

TOUR

SOUVENIR

**BIG
COUNTRY**
THE SEER



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When you started Big Country did you honestly believe it would be commercially successful?

"I hoped it would be, that I could still make that connection with people in records with spirit and passion, that I could speak my heart on them and have them sound the way I wanted and they'd still connect."

A lot of people must've thought you'd be lumbered with the 'cult following' tag?

"I haven't really been thinking

about how big the market's going to be. I get much more satisfied knowing the group is operating in a manner which I see fit, that the songs are still giving me a shiver up the back and that we're treating people with respect. A lot of groups don't do that at all. Once you allow yourself to be dictated to by outside forces then you're not being honest with yourself."

Is communication all important to you?

"We are very close with people who come and see us, we try and share as much as possible through live work. We do run our own more magazine, which is a communication point as well, where we can talk about things with people that want to know. We actually write articles for it and people write in with articles and reviews of gigs. It's great to have that contact. The thing is it's very hard to show people we're not some form of demigod we're just normal and stupid!"



Big Country in corny rural pose: (left-right)
Stuart Adamson, Mark Brzezicki,
Bruce Watson, Tony Butler:



Can you imagine Big Country as a synth duo? Seems unlikely doesn't it, but it almost happened.

The people who have helped to make guitar and guts respectable again, and whose live shows are stirring, joyful occasions, nearly ended up spending their lives in a recording studio.

Happily, although founder members Stuart Adamson and

play our music.

"We had to wait for the right people though. We didn't want to rush into something stupid which would cheapen what we were trying to do."

The first line-up sounds like something of a fiasco.

"Two brothers joined us for a while when we had the name Big Country but no record deal," explains Bruce. "We played one date supporting Alice Cooper (the American shock rocker) in Brighton, which was absolutely

songs "it just clicked".

As a working unit Big Country all share the same beliefs, although Stuart is more vocal about his aims.

"I want to put passion and honesty back into music," he declares.

"I left The Skids because I thought the spirit had gone out of the group. It had become something we were just doing for a living."

As Stuart was the songwriter

The GUITAR HEROES



Karen Swayne takes a breath of fresh air with Big Country

responsible for The Skids' rousing anthems, there were high hopes for Big Country – and so far the band have done little to disappoint.

One of the best new bands of '83, they refused to go with this week's thing. Instead they struck out on their own with the powerful 'Fields Of Fire' and haven't looked back since.

"What I think is good about our records getting into the top ten," says Stuart, "is that it shows people do still want to hear music with a bit of spirit. They don't want to hear stuff that all sounds the same.

"If we've inspired anyone to start up a group and play the music they feel is *theirs* then we've achieved something."

Bruce Watson had contemplated going it alone, they soon decided that they needed a band to interpret such big, bold songs as their current hit 'In A Big Country'.

"We had one line-up which didn't work out," remembers vocalist Stuart. "And after that we were nearly going to work just as a two-piece with tapes and put out records.

"Then we decided that live work was really important and that we wanted to go out and

terrible!"

The union was shortlived, but along came bassist Tony Butler and drummer Mark Brzezicki in the nick of time.

These two had been working together for five years, first in a band called On The Air (who supported The Skids on their last tour), then as a team called Rhythm For Hire doing session work.

They were drafted in to help with some demos Stuart and Bruce were doing and after three



Big Country have a very human approach to their music and their fans. They're all friendly, down-to-earth people with no time for the mythical pop star lifestyle.

At the Manor recording studios in the heart of the Oxfordshire countryside where they're working on their debut album, the atmosphere is comfortable and relaxed. Staying with them are Stuart's wife Sandra, their toddler son, and Tony's pregnant girlfriend Jackie.

"I'm beginning to realise that you don't see much of home life when you're in a successful band," admits Tony. "I know if I get carried away by it all my family will suffer, and I don't want that to happen, so it really helps me keep my feet on the ground."

Success may have come quickly but it doesn't look like it'll go to their heads.

"You've got to treat the people who buy your records with a lot of respect," says Stuart. "It's important to us to have contact with our fans. We run our own magazine which they can contribute to, and always stay behind at gigs so that anyone who wants to talk to us has the chance."

"We don't want people to worship us, we want to break all that down."

"Don't get me wrong," Stuart goes on. "I want to reach as many people as I can, because I'm not in a group to sit and listen to my own records in my bedroom. But it is important to play the music that's in yourself."

"I like synths, but I think Bruce and I get a bigger range of sound out of guitars. I'll do anything that makes them sound different."

"There are very few people who have experimented with guitars in mainstream music."

Part of the reason for Big Country's individuality is the undoubted Scottish influence in

the songs – which is reflected in Stuart and Bruce's 'bagpipe' guitar sound.

"The music has an obvious Celtic feel, but that's mainly because I never learnt to play American style guitar," says Stuart. "I think it helps being removed from London. I live on the outskirts of Dunfermline which I love, and it does give me a different perspective on things."

Big Country are no country bumpkins though. They're smart enough to know that these days it helps to have a 'look' the fans can identify with.

The checked shirts and short baggy trousers have a couple of advantages over the Duran-type gear. Not only are they cheap, they're also easy to get hold of.

They're keen to point out though that there's no ulterior motive behind their image.

"It wasn't a calculated thing at all," claims Tony. "Stuart had worn tartan shirts for ages and came along with the trousers and we adopted them because they're really functional."

