acoustics and me on vocals, keys and mando-guitar. That was our first recording ever, in fact, and everyone seemed to enjoy the overseas collaboration experience. At the time, though, I had no idea we’d ever do anything else.

<https://soundcloud.com/thomas-kercheval/peace-in-our-time-bruce-watson>

A further strengthening of the relationship (at least from my perspective) came during BC’s American tour of “The Journey” album. The band played in my town, literally 10 minutes from my house. Weeks before the show, I contacted the club owner and arranged to be the opening act, with plans of doing some obscure acoustic BC tracks and some of my own stuff. I also offered up my home to the band as sort of a pit-stop, something they relied on throughout that tour: A place to crash for a bit, maybe take a shower, get away from the tour bus for a little while, etc. On the day of the show, I met up with Bruce and Jamie nearby, took them around to a little music shop, even ripped out an EMG pickup from one of my guitars and gave it to Bruce, as he needed a replacement. The thought of BC music being played from that pickup as the tour progressed filled me with joy.



While hanging out that day, we, as the musos say, “jammed” a bit in my living room. I showed them my acoustic treatment of “Tall Ships Go,” and they showed me how to play the intro to “Steeltown.” At one point, Bruce suggested we all play “Chance.” I didn’t realise it at the time, but his suggestion to play that BC classic together was part of a scheme he’d devised to invite me up on stage that evening and play that very song with the band. Thank Crom, god of Conan, that I knew the chords and lyrics. It was such an amazing, surreal experience that night, singing and playing with my favourite band of all time as my wife,

longtime friends and even one of my former band mates — all of them fully understanding what this moment meant to me — watched from the audience. I’ll never forget that night, and it was such a kind and cool thing for Bruce to arrange.

That entire experience could be an article of its own (maybe it just was), but this is about WKW, so let’s get back on track, shall we? I took that tangential off-ramp simply to show how my relationship with Bruce developed over the years, eventually getting to the point mentioned earlier where I felt comfortable enough to share some of my songs with him and get his feedback. The specific song I shared was something called “Clickbait”, and he had some really nice things to say about it, things that showed he’d given it a serious listen. I guess that exchange gave me the cajones to finally pop the question. Actually, it was a question masquerading as a simple statement, which went something like this: “Hey, if you ever have any interest in writing a song together sometime, just, you know, like, let me know, man. I mean, it don’t make no difference

to me either way, you know, just like, whatever you feel like doing, man. I guess what I'm saying is, the offer is open-ended. Man."

At the time I put that out there, BC hadn't released any new music for awhile. After all, their schedule was, and continues to be, absolutely packed with gigs. Writing songs takes time, and recording those songs takes even more of it, not to mention hefty studio and production expenses. And in this day and age of recorded music being viewed pretty much as a disposable commodity to most people, there's no longer any money in it. (At least not much money coming *in*. There can be a ton of money going *out*, however.)

Still, serious musicians are naturally driven to make music in the same way that a night wraith is driven to eat souls. I'm an example of that myself (the first part), as I've continued to produce and release music on my own, my reward coming not from mountainous piles of decadent riches, but simply from a small group of people who've continued to enjoy it. It's been a long time since that wasn't enough for me. In doing all that, I've assembled a basement studio and learned how to record, engineer and produce at a decent level of proficiency. I got the feeling Bruce was interested in creating some new music, and I knew I'd regret it if I didn't at least let it be known that I was willing to contribute my skills to the cause if he deemed me worthy. And so, the trap was set. I sat back and waited, expecting nothing.

A few days later, I got more than I expected: two demos from Bruce, one called "Seven Swords" and the other "The River Stays the Same." The .mp3 files came with a short note, basically saying, "I never really finished these. See what you can do with them."

If this had been a screenplay, it may have looked like this:

INT. CANDY STORE

KID enters.

I immediately listened to both songs with the same frenzied excitement that the great Dom Deloisse must've felt when entering a Bob's Big Boy buffet. They were raw demo recordings with Bruce playing and singing everything. As I listened, ideas began to swirl, synapses began to fire, and I eventually composed myself enough to fire off an email of my own, telling Bruce how cool I thought the songs already were and asking him if he had anything specific in mind that he wanted me to try to do with them. "Do whatever you want with them," he replied. "If I don't like it, I'll tell you." Fair enough.

The first track I took a crack at was "Seven Swords." I really loved the demo. For one, I've always loved Bruce's voice. I'm a huge Joe Strummer fan, and there are definite tonal similarities between the two men's vocal chords. That really came through to me on "Seven Swords", which sounded like The Clash meeting Big Country on the field of battle, Braveheart-style. I especially loved the verses of the song and the abstract lyrical content, which reminded me of the approach Stuart used to take with his own lyric writing back in the day. The essence of what I loved about Big Country saturated this song already.

Listening to it over and over, I began to hear a big, anthemic chorus that wasn't there yet. So, I wrote one and tweaked the arrangement a bit so it would fit. Now came the tricky part. How should I present this to Bruce? Do a crude acoustic recording and send it to him? Connect with him over Skype and sing it to him? Nah, I wanted to impress the man, and my best chance at doing that was to just record the whole damn song as I heard it and present it to him that way, just lay all the cards on the table and see what he thought. If he liked it, great. If not, I'd still have a cool story to tell. One thing I wouldn't have would be regrets for not trying.

So, record the whole damn song I did, following the same approach I take when I record my own stuff. I always arrange a song on acoustic guitar first, then record a scratch guitar track to a click. After that, I program the drum parts using the scratch guitar as a guide. Drums and bass are a song's foundation, and for me, they've got to come first, so come first they did on "Seven Swords". I then added guitars and vocals and tried to get a mix together that, if it was my own song, I would consider finished. I really laboured over this, as it was the definition of one of those "one chance to make a first impression" moments. Once I was finally pleased with it, I sent Bruce and Jamie the file and ... waited. I knew this would either be the beginning or the end of our collaboration. A couple days later, "beginning" was confirmed. "Jamie and I love it," Bruce wrote. "You've given it a chorus!" We were off and galloping!

From that point on, here's how the process worked: I'd take a demo and produce a full version of it, just as I'd done with "Seven Swords". I'd then send that to Bruce and Jamie. If they liked it, I'd follow up by sending them

the track's "stems," which is what we call each individual part. Bruce and Jamie, on their rare days off, would then put those stems in their own recording software and begin recording parts of their own. They would then send me THEIR stems, and I'd mix them in to what I already had, cutting parts that no longer belonged, replacing my scratch vocals with Bruce's, adding their guitars, mixing in some of my own, recording backing vocals, etc. I'd then create a new mix of the song featuring all three of us and send it to the VVs again. Bruce would then critique the mix, giving me advice on things he wanted changed or added, different effects he thought would sound good, etc. After a few rounds of corrections, I'd eventually get a "we've got it!" email, letting me know the song was done to everyone's satisfaction. That was always a great feeling.

I learned so much from Bruce's suggestions along the way. He's got a great mind for music and comes up with fantastic ideas very quickly. It had been a long time since I'd worked collaboratively with other musicians, and it was an eye-opening experience. The older I've gotten, the more set in my ways I've become, and the less time I've wanted to waste arguing with someone about how I think a song should sound. That's why I haven't really sought out any other musicians to work with over the years when recording my own music. I know what I like and have just preferred working alone. But this, this was different, not only for the obvious reason of just WHO I was working with, but because I pretty much loved everything Bruce and Jamie sent my way. They came up with ideas I would've never thought of, ideas that really worked, really took the songs to higher levels. It was such an easy, stress-free way to work, knowing that everyone was basically on the same wavelength, that we all spoke the same language.

One of the absolute highlights for me early on came when Bruce sent some more parts for "Seven Swords", and one of them was labeled, "Bruce\_Ebow." That really drove it home to me how cool it was that I was doing this with the people I was doing it with. That was a special moment. (One other thing I found touching was to get various guitar and vocal files from Bruce and Jamie and see them labeled as "Dad" and "Jamie." To have a father/son working together to create music like this is a rarity, and it still warms my heart to think about it.)

