

WE SAVE NO SOULS!



The Big Country Fanzine
Issue 4

*Hei
Kane*

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Jeremy Carter

Douglas Johnson

From the Editors

Well, here we are, there you are and let's go on. Absolutely no doubt as to the major piece of news this issue. As I'm sure you all know, it was announced at the end of September that Mark was to leave the band to "pursue solo projects" and that the split was amicable. Tony was quoted as saying "It'll be sad working without him. He's a very close friend...." However, Scott Armstrong spoke to Mark briefly at the Scottish Music Fair in October and although Mark didn't really want to discuss it, he did say that what we were reading wasn't necessarily all true. It would appear that Tony may have made some nasty comments, which would tend to contradict what he has said publically. That said, the news isn't all bad. Mark may well be hired to drum on the next album if no replacement has been found and may even be touring with the band on the same basis, if he is available.

Rumours still persist that Stuart has recorded solo material for possible release, which can only go to fuel suspicion of dissention within the band. No doubt all will become clearer in due course.

You will notice that we have finally been able to include some artwork in this issue of "WSNS" and our grateful thanks go to Sheri Bean from the good ol' US of A. Come on you Brits, lets see some scribblings from you as well.

Please don't stop sending stuff to us, press cuttings, funny stories, absolutely anything, the more stuff we get, the more interesting we can make the 'zine.

Finally, we've another interesting piece of news for you, but you will have wait until you've read all the issue. For those of you who cannot wait, it's on the inside of the back cover.

Please note that with immediate effect, editorship of this fanzine has reverted back to the "dynamic duo" of Jeremy and Douglas.

COUNTRY EXILE

BIG COUNTRY drummer Mark Brzezicki has left the band to pursue his own musical projects.

His decision came a couple of months ago, at a time when Stuart Adamson was recovering from a series of illnesses which had forced the band off the road.

Bassist Tony Butler, who has played with Brzezicki since before **Big Country** began, said this week: "It'll be sad working without him. He's a very close friend and his departure from the band is a little unreal at the moment.

"Myself, Stuart and Bruce are deeply upset, but we want to continue in a very positive fashion. We're very positive about the future. We're writing and will start recording an album in January which should be out in the early summer.

"I think Mark just got a bit bored with **Big Country**. He has always enjoyed working with other people, and he has other projects to undertake.

"We don't know what we are doing about a drummer. One doesn't think about marriage so soon after a divorce. We are still hoping he will reconsider."

MELODY MAKER 30.9.89

● **MARK BRZEZICKI** has quit **BIG COUNTRY** to return to drummer-for-hire session work. The group will continue with a new drummer, yet to be named, and Stuart Adamson is currently working on new material.

NME 14.10.89

Is he or isn't he ?

This is possibly the biggest event in the band's history ever. One minute everything seemed to be going fine, the next all hell breaks loose. The news broke in all the daily and weekly newspapers that Mark had left to pursue "solo projects", well that's what they all say, isn't it. You see, Mark had not been fully stretched in Big Country, which is why he insisted on having a clause in his contract regarding session work. He had, it seemed, always enjoyed working with other people, nearly always at the top notch of the British music business, namely Townsend, Daltrey, Collins and more recently, Fish (ex Marillion). With regard to this, one of Townsends quotes from "A Certain Chemistry" seems quite apt; "..it would be a pity if he had to look constantly outside Big Country for a challenge...." What has happened is that when he wasn't in Big Country he has been with his other friends and his musical desires have outgrown Big Country.

Having said this, it has been said that he will session on the next Big Country album. If he's going to do that then he'll probably tour with them, so what's the point in leaving ? I just don't see the point at all, will someone please explain.

Currently Mark has been touring with Fish and on the next few pages follows a review of one of his gigs at Portsmouth. In the next few issues we will be covering Mark's work, both past and present.

Jeremy Carter

A Fan Responds

A great number of Big Country fans must now be considering whether their favourite group will ever be the same again. The departure of one of this country's finest drummers from the ranks of one of the UK's (not just Scotland's) finest rock groups is a bitter blow, but showbusiness' most well-worn cliché "the show must go on" rears its head. Although I believe one of the group members stated early in their career that if one of them left the band, that would be the end, I admire Stuart, Bruce & Tony's desire to press on with Big Country. It would be crazy for them to let go of a musical relationship that has given a lot of people a great deal of joy over the past seven years and has obviously given the band a lot of happiness.

The mammoth task that faces them now is to find a drummer who can replace Mark in terms of ability and, just as importantly, personality since it is the positive attitude of Big Country which makes them the great band they are. I'm sure all fans of Big Country wish Stuart, Bruce and Tony good luck in their search and future and also to Mark Brzezicki in his future projects and that he finds as much happiness as he seemed to find in Big Country.

Jonathan Selwood

The above seems to sum up perfectly the mood and feelings of all Big Country fans, certainly by the letters we have received since the announcement of Marks departure. We can only re-iterate these feelings and wish Mark every success in whatever direction he chooses.

In Issue 3 we featured an interview from BBC Reporting Scotland about the Russian trip last year. What we omitted to tell you was that it was Part 2 of the interview ! So in true "WSNS" style, we bring you the highlights from Part 1. Sorry!
Our thanks to Kirk Ollason for the original source.

SA) I think the special thing about it for all of us in the band is that these are the first concerts in Moscow that have been put on without being done through the State Concert Agency, which meant that the tickets were on general sale, that people could stand up in the audience and that it wasn't a formal situation. So people were able to see a Western group in pretty much a Western environment you know, which is very satisfying for us especially when you look down and see people dancing and reacting in pretty much the same way and manner that they would do in the West. It's pretty exciting...

