

The Big Country Fanzine

Issue 8 - January 1991

ED TALKING

Hello and welcome to another issue of WSNS. No doubt as to the main news this time, as Pat Ahern has left the band to be (temporarily) replaced by Mark Brzezicki. I don't think Pat's departure has been officially announced, certainly I've not seen it in the music press, though I understand it is entirely mutual. Mark has been re-mixing some drum tracks and will be drumming on the new album and touring with the band when they go out to promote the album, whenever that will be. Again, no formal announcement has been made about Mark re-joining on a permanent basis, though it would, perhaps, seem inevitable.

I was fortunate enough to meet and talk to Pat on a number of occasions during his brief stint with Big Country and I found him to be a really nice bloke, always ready to talk to fans. I suppose it must have been difficult for him, following in the footsteps of someone who is widely regarded as one of the world's finest drummers, especially as his style was so different to Mark's. Still, everyone I talked to held Pat in very high regard and I'm sure I speak for everyone when I wish him "good luck" and every success with whatever he does in the future.

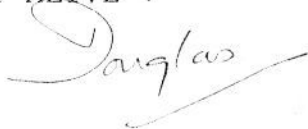
I have no definite news of new releases or tour dates. The post Christmas single hasn't arrived and I understand from Phonogram that they have nothing in their schedules, which at the moment go up to March. Country Club are telling people that the band were to have started recording the new album on January 7, with Chris Kimsey producing - let's hope it's a return to form after the disappointment of "Peace in our Time" and that it's not too long in hitting the shops.

In case you're wondering, Chris Kimsey was the co-producer of the Rolling Stones last LP, "Steel Wheels" so he's obviously no novice.

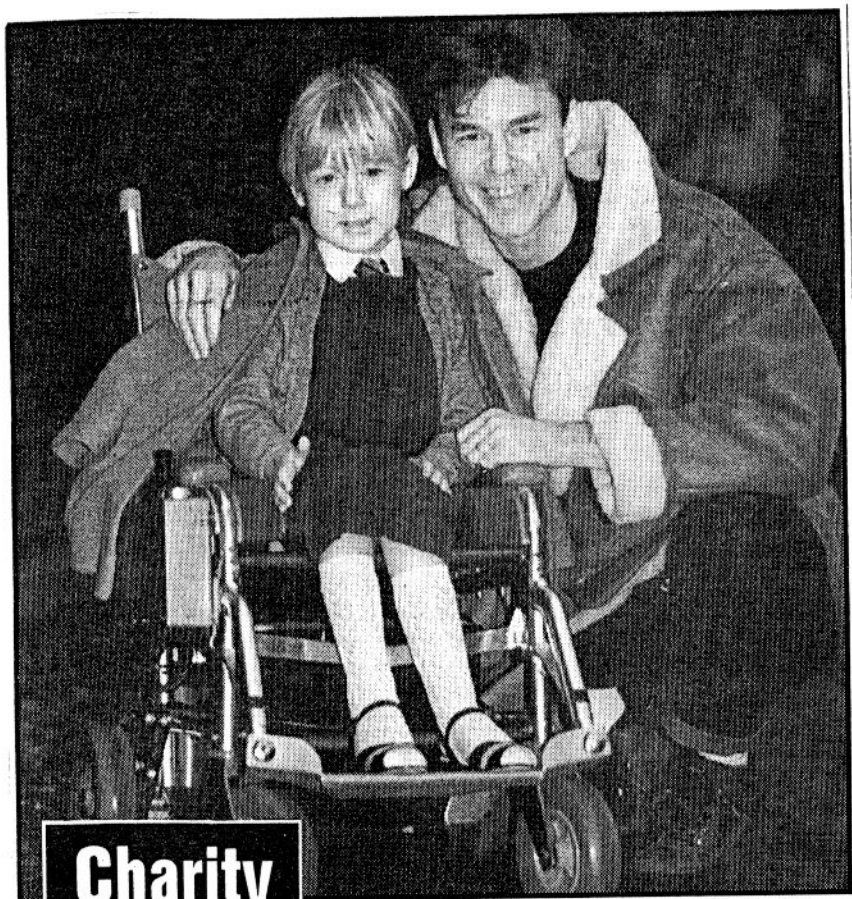
I would also like to say a big "thank you" to all the people who have taken the time and trouble to write to me since Issue 7 to wish me luck and to pledge their support to WSNS since the departure of Jeremy Carter. Your letters are greatly appreciated and although it has not been possible to reply to each one individually, I would like, through these pages, to say thank you, once again. Now the bad news. I regret that I have been forced to increase the cost of WSNS to £1.35 per issue from Issue 9, due in April. The price of WSNS has remained the same since Issue 1 in May 1989, but increased printing and postage costs over the last 18 months have left me with no alternative. I can, however, for the first time, offer a discount for those of you wishing to subscribe. Please see the subscription/back issues section near the back of this issue for details.

Also in this issue, you will find the results of the competition to design a logo for WSNS and how to get hold of an exclusive WSNS T-shirt. Anyway, enough of my ramblings, I hope you enjoy this issue. Issue 9 will be out in early April, so until then.....

STAY ALIVE !

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Douglas Johnson,
Newcastle upon Tyne,



Charity rocker role for Stuart

POP star Stuart Adamson is a cut above the rest when it comes to that festive feeling – for the Big Country lead singer has joined hair-dressing students from Glasgow College of Commerce to help little Emma Brown.

Six-year-old Emma has muscular dystrophy and she is now getting a computer and printer after students donned fancy dress to raise £900 to make her life a bit easier.

