

WE SAVE NO SOULS!



The Big Country Fanzine

Issue 6 - July 1990

From the Editors

Hello and welcome to another edition of WSNS. Sorry it's a bit later than originally intended (sounds just like Country Club, doesn't it) but as you will read later, there is a reason for this. As you know there has been loads of activity over the last couple of months, so without further ado, let's press on.

As announced in the music press, the band are to headline the first night of the 5th birthday celebrations of the Town and Country Club, to be held at the "Ally Pally", the Alexandra Palace in North London. Also to appear are Nils Lofgren (Springsteen's guitarist), Energy Orchard, who have been getting a lot of critical acclaim, and a band called The Grip. All this happens on Thursday 9 August. There are also to be two warm up gigs at Doncaster Dome Leisure Centre on August 7 and at Cambridge Corn Exchange on August 8. It is thought that the band will then go into the recording studio with Tim Palmer to record their 5th album.

The recent gigs appear to have been a great success and of course the Greatest Hits album has done really well in the charts despite very fierce competition from the likes of Madonna and Soul II Soul. The album only missed the number 1 spot on entry by a few hundred sales and although it is slipping down the chart now, the current burst of TV and radio advertising should should see a few more copies shifted.

What was a major disappointment was of course the failure of "Save Me" to dent the Top 40, stalling at 41 for two weeks before dropping back. This was ensured in part by negligible radio play, certainly from Radio 1, though reports from around the country report little difference apart from a few isolated area, Birmingham, Newcastle etc... Let's hope that "Heart of the World", due for release on 9 July does better, but the realist in us says otherwise.

You may have noticed an article in the June issue of Record Collector magazine on the history of Big Country

together with a discography. Jeremy was approached about 12 months ago by the magazine to write an article on Big Country and the main bulk was written by Jeremy and Douglas with some fine tuning by Phil Read and Eamon Bedford. We submitted it, but heard nothing further until it actually appeared last month. We were quite disappointed as obviously the article is very out of date and coming out as it does just after the album and tour, the ending makes no sense at all.

In the article mention is made of a picture disc of "East of Eden", don't worry collectors, this is just an error beyond our control as some of the text has been altered. Worst of all, we haven't been paid yet!

Was anyone listening to Radio Luxemburg on the night of May 15 ? It seems they did an interview with Bruce just prior to him going on stage at St Andrews University and mention was made of an "unofficial" fan club for the band, run by someone called Rob Ross (we think). He had apparently 'phoned Radio Luxemburg to tell them about the gig, which was arranged at very short notice, and this had prompted the DJ, Tony Murrel, to 'phone the University. Bruce mentioned in the interview that he would like to meet this bloke as he was described as a mega BC fan. We have written to Radio Luxemburg to try and get some more information...watch this space.

Finally, we have decided that with immediate effect, we are going to publish WSNS on a quarterly basis and future editions will be out in the first week of January, April, July and October. We will, however, from Issue 7, be increasing the size of each issue to 36 pages and have you noticed the very trendy stylish card jacket now being worn by this issue!

STAY ALIVE !

Look Back

The Big Country Diary - May 15 to August 14

- 15 May 1990 - start of the "Through a Big Country tour at St Andrews, Fife
- 20 May 1989 - cancellation of "Peace" gigs after Stuart again falls victim throat and chest virus.
- 1990 - "Through a Big Country" enters UK LP charts at No 2.
- 1983 - release of "In a Big Country" on 7" and 12"
- 28 May 1983 - "In a Big Country" enters UK chart.
- 3 June 1990 - band perform six song set at Glasgows "Big Day", only the last 1½ songs are shown on Channel 4. Shame !
- 9 June 1986 - "The Teacher" 7" and 12" released.
- 8 June 1987 - Mark drums for the "house" band at the Princes Trust concert.
- 17 Jun 1986 - "The Teacher" enters UK singles chart.
- 19 Jun 1988 - band play festival in East Berlin.
- 20 Jun 1986 - group perform "Fields of Fire" at Princes Trust 10th Anniversary concert at Wembley.
- 21 Jun 1957 - birthday of Mark Brzezicki.
- 23 Jun 1988 - rehearsals at R.E.L. studios in Edinburgh.
- 24 Jun 1986 - "The Teacher" peaks at No 28 in UK charts.
- 30 Jun 1986 - release of "The Seer" the bands 3rd LP.
- 8 July 1986 - "The Seer" enters UK album charts.
- 15 Jul 1983 - release of "The Crossing" arguably the bands finest LP and certainly one of the best LP's of the 1980's.
- 22 Jul 1986 - BBC2 broadcast highlights of the bands show at Reading Hexagon theatre, recorded earlier in the year one the first leg of the "Seer" tour.
- 28 Jul 1984 - "The Crossing" spends a full year in the UK album charts.
- 5 Aug 1984 - "Play at Home" documentary on Channel 4.
- 8 Aug 1988 - release of "King of Emotion" on 7" 12" and CD
- 1986 - video for "One Great Thing" filmed in Nottingham.
- 9 Aug 1986 - the band play Knebworth Park as support to Queen.

14 Aug 1988 - "King" enters UK chart at No 24

15 Aug 1988 - band perform "King" on BBC show "Wogan"

Once again our thanks go to John McKinstry for the information contained in "Look Back". As we have now completed a 12 month period, the feature will be rested until next year, when it will be completely updated with all the happenings of your favourite band.

Daily Star
5/6/90

Sad Stuart prays for a big future

☆ BIG COUNTRY singer Stuart Adamson has poured out his heart to Splash following the crippling mystery virus that permanently threatens to take away his voice.

Doctors have failed to identify the cause of the illness, which forced the star to cancel four gigs last year.

Stuart says sadly: "I panicked when it first happened to me.

"I just wondered what my future was going to be as I've no other skills to fall back on if I have to quit singing.