After we had "Seven Swords" and "The River Stays The Same" in good shape, the obvious question sprung up like the rotting corpse of Stalin on the Great Day of Judgement: "What are we going to do with these songs?" Bruce decided we should make an EP of our own. While doing the first two songs, I was never sure how they'd be used. I thought there was even a possibility they'd become elaborate demos for future BC songs, which would've been just fine by me. Are you kidding? I would've been ecstatic to see something I co-wrote being turned into a song by my favourite band. But now it looked like we were going to become a band of our own, a band of trans-Atlantic ruffians and ne'er do-wells who never actually get to work in person. (Not unlike my partnership with Svein for the podcast.)

So what would the name be? I threw out "Scorpheus." Podcast listeners will understand the significance of that, and I shan't explain it to the infidels. Bruce wasn't thrilled with that one. I threw out another one, jokingly: "Douchebag Iscariot." Bruce thought that was hilarious, and I began to worry he may want to actually use it! I had to back pedal that idea out of the arena very quickly. Finally, Bruce just said, "WKW." And that seemed to do the trick. It was also an incredibly generous act on his part. I felt like that "K" should at least be lowercase. Don't get me wrong; I'm proud of my abilities as a musician, and I've worked really hard over many years to develop them, but I was never under any illusions that having my name attached to the project was going to spark any significant uptick in public interest; Obviously the draw here is Bruce and Jamie and that sound and vibe that they bring to whatever they do. To just be a part of that was and is an incredibly rewarding thing.

Here I was writing songs and working on a new musical project with an absolute musical hero of mine, co-founder of my favourite band of all time, co-writer of some of my favourite songs of all time, not to mention the man's incredibly talented and cool son. Insert all the typical cliches here about how I was feeling; like your favourite pair of fat jeans, they all fit.

The thing is, though, you can't stay in that head space for long, as it's not conducive to getting things done. Besides, I can't think of many things that would've been more annoying to Bruce and Jamie than to hear, "Der, I can't believe I'm working with you guys" prefacing and ending every communication. You've eventually just got to focus on the work, and that's what we did, working our absolute hardest to create the absolute best songs we could. The third one, the one that would finish out the tracklisting for the EP, sprang from an amazing piece of music Jamie had written awhile back. He and Bruce shot a video of themselves playing that music, and the BC community went nuts for it. So did I. It had the old BC spirit that had hooked all of us. The

song would eventually become the basis for the band's first recording with Simon Hough on vocals, "All Lay Down", but there was just something magical about that early piece of music that really stood on its own.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om1VIQjGAFM>

Bruce wanted to see if the three of us could go back to the drawing board and create something new using Jamie's instrumental as the basis. I wrote new lyrics, taking the melody line from the great lead part that Bruce had played on the instrumental piece. I also added a new bridge to the song, and "Rose Red Sunset" was born. This one took a lot of time to record and mix, as there are so many layers to the song: multiple backing vocals, more ebow, clean guitar lines, distorted power chords, acoustic guitars, and more. I think when all was said and done, there were nearly 90 separate tracks that made up this beautiful monstrosity. Once again, everyone seemed thrilled with it. We now had our EP, as well as a title spawned by the brain of Bruce: "Hands Across the Ocean." The line came from a classic gangster film starring Bob Hoskins called, "The Long Good Friday", and it certainly fit our working methodology perfectly. We also added "Bruce and Jamie Watson Present" before the name "WKW" to make it clear where the project's roots are, where it springs



from, and to let people know immediately who's involved, which gives them a good sense right from the start of what to expect.

The artwork for the EP, which was a digital-only release, was generously created by Tim Eldred, another huge Big Country fan and, as luck would have it for us, an artist for Marvel! When you look at Tim's art, you can see why. He's amazing, and he created a fantastic piece of work in the vein of the "Boy's Own" art we all fell in love with years ago. We all went nuts over it. In fact, right behind me as I type, a framed print of that art hangs on my wall.

So yeah, if the story ended there, that would be enough from my perspective. But wait, there's more! We actually recorded a video for "Seven Swords". How did that work? Well, Bruce and Jamie recorded various shots of themselves in boring places like Japan and the famous "Eleanor Rigby" cemetery, while I had the good fortune to record myself in the far-more-exciting recesses of my basement in front of a green screen. I sent along my shots, and a friend of Bruce and Jamie, talented editor Liam Saunders, put it together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aHksZjgYjk>

Another great thrill. As to the EP, reaction was really positive from the BC fan base, and the experience was so enjoyable for all of us that we decided to do what one normally does when they've stumbled on something they enjoy: do more of it!

And so, it's my continued pleasure to formally announce in the pages of this reanimated fanzine that WKW is about to release a full album called "Men of Steel". We'll talk more about that title as the album launch gets closer, but for now, it's BC-related and has the word "Steel" in it. What more do you want?

The album will include nine tracks, and yes, three of them will be the same songs included on the EP. However, those three have been completely remixed, remastered and, in our collective opinions, sound far better than the EP versions. (I've learned a lot of mixing tricks since then, and I had to go back and apply them to those songs. They will sound fresh and even stronger on the album.) The other six tracks are a mixture of new songs we've written, heavy arrangements of a couple songs from earlier Bruce and Jamie albums, and two fresh takes on some underrated Big Country classics that never benefitted from a full-fledged studio recording, namely "Troubled Man" and "Killiecrankie"!

Doing a new recording of "Troubled Man" was initially fraught with emotion for me, as that song has become so synonymous with Stuart and the things he dealt with. I wondered whether or not we should just leave it be, but then I thought of Stuart's own approach to songwriting, and how, in my opinion, he wouldn't have

wanted a song to stand as some untouched monument to his own life. He, like most songwriters, wanted to write songs that others could relate to and that were living, breathing pieces of art. And let's face it, the lyrics to that song are words that so many of us can relate to. I can only speak for myself, but I know that I can.

And I have to say, perhaps the highlight of this whole experience for me so far was hearing Bruce's vocals on the song. He delivered a really emotional, touching performance, and it really got to me. I feel like we did the song justice, and I'm incredibly proud of how it came out. We made it our own.

But there's one other Stuart-related tune we worked on, something most of you will have never heard. I hadn't heard it either until the idea came from Bruce to record it, and the demo was kindly shared with me. It's a song called "Nationwide", and it's one of the first songs Stuart wrote for Skids. It's a great blast of late 70s punk, with great lines like, "Even the police are breaching the peace / Even the schools teach the wrong rules." Deciphering the rest of the lyrics is a story in and of itself. A full verse was amazingly printed in an early fanzine for the band, so that helped immensely, but the other two verses? Jobson was never known for singing easily discernible lines, but this early demo took that to a new level.

Still, Jobson remains a force of nature, so we figured, "No problem, we'll just ask him to listen to the demo, and surely that will remind him of the lyrics." Jobson's response after listening? "FUUUCCCK!" So, I sent the song around to a few native Scots who helped, and between all that and Bruce's own hard work, we basically cracked it, although I can't say we've got them all right with 100-percent certainty. Still, what an honour to re-record that one. What's more, Bruce wanted to get Skids bassist Bill Simpson to play on it, as he'd done on the demo. Bill agreed, even going by the fantastic name he used way back then: "Alex Plode."

"Men of Steel" will also feature one more guest with a BC connection; Colin Berwick's Mighty Organ makes appearances on two songs: "Troubled Man" and a re-recording of a Bruce and Jamie tune called "Lay the Coin", which has become the album-closing epic of this project. Finally, Tim Eldred is on board again for the art, which is in progress now, and I can't wait to see what he comes up with.

So, that's the story to date. What's next, and coming soon, will be a crowd-funding project we're putting together to help us cover many of the costs associated with getting this project produced and available in physical (CD) form. We're working on that at the moment, and there will be some cool rewards involved for various levels of support, everything from meet and greets with Bruce and Jamie to appearances on The Great Divide podcast, so be on the lookout for that. We hope you'll consider this a project worthy of supporting.

Bruce has always been hesitant about going the crowd-funding route, so if this works out, who knows what that could mean for other BC-related projects down the road?

As for now, I'm currently working on the final mixes of all the songs. Everything's been recorded, but mixing and mastering are the two dark arts that can make or break a collection of songs, so I'm taking my time with that to make sure everything sounds just like we want it to. We're hoping to have everything ready to go by mid-fall. Please check us out on our Facebook page for updates: [www.facebook.com/WKWmusic](http://www.facebook.com/WKWmusic).

