



**BIG
COUNTRY**

September 1996

ISSUE 38

Hi everyone,

I don't know about all of you but I can't believe it's already time to start work on the next Newsletter! So, here I am with my desk covered with your various letters, photos etc and thinking to myself, "*Oh, Jeez where the hell do I start?!*" I always feel the same, looking at blank pages - I wonder whether Stuart gets a similar feeling when writing a new song?! I doubt it. Anyway
.....

I hope you have all got your copy of the 'Eclectic' album - good'un, eh? The last that I heard was that this album was at 41 in the UK charts and still selling - available on CD and cassette only with hopes of a video but, as yet, release date unconfirmed. From mail received there appeared to be a little confusion over the title of this album - it was listed in some press as 'In The Scud', this apparently was originally to be the title but 'Eclectic' won through.

Just to follow up on something mentioned in the last issue - **The American Big Country Convention** - I received an E-mail from Art Love (the instigator) back in the middle of June - our sympathies are with you, Art, on the sudden, sad loss of your mother. Art's mother died suddenly and, he says, "*I was unable to continue with the concert convention. At that time I had about seventy or eighty people committed to it but I must admit most were sceptical, largely due to Pure Records seemingly ignoring any correspondence from the fans and myself. I was initially very excited by Ian Grant's enthusiasm but have not had the opportunity to follow-up with him since late April. In my final E-mail to the people who subscribed to 'BC to US' list I encouraged anyone interested to 'keep the ball rolling' in my absence but I don't know if anything has been done.....I honestly don't know whether it would have resulted in a US appearance or not but I was determined to stick with it, until the unexpected death of my mother. Perhaps after getting settled back in I can try to resume the efforts.*"

It really does seem like only yesterday that I typed in Newsletter Issue 36 "*..... 1996 looks full of promise....*" and, here we are in September/October already. So, what does the remainder of 1996 hold? Probably not to be released this year now but, there is to be the Stuart and Carol Laula "Celtic" album and Stuart's solo album. We also mentioned that the band would be back in the studio at the end of the year working on their next studio album with a view

to an early 1997 release - well, this is running behind that schedule and Stuart comments, *"As far as more Big Country recording is concerned, that will happen in due course. I feel that we need some time to regroup and revitalise our recording career instead of recording for the sake of it. We have been together for fifteen years so far so, I don't feel there's any point in rushing the next record."* I then asked Stuart how his album with Carol Laula was coming along, *"The album with Carol is still in development at the moment. We have been writing songs and jamming together on occasions as well as doing the 'Eclectic' tour. As far as any recording goes, I will be finishing my own project first."*

Other projects to be under-taken:- Mark, apart from appearing on Stuart's album, will also be working with the reformed "Crazy World of Arthur Brown". Bruce will be working with Fish on an Alex Harvey Tribute album and Tony is working on his own album which will probably be released through his own record label - Great Western Records. As previously mentioned Tony has been working with some local bands and he is now forming this record company basically for local west country bands

Then, of course, September was the month that we expected to see the long-awaited release of 'Restless Natives' and the 'Obscurities' album but September has been and gone - Polygram have decided to make these releases part of their Spring catalogue campaign so we won't be seeing these in the shops until Spring 1997. I know that many of you have been pestering the record stores to no avail - now you know why!

I certainly hope you all got to see the band at one, two or several of the festivals during the summer. Due to a very boring summer for Andrew and myself - builders, decorating etc. etc. yawn, yawn - we haven't been able to see the band since the Dingwalls gig so, apart from reading your letters etc, from which I gather there was not a bad date, I feel a little out in the cold - no one's fault except circumstance! Anyway, next time. Stuart comments, *"The festival shows were, as always, the usual mixture of hanging around and not being able to play for long enough. It's great playing outdoors when it all comes together and we haven't had any major sound hassles at any of this year's gigs so, they've all been highly entertaining. The wildest thing was doing two festivals in one day (Guildford and Swindon) but my favourite was the gig in Plymouth. Great setting, great crowd."*

'Greatest Hits' (without the re-mastered sales) reached platinum status, selling in excess of 300,000 - the only other platinum album the band have had is 'The Crossing'.

On a sadder note - the extremely sad and very sudden passing of "Fluff" the long-standing friend and guitar and drum technician for the band. Fluff died at the end of June whilst on tour in Canada with Nazareth. Fluff was only 27 years old and, at the time of Tony's E-mail informing me, the official cause of death had not been established but an asthma attack during his sleep was suspected. Several of you have written to me expressing great sadness at this news as many of you had met him at various gigs, thank you from all of us for your kind letters.