"There is nothing else I can do, and there's nothing that I want to do.

"I don't have a head for business matters at all."

He confesses: "I'd hate to have to open a studio or work for any other group."

Stuart, who scored huge hits with Look Away, In A Big Country and Wonderland, reckons the best part of being in a band is that he can spend more time with his children, Callum, eight, and Kirstin, four.

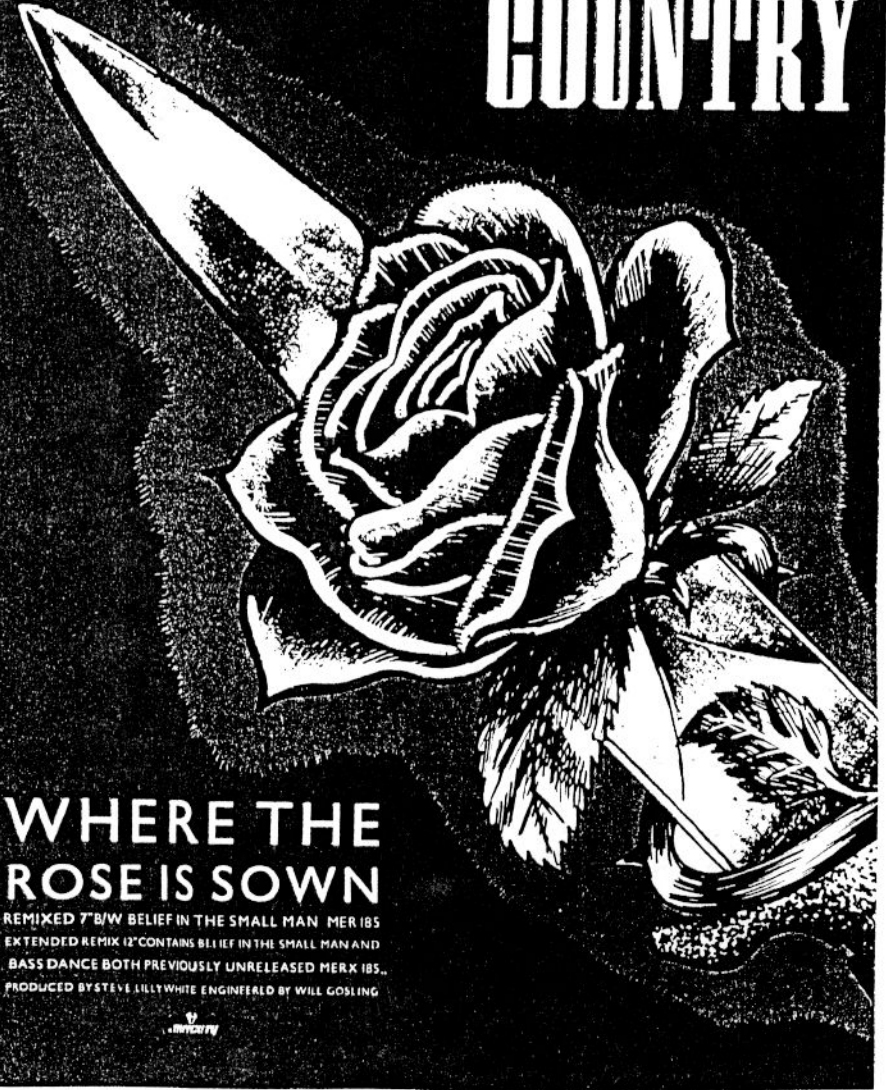
He says: "It's great to be able to spend so much time with them."

Please find enclosed a wrapper from the latest product to hit the market. I've heard people say that Stuart Adamson is tasty but this is ridiculous.

Frankie Arrives At Hollywood, Fenton.



BIG COUNTRY



WHERE THE ROSE IS SOWN

REMIXED 7" B/W BELIEF IN THE SMALL MAN MER 185
EXTENDED REMIX 12" CONTAINS BELIEF IN THE SMALL MAN AND
BASS DANCE BOTH PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED MERX 185..
PRODUCED BY STEVE LILLYWHITE ENGINEERED BY WILL GOSLING


mercury

The Skids - A Pocket History

by Dominic Williams

My first experience of The Skids was when they released *Into the Valley*, however the story starts rather earlier than that.

In 1977, Stuart Adamson and Willie Nelson played in a band called Tattoo who played David Bowie and Status Quo covers at local dances and the like. Then onto the scene came a bleach haired sixteen year old called Richard Jobson. An advert in *Melody Maker* brought forth a drummer, Tom Kellichan and this was the start of The Skids.

The band impressed Sandy Muir, who owned a local chain of record shops and this led to the launch of No Bad records whose first was "Charles" by The Skids. After this Adamsons and Jobsons writing talent soon started to attract interest from some of the major record companies. Virgin Records were the company who won their signatures and the first single for Virgin was "Sweet Suburbia" which came as a limited edition white vinyl release. Then came the 4-track EP "Wide Open", the 12" of which came in red vinyl. By this time they had won the praise of John Peel and Annie Nightingale at the BBC.