Department head Iain Gold thanked Stuart and said they were delighted to help Emma.

Glasgow Evening Times

BACK TO THE FUTURE ? - THE FANS RESPOND

Neil Rutherford's article in Issue 7 about the direction of the band and their recent "decline" has provoked quite a bit of response from WSNS readers. Here are some of the highlights, starting with Dave Cox from Cheltenham, whose original article in Issue 3 started the ball rolling.

"... I felt a lot of what he was saying was right on the button. Let's face it, the next album has got to be quality (I hope it's not too long in coming) and personally I feel they should do what they want to do, forget whatever anyone else might think i.e. critics and bring out an album that will eclipse "The Crossing". I want to hear Stuart playing the guitar his way, with his sound, like he used to, not trying to be Eddy Grant etc... "Troubled Man" is, I feel, a step in the right direction, emotive and inspirational, a change in direction from early work, but retaining the feel."

Tom Warrington from Glasgow also had a few points on the commercial failure of the last two singles.

"... I have little light to shed on the problem. Both records and particularly "Heart of the World" struck me as continuing the tradition of Big Country singles and I can only agree with your editorial comment concerning the "3 minute heroes" who seem to have the current youth market firmly sown up, baggies and all. While I'm sure that everyone would love to see the band regain the position of commercial prominence that their music rightly merits, it would be distressing to watch the "spirit" of Big Country dented by overt compromise, ignoring earlier attempts to soften the sound with keyboards and backing vocalists"

The last word goes to John Turner from Yorkshire.

"Some of the comments made by Neil Rutherford in Issue 7 had me rushing for pen and paper. I just can't let some of them go without at least trying to defend the band.

Firstly, he appears to think that having a hit single is all-important and that without it Big Country can never have any "street cred". To reach no.50 with virtually no airplay is still quite an achievement and to suggest that a single will do well regardless of the amount of airplay it receives, if it's good enough, is a nonsense. Would the "Greatest Hits" LP have done so well without the extensive press and TV advertising it received ?

Yes we would all liked to have seen "Save Me" or "Heart" make the Top 20 but the fact that they didn't doesn't spell the end of civilisation as we know it. The performance of the LP proves the support is there, given the right circumstances. As for Neil's views on venues, well I simply cannot agree. I saw the band at Doncaster where they were received like heroes. Why ? Because at long last a big name band had decided to play a truly local gig. People around here always have to travel a fair way to see bands, especially if the tour doesn't include Sheffield or Leeds and the atmosphere at The Dome said it all - "at last". Bruce's comments afterwards said it all as well..."we'll definately come back - it was brilliant"

And what's wrong with playing the smaller venues ? I for one would hate to see Big Country turn into the kind of band who only play large venues and stadia. Of course the band have proved themselves in the larger settings, but somehow songs like

"Fields of Fire" can never be the same at places such as Knebworth as they are when the crowd is only a few thousand, or even a few hundred strong. Paul McCartney has recently taken to playing the smaller venues, is he past it? I don't think so. As for bringing in an external songwriter, would that not alter Big Country a little too much? I think it would. Adding another band member isn't the best solution either. Virtually everyone agrees that the live sound didn't really benefit from the use of keyboards and I think 2 guitars, bass and drums are more than adequate, especially when they sound as big as Big Country! The band may need a few changes in production, but the quality of their songs has never been in doubt. Like Douglas, I fell bringing back Steve Lillywhite would be the best move Big Country could make.

Finally, I do agree that the new LP is going to be important, but if its performance is disappointing, it will be due to a variety of factors, not simply the failure of the band to produce "radio friendly" singles."

Well John certainly had a few interesting points to make in response to Neil's original letter. If you have any comments to make on this, or any other features in "WSNS" then please write to me. Remember it's YOUR fanzine and I can only respond to your suggestions and comments if you write and tell me about them.



Stuart at 50
Still peddling the same old riffs ?

ARCHIVE INTERVIEW

The following is an interview out of the archives from 1983. Tony is talking to Richard Skinner and Andy Batten-Foster (remember him ?) from Radio 1.

RS) We were hoping to be joined by Stuart Adamson and Tony Butler of the band, Tony has walked in on his own, Tony, you are the bass player in the band, where is Stuart at this time ?

TB) Well, in the last 4 months I think Stuart has been home for 2 days and for someone who lives in Scotland, that's not very much.

RS) So today is the third day.

TB) Yes, he's got home this weekend

RS) I hope you're listening Stuart - actually Tony, a chance to ask, how much is Big Country Stuart and how much is it a complete group of people working together ?

TB) Well, I would like to feel that Big Country is a total group, although from the songwriting point of view Stuart will come to the group with an idea for a song and then everybody just gets their teeth into it and that's the final product.

RS) Right, how do you feel then about the fact that Stuart gets so much of the front publicity, I suppose you can't really escape from that.

TB) No, you can't, I mean every group has to have it's front man, I suppose and also he speaks for us, you know, on all...any interviews...he speaks for us.

ABF) Right, we are talking to you this time Tony, before you joined the band, you were a session player, weren't you ?

TB) Yeah, I was in a group with Mark, the drummer and we left our last group "On the Air" and decided we ahd to earn some shekels somehow, so we started doing sessions together, wound up working for people like Pete Townsend and also Joe Bloggs

from Liverpool or Luton.

RS) Somebody said Lenny Henry, someone whispered in my ear !

TB) Yes I did.

RS) That was a weird record.

TB) Yes I did that. I just got called in from the producer to do a session and "..who's it for.. Lenny Henry...Argghhhh !!!"