It's been an amazing experience working on this music, and I can't wait for everyone to hear it. I want people to hear it so badly, in fact, that it literally hurts sometimes as I sit listening to these mixes in my headphones and enjoying them so intensely. I'm not kidding, there have been times when I've finished a mix and have listened to it five or more times in a row, all the while banging my head, shaking my fists, dropping elbows on my cats, and kicking my kids when they dare disturb me to ask for something like a "drink of water." We've worked incredibly hard on it, and Bruce and Jamie have done it while also balancing their incredibly hectic schedule on the road. I'm amazed at the level of quality they've been able to produce on, at times, such short notice, and it underscores once again for me just how important Bruce was to Big Country for all those years and why Stuart handpicked him to begin with. The guy is just full of great ideas and is a consummate pro. Jamie is amazing as well, coming up with great solos and musical ideas, adding layers of really interesting backing vocals and more. I'm forever grateful for the opportunity to have worked with them at this level.

So, the Men of Steel are coming, with an army of big guitars. Ironically, not steel guitars, though. Big, manly, electric guitars that spit shards of bombastic iron and mule-kick spleens. I hope and pray (again, to Crom, god of Conan) that one of those spleens will be yours. Just do me a favour: when "Men of Steel" comes out, don't say the "K" in "WKW" stands for "kryptonite." That's just lazy. And, quite frankly, hurtful.

**Thomas Kercheval**



# Big Country Wordsearch

C K A N S A S O Y E S W R L K S P K  
U N S E C U R B U E W H X M J I R N  
H M T B B S U V V O N X O S P I H S  
V B E L L A L E N Q B R O L I A S J  
F C E E E O I D Q H R E U D L U G E  
S K L J Q Z E Y N E I D S O L I S T  
Q R T L Y R I A E L B E D A J U N I  
V A O H L K M S E A P A B Y S A O H  
U M W A U H N D L I M G S R L Q E W  
N D N Z O O O C P A N D E P V N E Y  
X D A R T N O G S I N L G I I O T L  
C Y R N I N A C S A L G S L W P T L  
K O A S Y B U S L E E T M A D H O I  
P I Q N S S O W V G O R L G G Y L L  
G N Z E D R O A Q R E O Z Y F F R C  
V W D L C R R Y M F N Y N O T P A A  
Q A S W R T G N N E O Y E C N A H C  
V R U A O S O U N D T R A C K I C D  
N D B W F X D V M P V R E H C A E T  
M S B X T K M O S C O W U V J S V V

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ALONE	JOURNEY	WONDERLAND
BAGPIPES	KANSAS	
BALCONY	LILLYWHITE	
BARROWLANDS	MARK	
BELLA	MOSCOW	
BRUCE	PORROHMAN	
CHANCE	SAILOR	
CHARLOTTE	SEER	
CROSSING	SHIPS	
DAMASCUS	SOUNDTRACK	
DUNFERMLINE	STEELTOWN	
EGGPLANT	STORM	
EILEDON	TEACHER	
GIANT	TONY	
INWARDS	TRAVELLERS	

The complete Big Country release resource page by John Gouveia

[bigcountryinfo.com](http://bigcountryinfo.com) was not an original idea. It is far from that. In the nascent days of the internet, when dial-up ruled the plains, one of the best sites about Big Country was Robert Oliver's "Steeltown" site. While the Geocities site that hosted it is long gone, it can still be found in the oocities archive at

<https://www.oocities.org/inasteeltown/>

Among other features of the site, it included a lyrics section and a discography section that was periodically updated. On 23 January 2000, the site published the first pdf of lyrics. Sadly, the site called it a day on 31 July 2000.

Enter Michael Wallack and the "Book of Lyrics". In 2003, Michael picked up the mantle with his fine efforts in several iterations of the pdf edition of the Book. His site is still active at

<http://www.wallack.us/bc>

It is in July 2005 where I enter the picture. I had the fortune of snapping up the short domain name.

<http://www.jfng.com>

(I'll leave it to you, the reader, to figure out why :-p) and frankly wasn't really using it for anything that worthwhile. I had helped Michael with certain aspects of his BoL and posed to him the prospect of bringing it back in online format where it could be updated as needed. To this day, I implement features that Michael came up with including the "era" graphic on the top of the Big Country lyrics pages.

In 2007, my "Eureka" moment came when I realised that I should have a URL that is a bit more intuitive and thus [bigcountryinfo.com](http://bigcountryinfo.com) was born. His cousin, [bigcountry.info](http://bigcountry.info) came around shortly after. However, in 2014, I found a use for and brought back "jfng.com" in the form of "shortlinks", which are now part of every page on the site, which (hopefully) make it easier to share links to pages. So to share the page for "The Crossing", instead of <http://www.bigcountryinfo.com/releases/crossing.htm>, one only needs to enter <http://jfng.com/>

Over the years, I have been able to introduce new sections and features to the site, including the Timeline, Cover Art Variations, Listings and catalogue numbers for each country's releases. Very popular are the archives of the Country Club Magazines, but my personal favourite is the Search function, which I dubbed "Project Q", which allows a website visitor to search the site including the text of the fan magazines. There is even a page that will help you narrow your search with various keywords. <http://jfng.com/help>

But of course, no "tour" of the site would be complete without mentioning "The Great Divide" Podcasts that are put together by Tom Kercheval and Svein Hjorthaug. I have the honour of being able to host these podcasts on the site as well. Svein has also gone to great lengths to create show notes for the episodes as well, so if you are looking for a particular podcast, have a look there.

Currently, the latest "addition" to the site is "Project W" which will allow you to see the liner notes and credits for every release. It is still a "work in progress" and some minor tweaking of the pages continues. There is a LOT of extraneous information included, much of which is information that most people would never look for, but I have included it for those who may just be looking for that very bit of information. Much of the "heavy lifting" was already done by Oliver Hunter and is presented on his site.

<http://ihopeyoulikeit.co.uk>



# “The Great Divide” – The Big Country Podcast

The story of a podcast, seen through the eyes of Svein Børge Hjorthaug



## Part I: Introducing ‘The Great Divide’ (or “So what is a podcast anyway?”)

*“Hey Svein,” Stuart Menzies said. “Would you like to write an article with some background on how you guys put together the podcast?”*

*“Do you really think people want to read about that?” I mused sceptically.*

*“Sure!” he said. It was one of those firm answers that really meant “get to it already!”*

I was not going to risk the wrath of Ming the Merciless. Getting to it, then.

What Mr. Menzies refers to as ‘the podcast’ is, in this case, the Big Country podcast “The Great Divide,” co-hosted by Thomas Kercheval and yours truly. It is the only recurring audio podcast dedicated to Big Country I am aware of, although there are videos around where people have given tribute to the band and its fans, some exploring specific songs or albums. While no less valid, I feel they fall into a different category.

Before I get started, I should say that this piece represents my own memories and perspectives about how it all started and developed. If the piece had been written by Tom, it would no doubt have different perspectives, likely emphasise things differently, and maybe some memories would look very different. Who knows? We may have to make him write a similar piece just to find out!

First of all, to really start at the beginning: what is a podcast? Many will know, but if you’re not sure, think of it as an audio episode about any given topic that can be downloaded for listening (or streamed online) on the device of your choice. It can be compared to an offline radio program with the same familiar voices reappearing regularly to talk about your favourite topic – except it isn’t on radio, and it exists as audio files that you can listen to whenever you want.

The podcast phenomenon is no longer new, and there are easily thousands of podcasts out there, counting millions of episodes. Just about every topic have a podcast dedicated to it these days –you just need to search, and chances are you will find something. A lot of them are done professionally, some are done by skilled amateurs, and...well, some are admittedly a tough listen. However, I think there is a beauty in the fact that anyone can do it, and you really find all types of people producing them. Some are done by celebrities, some are done by professionals in their given field, but a high number of them are done by (frequently knowledgeable) enthusiasts and fans of the given topic.

“The Great Divide” has been going since mid-2012, has currently released 85 numbered episodes (and a few unnumbered special PSAs) to date, and it would take you nearly six full days – with no breaks of any kind – to listen through every numbered episode from start to finish. Each and every episode is about some specific topic related to Big Country. That is a lot of talk about our favourite band!