BW) They were a bit strange at first just because they hadnae really heard much of the songs. I think they've heard a couple of the singles, but a lot of the album material because our stuffs no' available there, they have never got a chance to hear much, you know. But they were a bit quiet to start with, but we got an encore an' that, so that's what counted you know.

Int) Is there an audience here for you, do you think ?

BW) I dunno, I cannae really say, I cannae say at all.

Int) Would you like to see an audience here for bands like Big Country ?

BW) Yeah, but to tell you the truth, I wouldnae like to come back here in my life, I hate it here !

(Always one to show an interest...Part2 - Eds)

FISH - Portsmouth Guildhall, October 1989

Gathered together in the small, yet comfortable, venue of Portsmouth Guildhall stands an array of Pink Floyd, Rush, Hawkwind, Black Sabbath and Marillion fans. Waiting in agitation after the banal support, the lengthy chord sequences start, accompanied by a lifting roar and after a short delay, the curtains move to reveal a highly bewildering and colourful set. Consisting of a heavenly backdrop and corrugated iron structures depicting the real wilderness, the set provides justification for the complex stage construction. Raised backstage sits the dark, massive figure of Fish (complete with arm sling) Three stringed musicians strut their stuff at the front, while the other two, caged by their instruments, are raised neatly into the set. Keyboard player is Fish's songwriting partner, Micky Simmonds, bass player is Steve Brzezicki, while the drummer is brother Mark. A re-adopted career as a session musician begins with the complex arrangements of 70's style progressive rock? Well maybe, but the music consisted mainly of Fish's own material, which takes a more simple genre than the old Marillion pieces, keeping to the common 4:4 and the same tempo throughout. Mark Brzezicki's percussion actually suits Fish's up-beat material. His ability to move his sticks at random parts of the kit to make the rock beat sound varied is useful, both in hard and fast songs such as "Big Wedge" and in the Irish folk-dance track "The Company". The persistent woodblock work on Fish's latest single "State of Mind" required full concentration and percussion talent to beat the average drummer. When old Marillion numbers like "Script for a Jesters Tear" "Fugazi" "Heart of Lothian" "Slainte Mhath" and the inevitable "Kayleigh" were performed, he seemed slightly uncomfortable, largely conforming to the songs rules, even keeping to Marillion drummer Ian Mosely's fill-ins making him sound somewhat limited in freedom.

His hi-hat and symbol work, sharpened by his experience, of course, would knock the socks off most and a newly arranged break in the classic "Punch and Judy" allowed him to show off his rhythmic capacity by the sounds of his congas and tom-toms.

Despite this good showing, Fish, who lets face it did a fair bit of talking (despite much of it being funny) only introduced the man Brzezicki as "Mark Brzezicki"; no reference to previous work and no reference, direct or otherwise, to him being one of the best around. There's gratitude, eh !

The return of The Flying Brzezicki Brothers ?

Sparks fly for rockers

TOP rock band Big Country really blew up a storm rehearsing for a gig.

They used so much power they almost blacked out Tralee, Co Kerry.

Singer Stuart Adamson said: "Thousands of TVs went on the blink.

"The grid couldn't handle all that power at once."

Glasgow Green - Sunday September 10, 1989

Stuart came on stage at around 6.30 pm to play a special acoustic set as a way of saying sorry to the fans who were let down at this years cancelled shows. A good response from the crowd and straight into "13 Valleys" which went down well. Next up was "Just a Shadow", complete with "do we have any dreamers in the audience ?" After "Shadow", he explained he came from sheep country and after a few jokes about sheep he introduced "The Travellers" as a farmers song. The close ups on the giant screen of Stuarts playing, particularly during "The Travellers" was brilliant. The last two songs, "Chance" and "In a Big Country" really got the crowd going. A great performance from Stuart, particularly after saying he was crapping himself about playing without the other lads, but he came through with flying colours. All in all, a great rare appearance, which I'm sorry you fans down South missed. Whatever happened to the recently played acoustic of "Come back to me" ? No matter, a great set from Stuart and we all hope to see you soon. Stay alive, Big Country.

John McKinstry

THE major surprise in the line up for Sunday's free concert by Wet Wet Wet in Glasgow Green is that the River Detectives have pulled out.

The band said that "circumstances beyond their control" had forced them to cancel, but they hoped the free show could become an annual event.

The Scottish half of Big Country have jumped in to fill the slot. Stuart Adamson and Bruce Watson will play a special set to try and make up for the disappointment suffered by their fans after the on-and-off saga of their re-

cent live outings.

The full line up kicks off with Worldwide at 1 p.m. There follows an acoustic set by Hard Line, Melanie, and His Latest Flame. They are followed by another Precious Organisation hopeful Boom. They are followed by Bliss and The River City People, and then it's the turn of Stuart Adamson and Bruce Watson. Finally John Mattin takes the stage before the Wets themselves play at 8.30. And just in case you've got to catch the last bus home the whole event should finish around 10.30 p.m.

"HOMELAND"

In Issue 2, Douglas wrote about a bootleg LP that he had bought at a record fair in Newcastle, asking about it's origins and value. As usual the grapevine runs very wide and very deep and we have been able to find out quite a bit of information about it.