"Fluff was a great friend of the whole band so, his death was a huge shock for all of us. He was the kind of guy who was never down and always laughing, you could never fall out with him and just being around him made your world brighter and more innocent. My favourite memory of him is on a morning spent going round the Civil War battlefield at Vicksburg where he opened the skylight and sat on the roof of the bus for the whole trip, just being Fluff." Stuart Adamson

"With great difficulty I would like to state: Fluff and I grew very close over the years, he was associated with the band, and I admired his capacity for never finding fault with anything or anyone, he always made light of any trying situation and always confided in me if anything bothered him. He was an honourable person and a great human being and, if given the chance, he would have been a great dad, my children would testify to that. We all loved him, we all miss him. He was our friend." Tony Butler

Moving on - in Issue 37 Kent Humphreys gave tribute to Darryl Williams who was an enormous fan of the bands and, since then I have received a letter from Darryl's brother who has asked me to say, *"Firstly, I would like to thank you for the tribute you printed for Darryl who died on Boxing Day aged 21. The letter Kent wrote to you said a lot more than I ever could. If it is possible could you please print a thank you to Kent from my family and me."* Neil

Oh yeah, one more thing before you all bombard me with letters, - what with the various projects being undertaken etc. there is no touring on the horizon for BC so, just hang in there for a bit, OK.

Jan

P.S. I think that I put a note in an issue a while back to the following effect but, as I've received a couple of letters recently I thought I would repeat myself. **Regarding the acknowledgement of renewals** - unless you pay the full amount and request one of the things on offer I do not, any longer, send out a receipt of your renewal - this is simply, purely and cold-heartedly to cut costs. If you specifically require acknowledgement then, please, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for this purpose. Thank you.

The HOT NEWS system. The way to keep up-to-date. How it works:- All you need do is lodge a stamped, self-addressed envelope here, clearly marked Hot News. (Overseas members should send International Reply Coupons). This envelope should show your membership number and the date of the last Hot News received by you. I will then keep them until there is news of release dates/tours or what-have-you. If you don't participate then, I have to say, that you could miss out - funds do not run to general mailings every time there is a bit of news, sorry. To keep abreast between the regular Newsletters/magazines you need to participate in the Hot News System, whether by E-Mail or "snail mail".

If you wish to receive this news via your computer screen then just let me know your E-Mail address and I will add you to the BC address group.

Someone recently wrote asking how often Hot News letters are sent out - so, to anyone else who is wondering this, there is not and cannot be a schedule - Hot News letters are sent when there is news - twice a week or maybe twice a year!

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The following questions from **Jim McConnell** (003954)

Q Would Big Country

Your

release an album of covers, like Guns 'n' Roses and Annie Lennox have in the past?

Stuart: It's not something we haven't thought about but I prefer doing little bits for B-sides or live, although there is quite a bit on the 'Eclectic' album.

&

Tony: I hope not.

Bruce: Not as Big Country but perhaps as individuals.

Q Have the band ever thought of setting up their own record label? Following previous record company hassles etc. wouldn't it be in their best interests?

Answers

Stuart: There's too much administrative work involved would

be my first thought, especially to make it work internationally, although a licencing deal might be a way to go.

Tony: It's always in the back of our minds, I suppose.

Bruce: Sounds like a good idea to me.

Following on from that I asked Ian if everyone was still happy with their move to Castle.

Ian: I have to say that the Castle experience was probably (no definitely) the lowest spot of my career and Big Country's. Retrospectively we would have been better off staying with Chrysalis. Sods law really because the wankers that were in BC's way at Chrysalis and thwarted Chris Briggs attempts to promote the band within Chrysalis were sacked six months ater we left them. Chris is now head of A & R and doesn't have

interference. The same thing happened at FOX/RCA in America and now has also happened at Castle. Over and

above this, I think the band need a

break. They have been together for 15 years nearly. If a band or artist does not maintain themselves at the very top, then difficulties can arise. We all know how journalists and media people love to knock when they think a band has been around too long. Plus the fact that the music scene always changes. New bands and new sounds have come along. In particular over the last two years. Every band is in competition and there are only so many slots available on playlists and at retail. Rather than bleat about how much Radio 1 don't play their records like Quo and probably Phil Collins at the moment it's better to grit teeth, also it would be very cheesy to break up and then reform in two years time. I am very excited about what Stuart will do. He is even more excited. I know it will benefit the band. Stuart and I are off to Nashville and NYC for a week on 21st October to lay the foundations. WATCH THIS SPACE, as they say.

Q Any chance of "Tall Ships Go" being included in the set on the next tour?

Stuart: No. It was written and played with me tapping on the strings with a 2p piece and would be impossible to play and sing it simultaneously.

Bruce: Absolutely no chance. Too many overdubs!

Q The soundtrack for "Restless Natives" is excellent - any possibilities of BC doing another soundtrack?

Stuart: If someone asks me, I'm there.

Tony: There's always a possibility, depends if we're offered anything decent.

Bruce: Big Country would probably jump at the chance for soundtrack work.

Q What is the story regarding the K-Klass remix of "In A Big Country"? Will it be released in the future?

Stuart: Pass.

Bruce: I think it will be going to the club scene only.

