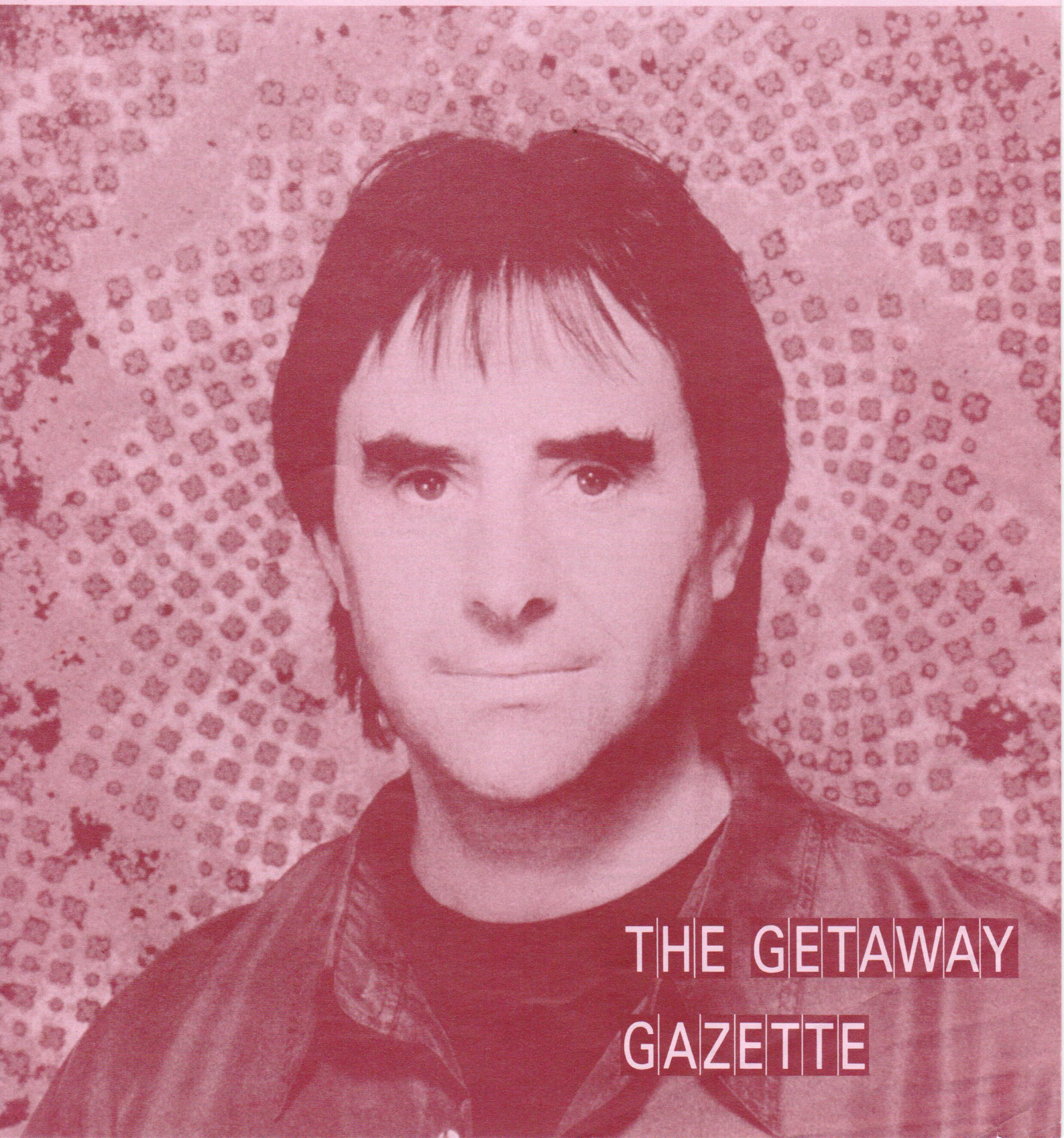


THE NEW *Chris de Burgh* CLUB

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THE GETAWAY
GAZETTE

An enormously belated welcome to the latest - in every sense of the word - edition of The Getaway Gazette. Regular callers to the C de B Hotline will already be partially aware of the protracted saga in eventually publishing this newsletter - chiefly that Chris was not in a position to conduct an interview for it as early as we might have hoped - but the delay was then further compounded by a severe and lingering bout of 'flu suffered by yours truly. . . Whatever, the long and the short of it all is simply. . . we're very, very late with this issue - please accept our humble apologies. Assuming that you will, we'll quickly pass matters straight over to the man himself. Having been unable to provide an interview while on tour in both Paris and Dublin, we finally got a phone call from Chris early in the New Year. This, in full and verbatim, is what he had to say. . .