"They're great to wear onstage because we leap around a lot, and if you wear tight trousers you sweat too much!"

"They're our working clothes, so to speak. It's just like putting your overalls on at a factory."

So how long do you see yourselves working on this particular assembly line, boys?

"It's silly to go on too long in this business," says Mark. "I don't want to be in a position where we're struggling to keep up the standard of music."

"I think we'll know when it's time to call it a day."





"We don't want people to
worship us".
Big Country stand outside
church to prove their point.
L-R: Mark Brzezicki, Tony
Butler, Stuart Adamson,
Bruce Watson.

IT MAY seem a trifle odd for a fine, upstanding, athletic young Scotsman to forsake an eye of the Cup Final to partake of the finest quality Pekinges braised duck with your humble reporter, but partake he did. Stuart Adamson is indeed a footers fan, but just so happens to think that interviews are more important than a small leather balloon.

Stuart and his band of merry Big Countrymen have their priorities just right; although quite shy and retiring, the oft-knickerbockered one likes to assert his views. I kicked a few questions midfield and he headed a few answers back. Here's a rough translation from greater-spotted Dunfermlinespeak.

You treat Big Country very much as a career, don't you?

"Not in a business sense, but in a personal sense it is, yeah. Totally. I think you can be serious without being po-faced as well. If I don't care about what I'm doing musically, then who else is going to care? So I think you've got to pay a lot of attention to it. I think it's awfully easy to get yourself led astray into areas that have nothing to do with that at all — nothing to do with what I wanna do anyway."

You put a lot of feeling into your songs, so do you find it a strain to have to keep justifying yourself all the time?

"I also think that if people are interested enough to want to come and speak to you, you should speak to them. But the whole thing about putting feelings into songs is that you want to communicate them, it's not to exorcise them from yourself. I don't think music's that important that it can change the shape of the world as we know it. The best thing is that certain songs can make you feel sad and thoughtful or up and want to dance, or just up in an optimistic sense."

DO YOU see what you're doing at the moment as fairly unique?

"I think some of the things we do are quite original. But two guitars, bass and drums isn't exactly an original format, though we try and push that to its limits. I hope. I don't think there's anyone else doing things in a musical sense like us, but I can see us getting tied up with other people in the spiritual sense of how much passion is actually in a song. I think it's important to follow your own course, play what feels natural rather than taking a slice of this and that and come out with the empirical formula for the hit single. I much prefer groups that do stand slightly on their own ground."



HAVE YOU actually encountered any sort of teenmania?

"Yeah, a little bit. What we always try and do in that situation is just stand and talk to people. I think that's much better than jumping on a bus and sodding off somewhere, even though it gets a bit scary sometimes. We just don't want people to think we see them as merchandising points."

I'm sure you must have noticed how everyone's picked up on the Big Country look?

"The tartan shirts ... it's amazing, every time you pick up the music papers there's more groups ... I spotted Depeche Mode, Martin Kemp and another group that's just won Battle of the Bands wearing them. I was wearing one when I was in the Skids anyway, then Bruce quite liked them so he got one, then Tony got one, and it started like that. Some people must think we're some kind of bastardised country and western group!"

"I don't mind at all, if people wanna wear them — everybody can buy them, it's not like they're designer-made! Next year you'll see the Gloria Vanderbilt range of designer tartan shirts, as used by navvies and brickies throughout the world, sponsored by the Duke of Edinburgh Award! I wear 'em 'cos they're really comfy, they cover your body like clothes are meant to, and they go with anything ... except swimming trunks ... they don't look very smart with swimming trunks!"

Do you find it strange being a pop pin-up?

"Yeah, totally. Raising myself as some sort of media character, a figurehead. But I'd rather people stuck posters of us up on their walls than some others I could name. I hate the thought that people might be thinking about me in a different manner to the

way I really am. Sometimes it feels like we're expected to be like all the other groups. I get awfully wary of it sometimes, 'cos I know there's something really special about us. I'm not trying to be bigheaded. I just think there is, you can feel it when we go onstage."

SAY YOU wanted to try something radical and the record company didn't want to spoil the winning formula, what would you do?