Ian: K Klass did not actually remix 'INABC'. It was done by a chap called Steve Miller. It will be released at some point.

Q Is there any live show over the years which a) means the most to you? and b) If so, why?

Stuart: There have been so many great shows over the years that

it's hard to pick out any specific one but I think the shows we did with The Jam at Wembley were the ones that really confirmed to me that we were doing something unique and accessible and were a real pointer for what was to follow.

Tony: The very first time that we played the Barrowlands in Glasgow. I don't think I'd experienced such a noisy crowd in such intense heat.

Mark: The Nelson Mandella show at Wembley Stadium. Particularly because of the enormity of the event (nearest to Live Aid) and drumming together with Phil Collins for the whole show.

Where BC are concerned, the East Berlin show in 1987. We were playing to 180,000 rock-starved East Germans whilst Michael Jackson was playing in West Berlin to 36,000.

Bruce: Appearing at Live Aid. Awesome.

Q Who was the first band that you ever saw perform?

Stuart: Led Zeppelin at the Caird Hall in Dundee. It made me want to play loud guitar forever.

Tony: Chuck Berry at the Hammersmith Odeon.

Mark: Brand X at The Roundhouse.

Bruce: Rezillos - Kirema Ballroom.

Q What is the best gig you've ever seen?

Stuart: U2 at Valentinos (a tiny club) in Edinburgh or The Clash on the White Riot tour.

Tony: The Who, Charlton 1973 or 74.

Mark: Brand X at The Roundhouse.

Bruce: Pink Floyd - Los Angeles Coliseum.

Q Both "East Of Eden" and "Giant" are James Dean movie titles, are any of BC band members James Dean fans?

Stuart: I think his pictures look great but I just stole the titles because of the images they inspired in me.

Tony: Not particularly.

Mark: I am not really a film person. All I know is that he had a black jacket and wore a white T-shirt.

Bruce: A bit before my time.

From Lewis Crow (003890)

Q Is Stuart a fan of musical satirist Tom Lehrer? The reason I ask is that Lehrer, popular in the 1950s and 60s and known for his albums of political and social humour with songs like "The Vatican Rag" and "The Masochism Tango" and the song "We Will All Go Together When We Go".

Stuart: That's an honest coincidence.

There has been a lot of interest and a very long discussion on the BC E-mail list regarding Stuart's pub which seems to have sprung from a discussion regarding "The Teacher" and the fact that this song would appear to be about being stoned, there followed a discourse on drink, alcohol, smoking, drugs - there are some very strong feelings out there against any of this. Subscribers to this list do discuss a very wide variety of subjects and, without repeating all of the messages here are few, very edited comments for those without access:-

"Why did Stuart choose to open a pub in a land so plagued by alcohol abuse." In reply, from another sub-

scriber, *"Why should he have to explain? No wonder Stuart has no interest in being famous if people are going to pick apart and analyse every move he makes. Not everything the man does has socio-political ramifications. Maybe he opened a bar because he likes hanging out in pubs! If the country is so riddled with alcohol abuse what possible harm could one more pub do?"* The E-mail messages regarding this go on forever and someone suggested that Stuart opened a pub to try to prevent or control under-age drinking in his area. Anyway, having read through the messages fairly quickly I do agree - Stuart surely does not have to explain his every move to us but I'll leave it up to him as to whether he comments or not.

Stuart: I used to drink to excess and not really through choice. I went to A.A. and found out who I really was and I'm still learning about me now. I think it has been well documented but I'm comfortable talking about it. After all I was there.

Passed thru by **Oliver Hunter** from the E-mail BC list.

Q Stuart, everyone is curious, to say the least, about your solo album. The question everyone is asking, what will it sound like, will it be closer to traditional US country or more folk-

orientated? Give us something to wet our appetite, please.

Stuart: The majority of my country record is written (although I'm still putting together more material) and I'm just waiting for the right people to come together to finalise the recording, hopefully very soon. It's difficult to write down a sound but it will be more country than folk. That's why I want to work with American musicians. I want to bring a twist and a punkier edge to it.

From Alan Simpson (003411)

Q Could you tell me who sang the original versions of the covers on "You Dreamer", "I'm Eighteen", "Vicious", and "On The Road Again"?

Stuart: I sang "Vicious" and "I'm Eighteen", Tony sang "On The Road Again".

Tony: Alice Cooper, Lou Reed, Canned Heat.

From Oliver Hunter

Q Whilst at the Northampton Town Show (which Oliver gives a big thumbs up to) he managed to get Stuart's set list from the stage and on the reverse of the list was a photocopy

of a CD entitled "Long Way Home". What is this? Is it a US release? It has a picture of a castle and a loch on the front and some rocks on the back, tracks include: "All Go Together", "Long Way Home", "Where The Rose Is Thorn"(?!), "Alone", "Steeltown", "Ships", "We're Not In Kansas", "IABC", "F of F", "Hey Hey My My (into the black)" and "Long Way Home" (acoustic). What the hell is this? Have I been on another planet or something?