Some of you will be very familiar with The Great Divide, have listened to every episode and know every topic (quite an accomplishment – well done, and thank you!). Others may have settled for select episodes (also great – thank you!). There are however still a lot of people out there who have not listened, and who may not even be aware that the podcast exists. Fortunately people are still discovering it. It is encouraging that nearly every month since we started we hear from people who just stumbled over it, having had no clue the podcast existed. We don’t want to be the kind of guys who always keep pushing the podcast onto people, and if anything we underpush it for that reason. As a consequence we are definitely not reaching our full potential of listeners, but that has never been our goal. We are very pleased with the listeners we have and that there is a small and constant trickle of new listeners.

The podcast format is interesting. When the episodes are done and put out there, they are set in stone. That’s how they will remain forever. There is something cool about that, but also something frustrating. People might listen to an episode ten years after it was made, or even further along, and opinions or statements will stand as they are even when new info comes along that changes things. If I change my mind on a song that is no big deal, but other times you learn more about a given situation which would change how you address it. Other times new facts emerge, and you’d want them to be in the discussion. Sure, I can address something in episode #86 about something I said in episode #9, but those listening to #9 may never



even get to #86, or maybe they finally hear it years later when what I said in #9 is long forgotten. This is why we usually just leave episodes as they are and use our Facebook group for any errata or additional comments. But the wish to get things as correct and representative as possible has no doubt given us an increasing and stronger focus on the quality of research as we have gotten further into the show.

Podcasts are extremely suitable for music discussions. Everything is in an audio format, so the discussion and the music can be mixed with interviews and all kinds of archive material to form a complete audio episode. This is what we have tried to achieve with the podcast – create audio documents that can stand on their own and still give a good listening experience several years down the road. At the end of the day it’s all about spreading the word and sharing the enthusiasm we have for our favourite band.

So, how did it all start?

## **Part 2: The Big Country mailing list days (or “Sowing the seeds of a podcast”)**

In many ways, I see our podcast as a continuation of the discussions that were going on 20-25 years ago on the Big Country e-mail mailing lists. The seed for the podcast was sown as far back as then.

Online communication has changed so much through the years that it is almost hard now to remember what it was like. Back in the 1990s, mailing lists and newsgroups ruled the fandoms of the world. Electronic communication was a new thing, with immediate delivery/response, which opened for a new way for fans to interact with each other. No more letters columns in Country Club with months between responses, or pen pals in Australia or California. Now we could all communicate by sending e-mail messages to a dedicated distribution server for all members to receive, read, and potentially respond to, instantly!

Back in the pre-social media days, with e-mail being the format, it was still common to write at length and in depth. E-mail messages were still basically electronic letters – not yet as snappy as messages have become on Facebook, Twitter, or any type of IM. They were frequently complete texts, containing a decent level of detail, often covering a topic from multifaceted angles.

Debating on e-mail lists was quite an art form, often using previous messages as jump-off points. Get this,

millennials: we would respond to other people's messages by quoting (indenting) parts of their messages, responding to that bit, then quoting the next part of someone's message, then responding to that part, etc. Communication was often specific, detailed, systematic, and meticulous. Netiquette was often about how to communicate in a way that invited others to respond properly to you.

Still, people were different even then, and some were content with just adding their two cents. That was fine. It was always clear who had the patience for the serious type of discussions and who didn't. You want to put out a quick message? Cool. If you were known as one of the "briefs" you were just less likely to receive a "longs". Nobody would be ignored, but it was just always clear who was up for a bit of nerdy detail-oriented nitpicking at length. It was all about corresponding meaningfully with each other at the correct level, for everybody's sake.

Man, could we write back then. We spent hours shooting off messages. Some threads got so long and contained so many multi-layered quotes that it was hard to keep track of who said what. Being skilled at quoting went a long way towards being a skilled debater. And, of course you needed to know what you were talking about, some facts, and opinions. Loads and loads of opinions.



I was certainly one of the long-winded nit-pickers back then. Another one was Thomas Kercheval.

I remember when Tom first showed up on the mailing list. But rather than having our first discussion through e-mail, I first encountered him in The Crossing chat room on John Underwood's old BC site. I know a lot of us have fond memories of that place – real-time chatting with other BC fans! Those were the days! I dread to think of how many hours I wasted spent in there. In any case, Tom and I immediately discovered that we were also joint KISS fans, which I'm sure endeared us both to each other. I also remember

us discussing professional wrestling, playing in bands, and (of course) BC. All things BC. Other music, too. I recall that we were both into The Pogues in a big way back then. Finding someone like-minded was great, and we were like-minded on a lot of things.

From that point on (which would have been sometime the first half of 1995), we would both be mainstays on the mailing lists all the way up until Stuart's death. When that happened, I left the mailing list behind and distanced myself from anything BC. The hurt was real, and I could no longer find joy in the music or any related discussions. I needed to get away from the mailing lists and forums that I had frequented before.

Years later, I went back to the mailing list archive from that time to look at how people reacted. I noticed that several people, including Tom, had hung around and written several good, thoughtful and passionate messages – but of course also with deep sadness – trying to put words on things. People are different, and sharing thoughts and putting words on things is no doubt very helpful to many. That isn't me, though. I internalise, adjusting my inner compass by creating distance in order to reflect, process and figure things on my own.

As important as it was to leave things aside for a while, at least the collector in me made sure I kept an eye on the official shop. I was able to pick up every release from the 2000s and beyond – some which are going for a king's ransom these days. I was not willing to stop collecting even if I had stopped listening, and it all happened a bit by autopilot. In any case, my future self (of a decade later) was most grateful.

The hurt stayed for years, but as the years went by I made some attempts at getting in touch with some of the folks that I had spent so much time communicating with before. Tom was definitely one of those people, and it felt really good to catch up, share what had happened with our lives, how both of our new families were, and everything that had been going on. It was great. It helped the music come back to me, too. Wounds were healing.

### **Part 3: The Great Divide arrives (or "The birth of a partnership")**

Having reconnected this way may be why a certain post from Tom appeared on my radar in May 2012.

At the time I was getting ready to travel to Sweden to interview candidates for a role in our team over there.

In the middle of that, I saw Tom's first post where he announced the first two podcast episodes. Interesting! I had no idea he was dabbling in that, but I downloaded them and listened to both episodes twice on my Sweden travels. (This was possible back then, as the episodes were quite a bit shorter than they would become!)

Primarily I remember thinking what a great idea it was to do a Big Country podcast like this. I had listened to other podcasts over the years. I was familiar with the format and had definite thoughts on what I liked about them, how they should be done, and what type of content I would like to see in them. This was also the first time I actually heard Tom's voice, and he definitely has a great radio voice. I also noticed how the show was very well put together. Tom is a very skilled editor (it is his profession, after all!), so all of these things made those episodes very appealing.

One thing I also remember thinking was that I knew Tom needed a partner to open up the discussions a bit. To be even better, the show needed some interpersonal chemistry, some difference of opinion, and... well, in short, some chutzpah! Tom had pretty much said the same thing too, so I knew that this would be taken care of. The second thing I thought was that I needed to reach out to the guy so that we could do something together. In my mind I was immediately the obvious co-host, based on the great interactions and the back-and-forth we had established on the mailing lists, our hundreds of hours discussing everything and anything in the chat room, and the fact that we just went back quite a few years at that point, even if only virtually. There was a friendship, and beyond that, I felt that there would be a compatibility and similar-mindedness in how we would dig into details. We had often been on opposite ends of an argument and torn into each other, but never without a mutual respect, and we pretty near always ended up in a good place. That could be really interesting if we made it work. But more than anything, I just felt an overriding sense that we would have fun doing this together.

Fortunately, Tom was already thinking along the same lines. He later said that he considered the first two a test of sorts, to see if he felt he could do it. If those worked, it was always his plan to bring a co-host on board. He was actually about to reach out to someone when that someone reached out to him first.