IN GOOD VOICE

"Happy New Year to all club members! We haven't spoken since I actually went on tour, have we? OK, let's fill in the long gaps. Before the tour started, we did a few days rehearsal in London - although we'd already done eight shows in the eastern Mediterranean, which I spoke about before and enjoyed enormously - but because we had the big sound and light production, we had to run through things with that in mind. By the way, if I start coughing, it's something I'll refer to later on in the interview but talking still makes me cough. Anyway, we rehearsed in a warehouse in London and, I suppose, I did about three days in there although the band were there for a bit longer; afterall, I know the words, they don't! And then we kicked off the tour, in Bournemouth, on September 9. Between then and the 21st of December, I think we played 79 - possibly 80 - concerts and five major television shows in the middle of it all. So that was a lot of extremely hard work. I'm the kind of person who's not mad about days off in the middle of a tour, because it just makes me itchy to try and get home, so I suppose I'm one of the hardest working people - at this level of the profession. Certainly, a lot of my colleagues can only manage two shows in a row - or maybe three, at the outside. People like Sting and Bono can only do two shows before their voice starts giving them a hard time. But, for me, this tour has been about a two-and-a-half shows, five nights out of every six to seven days - and I flourished on it. The British tour went by in a blur; it was very exciting. Particularly since I hadn't played the UK in four years. So, we did Bournemouth and, in fact, what I've got with me here somewhere is a tour schedule! It's actually my filo-fax notes from the year, so what I'll do is I'll refer to them from time to time to jog my memory. Here we go; Bournemouth . . . then, of course, it was Aberdeen - which was a place I hadn't played for years and years and years. In fact, the last time I played Aberdeen I remember I had 'flu, and subsequent to that show in Aberdeen was the first time I ever had to see a throat specialist - because I was in serious trouble and I really couldn't sing a note - and that was 14 years ago. The second time in 14 years that I had to see a throat specialist was the day after the first Belfast show in December. I got another illness then, which I'll discuss as we go along. Anyway, we played Glasgow, which was great; I enjoyed the SEC, they're always very vibrant audiences up there. Then we did two shows in St. Austell which, I think, must have been the smallest ones we've done in years - and possibly the smallest shows of the entire tour - but it was great to be so close up to the people for a change. Then, in the middle of all that, was Exeter which was absolutely outstanding. There was 7,000-plus people in a barn of a place but the atmosphere was sensational. For some reason, possibly because there was a lot of support for the show from people like Orchard FM and radio stations in the district, the place was just. . . jammed. And it wasn't a place that was used to staging concerts or this many people, because I know that afterwards it took some people three to four hours to get out of the place - which is absolutely ridiculous. It only has a bad effect on future concerts in a venue like that when people know that the access, certainly in terms of getting out, is very poor. I was very cross when I heard about that. If I want to go and play there again, people are going to think twice. They'll be saying 'The car park was awful. . . ' Hopefully, the next time I go to a venue like that, they'll be better equipped to deal with that many people.