The concert concerned was of course the famous one at Glasgow Barrowlands on New years Eve, 1983, captured on film by MTV, recorded by Radio Clyde and subsequently released on both video and CDV (I think there is also an American Radio Show LP as well) However, there were two concerts that day, an afternoon show for under-18's and unemployed and the evening show, both of which were bootlegged. The bootleg of the afternoon show is of Scottish origin and was pressed up on both blue and clear vinyl. This same LP re-appeared about a year later in black vinyl, called "Homecoming" which only goes to show that even bootleggers can be bootlegged ! The US bootleg is of the evening show and was, as far as we know, pressed on both black and clear vinyl.

There are two ways of telling the two LP's apart: in the afternoon show Stuart introduces "Wonderland" thus.... "this is the first time we've played this song anywhere in the world and we're all shitting ourselves..." and there is a false start to Fields of Fire, as something went wrong with Stuarts guitar just before he launched into the verse. The song was stopped, then started again after a brief apology. Both of these are recorded on the album. You can expect to pay probably about £10-15 for the album, but obviously the price of bootlegs varies enormously, depending on the popularity of the group.

Our thanks for the information about "Homeland" go to John Dunlop.

THE SKIDS - VIDEO REVIEW

The Skids compilation video kicks off with "Into the Valley" featuring dead boring shots of the band performing semi-live in front of a very unenthusiastic audience. Richard Jobson doesn't even attempt to mime to the song but shows a great deal of energy bounding across the stage. While Richard shows off, the rest of the band stays well in the background, with Stuart Adamson coming forward near the end more, to join in with the vocals. It's a shame that such a great song is let down by a crap video. Next up is "Charade", with the band dressed up poshly as a sort of 40's -style night club band. Once again Jobson does the posing, but remembers to mime as well, while the band play classical instruments, with a piano substituting for drums and Stuart playing excellent violin for guitar. The video is let down by intercut shots of the band jumping around in hideous jump-suits. After "Charade", comes "Working for the Yankee Dollar", with a great video. The background is the war, with the band in the trenches singing the song. Unfortunately this video suffers from more appalling shots of the band being active in their garish jumpsuits. At least in this video, the bands humour comes through with them collapsing in a heap while holding the American flag.

"Top of the Pops" provides the video for "Circus Games" with Jobson miming appallingly again and looking as if he is about to burst into laughter at any minute. The chorus cuts to a video of schoolchildren chanting "Circus Games" and then cuts back to the band in the TOTP studio. "Goodbye Civilian" the penultimate video is a straight-forward studio performance with Stuart playing keyboards and guitar. Richard Jobson wears a fetching cricket jumper and manages to mime reasonably well. There is also some use of dodgy trick photography, but this does nothing to enhance what is a pretty boring video.

By the time the final video "Iona" was made, Stuart had left and contributed only the guitar. Jobson had made his own "Mull of Kintyre" with a great moody video to match. The song failed, chart-wise and soon after The Skids were no more.

Matthew Dennis

THE SKIDS

THE SKIDS

(Virgin Vaults, 23 mins)

the
skids



The Skids are one of those immediate post-punk bands who have been just about stricken from the records – in the encyclopaedia indexes they're no more than the band Stuart Adamson left to form Big Country. Well, this odd revival at least

shows how a half-dozen of their hits and near-things were *that* close to on the money.

Into The Valley, the biggest and best (Number 10, February '79), caught the decade on the hop between the inspired madness of the Sex Pistols and the more sober, anthemic excitements of U2 and, indeed, Big Country. Adamson on guitar was the powerhouse. He took the grungy punk sound and then played it in pulsing Morse code-like patterns as if his hero was a sequencer rather than Steve Jones.

On the other hand, the similarity of the next four tracks, including Charade and Working For The Yankee Dollar, swiftly explains the brevity of their career. The only onscreen diversion from naff pseudo-live footage and naff "concepts" is watching Richard Jobson

quick-change from conspicuous adolescent with Beattie cut into a coiffed, quiffed smoothie closely resembling his present yuppie style-model self (see the Ford Granada TV ads).

The final track, Iona, is an aberration with bagpipes rampant, stirring cello riffs, and a strong sense of Celtic fields to conquer, as if The Skids were about to become The Proclaimers eight years ahead of their time. But it didn't work out and they drifted away to footnotoriety instead. ★★

Phil Sutcliffe

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Magazine

The Big Country Year - Nov 16-Feb 15

- Nov 16, 1984 Release of "Where the Rose is sown"
Nov 18, 1988 The band perform "Broken Heart" and "Peace in our Time" on BBC's Children in Need
Nov 24, 1986 Appearance on Wogan, performing "Hold the Heart"
Nov 30, 1984 Release of "Rose" as a limited edition double pack
Dec 1, 1984 "Rose" enters UK singles chart
1987 Start of "Under Wraps" tour at UEA, Norwich
Dec 2, 1986 "Hold the Heart" enters UK singles chart
Dec 10, 1984 Start of "Town & Country" UK December Tour at Birmingham NEC
Dec 19, 1962 Birth of Josh Phillips-Gorse
Dec 31, 1983 Recording of first concert video, "Live" at Barrowlands Ballroom, Glasgow
Jan 1, 1987 The band perform "Look Away" and "One Great Thing" on ITV's New Year show
No 1 magazine's Readers Poll shows BC as 12th best band of 1986
Jan 11, 1985 Release of "Just a Shadow" on 7" and 12"
Jan 13, 1984 Release of "Wonderland" on 7" and 12"
Jan 18, 1985 "Just a Shadow" enters UK singles chart
Jan 21, 1984 "Wonderland" enters UK singles chart
Jan 22, 1989 Start of UK leg of "Peace" tour in London
Jan 23, 1989 Release of "Peace in our time" on 7", 12" and CD single
Jan 29, 1989 "Peace" enters UK singles chart at no.39
Jan 30, 1989 Release of limited edition 12" gatefold of "Peace" (live)
Feb 3, 1984 Release of clear vinyl 12" of "Wonderland"
Feb 5, 1989 "Peace" peaks at 39 in UK singles chart
Feb 8, 1985 The band perform "Just a Shadow" on O.R.S
Feb 10, 1984 Release of 7" double pack of "Wonderland"
1989 Tony & Mark appear on TV AM
Feb 13, 1957 Birth of Anthony Peter Earle Butler
1989 Release of "Peace in our Time" video