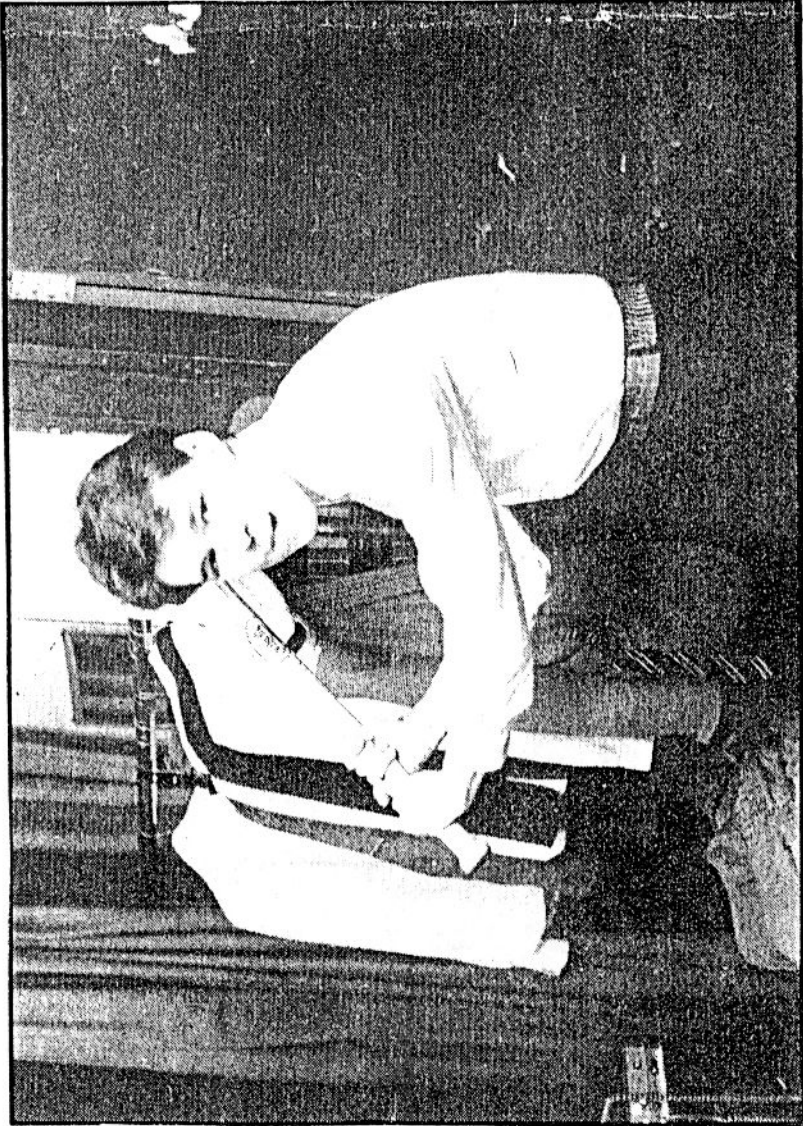
In February 1979, The Skids got into the Top 10 with "Into the Valley", followed by the LP "Scared to Dance" which also spawned "Masquerade". This is still my favourite and I still play it regularly as for me it's as good as anything Big Country have done. The single was released as a double pack, the extra tracks being "Aftermath Dub", a haunting re-mix of Masquerade, and Another Emotion. "Charade" was the next single, a catchy tune which featured the atmospheric "Grey Parade" on the B-side.

Their second LP was called "Days in Europa" and showed a further development of Jobsons lyrical capability.

At the start of 1980, temporary drummer Rusty Egan, who had earlier replaced Tom Kellichan, and bassist Willie Simpson were replaced by Mike Bailey and Russell Webb

respectively and later the same year they released what has come to be regarded as their finest LP, The Absolute Game. The singles were "Working for the Yankee Dollar", "Woman in Winter", "Circus Games" and "Goodbye Civilian". Three of these were released in limited formats, the most notable being the double pack "Working..." This was a gatefold sleeve containing "Hymns from a Haunted Ballroom" and David Bowie's "All the Young Dudes". These tracks were part of a John Peel session from 1979. "Woman in Winter" was released as a comic book which contained a very self-indulgent adventure story where the band ended up as the heroes. I wonder what Stuart thinks of that now? After "The Absolute Game" Stuart had decided to make a break from The Skids and his relationship with Richard Jobson had deteriorated into little short of mutual dislike. He had long had the idea for a new band that would take music beyond the fixed ideals of fashion and trends and become something more uplifting and spiritual. And so Big Country was born.....





Beat on the brat . . . Stuart Adamson limbers up for schoolkid's matinee.

New Musical Express 1st November, 1980

Pop wife Sandra puts family and keep-fit first

MUSIC throbs as the lovely lady in the black-and-white leotard puts the locals through their aerobic paces.

And the women – and men – in the Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline, are on reduced rates.

It isn't the first place you'd go looking for a pop star's wife – but Sandra Adamson isn't your typical pop star's wife.

The wife of Stuart Adamson, singer, lead guitarist and songwriter of the phenomenally successful Scots band Big Country, has her feet firmly planted on the Fife soil, where she was raised.

When she teaches her six hours-a-week of cut-price keep-fit, she's just one of the crowd. But her aerobic sessions are real class.

Sandra, 30, has just trained in the world's top centre, The Institute of Aerobics Research, in Dallas, Texas.

That was founded by Ken Cooper, the keep-fit system's guru.

REMAIN

It took a year of home study and a special examination week in the USA to qualify as an aerobics and dance trainer.

"Not a keep-fit teacher," Sandra insists.

So, why didn't she just start up a ritzy studio and make a fortune?

"I do have the facilities, but what I'm doing suits me fine," she said.

"It lets me get on with being a mother, too."

MEDALS

Stuart and Sandra have two kids – Callum, eight, and Kirsten, four – and the couple are determined that the kids will as remain as normal as their mum and dad.

Despite Stuart and Big Country's gold record success in America, Japan, Europe – and even Russia – Sandra can't get into the superstar-wife life.

"It sometimes upsets people, because they expect the glitzy glam stuff," she says.

"That's not us. We integrate perfectly with the people around us and it would be shame if we couldn't. Daughter Kirsten also seems to be following her mum's footsteps as a dancer.

"She's been Highland dancing for the last six months, and has

picked up a handful of medals," said mum.

"She's very competitive."

A former professional dancer, Sandra had to retire after a foot injury and took up aerobics instead.

FIT

"It's an excellent aid to health, but the trainer has to know what he or she is doing," she says.

"I have mixed classes, and Stuart joins my class three times a week, when he's able."

"He needs to be really fit to keep going on a stage for three hours.