GETTING INTO THE SWING

"Next we did three nights in Birmingham at the NEC, which was great. We also stayed at one of my favourite places in England - The Belfry. That's where the famous golf course is. They have the English Open there and, of course, the Ryder Cup - which I was at in 1989. I already have my rooms booked for the event at the end of '93! Did I get a chance to actually have a round of golf? Oh, gosh, when people said to me 'Where are you playing in Birmingham?' I said 'I'm playing the Belfry.' And they'd say 'No - what concert hall?' I'd be going 'Oh, I see. . . The NEC. How could I forget! A lot of friends came to the Birmingham show, including my good friend Ian Woosnam. It was very exciting; I always love the NEC, actually. It's a place where you can create a very good, intimate and exciting atmosphere. Those shows were followed by Brighton, down in the south again, and then came one of the stand-out nights of the whole tour for me. There's always outstanding concerts in a tour, for me. I'd say two or three nights when I'm just wired, really feeling on top of things, feeling like a star - and the whole night is just incredibly exciting. One such show was the second night at Earls Court in London, which was the Saturday. The crowd was absolutely fantastic. It was, for me, an outstanding memory. I think there's so few people who've played Earls Court in the last few years, that when you play there - you are a major name. So we were all really fired up about it, and the audience responded in a terrific fashion. It was one of my great memories of the last few months. The London shows were then followed by us going north to Sheffield. Again, we had a terrific show there - and it's a wonderful venue they have, I liked it a lot. It's a place I've never played before, and I was recently shown some of the press coverage following my performance there - and it was some of the best critique I've ever read of any show anywhere. It was just amazing. It's funny; when you get away from the centres, like London, where rock critics, on the whole, tend to be utterly cynical - you all know my views on rock critics by now! - and move into the provinces, the journalists tend to be far less cynical. Away from the major cities, the journalists seem more able to reflect what happened on the night - which, I think, is what a critics job in that sense is really all about. In fact, I had an idea - which I mooted at the time - for one of the national daily newspapers, like the Sun, or the Mail or the Daily Mirror, to open what I described as a fan line. The idea being that people could ring in on it the day after a major event and say 'This is what we thought'. The newspaper could publish, say, 20 quotes from people as a realistic appraisal of what people who paid money to go to an event actually thought of it. I think that would be great, because critics never have topay for their tickets - except, on my shows, we forced them all to buy their own, which I felt pretty good about! There were no freebies to newspapers at all on the whole tour. But the fan line idea would be nice; obviously, I have a lot of respect for the fact that people who buy their tickets deserve the best. So, if they didn't like an event, they could ring up and say so. Maybe that will happen one day and, if it does, it will be a fair reflection of what happened - rather than the reflection of one guy who, generally speaking, tends to represent an extreme minority viewpoint. I was amazed to see, twice this year, film critics presenting their top ten films - and when weighed up against the people's top ten, the popular top ten, there wasn't one similar film. Which just goes to prove that the people know far better what they like than the critics. . .

WUNDERBAR

"Anyway, moving away from all of that, we then went to Germany. We did three nights in Hamburg to kick off and eventually wound up doing something like 39