Thanks to John McKinstry for his Big Country diary

By MARK HELLINGS

COMA boy Danny McKay is back home with his mum and dad this week after top pop group Big Country helped bring him round.

And when Danny's well enough the band plan to fly him to one of their concerts abroad — possibly America.

Danny, 15, of Brecon Way, Wycombe, slipped into a coma after suffering a massive heart attack while playing near his home in June.

As he lay in hospital, friends approached the band's record company and asked whether they would record a special message to help bring Danny round.

Lead singer Stuart Adamson recorded a special tape introducing a couple of songs from their forthcoming album. On it he said he had heard about what had happened and hoped Danny got well soon.

Grateful mum Margaret McKay told the Buckinghamshire Observer: "Danny's out of hospital and back home with us.

"He is so much better now but still looks



MESSAGE: Chart band Big Country

Pop stars bring boy out of coma

a bit poorly. He is still not quite right.

"We would like to thank the band so much because they cheered Danny up no end. They're his favourites."

As Danny continued with his recovery this week a neighbour said: "It's so good to see him out and about again after all this.

"His mother and

father have been through a dreadful time.

"He fell to the ground while he was

with his friends at the top of the estate. He had to be revived three times."

Big Country, a Scottish band who have had top 20 hits like Look Away and In A Big Country, are in the charts this week at number 34 with their single King Of Emotion.

Thanks to Tahir Punnoo for this cutting from the Bucks Observer, 9.9.88





THE SKIDS - DUNFERMLINE

A while ago Virgin released the first, and to date, only Skids CD entitled "Dunfermline" In the following review, Skids buff John Dunlop reviews it, good and bad. Enjoy.

The Skids on CD at last. This is The Skids first CD to be made available and is also likely to be their last. For those of you not familiar with The Skids discography, "Dunfermline" is "Fanfare" cunningly disguised as a new album. I say it's the only Skids CD to be made available, because it is a "greatest hits" compilation and none of the other albums have made it onto CD yet.

So, is it worth forking out over a tenner to hear a dodgy Scottish band that few know anything about. YES !! It's effing brilliant. I plugged in the headphones, set the volume control to number 11 (shades of Spinal Tap -Eds) and wallowed unashamedly in nostalgia. "Into the Valley" "Charade" "TV Stars" "Masquerade" all put me back into 1978 in a dodgy, seedy boozier in Edinburgh, totally wiped out by a spotty, skinny herbert called Stuart Adamson, who played the guitar the way I wanted to. Ah, the good old days !

F... 'em, this is 1989, Adamson has served his apprenticeship and is now better than ever. Listening to this closely you can hear Big Country being born, especially on the tracks from "The Absolute Game" such as "Circus Games" and "Hurry on Boys". This is essential listening for anyone who calls themselves a Big Country fan. If you've seen the video that has just been released then ignore the amateurish visuals and listen to some bloody good music. Buy this CD and hear "Working for the Yankee Dollar" better than it's ever sounded. God, the bass was always heavy, but on CD it will puree your brain (and what better reason to buy it - Eds)
BUY IT, BUY IT, BUY IT.

John Dunlop

BAKTABAK INTERVIEW PICTURE DISC - BIG COUNTRY

The last couple of years have seen a large increase in the number of Interview Discs available to the collector, consisting of conversations recorded informally with artists, in many cases either immediately before or after concerts. It was inevitable therefore that such a disc featuring Big Country would emerge at some point. A 12" disc featuring a conversation with Stuart and Bruce has been released by Baktabak, recorded sometime in 1986, I think, immediately prior to a concert (unknown). Both sides of the disc feature a "head and shoulders" shot of Stuart and an approximation of the Big Country logo. This sort of release is neither official nor unofficial as I don't think recordings of conversations are covered under legislation currently applying to the industry. The first thing that comes across when playing the disc is the very poor quality of the recording. At times the voices are so faint it is impossible to hear what is being said. The best recorded sound is that of Stuart or Bruce striking matches to light their cigarettes ! It is also necessary to play my copy at somewhere between 25-30 r.p.m. to obtain the correct sound.

The first side consists mainly of conversation about "The Seer", both the ideas behind the songs and the way it was recorded. Topics on Side 2 range from influences on song-writing, the bands dislike of videos, Dunfermline Athletic, supporting Alice Cooper and musical influences on Bruce and Stuart, i.e. Ry Cooder, Bill Nelson and Leonard Cohen.

Overall, I would not really recommend this disc to fans due to the poor quality of the recording, but as most Big Country fans tend to be collectors of everything relating to the band, I suppose it will form a part of peoples collections, albeit not an essential one.

Douglas Johnson

The following interview comes from RTE (Irish radio and television) when Stuart and Mark were the guests of Barry Lang on his "Beat Box" programme on the 8th January 1989. Our grateful thanks to Kathy "Kit" Curry for supplying Douglas with the interview.