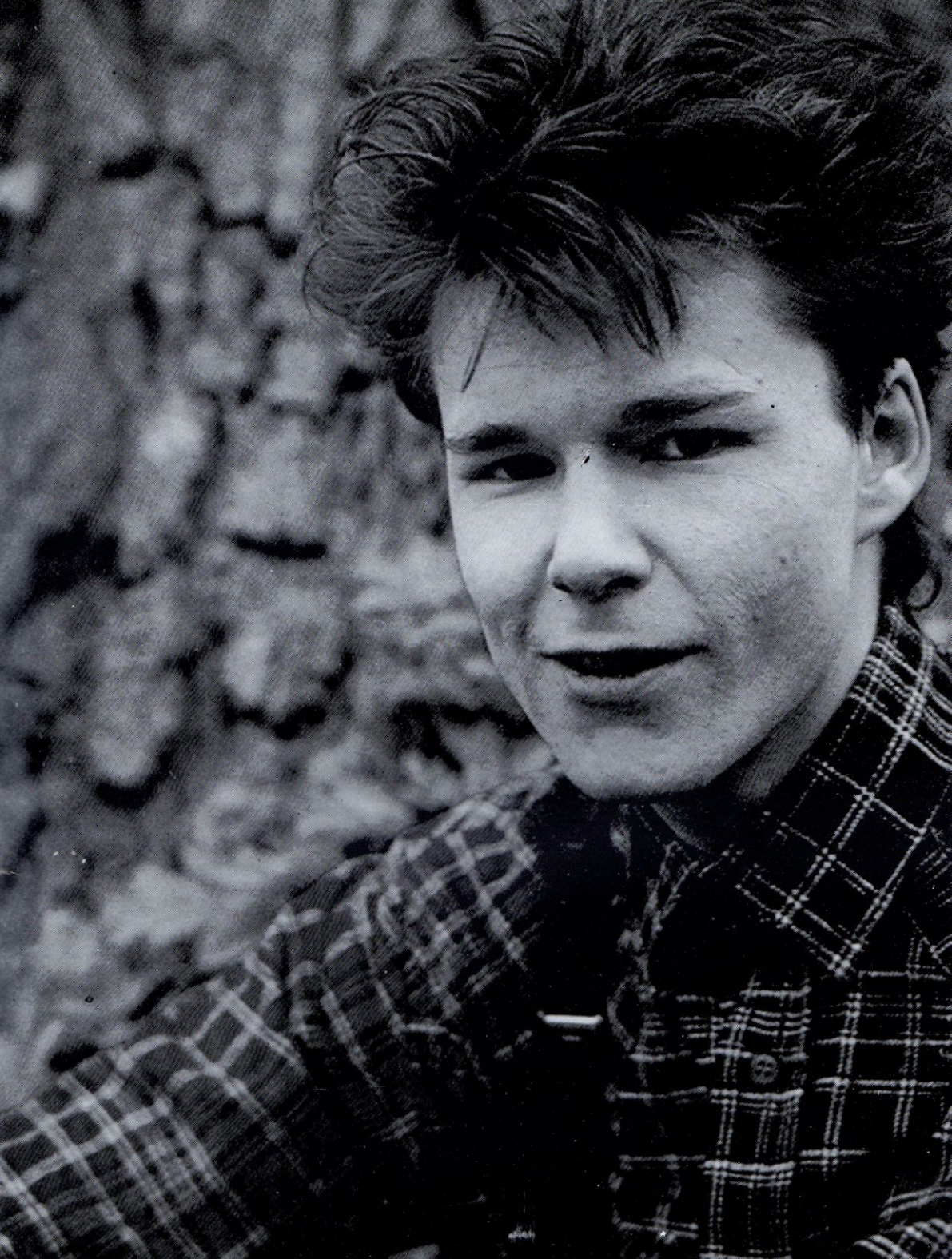
"That's something I cannot understand, 'cos 'In A Big Country' is totally and absolutely different from 'Fields Of Fire' or anything else I've ever written 'cos it's written as a song, it never started off as a guitar riff and it shows totally. That was a big change for me. I just think it's the best thing I've ever worked on, right from when I first started writing songs when I was 13. I'm so pleased with it it's no' real. It's such a great song. And I'm going to be embarrassed now ..."

What would you most like to achieve with Big Country?

"First of all to keep as honest as we can about things, secondly to give people hope in themselves and encourage them. That's about it, really. I think it'd be really good if a group like us could make it not just in Britain, but across the world. If it happens, it happens — I won't rush off and commit suicide if it doesn't."

Do you think you'll still be doing this in ten years' time?

"That's the big question, do I still want to be doing this when I'm 30? No, I don't think so. I think I'd feel pretty stupid if I was playing 'Fields Of Fire' onstage when I was 30. I wouldn't mind if I'd changed my musical thing altogether, but I've never seen myself as a spokesman for a generation anyway, all I've done is put down my feelings in the music and lyrics I write. I've got enough questions myself without supplying everyone else's answers!"



THE SEER
BIG COUNTRY







Barrowlands – Former haunt of Glaswegian gangsters, now revived as the city's premier venue.



The home crowd

THE HOMECOMING

1983 was a year of success for Big Country — topped with a triumphant New Year's Eve gig in Glasgow. Martin Townsend saw Stuart, Bruce, Tony and Mark celebrate Hogmanay in style.

MATINEE IDOLS

The Barrowland Ballroom is a battered old dancehall in one of the rougher parts of Glasgow.

Just a bottle's throw from the Gorbals — the town's infamous former slum area — it's an unlikely venue for a glorious New Year's Eve homecoming.

But this afternoon's homecomers are Big Country and the ballroom's careworn dignity is perfectly in tune with the band's favourite theme of survival against all odds.

Fresh from blazing a golden trail across America, Big Country are nearing the end of a triumphant special matinee performance for the under-18s and unemployed.

Onstage, the band crash into their third encore, a second helping of 'In A Big Country', amidst swirling smoke and against a panoramic backdrop of mountains and sea.

The crowd, ecstatic throughout the set, find the energy for a still more enthusiastic eruption as Stuart Adamson's battlercy — "Shout!" — rings out. The trickle of fans leaping onto the stage soon becomes a torrent, and though each is firmly escorted off by the band's "minder" Rob — a sort of Russell Grant figure with muscles — Stuart makes sure everyone gets at least a hand touch.