STRIPED FOR ACTION .. Sandra and her daughter, Kirsten, four. And, right, husband Stuart.

Daily Record 28/2/90

The man who billed Granty

(or...didn't we have a lovely time, the day we went to Dunfermline)

It all started with a 'phone call. I had just returned from a short holiday in Eire when John McKinstry rang to tell me that the band were to play in Dunfermline next Tuesday, the 1st of May for Channel 4's "Rock Steady" programme. Time was short, so the next morning I rang the ticket agency in Edinburgh, whose number John had given me, only to be put on to Regular Music in Dunfermline, who I assumed was a record shop. I rang and reserved two tickets and when I mentioned that I was coming up from Newcastle he said.. "Bruce says to stay home and watch it on TV, it's cheaper" I had heard people talking in the background, so I asked "Is Bruce there ?"

"Yes"

"Could I speak to him ?"

"Hang on..."

"Hello, Bruce here.."

I told him who I was and he said he had heard of "WSNS" but hadn't actually seen it, so I promised I would take some copies up to Dunfermline for him. He suggested that I come up before the show and we could have a chat. We talked for a few minutes about the upcoming gigs and how nervous they were about them, not having played live for so long.

Ray and I had decided to go up and spend the day in Fife but at the last minute (the Monday evening to be precise) Neil decided he wanted to go, even though he didn't have a ticket. We went to Regular Music, but they had sold out. For the record (excuse the pun) the shop sells musical equipment, guitars, amps etc... and is frequented by Bruce and Stuart. Neil decided to go to Edinburgh for a few hours while Ray and I went off to take some pictures, agreeing to meet up later on in the day.

After we had met Neil again, we went to the Glen Pavillion the scene of the evenings festivities, bumped into Phil Read and his mate Elliott and went off in search of band members. We found Bruce in the canteen area and were able to chat to him for about 20-25 minutes. When he found out that Neil didn't have a ticket he said that he should be able to

pay at the door, but if there was a problem, to get word to him and he would see what he could do. Who says pop stars don't have any heart !

Time for some liquid refreshment we thought, so after meeting John McKinstry and two of his mates we proceeded to a local hostelry, via the chippy. (Has the gum stopped bleeding yet, Phil ?) Neil had stayed at the Pavillion to try and get in and also as he wanted to see The Quireboys who were first act on stage. Bruce had told us earlier in the day that Big Country were due on at about 10.15 so there was no hurry.

Arriving back at the venue, we decided to hand out some flyers advertising WSNS. Everything was going well until Neil unwittingly gave one to Ian Grant. Nice one Neil ! Mr Grant (U2 can have a pony tail like mine) was not very happy but after I had spoken to him he calmed down a bit and agreed that I could talk to him after the show, back at the bands hotel.

And so to the show itself. There were only about 300 people in the hall so it made for a great atmosphere. Very hot, very sweaty, but great to see the lads back in action doing what they do best, playing live. As they had only had about 3-4 days to rehearse they were a bit rusty and the PA sounded a bit "grungy" at times, but technology can never diminish the feeling and emotion of being at a Big Country gig. It's difficult to put into words, but I am sure you all know exactly what I mean. Pat played well and got a good reception, even though he admitted to me afterwards that he had been far from happy with his performance and thought he had made quite a few mistakes. Stuart made the comment that all three versions of Big Country had made their live debut at the Glen Pavillion, synchronicity or what ! The set was the same as played on the mini-tour, with the exclusion of Porrohman, The Storm, Lost Patrol and Black-skinned, blue eyed boy. The last encore of Neil Youngs "Rockin' in the free world" took everyone by surprise, but soon had the

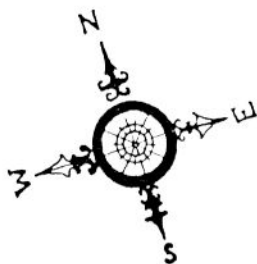
whole audience singing along.

After an hour and fifty minutes, it was all over. Dripping with sweat and very tired we headed back to the cars and said goodbye to John, Phil and friends. They were headed back to Glasgow so that Phil and Elliott could catch an overnight train back to Birmingham (which they missed and had to spend the night on John's sofa) and Ray, Neil and I went off to the hotel to talk to Ian Grant and hopefully one or two of the band as well. Stuart had gone straight home after the gig as he was flying down to London early the following morning to do interviews and Radio 1's "Singled Out" programme and Bruce had also gone straight home. Only Tony and Pat were there, and Tony went off to bed before I had a chance to speak to him, but I did manage a few words with Pat. He was suffering from a touch of flu and had not been very happy with his performance, though we assured him it had sounded great (which it had). He had heard of the fanatical following that the band had, but was astonished when we told him about Phil and Elliott coming all the way from Birmingham. He signed a few autographs for us and then we sat down with Ian Grant, the main topic of conversation being, of course Country Club. I won't go into detail here as that is dealt with in a separate feature, but it became apparent that we were not going to be involved in the production of the Country Club magazine, except as contributors, which was contrary to what we had been led to believe.

Anyway, it was soon time to go as we had a long drive home and I had to be at work at 9 o'clock. We made it home at about 5 a.m. despite falling asleep twice at the wheel (thanks for waking me up Ray) AND I slept in, making me two hours late for work. Still, it's all in a good cause, innit !

Douglas Johnson

BIG COUNTRY



Whatever happened to...Country Club

As most of you will know, Stuart rang Douglas in November last year to ask if we would be interested in possibly taking over the running of "Country Club" which had drifted into total inactivity. Stuart liked our fanzine and preferred our approach, saying that he would rather have a "fanzine-type" magazine for Country Club than, as he put it "a British Home Stores catalogue". However, despite a further 'phone call from Stuart to Jeremy in January nothing further was heard until Ian Grant rang Douglas in early April. He had found an organisation in Hertfordshire called "Under Cover" to handle the day to day admin of Club membership, but might still be interested in talking to us about doing something with the Club magazine. He would get back to us in a week or so.