The interview opens with the screening of the video for "In a Big Country".....

Int) That's "In a Big Country" there, from Big Country. Interesting to get your views on having seen that, now how long is it since you've looked at that guys ?

MB) 6 years...

SA) I've looked at it within the past 6 years, but I think it's 6 years since we actually filmed it and it's very amusing seeing it, I look about 12 in it.

Int) Well Mark, your hair was a little bit shorter in those days.

MB) It was, yeah, I've just never had it cut since.

Int) Anyway, it's quite a comprehensive tour that you're doing in the country, I mean you've been to Galway, Cork and Tralee so far and it's Dublin tomorrow at the National Stadium. I suppose you could have easily just come in and done a couple of dates at the National Stadium here in Dublin and gone back home quite happy, so was it a deliberate decision to get out there and see the rest of the country ?

SA) Yeah, very much so, any time that we've come through Ireland we've always wanted to try and do as many gigs here as we possibly can. Plus it's a place where we have a lot of fun and we've always been made very welcome here, always been made to feel comfortable here and it's a very beautiful place. The people are absolutely amazing, so we love to go out there and get to see a bit of the country and meet people and play in as many places as we can.

Int) You're to be commended for doing it Mark, by the way because so many bands come over here and they play Dublin and they head back home and it makes it so difficult for people who live outside the area to get here, so I'm sure you've gained a lot of fans as a result of that. What about fun on the road, you seem like a fun couple of guys anyway in here, certainly while we were watching that video.

MB) We did, we just had, what was it, 2 hours drive of hell !

SA) Yeah, we just had a severely rushed drive here this morning from Galway, so yeah. I think that....it's good to be able to be serious about your work, but I think you can do it without being po-faced you know, it is a very enjoyable way to make a living through sharing songs with people and I think that it's something which we've always been....we've always thought of ourselves as being very lucky to be able to do that you know and so it's.....we certainly don't take ourselves too seriously, that's for sure.

Int) How long have you been playing in bands now Stuart, how many years ?

SA) 15 years.

Int) 15 years and does that take in The Skids as well ?

SA) It does, yes, I've been....the first live shows I did were when I was 15 years old with a band called Tattoo and then started The Skids a couple of years after that, so it's been, I think, 12 years professionally.

Int) What happened to The Skids ? I mean, they seemed to be on the crest of quite a big wave and then suddenly they were no more.

SA) Yeah well, I think they....I have some very happy memories of The Skids you know, I think we did some really great material and had some really great times together, but towards the end everybody just started pulling in different directions. Richard was becoming interested in different things to myself, I always wanted to be a musician really and Richard was getting really into acting and poetry and stuff and so I felt it was time just to

move on and do something else, something else that I felt that everyone in the band would be committed to.

Int) And where did you come along Mark, were you in on the early days ?

MB) Since Big Country started, me and Tony have joined Bruce and Stuart and me and Tony came from a band called "On The Air" where we were in a band together for most of our earlier career, as a 3-piece....and we supported The Skids on tour and then we went our own way, we split our band up and Stuart went his way, then we came together via us doing session work and getting a 'phone call again.

Int) And the rest is history, as they say. You mentioned Richard Jobson there, I saw him interviewed recently and he was extremely reluctant to talk about his association with Big Country and with the guys in the band, was there.. was it an amicable split, or what ?

SA) Eh, well, things between Richard and myself were always a bit fractious, you know....I think in many ways we're very similar characters you know, we have a very clear view of what it is that we want to do, but...there were things said at the time which really are over and done with now and I still see Richard quite regularly and we get on famously together. We get on much better now than we did when we were working together you know, which is a good thing.....but he's interested in very different things to what I am you know, and that's the way that things are.

Int) I believe he's one of the top models in Europe these days, is that true ?

SA) I don't know, he's....

Int) I find that hard to believe as a matter of fact, when I think about it.

SA) He claims to be, but Richard's a great storyteller, I have to say....since I've met him, what, 12 years ago, he's had about 8 different life stories in that space of time, so I take what things he says with a very big pinch of salt, but that's part of what he does for a living, yes.

Int) You must have good memories of playing here Mark, with David Bowie at Slane, was that a good gig for you ?

MB) Yeah it was, it was brilliant, I mean everywhere we play, if it's outside or indoors is fantastic and it was good to play outdoors at that point.

Int) You're playing fairly small venues on this tour, is that a good thing ? From the bands point of view, do you prefer that ?

MB) Yeah well, I don't prefer it, but it's good actually to be quite close to the audience again 'cos when we were doing the really big places, you do lose a little bit of contact, but it's.....you know.

Int) It makes it a lot easier as far as sound and things like that are concerned....

SA) Yeah, I think to be quite honest at this point we really have to play small venues anyway, we've had a fair bit of business hassle over the past year, which has meant we haven't been able to play as often as we would like, so it's nice when you actually get back and start touring again, to start off in small places and build it up you know, rather than just think....well, we'll book a tour in all the biggest venues that we can possibly get to you know, and it's nice to have that intimacy there, definately.

Int) OK, I want to talk about the new LP, "Peace in our Time" in just a few moments, but first we'll have a look at the beer commercial (laughs from Stuart & Mark) Here's Big Country with "One Great Thing"

SA) No, it's not the commercial, it's the video.....