shows in Germany. For me, playing in Germany is almost like going home; I just love it there and I really have a tremendous affection for the people, the audiences - and the fact that things work! You know, when you're doing a tour at this level, with 50 people working for you and tons and tons of equipment, you need things to work. You need things to go smoothly and, in Germany, inevitably they do. It's a tremendous bonus for us when we tour there. The enthusiasm of the crowds is just absolutely extraordinary; they always have sparklers and they sing along and clap and dance. It's really magnificent, and I'm absolutely thrilled that things went so well this time when we were over there. And everywhere else. After Hamburg, we did three nights in Cologne. I have to stress that the economic climate, worldwide, is very bad at the moment and we were astonished that there was such great support throughout all the countries on this tour. My promoters told me that selling tickets is getting harder and harder and harder. It was hard enough for me, but the support is still there - and my tour was held up as a shining example of a tour that can be successful in the light of economic recession and the fact that a lot of people, a lot of bands, were cancelling or switching to smaller venues. There's a lot of rock 'n roll corpses out there at the moment who have died touring over the past few months because the support wasn't there. So I'm incredibly pleased and grateful for the fact that the support for me was superb. Where was I? Oh, Cologne. . . Actually, I love Cologne, it's one of my favourite cities, I have to say. It's just a terrific place and, in Cologne, I always go across to the cathedral. We stay in a lovely hotel, which is on the river, and over two days I walked around the city and through the cathedral. It was absolutely perfect. Then we went down to another of my favourite cities; Munich. Oh, one second, hold on.... (At this point, a child's voice can be heard in the background. 'Hubie,' says Chris. 'I'm doing an interview. You sit here for a minute, and be very, very quiet - like a mouse. . . ') Sorry! So, Munich. I love it very much there. It's a very cosmopolitan city because a lot of southern European people come there - Italians, Swiss - and it's just a place I like to be in. We did two nights there in the Olympia Halle, and then did a quick flit across to Innsbruck in Austria and back to Germany. We went to Passau and then, on the 15th of October, we went to Memingen. Prior to that, and just after Passau, I took the opportunity of going back to Dublin - because I wanted to be home for my birthday. I got home, the children gave me presents and then, that afternoon, I flew back to Germany into Memingen. There was a great reception there; people were singing Happy Birthday To You - and we had a little party afterwards, which was nice. You can't miss out on these occasions! That was followed by a couple of shows in Mannheim. A lot of these cities, we did two shows in - in some cases three - certainly in the early part of the tour. Oh, yes; then we had two days in Holland and, much to everybody's amazement, we completely sold out two shows at the Ahoy Stadium in Rotterdam. It's a big venue, holding about 9,000 people, and we thought we'd only possibly half-sell one show there. So, that was very exciting. The Dutch people, I think, are known to be a little reserved - but not those two nights! They went absolutely bonkers. As ever, the good people of Volendam - a small village in Holland from which the whole population seems to come and see me play - turned out in force. I mentioned them from the stage, and there was roars and cheers. Funny! . . . Then we went up to Denmark, to Copenhagen, and had a good night there. Then it was down again to Germany, to Kiel, where my family joined me. We did two shows there followed by two in Hannover, after which I got the opportunity to go home again for a couple of days. I'm sorry if I'm going through this all rather bleakly - but all the time, throughout these shows, we were getting extremely good reaction. And it gives you great strength and great heart to know that you're not getting an indifferent kind of reaction of 'we've seen it all before.' Everybody I've spoken to, just about without exception, said 'It's the best show that we've seen. Your energy level seems to be even higher than before. And the light show is phenomenal, the band is playing great. . . ' There was just a great spirit out there, I think. We really felt that this was a major tour and it was doing far better than others, we felt, and we were happy to return the affection and loyalty of the fans in the concerts.

EN VACANCES

"Next, we did two shows in Stuttgart - one of the earliest places for me to break out of in Germany - and it was a great pleasure for me to be there. Then, on the 1st of November, we were in Paris. As you know, French is kind of a second language to me, and I'm always very happy to be in France. We had a day off before our show at Le Zenith, and it was great walking around the city; I get a real sense of belonging in Paris. Anyway, the Monday of our show in Paris was a public holiday and, because of that, there's a lot of traffic in the city. So we started late, later than the advertised showtime, but - even worse - it turned out subsequently that 500 people who had bought tickets for the show from the west of France, from Brest and Brittany where I'm very well known, were stranded on the autoroute. They couldn't get to Paris, and they missed the concert. I was absolutely shocked to hear that, and I gave out yards to the promoter! I said 'Why did you let us do a concert on night when you knew the traffic was going to be dreadful and people were coming back from holidays?' And, I remember, she said to me 'Well, we had no other option.' Well, that's absolutely ridiculous; we could have swapped with Brussels, which was the following day. So, although I gave everything I had at the Paris show, afterwards I felt angry that we'd actually done that show on that night - when we could have easily done it a day later and a lot more people would have been able to see it. Nevertheless, these things happen and some people working on our behalf may not be as keen to get it right as I am. . . If you catch my drift! Anyway, as far as the Paris show was concerned, I'd obviously like to thank all the people from the fan club who came over from England to see that show. I was delighted to have them there, and very surprised when I found out that they were. Now they know the reason why the place didn't seem very full! From there, we went to Brussels. That was great, another sell-out, and then it was back to Germany - again. We did Bremen, two in Frankfurt - which were sensational - but the next two shows, I would say would probably be in my top five of the whole tour, or top ten, anyway. I'm talking about the two shows in Zurich. The audiences in Switzerland just go absolutely crazy; they give you so much. They're absolutely quiet in the silent songs, and then they can really generate a lot of enthusiasm. In fact, those four days were really hard work for me - because those are serious cities, you know, two in Frankfurt, two in Zurich. Four in a row; that's hard work for me. After that, we had one day off - and then we did two shows in Berlin. So I'd say that those few days were testing me to the full as a performer - and I enjoyed them a lot. From there, we carried on burning away around Germany and, in Freiburg, down in the south, in the Black Forest area, I remember I took a car and drove up to a place where I've been many times before. It was great walking around there because, not only have I stayed there on tour, I've also brought my family there for a holiday. I'm very fond of that place. It's always a real pleasure for me to go there.