Stuart: Pass!

Ian: I have no idea what the Long Way Home CD is about. It must be a bootleg. We would all like to hear it.

Alexander Mathieson (004137). Re your question of why fifteen and not sixteen tracks on the remastered NPLH - quite simply because one version of "Ships" only.

Q Thomas Klosterkother (004159) asked about the chart positions of 'Why The Long Face', 'I'm Not Ashamed', 'You Dreamer' and the 'Non' EP.

A: Castle don't remember. WTLF, we believe, got to 48 but 'INA', 'YD' and 'Non' didn't make the Top 40 so no-one can remember. Sorry

I never really know how many reviews to reproduce but, I do get lots of requests to do so and also receive many via the post or over the E-Mail so, I guess, for those who do not read the music press (as I don't) you do want to see some, if not all.

Mike Lynd sent the following from Record Collector dated May 1996 and, he says, **don't shoot the messenger!**

REVIEWS

Remastered, "The Crossing", "Steeltown", "The Seer", "NPLH" and "Through A Big Country"

Big Country are part of an '80s strand of music which you either love, hate or, frankly, don't give a toss about. The tradition might well be described as Gaelic blues rock and it definitely includes the likes of Runrig and Capercaillie but could, at a pinch, also stretch to Deacon Blue, Texas and late-era Lloyd Cole. The sound is expansive, the guitars bright and pristine and the emphasis is on simple, well-crafted songs. Which is probably a nice way of saying it's a complete load of dull-but-worthy arse. You even feel dull-but-worthy trying to justify it. So I won't.

Unlike some of their contemporaries, though, Big Country did (or 'do', I suppose, since they're still at it!) have the benefit of lots of punk gusto - that muscular twin guitar sound worked well - but there was always the musty smell of an old Aran jumper waiting around in the background somewhere, adding to the sense that Stuart Adamson and his cronies were steeling themselves to hew out a living in some far-flung barren land. The fact that they were relatively well-heeled musos didn't seem to matter; in Adamson's eyes Big Country were pioneers speaking for the generations for whom genuine hardship was an impetus to leave the British Isles. In fact, the more I think about it, the more it seems an inescapable conclusion that Big Country were a load of pretentious rubbish. Only Bruce Springsteen was similarly audacious in his attempts to represent the concerns of the blue-collar workers. If Stuart hadn't

been in the Skids (a truly underrated band - if in doubt, check our Virgin's reissue of "Scared To Dance"), we'd probably never have given him the benefit of the doubt.

Back with the Bigs, the 'I'm at the mercy of the elements' concept was set out from the start, with the hit-packed 1983 album "The Crossing" ("IABC", "F of F") which is saved from an ignominious end as a bad rock album by its sheer originality and verve. Adamson was actually a mean guitarist in a Bill Nelson meets Tom Verlaine way and some of the Skids' teen ebullience is still in the grooves somewhere. It's only when you get to its follow-up "Steeltown", that you realise the whole thing was done to a formula. Instead of a dozen different songs you get one song done in a dozen different ways. "East of Eden" and "Rain Dance" showed a greater maturity, though, but 1986's "The Seer" proved that being grown up doesn't necessarily make you more interesting. Ironically, when Mercury leaned on Adamson to make a softer, safer album ("NPLH") to clean up after the worldwide success of its predecessor, he actually wrote some less intuitive tunes like "Leap Of Faith", "Ships" and "Republican Party Reptile", which benefited from their pressurised genesis. By then, though, the band already had a greatest hits set under their belt, and were gearing up for the latest phase of their career with Chrysalis.

Digitally-remastered and with bonus tracks taken from B-sides and 12"s, these reissues neatly sign and seal BC's back catalogue and deliver it to the CD racks for consumption by hardcore fans. I can't imagine someone going out and buying, say, "Steeltown" - but then I can't imagine anyone buying it the first time round. (PG)

Graham Goodall (001511) plus others sent me the following
from Q Magazine dated June 1996

“The Crossing” and “Through A Big Country, Greatest Hits”
Excellent. Definitely worth investigation

“Steeltown”, “PIOT” and “NPLH”
Average. Caution advised

“The Seer”
Good. Not for everyone but fine within its field.

With commendable thought for the consumer, Phonogram have remastered all their BC albums for mid-price reissue, also endowing each with impressively articulate sleeve-notes by leader Stuart Adamson and bonus tracks drawn from the “Wonderland” mini-LP and many non-album B-sides (though not the live cover versions).

“**The Crossing**” (1983), their debut, remains a rousing listen with excellent short, tuneful songs (“F of F”, “IABC”, “Chance”) and the seven inventive minutes of “The Porrohman”. Sadly, these sterling qualities alone would never be enough. “The Crossing” also saddled the band with a single style in the public eye; skirling twin guitars and epic social dramas about little people at the mercy of larger, darker forces beyond their control.