Here is where we must leave the interview for the time being, it will be continued in the next issue, when we will hear Stuarts thoughts on sponsorship in music, the reasons behind the giving of "One Great Thing" to Tennants and more stories about the bands trip to Moscow (and I think Mark says a few more words as well)

The following interview with Bruce appeared in the magazine "Jamming" in 1984. It was recorded after the band had headlined "The Tube," in a Newcastle hotel room. We think it's interesting 'cos you don't often see interviews with Bruce...

You know this 'New Rock' Movement that has sprouted up, that comprises . . .

U2, The Alarm and us? Aye.

Well, how do you think it's come about, and what are your thoughts on it?

Well, it's like when we first went to America, it was totally over the top. Everywhere we turned, it was like "Oh, it's a Great British invasion, it's you, U2 and The Alarm". But as far as I can see it, we're not out to conquer anything; it's just the four of us playing our songs to as many people as possible, which means going round the world. I dinnae see us as part of this Great British movement at all.

But it can't be denied that guitars have come back into fashion. Do you consider it a good thing that other groups are using them again now, because when you came along there seemed to be a conscious effort on your part to declare 'We are using guitars.'

The thing is though, that everybody thinks we're anti-synthesizers and we're not. It's just that Stuart and myself have always been brought up on guitars. If we were really good at piano, we'd use a piano on stage.

So are you thinking of widening your sound?

Aye, for the next album - although we haven't started recording it yet - if a certain song needs a keyboard or a trumpet or a sax, then we'll use it. And if it doesn't work we'll discard it.

Don't you reckon this guitar dominance borders on Heavy Metal?

D'ya reckon? That's probably ma fault - it's probably just the guitars!

But it's more than that. Some of the slower songs like 'Chance' and 'The Storm' - it's all very rock, the audience singing along and everything . . . I know there's nothing wrong with it . . .

No there's not.

. . . Surely a lot of other people have said it to you as well.

Aye. A lot of people have been comparing us to maybe Led Zeppelin's third album or something . . . I've never listened to Led Zeppelin at all! I think it's quite healthy because we played Reading in front of, like, 60,000 and it was a really hard rock crowd and everything, and yet we went down a storm.

That's part of my complaint - the fact that you went down so well proved that you were more than acceptable to a heavy metal crowd.

Then again, the stuff we write we just feel natural doing. We dinnae try and copy anyone. I don't think you could categorise our music at all - I know that's been said by loads of people before, but it's true.

I tend to be very cynical, which is my own fault, but when you get the crowd singing along, it always seems very pre-punk.

It's just getting everyone involved because everyone's involved anyway. There's no point in a 'We're up here and you're down there' type thing - 'You have come to worship us' - there's no point in doing that at all. Because everyone's the same, like the folk that have paid to come and see us and enjoy themselves.

What about taking four singles off the album?

Well they've all been completely different.

We used acoustic guitars on 'Chance' for the single, we did a new version of 'Harvest Home' for the album, and although 'In A Big Country' was quite similar, 'Fields Of Fire' was really different.

But when you do a different version, it becomes even more of an incentive for people to buy the track, to get every different recording a group has made.

It depends how good it is and what people think about it. I think that the version of 'Chance' on the album is really scummy compared to the single. We dinnae treat every single as like the a-side and b-side, we treat every song the same and put the same amount onto it.

You were talking about broadening out the sound a bit, but I was a bit disappointed in 'Wonderland'. I thought it could have fitted in easily on 'The Crossing'.

D'ya reckon? We thought it was completely different from anything on the album! I thought it was a change; it was the first wee thing we'd written for ages.

It's not part of the next album you're working on or anything?

No. We get on great with Phonogram, they don't pressure us into writing songs, but they said 'A single needs to come out in the New year', so we went into the studio to try and write something. So it was the first time we'd been in that environment, where we had to sit down and try and work something out. That way of working doesnae suit us at all, because we're quite prepared to rehearse the stuff we've done, and take it out live. But now it's getting to the stage where if we go out and play it live, it might not do as well, as the old songs. I suppose it happens to every group, but we don't like to work that way.

How are you finding the pressures of all this sudden success? Finding yourself thrown into the studio to write a single and so on?

Well, we're not going to do that again. The only pressure I find is the travelling, especially in America, where we travel by Greyhound bus, and it can take up to eighteen hours to travel to one city for a gig. Tiredness is the only pressure I feel, but the playing and the interviews and the TV . . . it's alright.

I take it you don't mind the fact that it's pretty constant work.

I don't mind at all. I'd rather I was doing that than having a rest – well, you've got to have a rest, but two months off has been a bit long for us, and we're all enthusiastic about getting going again.

What would you put your success down to?

In Britain, I think a lot of gigging, and just treating people like people. It's not like we come over as pop stars or anything – all living in castles and the rest of it – we just treat it naturally, and if someone comes up and speaks to you, then you just have a laugh with them.

That approachability is something that is meant to connect you with these other 'rock' bands . . .

Aye, but a lot of people don't like to see it. I've got mates up in Dunfermline that I used to work with, and I go into the pub and they're like "What are you doing in here?" "I'm staying down the road" "So how comes you're not coming down in a Rolls Royce?"! They cannae handle it. In a way I think it's jealousy "If he can do it, I can do it, but how comes I'm *not* doing it." It's a horrible feeling really; I'm getting it in Dunfermline all the time, and Stuart's getting it as well.

There's that saying that when you get famous it's not you that changes, it's the people around you whose attitude towards you changes . . .

Aye, that is definitely true. It got to the point in Dunfermline where I was playing it down. People were saying "Oh, I hear you've been to America . . . limousines and smashing tellies" – that's what they think music is all about, and it's not! It's their attitude that changes you, you get to the point where you go "Oh it's not that good really, it's pretty piss – I wish I was back in the dockyard." You try and play it down, but you cannae get away with it.