Nothing.

Douglas eventually managed to talk to Ian Grant after the Dunfermline gig on 1st May, back at the bands hotel. Country Club ground to a complete halt because of the bands inactivity, in fact the band did split up in July-August last year and Stuart was very disillusioned with the whole scene. However they drifted back together again in late '89 (shades of '85) and Stuart is now in a very positive and creative frame of mind. The Country Club is now being run by "Under Cover" who are a commercial organisation with several fan clubs under their wing. We are obviously not going to be involved to the degree that we had originally hoped, though we would be able to contribute to the Club magazine if we wished to. We have therefore decided to remain exactly as we are, or rather to expand and improve our service wherever possible as we feel we are a valid alternative to Country Club. We would like to express our thanks at the large number of letters of support we received from our readers and hope that we can continue to live up to your expectations. While we are delighted to see Country Club running again there are several points which we feel are worthy of some comment.

1) The "programme" on sale at the recent gigs. To our knowledge, no effort was made to point out to Club members that this was an edition of the Club magazine and that they would be getting one in the post shortly after the tour. A lot of Club members will therefore have wasted their money.

2) The content of the programme left a lot to be desired. A few black & white publicity shots, information about the new single and album which the majority would have known about anyway and...not a lot else. The excuse given was that there was very little time, but surely the gigs were announced almost 2 months beforehand and must have been planned before that. Isn't that enough time to plan something a little better? As the tour was to promote the hits package, how about a nice glossy brochure with good quality colour shots of the band throughout the various stages of their career. OK it would have cost more but surely a genuine fan would have been prepared to pay a little more to get something worth having.

3) We quote from the note from Ian Grant. "There is no point dwelling on matters of the 80's" when referring to the old Country Club. We don't agree. We think all members of Country Club deserve a full explanation and apology for the shoddy treatment they have received over the last 18 months or so. We hope something is forthcoming and quickly.

One interesting thing to come out of Douglas' talk with Ian Grant was that the original artwork for past T-shirts etc... has been made available and this means that in the (near) future it should be possible to obtain T-shirts from the bands past tours, hopefully going right back to "Crossing" days.

Anyway, let's hope that whoever is now looking after Country Club can sort out the unholy mess it seems to have got itself into. Anyone who has any problems with them, please let us know, there's probably nothing we can do, but you never know.

BIG BOY'S ON THE BALL

THE clenched fist 'ere we go brigade was out in force, putting in some useful pre-World Cup training on Friday night.

Setting for the Big match was the long-awaited Big Country concert at Inverness Bowling Centre.

And following last season's postponement, which produced a panel verdict of disappointment all round, the fans were looking forward to an all-action performance from the team.

The band's midfield playmaker Stuart Adamson had obviously read the pre-match script, because he turned in a non-stop 90-minute display of energy and enthusiasm — and still had something left for the 30 minutes of extra time encores.

Half-time

He even gave the three other band members a half-time break by slipping a two-number, folk-club style solo spot into the proceedings.

From this you could conclude that Big Country are a one-man band — that would be unfair on the others, who provide a solid and professional platform.

But everything revolves round the charismatic Adamson — and the crowd lapped it up.

Which leads neatly into the group's dilemma... which direction should they take?

It's the classic situation which has faced many rock bands before, Status Quo perhaps being the prime example.

Formula

Do they stick with the tried and trusted formula, or go for something new? Certainly on Friday the old standards brought much the best response.

Third song Fields Of Fire had the crowd jumping, and the most spontaneous reaction came to other oldies like Wonderland, Chance and In A Big Country.

Newer material didn't have the same impact, and it seemed the band was aiming for a compromise by

closing with cover versions of The Equals' Black Skin Blue Eyed Boys and Neil Young's Rockin' In The Free World.

On the plus side, Big Country overcame the venue's less-than-ideal acoustics by not playing at full blast — and by the end it was survival of the sweatiest down the front as the punters showed their delight.

The final result?

An honourable score draw between band and fans, with the word just after the final whistle from the management dugout that the boys enjoyed themselves so much that they would be happy to forego home advantage and return to the Highland Capital for a replay.

I enjoyed the night but, being the same age as Adamson and

presumably having been brought up on a similar musical diet, perhaps I'm biased. And hits from a mere seven years ago don't seem all that old to me!

As Ron Atkinson might less than eloquently put it, "The boy Adamson done well." I agree with the sentiment, if not the grammar — and more importantly, so did the paying public on the terraces.



BIG COUNTRY: two nights at Whitley Bay Ice Rink

Saved — by a Stones hit

BIG COUNTRY were all set to bring out their current hit *Hold The Heart* when they realised something vital was missing . . . a recording for the other side.

"We'd been that busy we'd forgotten to do a B-side," explained guitarist Bruce Watson. "Then we remembered *Honky Tonk Woman*, which we'd recorded live when making a video of our concert at the Pier in New York.

"During the soundcheck we were just mucking about when we played the old Rolling Stones hit. Then, at the end of the gig, we were doing a few encores and thought 'Let's do *Honky Tonk Woman*' — it went down well."

He was quickly to reject any suggestion that *The Seer*, the album from which the A-side came, was a special effort to make up ground lost with the previous LP, *Steeltown*.

"If we'd wanted to, we could have used the same formula as on our first album, *The Crossing*, but we wanted to do something different. The only thing about *Steeltown* is it could have been mixed a little better," Bruce replied.

"We spent a lot of time rehearsing this album, *The Seer*. On *The Crossing* we had spent a long time playing on the road before recording, but with *Steeltown* we more or less wrote it in the studio."

Big Country return to Tyneside tomorrow for two nights at Whitley Bay Ice Rink as part of a short tour, but already are planning their fourth LP.