The follow-up, “**Steeltown**” (1984), surely owed its Number 1 status to the band’s stature as a live act rather than its contents. Described by Adamson as “dark and dense”, its tales of fear and frustration now sound turgid, its laboured songs further checked by poor arrangements and a leaden rhythm section. Here it’s enlivened by the addition of “Wonderland” (sadly, the overblown 12” version), Roxy Music’s “Prairie Rose” and the more delicate “Winter Sky”, but it remains heavy going.

“**The Seer**” (1986) is underrated. It’s simpler but with more ideas. It’s also Stuart Adamson’s most inward-looking Scottish album, with clear references to traditional music and tales, which limits its accessibility. It’s archaic storytelling style also introduced a less welcome trait of stilted language which

would remain. "Look Away", "The Teacher" and "One Great Thing" are fine tracks but a move from bagpipe sounds was overdue.

"Peace In Our Time" (1988) was produced by former J Geils vocalist, Peter Wolf, who left an American radio riff-rock imprint. It was the band's simplest and clearest collection, and - with the bagpipe sound turned down - their most orthodox. Despite a promising opening with "K of E", "Broken Heart" and the splendid "Thousand Yard Stare" (plus a fine ballad, "Everything I Need"), the cracks were beginning to show, with Adamson sticking religiously to old themes (though with increasingly oblique lyrical angles). Some songs were neither uplifting nor arresting despite Adamson's still-burning passion. Older sounds are represented in the extra tracks - indeed, the shuffle and harmonica of "Starred And Crossed" is better than much of the LP.

"No Place Like Home" (1991) sounds as if it were by a different group as the anthemic is abandoned in favour of straightforward rhythms and differing old-fashioned styles: slide guitar, banjo, bluesy organ etc. Despite some thoughtful lyrics, Adamson's preachy social concerns, over-elaborate wordplays and fading tune-power put it firmly out of sync with the times, sounding more like '70's protest rock than a band going forward. Interesting, but too much and much too late.

Now opening with non-album single "Save Me", **"Through A Big Country"**, does it all for the casual observer, pulling together almost all the best songs: a reminder that Big Country have coined some sterling, enduring music. *Ian Cranna*

AN UP-DATE ON THE ADDRESSES ON THE "NET/WEB":

THE CROSSING - a comprehensive set of pages maintained by John Underwood -

<http://www.cs.clemson.edu/~junderw/music/bc/> (the first BC home page)

WONDERLAND - by Lewis Crow, the "unofficial" Big Country home page -

<http://www.flash.net/~barcrow/BigC.htm>

I HOPE YOU LIKE IT - A more personal homepage with photos and gig reviews

maintained by Oliver Hunter - <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Alley/2384/>

STEELTOWN - Robert Oliver's beautiful BC page including the famous Book of

lyrics - <http://www.mint.net/~roliver/bc-mint.htm>

PHILIP DIXON'S BC PAGE - A new and (as yet) small BC homepage -

<http://www.mindspring.com/~pdixon/bc-wp1.htm>

And, of course, the list run by MARKUS SCHOELLER - subscribe to:

INTERNET: bc@specklec.mpifr-bonn.mpg.de

Letters, thoughts and experiences

From **Michael Purdie**
(004141)

"I was lucky enough to get through the Northampton traffic to see the band at the recent gig and it was absolutely brilliant.

As if the fact that it was free was not enough, there was a 6,000 strong crowd in the park and Stuart was in his element. They played a blasting version of "Alone" and the lead of "Rockin' In A Free World" was one of the best I have heard. Even non-Big Country fans were into the band's music. It was a great gig, with just one drawback, lack of originality! Now, don't get me wrong here, but the band's versions of many songs have been the same since "Without The Aid..." and with striking, unique originality being the band's strength, I think it's time for a change. Even though amazing improvisation with a guitar comes as naturally to Stuart as talking does, the general structure of their gig needs a new path to follow. Does anybody else feel the same as me?"

From **Oliver Hunter** (000490). Oliver is a very active member of the Club and he acts as my "postman" with the BC E-mail list, for which I thank him and he has set up the "alternative" BC Web page:-

<http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/2385/big-country.html>.

"So, regarding 'Eclectic', first the gripes:-

Out of twenty-two brilliant songs, only thirteen were used, 7 covers and 6 BC songs. I don't know if this was because the others came out badly for one reason or another or what but, there it is. This results in a running time of a little over 45 minutes, shame." (I then received another posting from Oliver re the running time:- "should have been 49.45 but when I put the CD in the player, it registered at 52.35, Strange?!) The running order is also different to the gig.

It is a great CD. The electric violin really adds to the proceedings and the overall sound is really folky. The track that really hit me was 'Buffalo Skinners', to listen to this you want to get totally relaxed, a glass of Southern Comfort and wack up the volume. Bluesy guitar intro and violin leading into a powerful and emotional rendition (I'd forgotten how good this was). All the guest artists add their mark in various places and the whole thing has a folky rock feel to it.