TWO OUT OF THREE

"Now, you remember I mentioned three concerts that really were outstanding for me? Well, the second of the three - the first being that night at Earls Court - was the first night in Dortmund, in the Westfalen Halle. That place, for some reason,

generates enormous excitement. It's the biggest indoor venue in Europe, I believe, along with a new which has just been built in Stockholm. Whatever, I think there were about 17,000 people present on the Saturday night - and the atmosphere was just fantastic. I think most people living in the general area would choose that venue as the place to see concerts but, for me, that night was absolutely stunning. We did two shows there, in fact, and it's hard to choose between them - but Saturday gets the edge for me. So... that brings us, eventually, to Dublin at the end of November - and four shows sold-out in the RDS. Of course, playing at home is extra pressure; I think I had something like 450 guests across the four nights! A lot of them came to say hi before the show and, afterwards, we had hospitality - and two of the nights we had parties, with music playing and stuff. That is some pressure... But, as ever, the audiences were just amazing. You know, to go out in your home town and feel that kind of excitement and affection is just really stirring. For me, that Saturday night in Dublin was the third out of the three concerts on the tour that I felt was just outstanding. I was in great form, the audience was in cracking form - they sing so well in Ireland, as you may have noticed. The audiences elsewhere in Europe are terrific, but what is outstanding about Ireland is that they sing, and they make an effort to learn all the words - and they sing all of the words in tune. It's just tremendous. It brings a tear to the eye; on some of those occasions it's hard to retain concentration. A lot of people say to me 'God, you must really enjoy being up there with all that adulation and cheering', and I say to them 'in fact, I'm always thinking five seconds in front and I never have time - until it's the very last few notes of the concert - to relax and say, well, right, I'm enjoying this.' But that Saturday night, I got caught off guard a few times and thought 'Oh, this is chilling. This is raising the hairs on the back of my neck...' Anyway, that brought me to Belfast. Now, as I say, we did four shows in Dublin - plus all these guests and all that talking - and, on the Monday, almost like fate would have it... I got sick. I'd been fighting something off for a while before then - everybody had been having this very serious chest infection which attacked the throat and then went into the sinuses. But, as usual, I had avoided it by a combination of care and, I think, mostly my mental frame of mind. But when you're travelling in a tight group with people who are sick, it's very hard not to catch their illness; it's like walking through a minefield with a blindfold on. Very hard indeed and, on that Monday, I got sick - badly sick. I spent most of the day in bed, and then I had to play Belfast the following day. Now, I'm not a person that readily gives in or cancels, as you may know - or as people may remember from Alton Towers - and the prospect of cancelling the Belfast show, I just couldn't really contemplate. The result was that during the first Belfast show, I was in absolutely terrible shape. The voice was not doing anything I told it to. I kept on hitting all the strangest notes, my breathing was in trouble and I felt, really, that I could have done better. I didn't want to cancel, but I was not at my best - and I was sorry that I was ill for that show. In fact, the next day was the day that - I suppose for insurance purposes - my management called in the throat specialist, who said to me 'I can give you a doctor's certificate saying that you're unfit to sing, if you want to take it. You're too unwell.' I said, no, I don't want to take it - I want to go out and do it. Ironically, the second show in Belfast was absolutely brilliant; again, one of my top tens on the whole tour. But the chest infection I got, I couldn't shake off. This would have been the beginning of December - and I still haven't shaken it off. Obviously, that has been the major reason why I felt that, previously, I was simply not in a position to do interviews of any kind. I was unwell, but I always feel that if I can do a show - and I'm not saying that I should do one even if I have to be propped up - then I will do. I believe that you've got to give people a good show, and I believe I did on both of those nights when I was not feeling well. What happened subsequently was - and I'll ask all the readers to imagine this... imagine being a singer - with a bad cough. It means that every time you go for a note, you just want to cough. And the concentration and the stomach power and the muscular power required just to sing with a cough is absolutely staggering. I came off stage every night - I would say, virtually, for the rest of the tour - feeling absolutely exhausted. In fact, finally I had to give in and go on anti-biotics. I'd had enough, and I wanted to avoid them but I couldn't - and they made me even more tired. That didn't really clear everything up, either. Anti-biotics are adequate, but they didn't do the whole job.