ABF) Is it great though being back in a band again after all that ?

TB) We just got lonely, just working together, you need a group to...a lot of creative things have come out of groups and it's just great to be in one.

RS) What is the positive side of doing sessions then, you must get something out of working with so many people...

ABF) Apart from the money, maybe !

TB) The money was the most important thing, but it's great to do a session when you're working on good material and the people are great, but then again, you do get sessions when the material is iffy and you just go in, you just do it really.

RS) And an awful lot of session players really are soulless types, they just go in, sit down, do it and go on to the next session.

TB) I'd rather not comment on that.

ABF) You may have to go back to it later, you never know.

TB) You never know, in my pension years...

ABF) Can we talk about the music then, because to me, when I listen to Big Country now, I can hear definite influences, I think anyway, of English folk music creeping through.

RS) Or Scottish folk as well.

TB) A lot lies on the background of everybody who comes from this group, obviously Stuart and Bruce are Scottish, but I don't think they rely heavily on their tradition, it's just the way they have taught themselves to write and play music. My

grandfather was of Scottish heritage, but I don't think it has got anything to do with it at all, but it's just that we have taught ourselves to play the way we do and we have bought ourselves with our own attitudes.

RS) I would imagine the other important member of the team that created this LP has to be Steve Lillywhite.

TB) Absolutely, yes.

RS) Doesn't he do U2 as well.

TB) Yes, U2.

RS) Very distinctive percussive sound, the rhythm is very important to him, isn't it.

TB) Well, I think maybe, drums are his most favourite thing to record, but also, I can quite honestly say, he makes, whoever he works with, he does not make a Steve Lillywhite record, he brings out the best in the musicians or the groups he is working with, he done that with U2, sort of... amazingly.

RS) That's paid off well...

TB) ...and Joan Armatrading...

RS) Yes and that is a very different sound, you are quite right. Would you say you would like to aim your band like U2 and maybe Echo and the Bunnymen, at America soon ?

TB) We want to take our music to whoever wants to listen to it basically, not specifically America, although yes, we are going to go there and play them our music and if they accept it, well fine.

ABF) You were talking about the recording earlier on, the guitars really belt through as well, don't they....I mean, there's so much more guitar about all of a sudden nowadays, after years of synthesisers, it's really changing back again to the "rocky" feel.

TB) Well I personally like guitar music of all types, acoustic, electric...but joining this group with two people who had completely different ideas on how to approach guitar, Stuart & Bruce, it was new to me, that's what fascinated me as well.

ABF) Well Stuart has a very distinctive style, hasn't he ?

TB) Yes, that's something he's built up over the years, he hasn't taken anything from anybody else.

RS) It does seem though, that exciting performance is coming back again after a few years of these "grey faced men" standing behind synthesisers.

TB) I think it's imperative, when we go out... we've just come back from a 6 week tour..and we're standing on stage, not for people to look at us and envy us, or to think we're demi-gods or anything like that. We're out there, we play our music to them and the feedback comes back to us and then more comes out...and it's like The Crossing.....yeah, it's great....that's why our tour was maybe that successful, because everybody enjoyed themselves.

RS) 6 weeks, you must be exhausted...

TB) Not at all, I mean, we finished in Mansfield on Thursday and we were all sitting rather po-faced in the dressing room and the agent came in and said "bad news boys, got another week" and we all went "hurray "

RS) Gluttons for punishment, or at least it's not punishment.

TB) No it's terrific, I wouldn't have it any other way.

RS) What are the next plans for the group ?

TB) Well we were going to be rehearsing some new material this week and going to the studio, but I

think we're going to have a little break...a few things coming up, we've got Dublin, the festival at Phoenix Park, that's pretty good, then we're playing at Reading on the 26th.

RS) That's intriguing because Reading, renowned usually for a much more heavy metal sound, has changed it's line up this year....

TB)especially the first night, the night we're on, they have quite a few different... Aswad are playing...

RS) I'll have to nip down and watch, I hope the weather holds.

ABF) Should be a very exciting festival this year, I hope. Anyway, Tony Butler, thanks very much for coming in...

TB) A pleasure.

.....

A couple more tunes from 'Control' follow, then darkness and the dawn of The Rhythm Nation. This tour has been dubbed a crusade but it is music and dance with a message of love and nothing more. From the 'Rhythm Nation' album comes the big party number, a very metal 'Black Cat' featuring pyro, Quo-patented formation headbanging and Janet uncharacteristically ripping open her shirt to reveal a black bra top. Cooler, and the best song of the night, is 'Come Back To Me', breathily sung to an acoustic guitar accompaniment.

The climax is furious. 'Miss You Much' includes a dance routine with made more entertaining

From "Sounds" 27/10/90, Janet Jackson at Wembley.
What next, brother Michael doing "Steeltown" ?