Scrolling back through our chat history is tough (it is incredibly freaking long at this stage!) but I can at long last reveal how the podcast partnership was officially formed, by way of Facebook messages sent on May 23rd 2012. I am pleased to see that I really put a lot of thought into my initial message, putting on my shiniest Viking charm and tons of persuasive arguments about suggesting we do something together. All that thinking and every bit of writing craftsmanship that I could muster was worth it though; what came out of that process was this profoundly well-written message:

23/05/2012, 14:58

Yo chief - should we try to hook up sometime to prepare for a BC podcast down the line? 😊

It was just as well that Tom was already thinking along these lines and my message basically just beat him to it. His response:

23/05/2012, 16:19

Svein! Yes, definitely. I was just thinking about this this morning. I'm at my busiest time of the year right now with my "real" job AND my job working freelance for the Redskins football team, but I'd like to do another one sometime in June hopefully? Have you had any experience with this using Skype? I'm assuming it's a fairly simple process, but I haven't had a chance to set up an account yet and set up my hardware. You can record the conversations through Skype, I'm assuming? We should definitely try to speak soon that way so we can test things out, test the interface and so I can actually hear your voice for the first time. 😊 As mentioned before, I'd like to do a podcast about favorite BC b-sides. Can you put a list of your top ten together? I'll do the same, and we can talk about our choices. I can add some clips after we do our thing in "nost-

There was more, as you see some of in the screenshot, but that is beside the point. This was it as far as connecting and agreeing. The reach-out and acceptance was minimal. At least to me it felt like a given – we already knew each other, had a decent feeling of what we would bring to the table, and we were keen to give it a test. To me it was very much about continuing what we had always done, going back to the mailing list days – just with a different format now. We quickly got into the practical stuff – show topics, what technology to use, how and when to record, and just overall planning and practical stuff. We really just dove straight into putting the show together.

Even though I think we both had a feeling it would work, we still had never actually spoken with each other, and there was no guarantee that we would have interpersonal chemistry. We had to connect to see how it worked out. I think that aspect was just understood by both of us, but also unspoken, because it wasn't the focus. We were just both very keen and excited to give this a try!

We connected on Skype a week or two later. We needed to get that first awkward talk out of the way, test our set-ups, test recording, and just go over our notes and do a little planning. And guess what – it wasn't awkward! We ended up talking for hours – two pals finally interacting in person for the first time. Just a few days later, we connected again to do the actual recording, and ended up with much more material than we needed for those episodes. This would be a recurring thing for us.

#### **Part 4: Editing the shows (or “Podcast post-production”)**

Early on, Tom suggested that we keep episode length at 80 minutes, which would make it possible to burn them onto an audio CD if someone should wish it. That made sense to me, and we both figured 80 minutes would be plenty in any case. Little did we know!

We have over time become known for our long discussions and (in particular) album deep-dives where we can talk about an album for 12-14-16 hours. While it wasn't always like that, right from the start we always had the potential to go a lot longer than we did. Enforcing the 80-minute cap meant that a LOT of material was left on the cutting room floor, especially for the first year or so. We were so starved of BC talk that we would go on for hours and get into all sorts of side topics. Look at the episode lengths for the first year – a lot of them hitting the 80-minute mark exactly, or being very close to it. This was the result of meticulous editing to get them down to where we wanted them.

As we moved away from the 80-minute limit and just let the episodes be as long as they needed to be, I personally think the episodes benefitted from it. Things would still be edited out, but we allowed ourselves to cover things with the needed depth and detail, keep some of the interesting side-discussions as those happened, and also take the time to laugh and just add various things for the heck of it.

From the get-go it was obvious that Tom would be editing the shows. For one thing, I had never done anything like that, did not know how to do it, and had no software for it. Tom, on the other hand, did this for a living and had a complete set-up. My contribution to the post-production process would be to listen through the first edit for flow and mistakes and send him a list with proposed changes or things to fix. And boy did I send him lists! They were full of specific time marks and what I wanted him to change/insert/do. He never complained (much) and just about always did what I wanted him to do. We were nearly always on the same page as far as what we wanted the show to be like, and I can not recall this being anything but a great collaboration.

We would revisit the editing of the shows later. As the show got longer and we kept doing them with some frequency – especially during deep-dives when we did a lot of shows in short succession – it started taking a toll on Tom. It was especially noticeable when we did the Steeltown episodes, and around that time that I decided to figure out how to edit for myself. I found some software, sat down with training videos, and practiced. Eventually I felt confident enough to tell Tom that I might be able to help out with this in the future. Saying that he was crying with joy may be taking it too far, but the relief and appreciation felt genuine. Obviously I had to show that I could do it. The first one I did (#46) was a test to see how well I did and how comfortable Tom felt about me continuing. He has high standards, so that he liked my efforts and was encouraging from the start was a big compliment. Then again, I have high standards myself, and I was not going to let them drop if I could help it!

What I discovered was that I really enjoy editing. I am happy to do it, except when the backlog of things to get through gets too huge – that just makes it stressful. Editing is a lot of work; especially the way that we have

decided to edit our shows. I believe the show is in a healthier place for being able to split things between us, especially for deep-dives when there is a lot of material to process over shorter time. From the time I started editing until now, I may even have a higher percentage of edited episodes than Tom. In the earlier days, it all fell to Tom. That was a lot of extra work on his plate that I did not fully appreciate until I started doing this myself. We have talked about this on the show several times, and I've said – and still think – that the show would have ended a lot sooner if we hadn't been able to share that workload. Let that be a tip to prospective podcasters out there.

### **Part 5: JfnG (or “The madman with a Big Country info site to the rescue”)**

The first two episodes of the podcast were shared through a file share service. That was fine for a test, but the podcast needed a more permanent home. We started looking at hosting solutions as we wrapped up our first episodes, but Tom also put the word out that we were looking for a hosting location for these episodes. Thankfully, the very first person we heard back from was John Gouveia.

Bigcountryinfo.com was a comprehensive site even back in 2012, and to think of how much it has grown just since then is incredible. When John offered us a chance to host the podcasts on that site, it gave us an immediate boost. It has been a perfect home for us all these years. In addition to giving us a webspace where people could go and download episodes, he also facilitated getting the shows on iTunes. When your podcast is on iTunes, you are doing something right.

Beyond being our “deployment manager” who does the magic in the background to get new episodes up on the site and iTunes, John has always supported the show behind the scenes. A lot of sound clips and snippets featured on the show come from him. A lot of facts and tidbits are fed to Tom and me from him. He has facilitated band input into the show, and even initiated contact with band members in the early days.

John is also a hilariously funny dude, so we try to get him onto the show sometimes. From time to time we'd succeed, even though he keeps expressing discomfort at being in the spotlight. Despite this, whenever we manage to trick him into appearing, he is always a witty, knowledgeable and eloquent guest.

John is appreciated not just by Tom and me, but by the entire BC community for everything that he does. We are proud to be associated with him. He definitely is the third co-host of the show, just invisible most of the time.

### **Part 6: The most crucial part of a podcast are the listeners (or “Develop thick skin now!”)**

This may sound strange, but when I work on an episode I sometimes forget about the listeners. But that is fine. As you do research, plan the show, record the conversations and edit, you really shouldn't think of anything but producing a good result for yourself. Also, to me the podcast is about catching up with my pal. When a lot of people comment that it sounds like a conversation between two friends at the pub, that is not far from the truth. Well, we don't sit at the pub, but you know what I mean! And that's how I think good conversations should sound.

Inevitably we come to the point where the show is done and put out there. What happens then is out of our hands in any case, but promoting it to make sure people are aware of it is part of the package. It has always been the part I dislike the most, and I know Tom feels similarly. One thing we are wary of is coming across as self-promoting. I really hope that at the end of the day, people know that we do what we do to increase engagement and interest in our favourite band. Every single episode is nothing less than a love letter to everybody associated with Big Country, past and present. We want people to feel about the music like we do – to see what we see, to hear what we hear, and feel what we feel. We want people to get engaged. Getting the podcast heard is how we can achieve that. That necessitates putting yourself out there and promoting



**JOHN GOUVEIA**



what you do, which can be quite daunting. It certainly was at first. You open yourself up to being evaluated on a number of levels.

Podcasting involves a number of skills that you can work on and get better at. Some of them came very natural to me – doing research, planning, conceptualising overall structures for the episodes, etc. I had to work on my presentation – projecting correctly when speaking, sounding natural, keeping up levels of energy... In other words, everything that goes into talking for hours on end in a way that is engaging to listen to. I don't really have a radio voice, but then again, 90% of the podcast hosts I listen to don't either, and it rarely matters. I also feel that there has been at least some learnings and improvement as the show has marched on. Still, everything will not be to everybody's taste. If the public dislikes anything, they will often let you know.