"We've written four songs and are thinking of recording it about February or March," said Bruce.

"This album should be different again, judging by these songs, but still identifiable as Big Country. We might shock a few people, it's not 'clichéd' Big Country."

Whatever the outcome, it will be a case of writing carefully and especially for the LP, as Bruce explained: "Some bands write 40 songs and have to pick out the ones for the album—we write 11 or 12, use about 10 and the other two go on B-sides."

COMPETITION

Yes folks, it's competition time ! For some time now we have been thinking of having some sort of "identity" for WSNS, so what we would like you to do is design a logo or symbol that we can use on the magazine cover and...wait for it... an exclusive WSNS T-shirt that we hope to have available in the early autumn.

Remember, you don't have to be a brilliant artist as we can probably "tidy up" any designs that we like, but the only things we would ask are;

1) Keep it fairly simple, both in design and colouring. Small orders of multi-coloured T-shirts are not cheap to print and would make the whole thing prohibitive.

2) We cannot really use existing "official" Big Country logos because of possible legal implications. Besides, we want a separate identity for ourselves.

Closing date for entries will be Saturday September 1st and all entries should be sent to Jeremy. The winning design should appear on Issue 7 which will be out in the first week of October and will contain details of how to get your T-shirts. We regret that entries can only be returned if a sufficiently sized, pre-paid envelope is sent with your submission.

The winner of the competition will receive a T-shirt with his/her design on it and a 7" single of "Save Me" autographed and dated by Pat Ahern after his first ever gig with the band in Dunfermline on 1st May this year. The runner up will receive a similarly autographed 12" single of "Save Me"

So come on you lot, let's see those entries come in thick and fast. Remember, the closing date is 1/9/90.

Memoirs of a Bootlegger - Part 2

In 1984 I crossed the border. After spending months biting my nails, Big Country were on tour again and I rushed out and bought a ticket for the Glasgow Apollo show on 21 Dec. In the meantime, a friend at Newcastle University bought tickets for the Newcastle City Hall gig on 9 October. We were about five rows from the front, but I kept the mike down low as there was a bouncer about six feet away and I was convinced he was watching my every move. The result was that you could hear everything, but it sounds like the band were playing next door ! At the Glasgow gig I arrived at about eleven in the morning with copies of Steeltown and The Crossing (red sleeve). The band turned up about 4 o'clock, but I got their autographs anyway.

I was at this gig that disaster struck. I got the tape recorder in OK, down the front of my trousers again. The stage at The Apollo is very high, about 12 feet, so a mate of mine hoisted me onto his shoulders, but lost his balance and over we went, taking six other people with us. I managed to keep hold of the tape recorder but the microphone was a write-off. The resulting tape was very disappointing, but those good people at Radio Clyde were taping the gig, so it didn't matter too much. The concert itself was brilliant, the Apollo is semi-legendary in Scotland and there is always a good atmosphere. The group don't play songs like most groups, they play to and for the audience. The songs from "The Crossing" received most applause as they were more familiar to the audience, although after "Come back to me" there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

For years I was convinced that this would be my last Big Country concert. I missed the "Seer" tour as I was in the process of moving from Glasgow to Blackpool. I missed the "Under Wraps" tour as no-one told me about it. I was convinced the group had split up, when all of a sudden "King of Emotion" was released. As soon as the dates were announced I got a ticket for Manchester Apollo and as it was so far away we decided to make a day of it. We spent

the day raiding all the record shops in Manchester and ended up outside the venue at about 5 o'clock. I was knackered so I wasn't moving ! My tape recorder was in my coat pocket, I intended to put it down my trousers again, but couldn't because the bouncers were watching us. Finally we got in, we were the first and I think that's why we weren't frisked. Outside I had bought a T-shirt from a "machete wielding thug" who was wielding T-shirts at a fiver a time. I got mine for three quid "...it's all I've got mate, honest.." and I went to the toilet to get changed. It was 6' by 8', two urinals and two pedestals, but I changed into my Superman outfit and found my seat.

I sat through Diesel Park West, yawning, then realised I was in the wrong seat. Mine was three rows from the front, right next to a bouncer. The group hit the stage and everyone seemed to want to sit in my seat. After "Peace" the crowd settled down a bit, although the idiot behind me was convinced he was Kate Bush and sang her part in "The Seer", albeit in a different key to the rest of the band. The geezer next to me kept taking photographs which was attracting the bouncers attention. I was getting paranoid and I had to keep the microphone low again, with the same results as the Newcastle gig. When they played "In a Big Country" there was a tremendous surge and Damien, my mate, was gone, swept away with the crowd and I didn't see him again until after the show.

The Apollo is miles from anywhere, the nearest building is about 200 yards away and the wind was pretty strong and very cold. After waiting for about half an hour, the lads came out. About 40 people were waiting, they signed autographs (some people seemed to have complete collections of records) posed for photos, chatted etc... I was bloody frozen but as excited as a 5 year old on Christmas Day.

Unfortunately the next gig I was to see them at, Preston Guildhall, was cancelled, so I await the next one with bated breath, or is that bad breath !

BIG COUNTRY

Through A Big Country (Greatest Hits)

MERCURY 846022/MC/CD

IT ISN'T Christmas. 'Through A Big Country' is a double album. The Big C circa 1990 are a thoroughly unhip prospect. All these factors point, somewhat reassuringly, to a package for fans rather than a vehicle for a fast buck.

Still, that's always been the ethos of the last decade's greatest E-bow exponents. As singer/bagpipe guitarist Stuart Adamson so rightly concluded in 'Wonderland's chill snowscape: "*With innocence within ourselves/ We sing the same old song*". They did and the be-tartaned hardcore loved it. And those gigs – clenched fists erupting from a sweat cauldron of pure joy; the poignant cries of "Oi", "Hah" and "Cha". Brings

from "Select" magazine

tears to the eyes.