Big Country - Town & Country Club
BSB Satellite TV

As anyone knows who went to the concert it was wonderful and thankfully BSB were there to cover the magic of it all. The video itself is a joy to behold. It is beautifully put together with a great picture, nice camera work and excellent sound quality. (it puts the "Peace in our Time" video to shame)

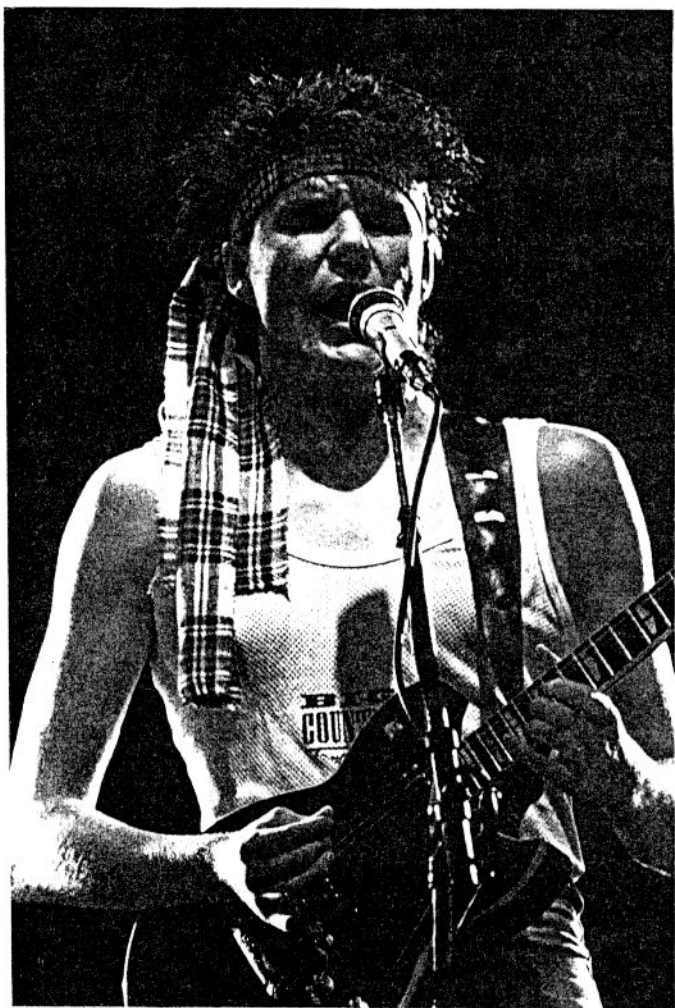
The lads bounded on, Stuart and Pat looking particularly natty in their Knee length shorts. The ever monumental "Restless Natives" started the proceedings, followed by "Look Away", Bruce's guitar work twinkling in the mix. Next up, "Fields of Fire", Stuart getting down to the front row for the guitar break and along with "Wonderland" and "In a Big Country" sent the surging crowd wild. The emotive "Broken Heart" and "Come back to me" added a nice variation to the video, the crowd singing along joyously to both.

A rocking "River of Hope" and rip-roaring "Rocking in the Free World" closed the set, Stu thoroughly enjoying himself on the long guitar solo. "Porrohman" accompanied the credits as the boys bid their farewell and the crowd showed their appreciation.

All in all, a smashing video and treasured remembrance of the "Through a Big Country" tour and if possible not to be missed.

Stay Alive

Dave Cox



Stuart, Hammersmith Odeon, 1984
Photo; Alan Gibson

Country life

Big Country's 14 hit singles of the '80s count for little in the '90s. Are they all washed up? David Quantick (words), Paul Assinder (photos) and the good people of Glasgow and Newcastle (rousing backing vocals) think not

SUNDAY

2.30 This is Glasgow, European City of Culture, which is probably why there are olives and Japanese nuts on the bar of Big Country's hotel. We meet the manager, who has a ponytail, and have a drink.

2.45 Bass-player Tony Butler appears. Large and genial, he talks about golf and racism on tour, particularly in the Deep South of America. It seems guitarist Bruce Findlay got arrested in New Orleans once. "He came out of the jail the next day and he said to me, 'Tony, if it had been you instead of me, they'd have killed you!'"

3.45 Time to go to the soundcheck. Soundchecks are the most boring things in the world. Drum roadies beat drums noisily while people drink coffee and eat chocolate biscuits. We go anyway. We are steel-jawed press men.

4.00 The van pulls up outside Glasgow Barrowlands. Burly security men – and when did you last see a slender security man? – bundle us through a crowd of youngsters in Big Country shirts, and up some stairs. Up a lot of stairs, in fact.

4.15 Soundcheck. Drum roadies beat drums noisily while people drink coffee and eat chocolate biscuits.

5.00 This is a living hell. For an eternity the band have wibbled and twiddled and played bits of songs. We can take no more.

5.10 All of Big Country take the stage and perform a stonking version of Muddy Waters' 'I'm A Man' aka 'Mannish Boy'. I put my head in the speakers and my hair goes curly.

5.20 "It's really boring playing that song because nothing happens," moans Tony as we return to the van. Suddenly we are surrounded!

5.21 A million Big Country fans, from spotty lads to whole spotty families, are waving pens and demanding autographs and asking Stuart if he remembers them. They reach in the van and find Bruce hiding, but no-one recognises drummer Pat Ahern and he remains safe from adulation.

6.00 We arrive back at the hotel. Everyone is knackered from the day's exertions and goes upstairs for a lie-down. We steel-jawed press men go and have a mega supper in the hotel restaurant.

8.15 Time to rock and indeed roll. The van roars off to the accompaniment of Stuart's huge collection of blues tapes. It seems that Stuart has only recently become a blues fan which is why they do blues songs at the soundcheck and things. Will this be a blues gig? One wonders.

8.25 At Barrowlands again and up the bloody stairs.

8.26 In the backstage area. In films, backstage is full of champagne and Mick Jagger and all sorts of exciting stuff. In real life there are some chocolate biscuits and mineral water and the men who do the sound. The band change in what looks like a public toilet.

8.45 Showtime! Big Country raunch onto the stage and burst into a thousand guitar favourites: 'In A Big Country', 'The Scer', 'Wonderland' and, with the help of some reluctant audience members forced to sing backing vocals, 'King Of Emotion'. Stuart is rude about Bruce and Bruce wears the most horrible shorts known to man. Then two hours have flown by in the twinkling of an eye and they are off.