Julian Carter says, "HMV had two headphones connected to a listening point with "Eclectic" playing and I had a quick listen to each track. The mix is damn good! The sound is much better compared to what was heard on the night. Stereo effects are in use and the sound is very clear, I know it always sounds better with headphones so I was prepared for a little disappointment when I put the cassette on in the car on the way home. None came - the tape sounded just as good and I can't wait to listen to the CD tonight on my Hi-fi. My car speakers couldn't cope with the levels and I had to turn the bass down a bit! The electric violin really sounds good, I had forgotten how good some of the intros to these songs were so, it is great that this CD has captured it so well. As Jan said, I don't think it has completely captured the spirit of the evening(s), partly because of the chopping around and cutting of in-between banter etc. However, I think it gets pretty close and this will be a CD that is treasured by fans all over the world, especially as it is "that bit different..." So, despite the gripes it has turned out pretty good - go get it everyone!! Maybe someone will "leak" a full-length bootleg??

I hope that (as WOTAOASN) there are some different or extra tracks on the video so that we get to see/hear some of the other great songs that were played. Songs that should have been included but weren't: "The Storm", "Chance", "The Seer" and "Ships" (pray for them on video).

From Gavin Boyle (003675)

"They say that the best things in life are free and never was this more apparent than at the Northampton Town Show on 13th July. Held in the beautiful surrounds of Abington Park over three days, the event had a jewel in its crown. **Big Country live and free!** Having enjoyed a lovely afternoon in the park soaking up the sun and entertainment we knew the best was yet to come. Billed in the free programme to be "on stage from 9pm to 10pm" ahh, only an hour I thought, an act certain to get the park rocking we made our way to the concert arena.

At 8.45pm the lads came on, with that great opener 'God's Great Mistake' and superbly worked their way through such classics as 'Look Away', 'King of Emotion' 'Chance' and lots more, culminating with the brilliant 'IABC'. By this time they had the crowd eating out of their hands and the roar of thousands

Continued

Gavin Boyle's letter continued

was deafening, we'd reached fever pitch and to my delight, 10pm wasn't the end! We were further treated to a rousing encore of 'F of F' and 'Rockin In The Free World'. Ninety whole minutes of pure brilliance!

As if that wasn't enough, to end a brilliant day it was very quickly followed by a breathtaking classical firework spectacular, which I hope the band were able to watch from backstage. What can I say, days like that a few and far between and it was certainly the best Big Country concert that it's been my privilege to witness. With only a handful of Big Country T/shirts evident at the show I doubt that there were many ardent fans among our number but, with a

From Jeffrey Marsh - "I was watching the Olympics - a boxing match had just finished and boxers and referee were waiting for the judges' scores. During the wait, "IABC" was being played over the sound system.

Thought that was pretty cool....."

performance like that I think Big Country will have made many more friends. I sincerely hope that the band enjoyed it as much as we did and that after such a successful performance they'll be back next year. Once again, to Big Country I say

THANKYOU VERY MUCH
for making the day so special and it was all free!!!"

From David Slammon (001710) *"****ing brilliant (excuse the French) but I can't describe how this Eclectic thing is. I went to Tralee - thought it fab but it was only a taster for midnight at The Olympia, what a show, it's that good I'm going to London for the Mean Fiddler.*

I met Kit Curry and she took a photo of me with Carol Laula so could you print my address in the next mag so I could get it, please? So, Kit, could you get in touch with David, 47 The Green, Clara, Co Offaly, Ireland.

Andrew Skinner
(003225) wrote,
"Eclectic" was a lot
easier to get hold of.
'Our Price' had it in
their recommended sec-
tion while Andy's
Records had it on their
listening posts."

From **Caz Jones** (003937)
"...listen to **VIRGIN 1215** for
about 7 hours each day. The
advert for 'Eclectic' is on at
least 3 times every day and
BC make the play list every
week now, usually on the
Richard Skinner Show"

From **John Scully**
(004019) - "Big
Country",
Olympia, Dublin
24th August 1996.
What a special band
this is, whether interact-
ing with their audience,
fooling around or giving a
blistering version of 'Eleanor
Rigby'; they have no equals. First
glimpse of the boys was when
'King Bruce' and 'Billy Stuart' came
on replete with headgear during Carol
Laula's support slot

and joined her on 'Summertime'. Elsewhere it was an aban-
donment of the last three albums (just 'Your Dreamer' and 'All
Go Together') in favour of 'Peace In Our Time' and
'Steelestown' songs, which were given a full-blooded airing. The
inclusion of Bobby, Hossam and Mohammed and Carol aug-
mented the sound, as did James McNally's low whistle,
Stuart's quips about Ballygowan and false intro strumming
were hilarious; Mark and his percussion pals entertained
inter-encore style and not even feedback dampened the spirits
of the songsters. **VIVA BIG COUNTRY!**

Stephen Ashe (003312)
- "...Belfast last
week, what can I say?
TOTALLY excellent.... To be
honest, I wasn't too keen on
the 'Eclectic' CD when I
first heard it but to see the
band live with all of the
extra musicians you really
see the benefit to the band's
sound that these extra guys
and gals make. An awesome
experience!"