LOST AND FOUND

"Anyway, out of Ireland, we went off to Whitley Bay, Cardiff and Manchester. Those three were particularly difficult, because of the geographical differences. Now, certainly, I'm a person that's usually fairly backward about being critical - but the venue at Whitley Bay is an absolute disgrace. It's not just a disgrace for the people who come to the concert - because it's absolutely freezing; OK, it's an ice hockey arena - but if people are going there to be entertained, they should not have to sit throughout the whole show shivering in coats... but the backstage facilities were an absolute disgrace, too. Even in my early years touring the dumps of the world, I've never seen anything like that. I felt embarrassed to be there. It was a terrific show and I was pleased about the concert, but the venue is just disgraceful. They shouldn't be putting concerts in there - until they put some money into the place. Cardiff was great; I hadn't played Cardiff before. It was a very welcoming crowd, very warm, and I was particularly pleased because a lot of my crew are from Wales - and they all had their mums, dads and families come along. Everybody was amazed by the show; they really enjoyed it. Then, finally, we played Manchester - the last show in England - and it was a complete sell-out. It sold out weeks before, in the G-MEX, which holds about 8,500 people, and that was really exciting. I was pleased to go out of the English tour on such a high note as that. Now, I know certain people have contacted the club telling of rumours concerning more UK dates - well, that isn't happening. Not as far as I know! So, where was I? Well, while I search through the old Filo-fax, let me just tell people a little bit more about the boys in my band and two aftershow gigs they did back at the hotel after two of the Dublin gigs... they are a fantastic bar band! Their knowledge of the blues and r'n'b is incredible, because that's their thing. Sometimes it's embarrassing for me to hear them play, I'm kind of like a proud dad. And I listen to them and think 'This is what they really do well...' You know, my music they're terrific on but when you hear them playing their roots - oh, boy! And I watch people coming in, jaws falling slack, thinking 'Wow, these guys are fantastic!' And they really are. They're excellent. Right, I've got the Filo-fax, I'm on to December 6 - and I've lost a week somewhere! Anyway, we were back into Germany in the second week of December, and that was great. We actually played our first show in the former East Germany, in Schwerin, which was a complete eye-opener. I remember we were driving to the venue, and the driver - who spent a lot of time scoffing at my regular driver getting lost - did a real classic at getting lost himself. He came off the autobahn, it used to be the Berlin Corridor - which you were not ever allowed to leave if you were driving to Berlin, otherwise you got arrested - and he drove off, but left an exit too early. He kept on saying 'This is the correct way - don't worry...' And we wound up totally lost. I'd never been

in countryside so utterly dark! It was dark even when we passed houses; they had tiny little 25-watt bulbs lighting them. You could really tell that you were in the east, just by looking around you. Anyway, we wound up on this little dirt track, in the middle of nowhere. I got out, looked up at the stars and the sky, and just started laughing. I'd flown in from Dublin that afternoon - we were late, got delayed - so it was really straight into the venue and onto the stage... when we finally found the place! It was an amusing moment and, certainly, the last place I expected to find myself was on a dirt track, somewhere in East Germany, staring at the stars...