11.00 Back onstage, Big Country rumble through Neil Young's 'Rockin' In The Free World' and the effervescent old Equals song, 'Black-Skinned Blue-Eyed Boys'.

12.00 Back at the hotel for a quiet drink. Everyone is totally tired. "We learned 'Black-Skinned Blue-Eyed Boys' off a video," explains Stuart.

12.30 Bedtime.

MONDAY

9.30 Brekker. Everyone looks obscenely cheerful, despite the fact that were are about to get in a van and drive to Newcastle.

10.30 We get in a van and drive to Newcastle.

11.30 This is about as much fun as being at a soundcheck. Pat reads a gruesome book. Stuart looks for a video.

11.40 Video time! We get a video of Neil Young live. Neil Young is a wrinkly Canadian rocker who Big Country adore. "Look at that suit he's wearing," says Stuart. "It's awful."

12.30 By now Big Country have criticised Neil Young's suit, band, songs, conversation, and haircut. They put on a Rolling Stones video. It is rubbish but everyone has fallen asleep.

1.30 Everyone still asleep.

2.15 Newcastle! We are late and we have to go to a record signing.

2.30 To reach the store, the driver goes up a pedestrian precinct, scaring the trousers off half of Newcastle.

3.45 Soundcheck at the attractive City Hall. Drum roadies beat drums noisily while people drink coffee and eat chocolate biscuits.

5.00 Off to the hotel, which turns out to be about 200 miles from Newcastle. Big Country go and have a lie-down.

7.30 Big Country still having a lie-down.

8.00 Big Country still having a lie-down. We steel jawed press men have a mega supper in the restaurant.

8.45 Time to rock. The City Hall is seriously cramped in the dressing room stakes, probably because it is more used to not having any kind of pop stars at all. Big Country get changed in some shoe cupboards and miraculously manage to get onstage without banging their heads on door tops.

12.15 Ending, again, with 'Rockin' In The Free World' and 'Black-Skinned Blue-Eyed Boys'. Big Country adjourn to a weird brown room full of fruit and posters where they wait for the vans to be loaded and the fans to go home. Pat talks about cameras to photographer Paul.

12.30 In the van. Stuart plays his new tape. It is the Technotronic album, and it isn't very bluesy at all.

1.30 In the bar with Bruce and Pat, Stuart and Tony having retired earlier. Bruce tells horrendous stories about the Bay City Rollers which are far too libellous to print and we bid each other a cheery good night.



THE SECRET LIFE OF TONY BUTLER

"I'm a golfer. I belong to this club in Cornwall, where I live, and it's really nice. Everybody knows me and my family and I go the rounds with bank managers. They all know me as this bloke who's in a pop group and they were all very pleased when the records are hits. The only problem with being in a group, though, is I can't enter for any tournaments or anything in case I'm away on tour. They say the only thing wrong with golf is that the game spoils a good walk, but I like it."



THE SECRET LIFE OF BRUCE FINDLAY

"I'm really into guitars. I just went out this afternoon in Newcastle to this guitar shop – 'cos I collect them as well – and the guy in the shop told me he'd sold one belonging to Jimi Hendrix for £10,000 or something, which is incredible. I like guitars which is why I'm a guitarist, obviously, but I like the old rock'n'roll lifestyle. It's like heavy metal – I can't stand the music but I find the lifestyle incredibly appealing. All that hanging around Sunset Boulevard in expensive cars. It's brilliant!"



THE SECRET LIFE OF STUART ADAMSON

"I'm just enthusiastic about this band, I guess. It's very important to me, both the music and the attitude. We're not wee lads any more. We're married and we've got families and so on. To be able to go out there and sing those songs is fantastic. We may have been going for nine years or whatever but there's still an incredible vitality there. We've been rehearsing what's going to be the new album with Pat and the new songs are something of a new direction for us, but it's still Big Country."



THE SECRET LIFE OF PAT AHERN

"I was a session drummer, I suppose you'd call it. I went on tour with Ultravox, so, yes, I have played drums on 'Vienna'. I've known Tony for years from various bands and things and when the previous drummer left Big Country he asked me to come and play on a few songs. It's very good being part of a proper group; Stuart and Bruce and Tony definitely make me feel part of things, decisions and stuff, and it was nice at Barrowlands when Stuart introduced me and I got cheered. Being in a group is all right!"

THE TRAVELLERS (Part 2)

When we left our heroes last, they had just bedded down for the night in Motherwell. Let the story continue.....

Monday 21 May

Rudely awoken at about 8 o'clock by John McKinstry banging on the outside of the van and set off for Newcastle at about 9.30. Gave Jeremy (former WSNS Ed) a lift to save his train fare. Listened to Radio 1 on the way and discovered the Greatest Hits LP was the weeks highest new entry in the LP charts at number 2 !!

Got to Newcastle and went to have a look round the shops. Approaching the local HMV store, I noticed a queue outside the door and jokingly suggested that Big Country were there. Jeremy panicked and rushed towards the door, shouting back very loudly "it is, it is" and sure enough, the boys were signing copies of the hits album, so we went and bought a copy. Jeremy thought he would get a Scottish £1 note signed, but on passing it to Bruce, he put it in his pocket and said "Oh cheers" here you are, you can have 5p for it" Stuart recognised me and Elliott and told Tony that it was us two who were following them in a caravanette. Tony said "I don't know how they could do it, I wouldn't" to which Stuart replied "you don't have to Tony, you're in the band !" Went swimming again and nearly ended up drowning Jeremy. Met Ray Robson and went for a few pints. (That's unusual for Ray - Ed). Was pretty much under the influence by the time we got to the City Hall and when the lights went down I dived towards the front. Tonight's gig must go down as my fave, 'cos Stuart pulled me up on stage with two girls to sing along to "King of Emotion". I couldn't believe I was on stage with my No 1 band.