Ahem. The track listing here is pretty academic: all the singles plus 'Eiledon' and the optimistically included newie, 'Save Me', in roughly chronological order. Thus, like the band's LPs, the songs pale as time progresses and Big Country gradually become unwitting parodies of themselves.

'In A Big Country', 'Fields Of Fire' and 'Chance', from that masterwork 'The Crossing', defy introduction. The 'Steeltown' tracks hit and miss; those of 'The Seer' return sporadically to the original roomy Scottish values (and don't forget that Kate Bush's instantly legendary "*Hmmm yes*" on her song 'The Sensual World' stemmed from her guested "*Yeah yeah yooooo*" on 'The Seer'). By the time Adamson goes glasnost with 'Peace in Our Time', the quartet are just shadows of their former selves.

Let this be the swan-song, Stuart, so that 'Where The Rose Is Sown' might ring true: "*Our name will never die/This time will be forever*". Sniffle.

■■■□□ NICK GRIFFITHS



Interview

We now conclude the interview with Stuart & Mark from RTE (Irish radio). When we left them last time, the conversation had turned to the Moscow trip of '88.

Int) Somebody told me you had problems getting your sound equipment back out of the country, is that true ?

SA) No, that was a slight exaggeration by the gentlemen of the press. What we did was, we actually took...Mark is sponsored by Pearl drums and Josh the keyboards player has a deal with Kawai keyboards, so what we were able to do...Bruce and myself use Marshall amplifiers and Fender amplifiers and we were able to take some equipment which those companies gave us and leave it there for use in the music centre in Moscow.

MB) They just haven't got any equipment at all really..

Int) So did you leave basically a lot of instruments ?

MB) I left my drum kit...

SA) We left a drum kit, keyboards and some amplifiers..

MB) ..but it wasn't our own gear that we were playing..

SA) ..it was donated for us to take there by the companies...

Int) So does that mean there is a very happy Russian somewhere playing rock'n'roll on a Big Country set of gear.

SA) Hopefully more than one, because we left it at a music centre which is used by lots of different musicians in Moscow.

Int) Great, that's excellent. Peter Wolf produced the new LP, I'm interested to know why you chose him to work with, he's worked with Starship and I think the J.Geils band.

SA) No, no, this is a mistake, people have confused... there's two Peter Wolfs, the Peter Wolf we worked with is a classically trained pianist from Vienna, who played for 10 albums with the Frank Zappa band...and he is the guy who worked with Starship, but he's such a brilliant, off the wall genius musician that as soon as I met him I immediately wanted to work with him, he's got a great attitude, he's a great enthusiast, he's very much like

people we've worked with in the past like Steve Lillywhite and Robin Millar inasmuch as he's a great fan of music, he's interested in all types of music and really gets into people and atmosphere...and he's a real great person to work with.

Int) So Mark, am I the first person to make that mistake of thinking it was the Peter Wolf...

MB) No, we did a month of interviews in America and everyone thought it was the J.Geils Peter Wolf, it was a constant correction.

Int) So how long ago were you in America, how many weeks ago ?

SA) About a month ago, six weeks ago.

Int) Listening to the LP it sounds very much geared towards the American market, was that deliberate on your part ?

SA) I don't think so, I mean people have said this to us and to be quite honest it's actually the most live album we've ever done, you know, for the first time we were actually playing very much as a band in the studio. Previously what we would do, I would do a guide guitar and then just do a version of the song just on guitar and then Mark would lay the drums down and we'd build on that, but this time Peter encouraged us very much to play as a band and I think it suits us to do that because it means that when we take the songs out to do live it's very easy for us to communicate the songs properly, plus a lot of the material we recorded this time we had actually done live before we recorded it which I think makes a big difference for us, you know, I think it makes the whole thing much more cohesive and much more expressive and lets us keep the arrangements very simple, we certainly did much less overdubs because we did it live.

Int) Mark, is America somewhere that you would like to conquer in a bigger way ?

MB) Yeah, it's a big challenge, I mean you really do have to spend a long time over there to make any result..

SA) It's been a bit strange for us there because we had a huge burst of success there at first, then with albums

which are perhaps a bit more dense and a bit more complicated for people listening, things kind of stayed at the same level rather than progressed, but it's a nice level to be at you know, we have a very committed, hard-core following out there and it gives us a nice base to build on. We go there to start touring within the next couple of months and hopefully we'll be able to build on that.

Int) Well I hope so, you've a very hard-core, dedicated following...

SA) Indeed we have, I have to say that the support we have had in this country has been absolutely unbelievable the people are the warmest and most spiritual people that I've ever come across in 15 years of touring.

Int) It's the celtic connection...

SA) It must be, definately.

Int) Well it's not over yet, there's one more date here at the National Stadium tomorrow night here in Dublin, I hope it goes tremendously well for you, Stuart and Mark from Big Country, thank you very much.

Phew, that's that, hope you enjoyed reading it. We are always on the look-out for tapes of interviews, preferably from local radio or even from abroad which most (if not all) of our readers won't have heard. Please get in touch with either of us if you have anything which may be of interest.

Next month we'll be delving back into the archives for an interview from the early days, though quite which one we haven't decided.

SPOKE TO Stuart Adamson (right) and Tony Butler of **BIG COUNTRY** last week. Both seemed happy with the advance sales of their greatest hits package which has already gone gold before release.

Incidentally, Stuart tells me he did a version of *Into The Valley* on local TV last week with Richard Jobson. It's the first time they've done that hit from their old **Skids** days since the lads had a bit of a fall out years ago.

Happily they're now the best of pals again.



Sunday Post 20/5/90



Bits and Pieces

WANTS AND SWAPS

Spencer Munday of

wants the 12" of "Just a Shadow". Can anyone help him ?

Dinet Koopman of

wants to know the lyrics to "Song of the South", "Prairie Rose". She can be contacted at the above address.