What is your actual background?

Me, I just worked locally in the dockyard for four years. Just the same as Stuart really. 'Cos we only live half a mile away from each other.

Coming from that, how do you find . . . being this big rock band?

It never really hit me until we went to America this last time. Folk go completely over the top over there. We did a couple of shows in Hollywood, and Steve Jones was there, and Adam Ant and Marco, and it was really false. We got all these record company folk coming up to us and saying "This is such-and-such from such-and-such a radio station; they played your single first."

I just like meeting the people after the gigs.

Do you make a special point of that?

Aye, but there's been instances that have pissed us off during gigs and you can't bear to meet folk, 'cos you feel embarrassed about the show you put on.

Is it a lot of pressure doing that, 'cos I can imagine you meeting all these people and then not resting while on tour?

No, we dinnae mind. The thing that I hate is the screaming girls. We've had that before as well, particularly in America, and I'd rather talk to a normal punter, than a wee lassie screaming "Give me you t-shirt! Give me this and give me that!" I hate that. It's only part of growing up, but I hate it. I'd rather talk to somebody in the pub, not about music, but just about anything.

Is it exciting being famous?

I don't even see myself as famous!

I thought you'd say that - that's why I asked!

The thing that I hate is when you go out to do your shopping on a Saturday morning, and the young lassies start shouting at you. It gets embarrassing.

Do Phonogram try and push you to be a pop band at all?

No, never. Phonogram are a really good company, they work well with us. They took a risk with me and Stuart, us coming from Scotland, and working with guitars, which wasn't in at the time. We do what we want musically, and everything's alright.

There's quite a feeling with the public that Stuart is the leader of the band, which obviously isn't the case. Is that a worrying point?

No, it's not worrying at all. Stuart doesn't like it either. He's quite happy with his wife and son, so he just stays up in Dunfermline, he doesn't bother with it. Me and Stuart just go down the pub and talk about football or anything at all.

Do you get worried that people think Stuart is the songwriter?

No, because when Stuart gets his picture in Smash Hits and No.1 - I dinnae like the papers - I'd rather Stuart was on the cover than another group 'cos it's advertising us.

I don't know if the money's coming in yet, but how's that going to change you?

Well it has started coming actually, because we've been told that we've got to buy houses for tax! We're going to have to buy houses for cash, and we're going to do the next album out of the country. We're going to have to do a Duran Duran and make it in Montserrat.

You're going to have to leave the country?

Aye, to do the next album.

Does that mean you're becoming tax exiles?

Aye, basically.

You're only going to be spending 90 days in Britain in the next year?

Aye.

I can't imagine Big Country being tax exiles . . .

Well it's happening now! But I'm just going to come back into the country anyway, sneak back in through the airport, nobody's going to recognise me. That's what's happened, because the album went double platinum in Canada, it went gold in America, it's platinum in Great Britain . . . The same's going for Steve Lillywhite as well, because in the last year he's produced U2's album, Simple minds' album and us; with the amount of singles he's done, he's near enough a millionaire now. Another reason we're going to Montserrat or somewhere out of the country is because of Steve as well.

You're making the point about going to the local pub, and Stuart being at home with his wife and kid, so surely it's going to be a very different lifestyle.

Oh it is. For me, I like staying in Dunfermline, I would never move away from there. It's just natural for me being in Dunfermline, and going up to see your mates, even though some of them are scummy the way I've been getting treated the last few weeks. It's wierd for me because . . . punk got me going, you were young and you could go out and express yourself, and that was it. But now you're going to be a tax exile and everything, it's a wierd feeling, but I'm trying not to worry about it too much. Money's not the be all and end all.

But if it wasn't, wouldn't you just pay your tax to live here?

No, I'd rather have the money! Wouldn't you like to buy your own house some time in life?

Yeah, but then again I'd like to buy the house in England.

Oh well, I'm buying a house in Scotland.

But you're not going to be able to live there for more than 90 days a year.

Well, we're going to be out of the country for most of that time, because we're going to have to do the album - that'll take two months - then we've got about a month in America, two months in the Far East . . . it all helps.

Can you see the day coming when you will just not go down the local pub at all?

No, I'll always go down the local pub. People take the piss out of me, but I'll still go down there 'cos it's my local. What I really want to do is . . . there's hundreds of groups in Scotland, and there's nowhere for a young band starting up to play. So when I get all this money, I want to open a big place, like a club and studio and everything built into one. I really want to do it, if I've got the time.

And that would be in Dunfermline?

Well as I say, I want to stay there, because I've never lived anywhere else. That's what I want to get into - producing bands, and just helping groups, because so many groups I was in when I was young, growing up . . . nobody gives you a chance at all. If it wasn't for Stuart I'd have disappeared somewhere.

It would be good if you could do that.

That's one of my ambitions, anyway, to do that. There's really hundreds of good bands in Scotland but they never get the chance. A lot of them, I know, when they go down to London, will be completely disillusioned. Someone from a record company will go "Oh you've got one good song, and you'll have to sack this bloke" and everything. London's the musical capital, and although there's a lot of wee things happening up in Scotland, there's nothing on that scale. A lot of bands are still getting raw deals off companies, and I'd really like to do something about it. Maybe get a few venues going. Just to hire out cost price. That's what I'd like to do.

So what about the long term future for Big Country?