After the gig, we set off towards home, stopping off at a lay-by on the A1 near Durham to sleep. Jeremy went to sleep straight away and was soon snoring heavily, so me & Elliott decided to try and wake him up. Easier said than done ! This is what we did to wake him up.

- 1) Disconnecting the pipe from the gas bottle, holding it under his nose then turning on the gas.
 - 2) Blowing cigarette smoke into his face.
 - 3) Going outside the van and rocking it violently.
 - 4) Holding a rag soaked in vodka under his nose.
- None of these worked, so poured some water down his earhole - this did the trick, but was met with a string of abuse. We tried to explain what we were trying to do, but for some reason he didn't believe us.

Tuesday 22 May

Made our way South and arrived at "Chez Read" at about mid-day (yes, I can now get someone else to make my dinner). After all the travelling of the last few days it seemed funny seeing Big Country just 20 minutes car ride away. Tonight's gig at Birmingham Hummingbird nightclub - a good venue - was unfortunately the worst of the whole tour, due mainly to the amount of "technical" problems that surfaced at the most inconvenient time i.e. Tony's bass breaking down completely during "Wonderland". The rest of the band tried to fill in for a while whilst a frantic effort at repair was made by the guitar technicians. Finally though, they started "Wonderland" again and this time it was OK. I was with my girlfriend Vicky at tonight's gig (there's the promised namecheck, dear) and as she is not very tall she didn't see much of the band, let alone hear them at their best. That said, even with all the problems, BC still went down very well with the Brummies.

Wednesday 23 May

Drove to London today in my car, decided to leave "Thunderbird 6" (the caravanette) behind. It'll be wheeled out again in time for the next tour !

We were to stay with Jeremy's aunt who worked in a Halls of Residence - girls only !! Sounds like paradise (don't be so sexist - Ed). Met up with fellow "Traveller" Elliott who had come down under his own steam (quite appropriate for a train driver - Ed) with another mate, who said he'd only come to see the best bass player in the biz, yes, Mr Butler himself.

A fine performance by BC tonight, much better than the previous night in Brum.

Thursday 24 May

Had breakfast in the restaurant in the Halls, surrounded by about 100 females. Jeremy & I were the only blokes in the place and we were getting some peculiar looks - must have been my good looks that they couldn't take their eyes off !!

Did some shopping, then set out to drive to the Odeon - big mistake as it took us about 45 mins to drive the 10 miles. Elliott had gone back home last night, so he had come down again by train. Tonight's gig, the last of the tour was definately one of the best. Well done lads.

Took Jeremy home to Chandlers Ford as he had missed his last train, then drove back home to good old Kinsbury, via Leamington Spa to drop off Elliott. I eventually pulled up outside my house at 3.40 and the next thing I knew was waking up freezing cold at about 4.30 am ! The past week had taken it's toll, I had fallen asleep in the car. It got worse as my mother had locked the door, so she was really chuffed at being woken up to let me in.

Well, what a tour. I had a brilliant time and I'm really looking forward to the next one. I'd like to thank Elliott for doing all the driving in "Thunderbird 6" as I wasn't insured. And well done to Big Country of course for a brilliant series of gigs, the best I've seen to date. See you all soon, until next time.....

STUART ADAMSON (Big Country),

APRIL 1983

1. LEONARD COHEN: Avalanche (CBS). "I listen to this song when I'm feeling depressed. It's so tragic that it cheers me up."

2. U2: Sunday Bloody Sunday (Island). "One of the most powerful and moving things they've ever written."

3. ROXY MUSIC: Pyjamarama (Island). "This is from the time when Roxy Music were totally inspired and inspiring. It's also got one of the best guitar breaks I've ever heard."

4. FUN BOY THREE: The Lunatics Have Taken Over The Asylum (Chrysalis). "A good example of how to be critical without preaching."

5. THE JAM: Dreams Of Children (Polydor). "The Jam at their best."

6. THE CLASH: White Man At Hammersmith Palais (CBS). "It's got the best laugh I've ever heard on a record, just after he sings: 'They've got Burton suits ...'"

7. THE FOUR TOPS: Seven Rooms Of Gloom (Tamla Motown). "I could have picked at least a dozen of theirs but this is my favourite right now."

8. BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS: Trenchtown Rock (Island). "This is the version on the 'Live At The Lyceum' LP. I think that's the best live record ever."

9. WIRE: Outdoor Miner (Harvest). "A sadly ignored group. They deserved much more attention than they got."

10. SMOKEY ROBINSON AND THE MIRACLES: Tracks Of My Tears (Tamla Motown). "My favourite love song."

Stuart's all-time Top 10, from (I think) Smash Hits - 1983

"WSNS" - Fanzine or Fanclub ?

Some of you who are members of Country Club may well have received a letter from Jan regarding outstanding letters from the old Country Club, run by Paulette Long. Under Cover, the outfit who took over the running of the Club in May 1990, have been trying to sort out the unholy mess that the club got itself into during the band's period of inactivity. They have received a lot of criticism about the state of Country Club, a lot of which is unfair as they cannot be held to be responsible for what went on before. I have been very critical of Country Club myself, though perhaps with hindsight, my criticisms were directed more towards the band/management for allowing the club to get into such a state.