In the end he actually gets down into the crowd while bassist Tony Butler continues

with the vocals. He emerges at the other end of the stage, his tartan shirt ripped to shreds. That's the price of fame . . . about £6.95.

By now the ballroom's sprung dancefloor has begun to bounce to the extent that a row of ten roadies, stripped to the waist, are being employed backstage just to stop the towers of speakers toppling over. Photographer Gary Compton's given up snapping and gone off to look for some seasickness tablets and as the final chords echo round the dancehall, I'm left wondering how the band are going to top this at the main gig.

Later I overhear a roadie: "How the hell are they gonna get 28 bagpipers on that stage tonight?"

Of course he could've been joking . . .

THE INTERVIEW

After the matinee, it's back to the hotel to catch up on Big Country's latest news.

Since the band flew back into Britain on Christmas Eve, bassist Tony Butler has married his fiancée Jackie and moved into a new flat in London. Stuart's been re-united with his wife Sandra and son Callum whose bedroom, after Christmas, "looked like a toy shop". And both Mark Brzezicki and Bruce Watson have been looking forward to settling in for a rest at home in Slough and Dunfermline

respectively.

A new single 'Wonderland' coupled with an instrumental track called 'Giant' is released this week, and a short tour of Japan has been pencilled in for April. But for the moment, Big Country's first major tour in America is still fresh in everyone's mind.

IN A BIG COUNTRY . . .

How do you feel about the cliché of 'breaking' America and do you think you're close to doing that?

STUART: "We have been successful in America — the album went gold and stuff like that — but that's the business criteria for success, it's not mine.

"To us it's just more people to play to, really — it's more gigs. It means that the things I'm writing about and the way that I write is reaching people outside Britain.

"All the songs are based on my experience in Dunfermline — the community that I live in — or on things that I've seen other people go through. So to see that connecting with people in other countries is really gratifying . . .

TONY: "This group couldn't function if it was just set up to 'break' places or to be big. There's too many contrived groups put together by record companies with those sort of aims."

What were your impressions of America?

MARK: "I didn't believe it existed! Well, I knew it was there 'cos I'd seen it on the telly, but it's weird to see how big it is; that really shocks you."

BRUCE: "There's like different states . . . I enjoyed Hollywood and that but I still don't like New York."

"And there's a lot of Americans who've still got that big loud attitude. It's like maybe one night you've been feeling *terrible* and some guy'll come up and say: 'Hey, you!'"

"If any of us leaves Big Country, that's the end, that's it . . . It's not a group where we can get, say, a replacement guitarist – not because Bruce is a great guitar player but because Bruce is Bruce."

"Big Country is that unique."
– Tony Butler

You in Big Country? How are ya!! And you just go (whining) 'Oh, nooo – don't TALK to me . . ."

"In radio interviews me and Stuart just started going 'Nananur, nananur, nananur'. And they thought it was an accent! They'd sit there and go: 'Yeah?'"

What's your most lasting memory of America?

BRUCE: "My car crash. I was in the back of a taxi and this car just rammed into the back of it. The ligaments in my shoulder were torn and I had to be strapped up."

MARK: "What impressed me the most was how different America can be. One part is snow and mountains; drive for a few hours and it's desert . . ."

TONY: "It's just different physical attributes. It was nothing like what we were used to in good old Blighty!"

THE CROSSING

You've always said you're a socialist, Stuart . . .

STUART: "Aye, I'll talk to anybody!"



Mark

But some of the themes running through 'The Crossing, such as the value of traditional family ties and the community spirit, are ones which Margaret Thatcher has dwelt on . . .

STUART: "Yeah, but she's not talking about anyone who might have some problems. And that's the difference."

"Take for example a one-parent family – the subject of 'Chance'. That must be one of the worst situations possible just now especially, what with the repression of the welfare, the withdrawal of benefits and stuff like that, and where they assess benefits according to what you earned before. If you were a housewife left with kids to bring up you'd just get one set payment of the state, no matter what situation you'd been left in."

"It's just sad that there's nobody there caring at all for what is basically the future of the country."

A CELTIC CRUSADE?

Do you think there's a regionalism – a Scottishness – in your music?

STUART: "I think we'd be silly to deny it, but I've never consciously strived to make it sound Scottish or ethnic or stuff like that. But you do grow up with a lot of that music"

"One of the most frightening things ever said to me was this guy who said, 'I heard one of your songs on the radio and it made me want to go to war'. And I thought, oh, nooo!"

– Stuart Adamson

about you in the area where I grew up . . . it's just come out subconsciously." **But you had that same 'bagpipe' guitar sound with The Skids and no-one ever called it that then. Why did it suddenly get noticed in Big Country?**

STUART: "I think because music just became too reliant on style; people just thought, 'There must be a style about them, there must be a fashion. Oh, they sound Scottish! That sounds like bagpipes!'"

"It's a terrible thing, this labelling. But loads of groups set themselves up for it."

Your gig tonight has been described as a 'triumphant Hogmanay Homecoming'. How do you feel about that?

STUART: "Well it's nice to be home again and to have a gig in Scotland. But I think we all felt pretty shattered when we got back from the States and were quite glad of the rest. I didnae feel very triumphant walking round Heathrow at nine o'clock at night!"

BRUCE: "That's just another tag, really. Like the 'British Invasion' as the Americans called it – we're not going out to invade and conquer – we're just going out to play our songs."