Paul Stanley of KISS once said: "If you love us, wonderful! If you hate us, bless you too! If you're in the middle – get out!" Maybe there's something to be said for that, because people with definite opinions have actually engaged with what you do, processed it, and formed their opinion. As a creator of something, that is vastly preferable (even if said opinions are negative) to nobody engaging at all. Does it help if someone is aware of what you do if they do not want to check it out?

I recall some discussion from the bulletin board of the BC site back in early 2013, when that was still active. Diplomatically put, this was frequently a place of many harsh opinions, which is ultimately why it was shut down. We would announce new episodes there for a while, and definitely got our share of blunt comments. One classic comment was "When I listen to Svein speak, it makes me want to bash my iPad with a hammer". As much as that is an "ouch!"-moment, that comment made me laugh. Still does! I can appreciate colourful comments, even at my own expense. For whatever reason, the iPad-basher kept listening, and after a few more episodes their outlook was: "That episode wasn't too bad! Even Svein wasn't too bad to listen to in this one!" Why, thank you! I'll take that!

Sure, some comments have been hateful and personal, but those are fortunately in the minority. I have to say (and I am sure I speak for Tom as well) that the absolute majority of feedback we have received has been nothing but supportive, encouraging, constructive, and appreciative. This is extremely humbling. Positive feedback is the single biggest boost we can receive as far as motivating us to create more episodes. Seeing people enjoy what we do, and hearing how it gets them into BC music in a big way, is just incredible. It really is the only payment we have ever wanted.

We have always been keen to make listeners part of the show. We owe thanks to the numerous people who have guested and helped make the show what it is, including everybody who has used our Speakpipe-app to submit sound clips where they can talk about any given topic. Adding other voices to the show has always been a positive thing.

Several of the episodes contain genuine rarities. Whenever we have something special, we are always curious to see people's reactions. There was one time, however, when we dropped a rarity in the background of our discussion to see how many noticed, and nobody did. Ahead of the band's first Steeltown anniversary tour, Bruce and Jamie were working out guitar parts to songs and sent us some naked guitar treatments for "East Of Eden" and "Girl With Grey Eyes." They sounded sensational, and is really the first time we've gotten a close look at how the guitar parts that are so buried in the album mix could sound. The "East Of Eden" one was played during our discussion of that song, and Tom ended up asking our Facebook group "Did anyone notice anything playing in the background during that section?" Someone mentioned that they just assumed it was Tom noodling around with that guitar part to demonstrate what he was talking about. We had been too subtle about it! We ended up playing the remaining one properly with a decent introduction during that song's discussion, and the first one was played in full again on the next Yuletide episode. (Episodes #41 and #43.) After that, we always started introducing our clips properly!

A similar thing had happened when Bruce sent us the walk-on music they were going to use on the initial Steeltown tour. A great piece of music! We put it at the end of episode #36 – the last episode before we started on all the Steeltown ones - without saying anything. We felt it was a fitting foreshadowing of our own Steeltown focus. But, no surprise: nobody said anything much about that either. It was not as obvious as we thought, and we learnt our lesson.

There are many similar nuggets in our episodes, and after a while Mazz and several others started asking if there was an overview showing which episodes featured specific songs. This led me to produce show notes for each and every episode, which can be found on the main podcast page on John's site. It should be regarded

as an index –it shows the topics discussed, but does not recap the discussion. It also show all the songs and sound clips featured in each episode, so it is now possible to find them much easier. John even made the show notes searchable, so when you search for something specific on the BC Info-site, this might lead you to a specific episode of the TGD podcast.

### **Part 7: The band is listening (or “Can I be a guest on your podcast, please?”)**

Bruce Watson is a well-informed chap. Someone might have whispered in his ear that someone was making a Big Country podcast, but he was interested in what we did from early on. He must have liked what he heard, because word came back to us that he was interested in appearing as a guest. Imagine our excitement! We were only nine episodes in, and already the band was taking notice! Contact and plans were made, and just like that Tom and I found ourselves speaking for four hours with one of the founding members of Big Country. How awesome was that?



The resulting discussion was spread across three episodes. Bruce has remained a staunch supporter of the podcast ever since, coming back on the show several times, providing several sound clips for us to use, and even creating a theme song for the podcast! Whenever he has guested, he has always said “you can ask me anything,” making himself totally open to any questions we (and the audience) might have. We really could not ask for more.

Later, Mark was a guest on the show, and was equally forthcoming to every question we had. It took longer for us to get Tony on as he had made the decision to distance himself from anything to do with music for a while, but when the time was right and he did come on, he was as generous with his time and anecdotes as the other classic band members had been. And by no means is this meant to sell short other band members Jamie Watson, Derek Forbes, and Mike Peters who have also appeared at various times and been nothing but courteous.

Having a connection to the band has made the show interesting, as well as leading to a few other BC-related opportunities for both of us. Bruce, having taken notice of Tom’s own musical

adventures, invited him to join Big Country on stage for “Chance” when they played in his hometown in 2013, and these days Tom is finalising an album with Bruce and Jamie. If everything has gone according to plan, you will read more about that in an article from Tom somewhere else in this ‘zine.

Personally I had the great pleasure and honour of providing liner notes for the 2018 deluxe box set release of the “Why The Long Face”-album. If someone had told my younger self that I would be that involved in a future BC release I wouldn’t have believed it. Hopefully I managed to tell the story of the album well.

### **Part 8: odds and ends (or “final thoughts from a podcaster”)**

The podcast started sometime mid-2012. At the time of writing this, that is seven years and eighty-five episodes ago. Every Big Country studio album has been dissected, discussed, and covered. We have had conversations with several band members: Bruce, Mark, Jamie, Tony, Mike, and Derek. We have talked with Kirsten Adamson. We discussed the band’s early artwork with graphic designer Julian Balme. We have covered the early days of the BC fan club and the Country Club magazine with Martin Warner. We have had specials on the band’s first ever tour of Australia, discussed and hosted the fan-made audio book of “A Certain Chemistry,” done a couple album roundtable discussions featuring several fans, we have discussed all kinds of releases, music videos, tours, and projects...and then there’s our annual end-of-year Yuletide episodes.

I have always given credit to the podcasts for fully restoring my passion for Big Country music. After Stuart’s death, I lost it. Over the years it started coming back. I started listening again, and even enjoyed the music, but did not quite feel it like I did back in the day. Getting involved with the podcast brought that final spark

for me. I started reconnecting with songs and albums like I once had. I even got active in BC fandom again for the first time since 2001, including various Bulletin Boards and social media. The excitement and positivity was coming back. I had missed this. I needed this. This is why it means so much to hear from listeners who say that the show has had a similar effect on them. That's wonderful! I understand completely!

Funny stories and memorable moments? Sure! There are plenty, most of which have played out in the episodes (or included as "outtakes" at the end of them), so those of you who have listened will already know most of them. Some honourable (and biased) mentions: the time Tom did a double take when I threw it out there that "The Teacher" was about sex. Many years later it got even funnier, with Tom nearly begging for mercy, when I started getting into the particulars of "Another Misty Morning" – a song with actual sexual content in it. The story behind the catchphrase "Have at you!" is another one which has been recounted on the show several times, as have the tales of the Scorpheus. A personal favourite is the time John actually visited Tom's house right before we recorded an episode, and was added as an impromptu guest – but he had to sit out in Tom's hallway for the duration to avoid echo and sound bleeding over (episode #46). He sounded a little lonely out there! It has also been fun to throw in special surprises like the heavy metal version of "In A Big Country," the Big Country cover versions performed by James Last, and a mash-up of KISS and Big Country.