I have spoken to Andrew Bremner on the 'phone a couple of times and we have talked at length about the problems faced by the club and the criticisms levelled at it, both by members and this fanzine. Andrew has asked that he be allowed to respond to some of these through the pages of WSNS and so in Issue 9, all being well, we will have a reply from Country Club.

Going on from this point, a few people still tend to think of WSNS as a "fan club" along the lines of Country Club. Fanzines like WSNS are nearly always produced by fans for themselves as much as other fans and offer a deeper, more personal view of a bands activities and invariably tend to be much more critical towards the subject. I try to not be over-critical, but sometimes heartfelt criticism from people who genuinely care about the band is more appreciated than unquestioning loyalty. If I may quote from a letter received from Tom Warrington from Glasgow.

"...we perhaps have a greater interest in the machinations of their career and possible changes

in musical direction than the many thousands who bought last years Hits album. This doesn't automatically award us a greater claim on the bands affection, but unsurprisingly, we tend to be particularly vocal when dissatisfied." This sums it up very well and explains the main difference between fanzines and Official Fan clubs.

Bruce Watson's views on music on television.



**BRUCE
WATSON**
(Big
Country)

Best: *The
Tube and
The Old
Grey*

Whistle Test (the original one). I liked the fact that they had real

groups on. And I always remember watching those *Whistle Test* eight-hour specials around Hogmanay time, where you'd get everything from Frank Zappa to Alex Harvey.

Worst: *Top Of The Pops*, because I don't think it's a true representation of what people are listening to. In fact the whole chart system is a shambles. To be a presenter of *Top Of The Pops* is not a skilled job either, is it? I preferred it back in the old days, when Jimmy Saville used to do it, and there was decent music.

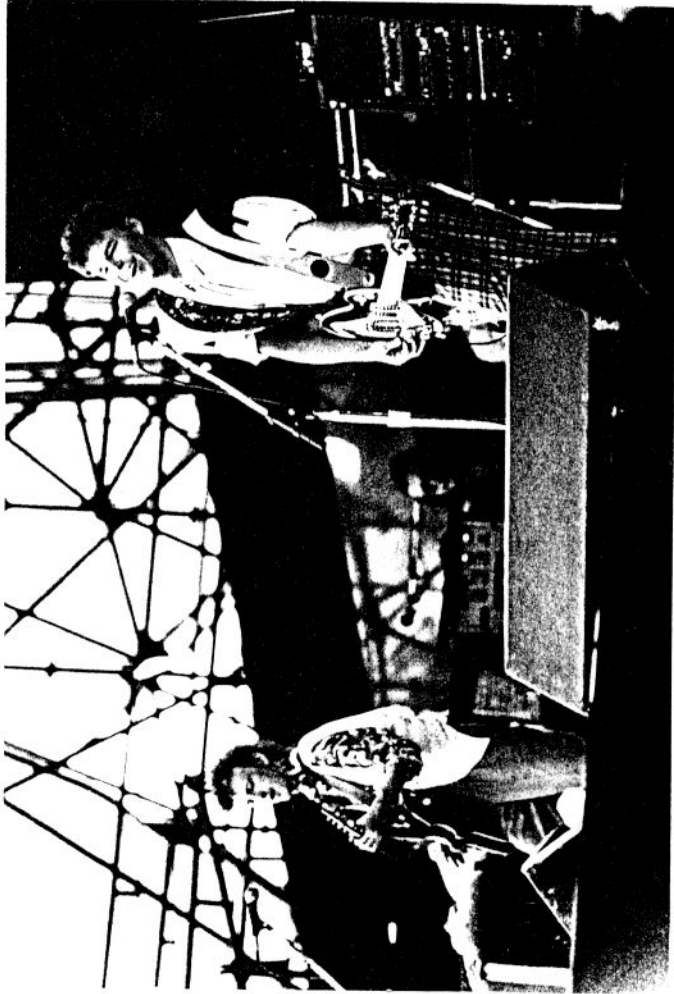
Worst experience: When Big Country went to Moscow for two weeks, we appeared on this Russian game show - their equivalent of *The Price Is Right*. And the first prize was a plate of fish - this is absolutely true - and the second prize was some coloured pencils. But the third prize was *us!* Miming to 'Peace In Our Time'.

Of course, in order to win us the contestant had to get onto the music question, so we're waiting around for one and a half hours, and then we had to rush on - the backing track had already started playing! - and mime away on all this hired Russian equipment with this plate of halibut in front of us!

Pop TV: The worst thing about doing Kids TV is that they treat you like kids - and I find that insulting. Also videos these days don't mean a thing - they're just another promotional device.

The independent Channel Four Pop programmes are the best - they're well put together. On *Rock Steady* you just come in, set up and play live: they don't bother with run-throughs.

With the BBC you have to go in from 10 in the morning till one o'clock - do five run throughs - and it still comes out crap!



Stuart & Bruce at Knebworth, 1986
Photo; Alan Gibson

COMPETITION RESULT - HOW TO GET A T-SHIRT

In Issue 6 I announced a competition to design a logo for WSNS, to be used as a front cover and on an exclusive WSNS T-shirt. The initial response wasn't very good, but I am delighted to tell you the competition was won by Dave Cox from Gretton, near Cheltenham and his design is on the front of this issue. His prize is a free T-shirt and a 7" of "Save Me" signed and dated by Pat Ahern at Dunfermline on May 1st last year. In view of the fact that Pat is no longer with the band, this will no doubt become a collectors item in years to come. Second prize and a similarly signed 12" goes to Gerry Harper from Glasgow. Lack of space means that I cannot reproduce Gerry's design in this issue, but will do in a later issue.

