



Live at the Town & Country Club, London

Big Country

Wienerworld - WNRD2573 (DVD)

Available from MVD Entertainment Group.

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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Big Country was one of those 80s bands that rose meteorically in the UK but couldn't catch a decent break in the U.S., no matter what they tried. Still, in Europe, in a decade's time, they went from nowhere to #1 sellers and then slowly back down again until home label Phonogram let them go. After, they came to be a popular opening act for the Who, the Rolling Stones, and others. Not a bad in-lieu to fall back on. Though the ensemble produced 9 albums before dismantling, the 90s and 00s saw an impressive post-era issuance of live releases and anthologies (45 in all!) due to a large cult following. What had not been too known in all that time, because the members never pried into each others private lives, but became a growing concern was that lead singer/guitarist Scott Adamson suffered from mental and emotional problems which led to an alcoholism that bedeviled him for years, finally resulting in suicide in 2001. Scottish and noted for emulating bagpipes via two lead guitars, the band was really just a solid rock and roll unit, nothing more, nothing less. The closest antecedent I can come up with might be the almost-unknown Horslips, who also never made it here but did okay in Europe.

Big Country retained its following, reunited in 2007, and has been touring ever since. This 23-year late release of a 1990 London gig, though, journeys back to the juncture when the first wave had settled, and the 10-year slog to Adamson's demise commenced. The performance is short (50 minutes) with no secondary features but gives a very good insight, if you're not already a partisan, into what made them a band that still hasn't taken the exit: they could rock and they knew what the fans wanted. That's especially apparent in the closer, a version of Neil Young's *Rockin' in the Free World*, where they pull out all the stops.

I think I may know, however, what constituted the indifference the gents encountered here in the States: the UK had sent over so many irrepressible heavyweights to the U.S. for so long—I mean, Jesus, when I think of all the dynamos I saw (King Crimson, Gentle Giant, Led Zeppelin, Uriah Heep, Pink Floyd, Moody Blues, and so on), I boggle—that we had become jaded. In the meantime, American bands caught up fairly well (sorry, fellow Yanks, but the Brits musically and literarily have had it all over us for a long time and still do despite some heroic efforts), the milieu had exploded and spread like wildfire, and everything had pretty much changed, presaging the strange environment we now roam about in. Thus, it became so much easier to fall into The Big Mid-Field Catch-All, and that's what's most interesting here: the proof that Big Country was indeed just one of those bands who held a solid middle position between unknown and immortal and will probably enjoy that slot until they decide to call it quits.

Track List:

- Restless Natives
- Look Away
- Broken Heart (Thirteen Valleys)
- Come Back to Me
- Wonderland
- In a Big Country
- River of Hope
- Rockin' in the Free World

(Songwriting credits not given.)

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