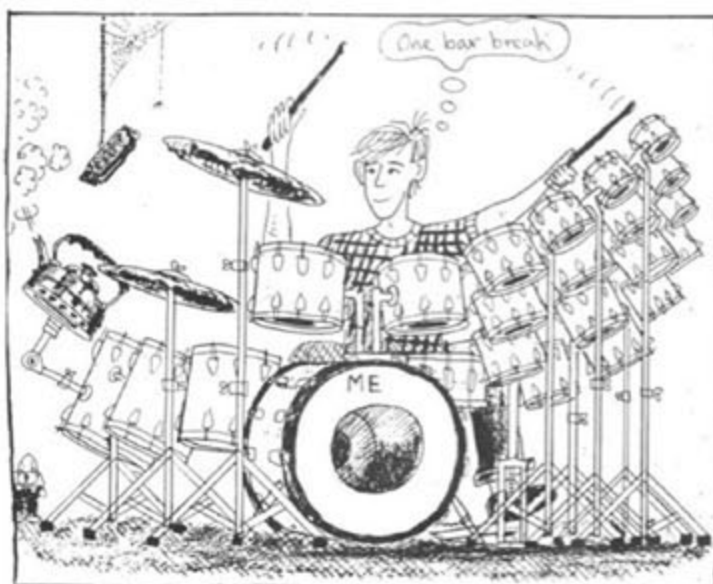
A lot of people have asked us how long we can keep going, especially now that we have completed deep-dives on all studio albums and covered most of the obvious topics. That is a good question. We are definitely closer to the end of the show than the beginning. To be honest, both Tom and I have at different times felt that we want to move on from the show, but a good break has always helped – and especially our joint desire to at least complete every album deep-dive. And finally, that's where we are now. With all the deep-dives done, that may be one less incentive to keep going. There is a sense of achievement in what we have done. If we never made another one, the series of podcasts would not feel incomplete any longer, even though I would not want them to suddenly end without a proper farewell of sorts.

But at the same time, why end? There is less pressure now. There are no more huge album deep-dives that we have to do. Anything we do from here on out should be easier – shorter, less need for super-detailed research, less complex to edit, etc. There are even a few ideas floating around. We have talked about doing a Wonderland EP deep-dive at some point. There may be the odd topic we feel like dipping into more casually. If things work out, I may return from Liverpool in September with band interviews and impressions from seeing the first show of their 35th Anniversary Steeltown tour. And it would of course be silly of us not to use the podcast to talk about the WKW album when that is fully done. In short, there may be some traces of gunpowder left in the sack after all.

On behalf of Tom and myself: Thanks to everybody who has listened to The Great Divide over the years and supported us with feedback and downloads. If you have yet to discover and listen to the show, we hope you will give us a listen in the future.

<http://www.bigcountrypodcast.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thegreatdivide/>



Mark Brzezicki drawing from CC 08/9

# Collectors Corner

A Guide by Stuart Menzies

It would be fair to say that collecting Big Country memorabilia can become a bit of an addiction.

In fact what many people don't realise is that your collection will never be finished. There is always something else out there that will catch your eye, or you were not aware of and likewise, despite arguments to the contrary, there is no medication for this disease..... It just grows and grows.

So what is hot and what is not out there in collectors land? I suppose that all depends on what you collect, whether it be vinyl, cds, posters, tickets, t shirts, signed items, DVDs, the list is endless but what I am sure of is that the collectors market is a busy place to be and, on occasions an expensive place to be as well!!!

Probably the easiest way to chat about this more is to break up into categories. So let us begin with vinyl.

The usual suspects that collectors frequently ask for to complete their collections are –

## Why The Long Face



A ltd vinyl release of 3000 and probably one that comes up for sale most often but still commanding a price of around £50. There are quite a few signed copies of these in existence as well as the band were very active in promoting this album.

## The Buffalo Skinners



I have no idea how many vinyl copies were printed however this is a much wanted vinyl for collectors . I have seen these sell for £100 + however have also heard stories of fans picking them up at charity shops for a few pounds .

### Without The Aid Of A Safety Net



Are the three big ones that spring to mind and which can command ridiculous sums of money should someone wish to pay that out for them.

Another vinyl that was ltd in its release numbers but commands around £100 +. Again, many fans bought a copy of this from their local HMV when it was released, for around the pricely sum of £5.99!!!

The more recent releases have also become a rarity to get a hold off.

### Driving To Damascus (Double vinyl and free poster)



This was fairly easy to get a hold of on the market for around £25 until recently where most copies have been bought up. This sells for around the £45 at the moment. It is released in 180g vinyl and comes with a free poster.

## The Crossing 30th Anniversary



Another release that was extremely ltd in numbers. Only 250 I think, I may be wrong. Released in 180g double vinyl with a hand signed certificate from Tony Mark and Bruce. The first 100 buyers also had their name printed on the insert.

Alongside WTAOASN I would say that this is the most wanted vinyl released with copies being sold for well over £130.

7 inch singles do not seem to be so popular and all are regularly available on the buyers market for various prices. For the avid collector, close attention is paid to the centre of the single with some being released with paper centres, blue centres and silver moulded centres.

In CD land, the Rarities Series and Country Club issues command the most attention however the two disc re releases of The Seer, PIOT and NPLH have also been commanding a fair price.

Rarities 1 and 2 are the easiest to get a hold off and appear to cost around £20 each, with releases such as rarities 5 and 6 much more difficult and selling for £40 - £50 each.

These official Big Country Web site releases vary in price but usually sell for between £20 and £35. These include In The Scud and Bon Appetite.

The 2014 re releases of The Seer, Peace In Our Time and No Place Like Home have more recently become especially collectable, however, like everything else, were readily available on their release. These are all double re mastered CDs.

Prices can vary for these with The Seer appearing to sell for the highest price. Recently one sold for £60 but I would expect to see prices between £25 - £35 as being more reasonable.



Next up are some more popular releases - The Singles Collections 1- 4. These are a great addition to any collection and contain all the releases singles, 27 in total. The box sets are really well presented and the singles inside are printed with a vinyl look.

The box sets vary in price and ease to trace. With No 3 (green) being the easiest to source and the cheapest, usually around £30, whereas No 4 (dark grey) is the hardest to get a hold off, this normally sells for around £50. More recently further box sets have been released to varying degrees of success.

Why The Long Face 4 cd deluxe edition is a great addition to any collection and relatively cheap. You can pick this up for around £15.

Big Country – We're Not In Kansas the live bootleg set has received various comments on its quality. At the end of the day, these are not professional recordings, but they give the band in their raw state, combined with the banter the band have with the crowd makes this a worthwhile purchase. It should be noted that this has also been released on a set of double coloured vinyl records, 5 in total.

Finally for box sets comes the recently released Rockpalast 2 DVD and 3 CD release. This for me is a fantastic release, albeit the DVDs had been released before, the recordings on CD had not. Again, a nice item to own, especially for around £15.



I did say finally, but it would be amiss of me not to mention the most popular release in recent times, the much sought after BBC box set.

This was released in 2013 with only 250 units being made I believe.

It really is something different with 39 tracks on DVD and 3 CDs containing a total of 42 tracks, add in a book, postcards and a poster, all presented in a cracking box, this really is a collectors item.

It was readily available on its release, selling online and on the shelves in records stores such as HMV however eventually sold out and has now become one of the most sought after items for collectors.

Prices of this have varied so much, up to £150 however more recently I have seen these become available for around £75.



Out with the regular releases it is always a challenge to find those items that were only made in small quantities.

By that I mean Acetates and certain promo copies.

Then there are international releases, tricky to get a hold off but looking that little different.

This South African Look Away is one example..... Yes, it's a black and white cover.

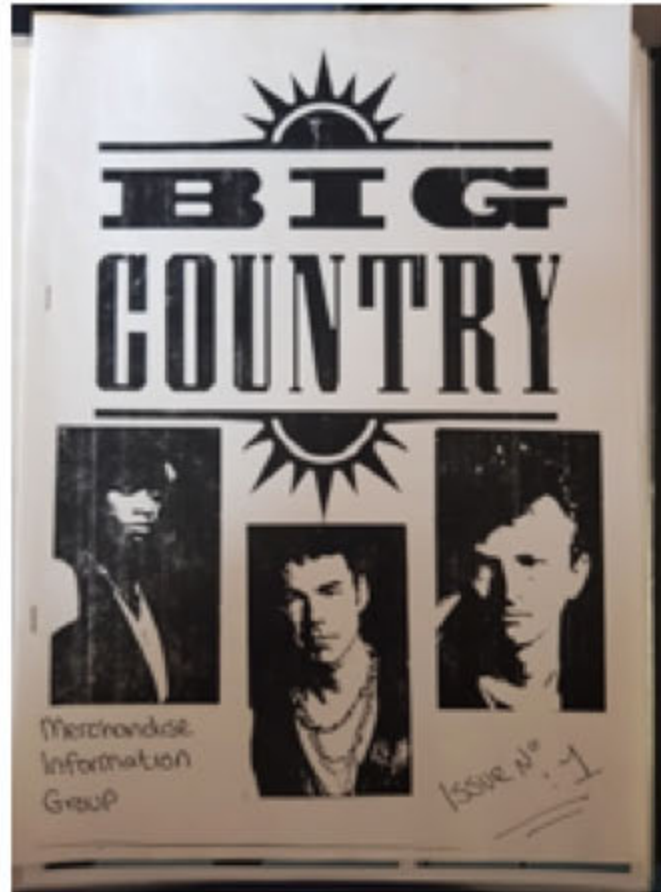


There is a whole other area to talk about and that is Japanese releases, but that may have to wait for another day.