I can now tell you that the T-shirts with the new WSNS logo are now available. The shirts are white 100% cotton with the logo in red and black with the words "The Big Country Fanzine" beneath the logo. The initial cost of the shirt will be 6.00, but depending on how many people order them, I will probably be able to get it done cheaper, so if I can, I will give a refund to anyone who has paid the full price. The shirts are available in all sizes, but when ordering, please state your chest sizes (sorry ladies), though obviously if you like 'em baggy, then order a bigger size. You should allow 2-3 weeks for delivery, but I will try to be a bit quicker if I can. All money should be sent to me in the normal way.

BITS 'N PIECES

WANTS/SWAPS

Ashley Fraser of

has asked whether anyone can supply him with lyrics to any of the bands B-sides.

Liam Shand of

wants copies of any TV appearances by the band, TOTP etc... Anyone help ?

Neil Rutherford of

Newcastle upon Tyne, asks if anyone can supply him with a tape of The Quireboys performance at Donnington last year, as broadcast on Radio 1.

Andrew Simia of

has a mint condition copy of "One Great Thing" (Big Baad Country Mix) BIGCR3 for sale. Quite a rare 12" this one.

Some responses from queries raised in Issue 7.

Tom Warrington from Glasgow has given me some details on "Streets of Fire", the film that Big Country were originally supposed to have given a song to for the soundtrack. The film, directed by Walter Hill (48 Hours) and starring William Dafoe, is a mixture of "High Noon" and motorcycle gangs. The soundtrack album is, he thinks, still around and featured a couple of songs by Jim Steinman - but no Big Country.

Also from Issue 7, I mentioned a rumour that Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) had at one time been a roadie with Big Country. Kitt Curry thinks this stems from when he was working as a journalist with "Smash Hits" and followed the band on the road for the magazine.

I understand there is a possibility that the soundtrack of "Restless Natives" may be issued on a budget-priced CD sometime in the (near) future. As this has never been available before as a complete album, I will reserve judgement until I see it, though it would be nice as there is some great music on it.

A couple of people have asked me about the intro music used by the band just before they came on stage for the various dates of "The Seer" tour in 1986. Although it is familiar, I don't know what it is called. Any muso's among us ?

The response to my request for letters to send to Channel 4 to request the full broadcast of the Dunfermline "Rock Steady" show has been, to put it mildly, disappointing. I have only received 5 letters and although a lot more of you promised to write in....I'm still waiting. I will wait until March 1st before writing to Channel 4, so those of you who haven't written, please do so.

It seems that Pat did appear at the "Celebrity Splash" charity event on August 12 last year, thanks to John McKinstry for the photo to prove it.

Mark was spotted on "Wogan" on Monday 7 January backing Sting as he performed his new single. He is now sporting a pony tail.

Overheard in a recent pub music quiz.
Question. Which group has a current Top 10 hit with " A little time"
Answer.(given by one team). Big Country.
How could it possibly be Big Country, they haven't had a Top 10 hit for almost 5 years.

Don't forget to continue to send in your "Country News" envelopes for all the latest news and gossip about your favourite band. Those of you who had previously sent in envelopes were told about Pat leaving the band in mid December, before anyone else.

In the last issue of Country Club magazine, one member suggested that anyone wanting Big Country records to fill gaps in their collection, should contact a dealer called Bob Clayton. Whilst I am not going to get involved in a libel suit, I feel I should point out that some of his records are, I feel, a little over-priced and can easily be obtained from record stores, record fairs or through magazines such as Record Collector. To give an example, he is advertising the gatefold 12" of "Save Me" at £10.00 plus postage, though I recently ordered one through HMV for only £3.49 and I only had to wait about a week for it to arrive.

Although it might seem coincidental (well OK, it isn't) if anyone does need some stuff to fill a gap in their collection, I would recommend they contact Dominic Williams of

or Phil Read

Tamworth, Staffs, B78 2LT. Both of these guys are huge Big Country fans, as well as being personal friends of mine and will not rip you off.

There was an article in the Glasgow Evening Times on 24 December last year about Jimmy Moon, the guitar maker from Glasgow, whose products have been used by Stuart and Bruce for a number of years. A picture of the boys accompanied the article, though I think it dated from around 1984.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

As previously mentioned, I have had to increase the price of WSNS to £1.35 per issue. This will mean a rise in the cost of subscriptions, though for the first time, I can offer a discount to new/existing subscribers. Those of you whose subscriptions expire with this issue will have received a separate notice, but from Issue 9, a 5-issue subscription will cost £6.50.

I have a small supply of Issues 3,4,5,6 and 7 and these are available at £1.00 each, including postage. I have sold out of Issues 1 & 2, though I will be arranging a re-print of these issues as soon as there is sufficient demand. Those of you who have already paid for reprints of 1 & 2, please bear with me, I haven't forgotten you, but I cannot arrange for these to be done until it's economically viable to do so.

Well, that's your lot for another issue of WSNS. I hope you have enjoyed reading it. Issue 9 will be out in early April and hopefully by then, we will have some definite news about gigs and/or new releases. Those of you who subscribe will receive their copies "hot off the press", those who don't, please send money (£1.35) nearer the time.

A quick namecheck for those people who have helped me with this issue of WSNS, in one way or another. They are, in no particular order... Ray Robson, Phil Read, Dominic Williams, Kitt Curry, Neil Rutherford, John McKinstry, Gerry Harper and anyone else I've forgotten (and there is almost certain to be at least one)