BIG COUNTRY'S REVIVAL OF ROBERT BURNS' "KILLIECRANKIE" BY CAMERON DAVIS (004146)

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Where hae (have) ye (you) been
sae (so) braw (dressed fine), my
lad?
Where hae ye been sae brankie
(spruced up, dapper), O?
Where hae ye been sae braw, my
lad?
Cam (came) ye by Killiecrankie,
O? | 2 I faught (fought) at land, I faught
at sea,
At hame (home) I faught my
auntie (aunt), O;
But I met the devil and Dundee,
on the braes o' Killiecrankie, O! |
| Chorus | |
| Chorus An (if) ye he been where I
hae been,
ye would na (not) be so cantie
(cheerful), O!
An ye hae seen what I hae seen,
on the braes (heights) o'
Killiecrankie, O! | 3 The bauld (bald) Pitcur fell in a
furr (furrow, gap),
and Clavers gat (got) a clankie
(knock), O,
O I hae fed an athole gled
(hawk),
on the braes o' Killiecrankie, O! |
| Chorus, repeat chorus x 2 | |

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

The song seems to take the form of a conversation between two Williamites in which two thoughts are portrayed. First, the hard fight that the Scots put up against superior forces. For example, if you had been at the Battle of

Killiecrankie, you wouldn't be so cheerful, and likening fighting the Scots to fighting the Devil himself. Second, through the use of sarcastic humour, one of Burns's most classic delivery vehicles, he exposes the feebleness of the Williamite forces. For example, one soldier boasts of how he was indeed fighting with his aunt at home and another soldier, Clavers, getting a knock on the head; also portraying the Williamites as clumsy, the soldier named Pitcur falling into a crevice.

The last reference also gives some insight into the remarkable terrain of the battlefield. It is comprised of steep, rocky bluffs overshadowing the River Garry, just north of the town of Pitlochry in Scotland. The battlefield is preserved today (memory don't fail me now) by the National Trust for Scotland. It includes some of the most magnificent landscape in Scotland, with plenty of trails for hiking and climbing. There is a visitor's centre that gives detail on the site and the battle. Well marked on the site is the "Soldier's Leap", where one Jacobite, pursued by counter-attacking British, successfully jumped from one side of the river to the other - an enormous feat given the distance and jagged rocks.

Big Country recorded the song on video in the early 1990s as a tribute to Burns as an expression of Scottish heritage. Stuart, who was originally approached to head up the band's contribution of their rendition to celebrate Burns's work (ironically close to the 300th anniversary of the battle), characterised the song as, "strident" and reflected on Burns writing: *"The whole atmosphere that surrounds his work is something that is not only contemporary, but worldly as well. It's something that is a great outward looking work."* Big Country is well-positioned to meet the challenge of recording such a time-honoured, traditional song because of its own excellence in blending traditional Celtic themes and melodies with more modern ones. Big Country's version of "Killiecrankie" stands with the best of their original material in representing a vision of pride in Scottish heritage. *"It's a song I remember hearing in my youth. I remember it being a really strident sort of melody and "real inspiring". When I was asked to do this celebration it was the first thing that came to mind. I think that Burns would have enjoyed the version. I know he was not someone who was adverse to a wild night himself and I tried to do a wild, up-tempo version that is a lot out of control in places. I feel the song, there's a great pounding, strident beat all the way through, you know the wail of the charge, the race of horse. I just think that he would have enjoyed the approach we took. I think it's very much the kind of approach that was in mind when the song was written."*

Jim McConnell (002954)

WANTED: "The Seer Live In New York" and "Country Club Convention, Dunfermline (1991) on VHS video. *Jim, the "River Of Hope" video is available from me at Country Club (see merchandise list).* Jim is also searching for a list of singles, "Harvest Home", "East Of Eden", "Just A Shadow" 7". "Where The Rose ..." 7" and 12", "PIOT" 12", "Alone" 12" pic disc and CD (Pt 1 & 2) "Rep Party Reptile" 12" and CD, "Ships" CD (pt 1 & 2) "Save Me" 12" and Cass, "Heart Of The World", "Beautiful People" 12", 12" pic disc, CD and cass, "One Great Thing" and "K of E" cass.

Simo Neiglick (003377)

, Finland.
INTERNET:neiglick@cc.helsinki.fi

DESPERATELY WANTED:
Videos of Karlsruhe 1995,
London T & C 1990, Munich

Notice Board

1993 and Bonn 1991 and
"You Dreamer" 12" .