THE HOMECOMING

TONY: "It's gonna be MENTAL tonight."

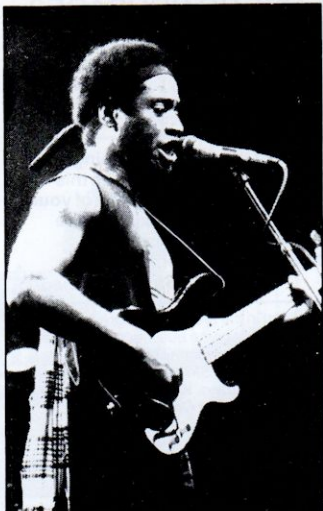
BRUCE: "It's gonna be crazy."



Bruce



Massed pipers with balloon.



Tony

MARK: "We're quite popular up here, aren't we?"

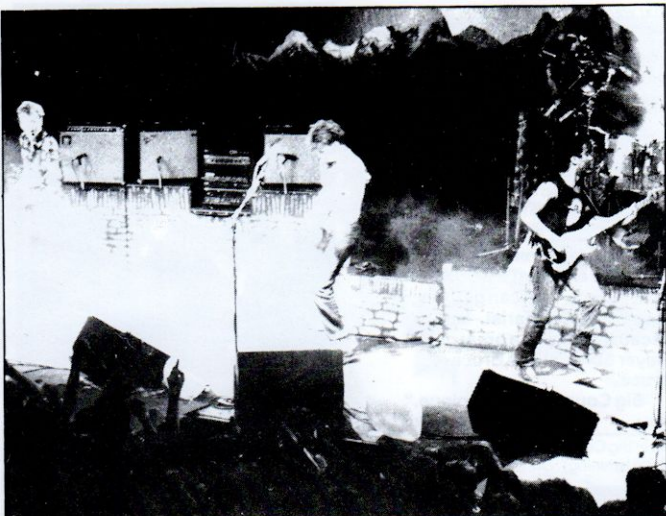
BALLROOM BLITZ

It's 11 pm and the support band has whipped the crowd up admirably with an inspired mixture of traditional Gaelic songs and hard rock rhythms.

As the intro to '1000 Stars' begins, four shadowy figures move onto the stage, the big curtains slide back from the spectacular mountain backdrop, there's a dazzle of lights and the crowd surge forward.

Stuart's found a new blue tartan shirt, with cut-off sleeves and matching headband, Mark and Bruce are in tartan too and Tony's stuck with his faithful Big Country T-shirt.

The set is structured in an



Over the hills and far away . . .

unconventional way in that the two longest tracks on the album 'The Storm' and 'Porrohman' are played one after the other.

"They seem to run well together," Stuart had told me earlier, "and that's my favourite part of the show. From 'In A Big Country' right through to 'The Storm', 'Porrohman' and into 'Chance' . . .

"The traditional rock'n'roll idea is for a show to build towards the end but I like it better if it undulates a bit."

Unfortunately the floor is undulating, too. But the band are well into 'Chance' now with Stuart leading the crowd on the chorus: "O Lord, where did those feelings go Oh Lord, I never felt so low."

Gloomy lines, but 4000 voices turn them into an optimistic roar of hope.

A bouncer taps me on the shoulder: "Kin ye move onto the floor, laddie – the pipers

have got to get through."

Sure enough, black bushy hats and white feathers begin to appear among the people crowded at the main door. Stuart stops the band and the slightly ominous chimes of Big Ben come booming over the PA, striking in the New Year.

As the final toll sounds, a massive cheer goes up and four huge *Prisoner* style balloons come bobbing out from backstage. One bursts on a speaker cabinet, drowning the front of the stage in glitter. Another bounces off Bruce's head.

Then, little trap doors open all over the ceiling and silver and gold balloons cascade down into the crowd, showering them with glittering rain.

From the edge of the dancehall, the first plaintive whine of the bagpipes is heard.

Big Country leave the stage to make room for the pipers, who play in all about half a dozen themes. As they finally march away, the band bounce back on and into 'Fields Of Fire'.

"I get more nervous about playing in Scotland than playing anywhere else in the world.

"When Mark started playing the intro to '1000 Stars' this afternoon, I just thought I was going to faint . . ."

– Bruce Watson

It's one o'clock and I've lost count of the encores. Stua, it's voice at last begins to crack on 'Tracks Of My Tears', but by now the crowd are doing most of the vocals anyway. It's a cover cover version.

Stuart and Tony lead the crowd in 'Loch Lomond' and the final, inevitable 'Auld Lang Syne'. A Scots flag and Stuart's headband are flung into the crowd and it's all over.

A kid walks past me, his face and hair plastered with glitter, 1000 stars at least, and it occurs to me that if there is a big country, this is it, in a hall like this and in the hearts of the people in it.

In a big country, dreams stay with you . . .