Gathering information about collecting Big Country is not a new thing. The Country Club magazine regularly had a collectors corner section, highlighting what was released and also a swap, sell section. Life is so different these days with the Internet.



I managed to get a hold of this magazine entitled Merchandise Information Group. It appears to have been produced around the Buffalo Skinners time and lists all releases and potential values. Someone has really put a huge amount of effort into the booklet which is 33 pages long.



Its always interesting to find something out there that you never knew existed.

Items such as the 12 inch promo box, which were very few in numbers. I have seen this selling for excess of £600.



Another hard to get is The Crossing decks of cards which came in Blue and Red and for me In a Big Country 7 inch single with free bandana. Now that is a rarity and a half. I only know of one in existence.



I'm sure I could write a book about all this stuff, but I couldn't do it without reference material and other collectors to provide information.

I tend to research for items on Discogs and Musicstack on the internet, however you really need to know what you are looking for first.

Where better to go than the outstanding Bigcountry.info site.

This site contains everything you would ever need to know about the bands releases.

The site owner, John Gouveia (JfnG) has, and continues to put so much time into adding to the content on the site. I hope you enjoy reading his article on the history of it.

To finish off with, here is a flyer from 1984, and an excerpt from one of the first CC magazines.....

Look at the prices!!!!!!



And don't forget, the band still have newer items coming in stock over on the official BC site.

<https://store.bigcountry.co.uk/>

# The Night They Drove Old Marky Down

August 1, 2015.

What do you do when one of the key members of your band takes ill just before show time?

This is the exact scenario facing Big Country in Edinburgh on August 1st, 2015 at the Hard Rock Rocks Festival when drummer extraordinaire Mark Brzezicki had to be rushed to hospital just before the gig.

With an empty venue soon to be filled with patrons for the evening's gig, the band had to find a solution, and fast.

A lucky member of the band's road crew was handed the task of finding a replacement drummer from one of the other bands that had been performing at the festival with zero notice so the show could go on but who would it be? And where might they be found?

Chris Squires, after playing a set that night with his own band The Sinsheimers, found out he was a wanted man and answers some of the big questions about what exactly went down that evening in Edinburgh...



**You're a drummer - how long have you been playing for?**

*I started drumming at the age of 13; I recently turned 32, so I've been drumming for 19 years now, God...*

**What were you planning on doing on the night?**

*To be frank, my only plan of action after our set, was to get good an' pished while discovering some good bands lol.*

**Who contacted you and how exactly did they ask the question?**

*We'd been hangin' out in the VIP tent at Hard Rock Rocks Festival (St Andrew's Square, Edinburgh,) taking full advantage of the open bar! I was already quite drunk by this point, and left to use the toilet. As I left the bog, a stranger approached me and grabbed me around my shoulders. He said simply "I know who you are, I know you can play, Big Country's Drummer is ill; do you want to play for Big Country?!" I replied with "err... aye, alright then. But, how do you know I can play? We only played the acoustic tent and I was using a cajon..." He then said, "Well, ye can keep a beat can't ye?" I said "...yes." And he said, "Well that's good enough for me." Haha! Turns out this guy was a close friend of the band and he actually sorted us out with a gig in Dunfermline later that year. Though for the life of me, I can't remember his name...*

**Which Big Country songs did you know?**

*The only songs I was vaguely familiar with were, "In a Big Country" and "Look Away." As it goes, I think "Look Away" was the best song on the night.*

**Can you tell us about your rehearsal?**

*I was taken immediately from the toilets to the venue (Spiegel tent) where I very briefly met the guys, had only enough time to adjust the snare drum and then we jammed a verse and chorus of only four songs. There was then perhaps a ten minute wait for the crowd to filter in and then it was show time!*

**Do you remember the first number of the set?**

*I don't remember the first song of the set I'm afraid lol. There is a photograph of the set list though floating about in the ether. Some songs were struck from it actually. Presumably they thought they'd be too difficult to pull off with a stranger at such short notice.*

**Were you wearing your lucky underpants that night?**

*I was wearing something lucky for sure haha! I honestly don't know what possessed me to agree to do it, or what possessed them to ask me...*

**Do you think the band were more nervous than you?**

*They must have been slightly apprehensive, but they seemed pretty composed. I was sickeningly nervous and actually asked them three times if they were sure they wanted to go ahead with me. This was partly because I was nervous, but I also didn't want to embarrass anyone...*

**Did you attempt any flash drumming or a solo to try and push Brzezicki out for good?**

*Haha! Nah, we agreed that as I wasn't familiar with the material, that I'd just stick to the groove and pin it all down. Nobody wanted to see a car crash and if I'd tried anything flash, I may well have fallen flat on my face. That being said, I did relax into the last couple of songs, particularly "Look Away"*

**How much different did the songs sound with you on the kit?**

*I couldn't sound better than Mark playing those songs, but quite a few people commented that they were diggin' my vibe; that it was interesting to hear the songs with more of a rock feel to them.*

**Being seated behind the band, could you hear any nervous farting from any of them?**

*They were shitting themselves mate! Haha! Nah they were consummate professionals but I did think it was very bold of them to take a punt on me when they had never heard me play before. Their friend had been sent out to find "a drummer" and I guess he bumped into my friends before anyone else. It was my friends who sent him to accost me outside the bog...*

**Did it seem like the longest gig you'd ever played?**

*Quite the opposite in fact; it skipped past in no time at all and definitely didn't feel like the 70minutes that we played...*

**Bragging about it you your mates must have been fun!**

*It was fun yeah, but I tell you what; NOBODY would have believed me if it weren't for the guy that filmed nine of the songs. God Bless that man!*

**Is it true you were the one who made Brzezicki sick to give you this fantastic opportunity?**

*I may or may not have spiked his drink in Glasgow...*

**Did you get to party with the band after the show?**

*There was no party I'm afraid as the guys were in a hurry to get to their accommodation for the next gig. There was however time enough for me to have two bottles of Stella with them and they kindly allowed me to shoot the shit with them while the were getting ready and changed etc. The chat was mostly about what had just happened; they were very complimentary to me and I expressed to them that I was now a big fan of Big Country. They thought it was hilarious that I was pretty unfamiliar with their stuff (not anymore.) I was also carrying a bag of CD's. Our band, The Sinsheimers, had not long released our first EP and I*

*thought this would be an ideal time to hand out a copy. The lads passed it around between them, nodding and murmuring approval and then it got passed back to me! Lol I was gutted! Haha! But too shocked and hyper to say "No, no lads, that's your copy." They all then left through the back entrance, straight into a car and I was sent on my way completely bewildered as to what the hell had just happened....*

**And finally, tell us how tightly your cheeks were clenched. Have you recovered?**

*After that gig mate I could lift weights with my arse cheeks!*

Thanks so much for taking the time for us, Chris. You know your name is a legendary Big Country trivia question now and you're a braver man than most for standing up when the band needed you!

*Interview conducted by Andy Inkster*

	Jamie	
Porrohman	63	64
Harvest Home	55	
[Redacted]		
Steeltown	73	74
Where The Rose Is Sown	67	68
Just A Shadow	65	66
King Of Emotion	55	
[Redacted]		
Chance	45	46
<b>KANSAS</b>	<b>55</b>	
Ships	45	46
In A Big Country	38	39
Wonderland	30	
Fields Of Fire	60	61
Inwards	35	36
Look Away	47	48

# Without Whom....

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