Liam Davey (001593)

FOR SALE: "Fields of Fire" 12" remix £7.00, "IABC" rare orange 12" £12.00, "IABC" 12" remix £7.00, "K of E" 12" £5.00, "Chance" 12" remix £7.00, "Chance" rare pic disc 12" £15.00 and "Wonderland" 12" remix £7.00. UK Postage and packing £1.00. Many other BC rarities available plus Skids. Please write to Liam for details and include SAE. Cheques payable to L. Davey.

David Slammon (001710) says THANK YOU to Ann Parking who offered "Non" free of charge to anyone who wrote to her - she had quite a few replies, but she chose me because Ireland did not qualify for Euro '96 and England did! It just shows how good-hearted BC fans are. God bless her - I tried HMV, Virgin, Our Price, Golden Discs and various independent record shops in Dublin with no joy.

From Alan Simspson (003411)

First of all, thank you Alan for the Newspaper cutting - WTLF dog used in an Apricot, Glenrothes job advert in *The Courier and Advertiser*, January 1996. Jan

WANTED: 12" "You Dreamer" limited edition.

Via E-mail the existence of a band called "The Seer" has come to my knowledge. They are from Augsburg and indeed named themselves after the album as they say that BC was one of their major influences.

David Neale (003764)

WANTED: Preferably guitar tab transcriptions but if not standard chords. Budding guitarist who wishes to play BC songs - fav tracks appear on "Steeltown", "Through A Big Country," "Why The Long Face" and "Buffalo Skinners". Can anyone help?

Paul Bratley (001495)

First of all, Paul, back-issues are available from the merchandise list. Jan

WANTED: 12" and CD of "Thirteen Valleys", and copies of concerts from 1989 onwards, photos of the Dunfermline Convention and the Convention video and ON OFFER "Made In Heaven" and copies of concerts 1983 to 1989.

Darren Ralph (004047)

WANTED: "Ships" CD, the Texas Tapes and interviews plus videos.

Darren, The River Of Hope Vid is still available from the merchandise list. Jan

Rohan O'Reilly (004188)

Australia

WANTED: sheet music - photocopies would be great just let Rohan know P & P costs.

Joep Mens (004002)

Holland

WANTED: VHS video of BC concert on BBC New Year's Eve 1995/6 and concert in Germany - Karlsruhe July 1995 plus other live audio recordings.

Professional photos available in exchange.

Neil Cutting (003939)

Neil says he has managed to buy some pretty rare BC records from a local chap who has a comprehensive collection which he is selling (It may well be too late as the letter from Neil is undated but it could be worth a try). Neil does not give a name but the phone number is:- 01305 779953. Neil has ON OFFER an American 12" promo of "Just A Shadow" PRO333-I. Call him on

Darren Ralph (004047)

UK

WANTED: music for BC songs - learning to play the guitar and needs some music with which he is familiar to help him learn. Can anyone help?

Sean McCarney (004105)

, UK

WANTED: BC videos and various lyrics (lyrics would be in the lyric book but I've not got one left so, if someone can help - Jan).

Penpals:-

Julie Wilton (001498)

Wants penpals from the west country in order to travel to and from gigs together.

Sergio Diaz (003825)

Spain.

100655.2622@Compuserve.Com

There are only two other current members of CC from Spain, Sergio, but a more on the general database. Jan Born in 1971 likes The Chameleons, All About Eve and The The amongst others.

Dean Davis (001793)

Dean's wife likes BC but not enough to go again and again to gigs so, he would like to hear from fans in London with whom he can go to gigs. Please drop him a line.

Letter from Keith Groom (003749).

".... 12th July at Joe's Pub (Duke of York). Joe has looked after security on some of the band's gigs and also the last Rolling Stones tour and Big Country did a freebie gig as a thank you to him.

Stuart somehow got parted from his guitar en-route to the venue and one of the locals had to go home to get his for Stuart to use! The band went down really well with the locals even if the set was cut short due to a lack of spare strings!"

As received via E-mail from Oliver Hunter

Review of 'Eclectic' from Q by Paul Davies

Stripped of the Caledonian corn, Braveheart bombast and bagpipe-twirling braggadocia, Big Country allow themselves some rare moments of subtlety and sensitivity on this semi-unplugged album recorded at London Dingwalls. Ambling through a selection of homegrown hits and slightly unusual covers, Stuart Adamson invests King of Emotion, Winter Sky and Buffalo Skinners with a quiet grandeur, whilst the bohemian charms of Big Yellow Taxi are dragged on a bizarre and enjoyable tour through Cairo backstreets via the musical interventions of the Hossam Ramzy Percussion section. Springsteen's I'm On Fire is given a thigh-slapping cowpunk makeover, Eleanor Rigby and Ruby Tuesday are ploddingly workmanlike, but the version of The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down positively spits fire.

(3 stars).