Stuart

BIG COUNTRY

If you could feel
How I must feel
The winds of quiet change
If you could see
What I must see
Still hidden in the rain

But when the thunder rolls
It comes and covers up my soul
And you will take my hand
And be with me in wonderland

Chorus
I am an honest man
I need the love of you
I am a working man
I feel the winter too

If you could hear
What I must hear
Then nothing would replace
The fifty years of sweat and tears
That never left a trace
But when I look at you I see
You feel the same way too
And you will take my hand and
be with me in
Wonderland

Repeat chorus

You still remember other days
When every head was high
I watched that pride be torn apart
Beneath a darker sky

With innocence within ourselves
We sing the same old song
And you will take my hand
And make believe it's wonderland

I need the love of you
I am a working man
I feel the winter too

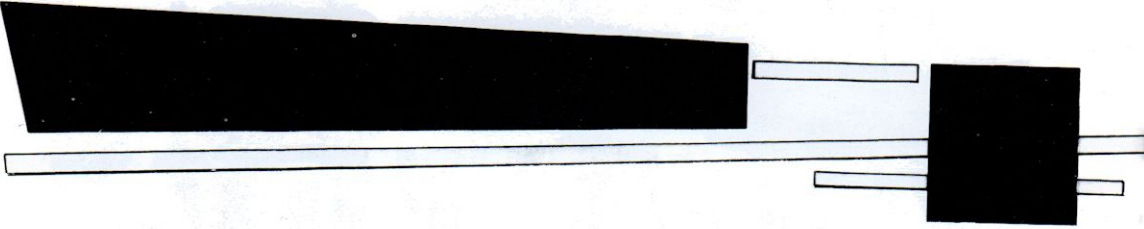
Repeat chorus

Wonderland wonderland
Wonderland wonderland



WONDERLAND

Words and music Stuart Adamson. Reproduced by kind permission Virgin Music Ltd. On Mercury Records



Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore

I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LOOK LIKE THIS WITHOUT A REASON.
ANOTHER PROMISE FALLEN THROUGH, ANOTHER SEASON PASSES BY YOU.

I NEVER TOOK THE SMILE AWAY FROM ANYBODY'S FACE
AND THAT'S A DESPERATE WAY TO LOOK FOR SOMEONE WHO IS STILL A CHILD.

Chorus:
IN A BIG COUNTRY
DREAMS STAY WITH YOU
LIKE A LOVER'S VOICE
STAY ALIVE

I THOUGHT THAT PAIN AND TRUTH WERE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTERED
BUT YOU CAN'T STAY HERE WITH EVERY SINGLE HOPE YOU HAD SHATTERED.

I'M NOT EXPECTING TO GROW FLOWERS IN THE DESERT
BUT I CAN LIVE AND BREATHE AND SEE THE SUN IN WINTERTIME

Repeat chorus

SO TAKE THAT LOOK OUT OF HERE IT DOESN'T FIT YOU
BECAUSE IT HAPPENED DOESN'T MEAN YOU'VE BEEN DISCARDED,
PULL UP YOUR HEAD OFF THE FLOOR, COME UP SCREAMING
CRY OUT FOR EVERYTHING YOU EVER MIGHT HAVE WANTED.

I THOUGHT THAT PAIN AND TRUTH WERE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTERED
BUT YOU CAN'T STAY HERE WITH EVERY SINGLE HOPE YOU HAD SHATTERED.

I'M NOT EXPECTING TO GROW FLOWERS IN THE DESERT,
BUT I CAN LIVE AND BREATHE AND SEE THE SUN IN WINTERTIME.