I suppose the same will happen to us next year, and maybe the year after that, but it's going to get to the point when we're going to be pissed off with being in a group, and pissed off with seeing each other and the rest of it, and when that happens we'll just call it a day. Definitely.

Until that day, Big Country are likely to continue down their yellow brick road, constantly winning friends and admirers, while never forgetting their roots and the plight of unknown bands. For all the well-trodden cliches that I (alone?) can see in Big Country, they *care*. And that's important.

P.S. We went to see The Icicle Works later that evening. Bruce didn't get recognised. Once. Not bad for a tax exile!

Bits and Pieces

With apologies to Radio 1 Roadshow and for those old enough to remember (like Douglas) the Dave Clark Five.

Wants/Swaps

We've had a few requests from readers for a Wants/Swaps column to enable them to complete gaps in their collection. This is for genuine commercial or promo items only please, no bootlegs will be mentioned.

Tahir Punnoo of 105 Bowerdean Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 6AY is looking for 12" copies of "The Teacher", "Where the Rose is sown" and "Just a Shadow". He has a white label/test pressing of "Look Away"(Outlaw Mix) to swap or sell.

Paul Lynch of 11 Hadrian Avenue, Chester 1e Street, Co Durham DH3 3RS wants a copy of the 12" of "One Great Thing"(Big Baad Country Mix) Cat no BIGCR3.

Douglas also wants a copy of BIGCR3 and is quite prepared to pull rank as co-editor to get it !

Anybody who has wants or swaps, please get in touch with Douglas or Jeremy.

BIRTHDAY BOYS

Josh Phillips-Gorse, 27 on 19 December

Tony Butler, 33 on 13 February

Bruce Watson, 29 on 11 March

Message from Douglas to Ian Jessop

How were 20061 + 20093 on 25th November ? (Phil Read and Kirk Ollason will understand)

Message to John McKinstry from all of us

Keep smiling John, we're with you.

Back numbers/Subscriptions

Please note that at the time of writing (3/12/89) only 3 copies remain of Issue 1 and only 1 copy of Issue 2. These are available on a first come, first served basis. Just a reminder that a 5-Issue subscription can be yours for only £6.00 (an ideal Christmas gift!) Cheques etc... to Douglas please.

Dominic Williams has advised us of some rare North American Big Country stuff he has just acquired. The first is a Canadian compilation double LP entitled "The Vertigo Sampler" which has "Steeltown" and "In a Big Country" (Live, Texas Tapes) on it. Other artists include Dire Straits, Cocteau Twins and Tears for Fears. The second is a "Big Country In Store play sampler promo". This has a plain red sleeve with the hammer and sickle motif. Side 1 has 5 tracks from the "Peace" album and Side 2 has the 4 tracks from the Canadian EP that was doing the UK rounds earlier this year. Lastly, would you believe, a Big Country carrier bag ! This has the legend "Moscow '88" and the Swallow/Peace logo on it. (Was this part of the press pack supplied to journalists who accompanied the band to Moscow ? - Eds)

Manic completists eat your heart out!

Dominic nearly always has a large selection of BC items for sale or swap and readers are invited to get in touch with him at

John Dunlop thinks he has identified the source of the Westwood One Radio Show LP owned by Douglas. He is sure it is from the Locarno Ballroom, Glasgow, 4.7.83.

Phil Read has heard of two people who claim to have the elusive clear vinyl 12" of "Fields of Fire", but it would seem it IS a promo, not a commercial release. Anyone who knows any more about this legendary 12" is asked to get in touch with Douglas or Jeremy. Phil has also advised of a 7" of "River of Hope" that was released in Holland, though he is unsure whether it is a promo or a proper release.

Well, that's about your lot, hope you've enjoyed this issue of "WSNS". Issue 5 will be out sometime in March so those of you who haven't taken advantage of our subscription offer, please send the appropriate money nearer the time. In the next Issue we hope to have the first part of an in-depth look at The Skids as part of our policy to look at the former careers of the members of Big Country. There will also be Part 2 of our RTE interview and lots, lots more. Order your copy today !

Without whom...

A quick thank you to the following for contributions, ideas, drink etc... Kathy "Kitt" Curry, John McKinstry, Jonathon Selwood, Neil Rutherford, Nicky Stanchev, Matthew Dennis, Kirk Ollason, John Dunlop, Sheri, Tahir Punnoo, Wadworths brewery and anyone else we've forgotten.....

And finally.....

On Sunday 5th November, Douglas received a 'phone call from Stuart Adamson in response to a letter he had sent him two weeks previously. He had written to Stuart enclosing copies of Issue 2 & 3 of "WSNS" explaining who we are and what we are trying to do. After his initial shock, Douglas was able to talk to Stuart for about 10 minutes, one of the topics being the Country Club. The band are aware that the Country Club has not been run properly for some time and they have been looking round for someone to do it. Stuart then asked if we would be interested in running the Country Club and after talking at length with Jeremy, we have agreed to hold a meeting with the band and the management to discuss it in greater detail.

As you know, we have been very critical of the Country Club and the way it operates (or rather doesn't) so at this stage we simply do not know what is going to happen. We have no idea what state the present club is in, so we cannot tell you anything more at this time. Rest assured, as soon as we have some news we will let you all know.

We would like you to write to us giving us your opinions and comments as we feel this is a great opportunity for all of us. We would also like to express our thanks to John McKinstry, his mate Douglas and Dominic Williams for helping us make contact.

As a result of this news, we are postponing the results of the Readers Survey until next issue. We have had a very encouraging response and it has certainly given us some ideas for future issues.