Mike Osborne

wants a copy of the 12" of "Look Away" (Outlaw Mix) BIGCX11.

How's this for dedication. Phil Read from Birmingham found out about the show at St Andrews in Eife very late, but decided to go all the same. He travelled all the way up, saw about 45 minutes of the show, then had to leave to catch an overnight train home. That's what we call real dedication.

In Issue 5 we mentioned Stuarts solo performance at New Year in Glasgow last year. Gerry Harper from Glasgow has kindly sent us a tape of his performance, the songs being In a Big Country, Peace in our Time and Flower o' Scotland, the latter with Richard Jobson

We are indebted to John Dunlop for providing us with a very detailed listing of all the equipment used by the band since the early days. It is too long and involved to be reproduced here, but if anyone would like a copy, please send an s.a.e. to Douglas.

Virgin Records have just released The Skids "Scared to Dance" on CD at a budget price.

The names of the two backing singers that accompanied the group to Moscow are Julie and Suzy (surnames unknown). They have previously worked with The Cross, Queen drummer Roger Taylor's other band. Thanks to Ian Drain.

Congratulations to Big Country on moving from no.72 up to no.70 in the "Record Collector" magazine poll of the top 500 collectable artists.

Dominic Williams has heard rumours of picture discs of "The Teacher" and "One Great Thing". Anyone else ? Just a reminder to contact Dominic for all your record wants, his address is

There was a nice long interview with Mark Brzezicki in the April 1990 issue of "Rhythm" magazine. Well worth reading and interesting to see what he has to say about his time with and departure from Big Country.

It seems that Nigel Luby, the engineer who recorded the Moscow gigs in October '88 may have done a runner with the master tapes. Bruce told Douglas before the Dunfermline gig that he was refusing to hand them over and the band may have to go to court to get them back.

"Fields of Fire on this ?" says acoustic wielding Stuart in response to a crowd request at Newcastle City Hall (21/5) He plays the opening riff to the delight of the crowd, but decides "...I sound like bloody George Formby, man."

Earlier the same day, at a signing session in the HMV store in Newcastle, Stuart decided he needed a new pair of trainers so he popped across the road to Barratt's shoe shop and bought some. Apparently he was chased out of the shop by a sales assistant asking for an autograph !

"..another promise fallen through, another season passes by you". A lyric from "In a Big Country" or yet another sorry chapter in Newcastle Utd's promotion attempts. (Sorry about the Newcastle bias but as I write most of this stuff, I think I'm allowed a little indulgence - DJ)

This will be news to most of you, but BC were pencilled in to play a "secret" gig at Buster Browns in Edinburgh on a Saturday lunchtime sometime in early April. It seems someone from Radio Forth asked one of the band (presumably Stuart or Bruce) if they would do it, but nothing formal was ever agreed. This didn't stop Radio Forth advertising the gig, but the only way you could get tickets was by winning a 'phone-in competition on their station. Douglas did manage to persuade the publicity department of Radio Forth to let him have 3 guest passes, but when they arrived, the "stars" on show turned out to be Fish and Jim Diamond.

Thanks to Liam Shand for tipping us off in the first place.

Anyone know anything about the address in Leamington Spa that was on the questionnaires handed out at the recent gigs and on the reply coupon inserted in the limited edition 12" of "Save Me". Who is this person ? Are they connected with the newly resuscitated Country Club ? The world awaits an answer with bated breath.

As we now only publish quarterly, there are times when we get information about tours, new releases etc... when there is no new issue due for some time i.e Issue 5 when we found out about details of the album, single and tour before the music press, but too late to put in as it had already gone off to the printers. If anyone wants to send in an s.a.e or two, then we will endeavour to send out any information we get, along the lines of the "Hot News" envelopes used (!) by Country Club. We will not simply re-gurgitate information already printed in the music press, the envelopes will be used to inform readers about any news we feel is important. Please mark the s.a.e's "Country News" in the top right hand corner and send them to Douglas.

The two cover versions played on the recent tour were "Black skinned, blue eyed boy" and old song by The Equals, Eddy Grant's old band (no relation to Ian Grant I suppose) and "Rockin' in the free world", written by Neil Young. The latter appears to be popular as a cover version as it was also played by The Alarm on the tour earlier this year.

A number of people have asked us if there are any live recordings of Big Country available. Apart from Radio Show LP's and bootleg tapes, we only know of one. On an album recorded at The Princes Trust 10th Anniversary concert on 20 June 1986, the band performed "Fields of Fire". Not sure if the album is still available, but if you ask at your local record store we are sure they will tell you. It is on A & M records and the CD catalogue number is CD 3906. We are not, of course, including the various live tracks already released as B-sides, which are fully covered in the discography.

Any personal computer fans out there ? A free cassette game which came from "YC" (Your Commodore) magazine in April this year contained a computer game called Blastball. So what, we hear you ask. The music that is played by the tape at the end of the game is an electronic, synthesised version of...Porrohman ! Depeche Country ? Big Mode ? Thanks to Neil Rutherford for bringing this amazing piece of trivia to our attention. By the way, do the band get any royalties for this ? Stuart, if you're reading this, take note !

Subscriptions/Back Numbers

Just a reminder that a 5-issue subscription can be yours for the paltry sum of £6.00 (UK only) For details of overseas amounts, please contact Douglas.

We also now have a healthy supply of back issues, all available at £1.20 each, also from Douglas.

Well folks, that's your lot for another issue, the next one will be out in the first week of October, so those of you who don't have a subscription, please send money nearer the time.

Without whom etc...

We would like to express our thanks to all those people who have helped to bring this issue of WSNS into being. They include Neil Rutherford, Ray Robson, Phil Read, John McKinstry, Dominic Williams, John Dunlop, Kathy "Kitt" Curry, Tahir Punnoo, Anthony Gilbert, Gerry Harper, Ian Drain and anyone else we have forgotten.