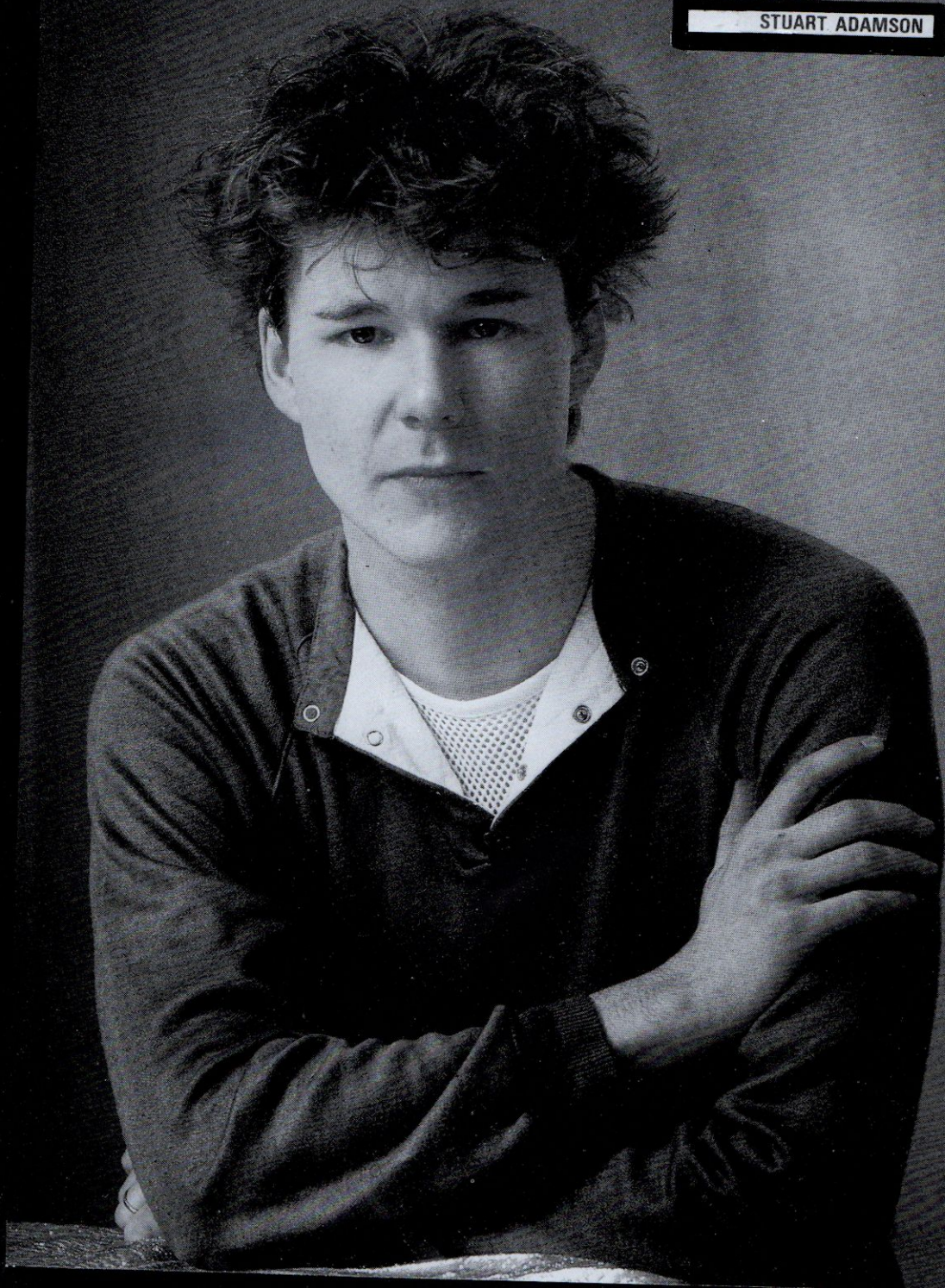
Repeat chorus

Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore Encore

IN A BIG COUNTRY

words * music Big Country
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STUART ADAMSON





BIG COUNTRY'S leader Stuart Adamson doesn't like wasting time. If he can't write a song in half an hour, then the ideas usually end up in the bin.

"Our single 'Fields Of Fire' took about 20 minutes," he says. "I like to keep my ideas fresh and spontaneous. I'm not a person who likes to take four days to write four lines."

But although he doesn't pore over his songs, Stuart reckons that he's able to express an almost endless variety of ideas in his work.

"The single 'Fields Of Fire' is about love and life," he says. "It's quite a deeply personal song so I don't want to say too much about it. Basically it's about people having to live apart in order to survive."

Another of Big Country's best known songs 'Harvest Home' was equally as adventurous.

"It's all about the Highland clearances after the Battle Of Culloden," he says. "Scotland became a wasteland and the same sort of thing is happening today. The oil boom has burst and now there's a lot of workers up there living in caravans shivering with nothing

COUNTRY CASUALS

to do. Scotland's always been plagued by hardship."

Stuart's had his share of tough times as well. Bred in a mining town in Fife, he has a tale or two to tell.

"It was the kind of place where you were considered a poof if you wanted to form a band," he says. "I got thumped once, but I didn't attempt to hit the bloke back because he was so big."

SO STUART took a himself away in his bedroom and taught himself guitar,

developing his well known and personal style to its current polished level.

"I don't really go in for the American style of playing," he says. "I think that's why my style of playing is so different from a lot of others."

I suggest that Stuart plays the guitar with the ferocity and style of somebody playing the bagpipes and he raises an eyebrow and half agrees.

"This band has a lot of spiritual input, so if you think we make a hard sound you can put it down to that," says Stuart. "We don't

have to copy anybody and we're not looking back over our shoulder to see if anybody is following."

"I think the record buying public is getting younger which means that a lot of bands are beginning to sound like each other."

There are some bands around who are really good businessmen but perhaps their hearts aren't really where they should be," says bass player Tony Butler. "I'd like to see many more bands playing because they simply enjoy it."

"What really upsets me is the use of drum machines," says drummer Mark Brzezicki.

He says that about saying that anybody. "I don't like to see anybody performing with equipment that looks like an ironing board and not having to work hard. There's something very false about it all."

"We really try to give a true performance," continues Stuart. "We're trying to make contact between us and the audience."

rather than being some kind of

"We're making music to move mountains and melt the snow in your heart."

HAWING

NICK OF time stuff, that 'Fields Of Fire' single! Just when Big Country, if you'll pardon the impression, appeared to be all trousers and no mouth.

On the 'Skids' sans Jobbers ("Whit ye a'abedoot, Warhol?"), Stuart Adamson's new combo seem to prefer doing things the long, hard, sloggy way. No big tonsils or superwave amalgams here, not a smashed office or a front page in shite (shurely shome mishtake?). Whit ye a'aboot, Adamson, Watson, Butler and Brzezicki?

There we were, crushed into some naff caff near the Phonogramofcoke HQ. Coke, that's what we were drinking, one can each and no chance of any of these "let's get the bill above £100" sprees. It was tough, I can tell you. Big Country had lately completed a new video for the afore-touted 45, allegedly catching them capering in war-torn mudbanks, a concept which sounds suspiciously close to a Skids clip for 'Yankee Dollar', no? Stuart!

"It's jist tae take it away from a bunch of boys jumping about playing guitars, which I find never works anyway, ye ken? It's no that much connected with the song other than it jist draws on some of the lines in the lyrics, ye know?"

"Images . . . It's not like The Skids' one you mentioned. Plenty explosions, there's even a piper in it! Much better than jumping about the studio, y'know?"

I know! But there's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip. The *Evening Standard*, had just published, in its nefarious *Ad Lib* column, a short biog on Stuart Adamson which gave the impression that he was a darkling character, a brooding, morose soul, something akin to a rock Ingmar Bergman, obsessed with sulking, black and white shapes. What was all that about, er, about?

"See, the thing was done over the 'phone, right?", smirks the very unmorose Stuart, "And I was joking like hell, and obviously the guy has just taken it all down and typed it up without putting 'Ha-Ha-Ha' in there. Does it no even look a wee bit like a wind-up?"

'Fraid not. What *are* all these Italian Army trousers it goes on about?

"There's nobody else playing music like ours, and there's nobody else got troosers like us either! We just like them, we don't think of image first, we think 'what's the next song gonna be'.

"Guitar music has been neglected, and I think there's a lot more could be done with it, especially in pop music. I like Nils Lofgren, Bill Nelson and The Edge in U2".

He makes a mental note as I babble about the axe wonders of Nico's sadly obscure 'Drama Of Exile' bash.

GIVEN ADAMSON'S pedigree and exuberantly-expressed desire to rejuvenate guitar-rock, it seemed odd to me that he hadn't wanted to recruit a star vocalist to front Big Country.

A hidden desire for personal swaggering emergent?

"It's not a matter of being a guitarist wasn't enough, the only reason I left The Skids was that I thought all the spirit had gone out of the group, y'ken? I just think it's logical if you're writing the music and the lyrics for your songs to want to sing them as well."

But would he consider a new vocalist if he heard someone star tling?

"Oh definitely . . . It's not that the writer must sing it, I mean I just heard Elvis Costello doing a Madness song and it was brilliant . . . it's just that I was mostly up in Dunfermline and there *aren't* that many great singers flying about up there, y'know?"

Speaking of his tendency to remain in Scotland: "You can be out of touch, but also it gives you your own perspective on things, y'know? You don't go running round absorbing everybody else's influences, the danger of just clubbing it and going around with other musicians all the time. If you're out of touch it's only out of touch with a fashion scene anyway, ye ken?"

"I like Dunfermline a lot, aye. It's quiet. Friends and family. I still like that sort of thing". The last bit is said quietly, but quite firmly.

"There's not any concept behind it," he muses on the band's name, "It just seems to fit what we sound like, sort of big and wide. The spirit of adventure type thing . . . boldly go where no man has gone! An act of unspeakable vulgarity! Naw, it was just the feeling I had at the time, and I think it's worked out well with what we're doing."

And Phonogram?

"They've been very patient, it's not like 'Come on boys, where's the hit songs' or anything. You want to get your songs to as many people as possible, so there's no point in bickering, you've got to work with the record company people".

STUART HAS said this ain't no rock revolution, though. Love's 'Little Red Book' rather than Mao's? No change? "It can affect you on an emotional level but it doesn't inspire people to go out and start revolutions or anything like that. Nobody is gonna live their life as dictated by a song . . . And I think it's dangerous to get caught up in 'movements' in music because it cramps style, it cramps your being creative.

"Because if you try to stay within the boundaries of what you see as your movement then you're not allowing yourself the full scope . . . you should be able to draw on everything, y'know?"

"You can be serious about your music without having to be po-faced about it. Going about grim as death day in, day out . . . I'm not like that! . . . If people want to take our stuff as dance songs they can, or if they want to see it as 'head music' so to speak, they can get into it like that!" He cracks up laughing, *Ad Lib* fans.

BIG COUNTRY has a stable lineup (they *swear*) of Stuart, fellow-Scot and fellow-axeman Bruce Watson (formerly of the Wallermanaged Delinx), and two geezers from a band called On The Air: bassist Tony Butler and drummer Mark Brzezicki.

They had a dodgy deal with Warners and a bunch of personal problems, but they knew Stuart from supporting The Skids on tour.

"We've been doing a lot of sessions, me and him," sez Tony, "With Townshend, and a new Daltrey album. And I did The Pretenders last single, 'Back On The Chain Gang' . . . but I look on this band as a long term thing, with a gradual build up. It could've destroyed the group if we had a hit last year." Mark agrees 100%: "You can only learn by your mistakes".

Mistakes?

As in errors: "We had a little hiccup," says Tony quietly. "We started off with Chris Thomas, who I've done a lot of work with in the past . . . A couple of the tracks didn't really work out the way anybody wanted them to, so we then thought we'd try Steve Lillywhite.

"Fortunately he was great, so we're waiting for him now to come back from working with Marshall Crenshaw. We'll do another single and then the album . . . I dunno why it didn't work with Chris, I just think he didn't have a *feeling* for the group."

The chart in the USA looks almost like a British listing now. Does this bode well for Big Country? "What I really like about the band is that we got a sound of our own," avows Mark, "Due to the two guitars . . . The Americans loved it when we did the clubs in New York. I think they could *really* take to us. . ."

Big Country are now! Or as the Lenny Bruce motif etched on one of Stuart Adamson's guitars says: "WHAT SHOULD BE IS A DIRTY LIE. . . THERE IS ONLY WHAT IS".

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TOUR

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**BIG
COUNTRY**
THE SEER



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