SAYING GOODBYE TO IT ALL

"I might be skipping a few shows here, but we did two shows in Koblenz, separated by a show in another city. In fact, the last two weeks were very tough, because there were added shows at the end. Those kind of shows tend to be not as geographically accommodating as the earlier shows, where you can plan a tour. So, for example, that meant flying into Hamburg, going to Schwerin - and then the next show was way down in Frankfurt. From there we had to fly back up to Koblenz, if I remember correctly. Koblenz is a wonderful city, actually, I liked it a lot! Then we were in Aschaffenburg, which is a really cute place. I remember checking into the hotel, and the guy said 'You must come with me...' And we walked, I would say, 250 yards up a back street - a very pretty back street, mind you - to an apartment building. I was thinking 'This has got to be some kind of joke', but it wasn't; the building was owned by the hotel, but allegedly part of it. Whatever, it was certainly the longest walk I've ever had to a hotel room. Next we were in Nurnberg, which is a wonderful old city, and the concert hall is in an area where Hitler used to have a lot of his rallies. I'd been there before in the summertime, and it's an extraordinary historical area. Also, in the town is the oldest Christmas market in Germany. It's in front of the cathedral, and I obviously went there - one morning - before we went down to Munich on December 20. They drink glubwein there and have all sorts of sausages cooking - and millions of things that you can buy, really Christmassy things. It's very pretty, and people come from all over Germany and stay in hotels, just to be there. So that was fun. Then we had an end of tour party in Munich. It was an opportunity to say thanks to everybody, see you in the New Year. That was great fun - and then we had the last show in Augsburg, which is close to Munich. I remember I invited my brother-in-law and his 15-year-old son to join me for the last two days. So they came down from Dublin and had an absolute blast. They came to the show, went to the party... In fact, my brother-in-law is Paulo - of Paul and Sue; the people I mention in my song Perfect Day, all those years ago. Paul and his son, Rocco, had a terrific time and I wound up, both nights, in my favourite bar in Munich called Roy's Bar. It's a place I can recommend to anybody for a bit of fun. And then I flew home. I got home on the afternoon of the 22nd of December - straight into Christmas. I'd already bought the Christmas tree, and we decorated it a week before. Christmas is such a crazy time anyway, but I got home at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and went out to dinner that night with the film director John Borman, his wife, and John Hurt - the wonderful film actor - down in Wicklow, 30 miles away. So I was still flying about for a few days even after I got home. As ever, Christmas was spent at home with friends and family, and it was great fun. Did I do anything on New Year's Eve? Well, I don't know if I'm unusual - but I have no great cause for joy at New Year; I find it a reflective time. Not necessarily in a sad way, but reflective about the year that's just been and in the sense that there's another year to challenge and make something of. I've never been one to really jump up and down at midnight - well, maybe I was when I was younger... But what we did was we stayed in and we had some friends here, and at midnight we went out into the street. Lots of neighbours come up with champagne, so we drink to each other's health and drop into one another's houses for a few minutes. I got back pretty late, mind you, after all of that! Also, I'd promised to get the two eldest children up for midnight, so that they could see the stars and wish them Happy New Year. They were thrilled with that. Do I make New Year's Resolutions? No. It's not that I'm inclined to break them or anything, just simply that I'm resolved enough as it is; if there's something I particularly want to do or don't want to do - it doesn't have to be the 1st of January for me to make up my mind about it...

SOUTH AFRICA

At the time of writing, Chris had left to embark on his first tour of South Africa in many years. This is what he had to say about the prospect. "We're doing indoor shows and, in fact, the sales are absolutely phenomenal. I think the first 20,000 tickets in Johannesburg sold out in an hour or something. But I'm looking forward to going, particularly at this time of year. I'm taking my family along for a week in Cape Town, and then they stay on in Johannesburg for a second week. So it'll be fun. As for the concerts, I'll be playing Durban, Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg - over a period of four weeks. As readers may or may not be aware, I've been over to South Africa twice previously on promotional visits. Having lived in Africa and having strong anti-apartheid feelings anyway, I was delighted when the de Klerk government started making moves to dismantle it. I was even more pleased when all the sporting bans were lifted along with all the bans on performing over there. Obviously, I'm very concerned for the future of South Africa, but this seems a very good time to go and visit and actually play concerts again. I've also had an attitude towards South Africa of, rather than isolating the country, I felt that the best way of improving the inner knowledge of people who have suffered very much in a censorship situation - where they didn't know what was going on, even in their own country - is by missionaries coming in, i.e. visitors, and spreading the word. I always felt that that was more successful than isolation. What's more, a lot of performers are planning to go there this year - Stevie Wonder and Elton John, to name two. I also know of quite a few others who are looking quite seriously at going. Basically, South Africa has now become another place on the global map to go and play concerts. What's in store for me after I play South Africa? Well, I have offers to play in places like Canada and Australia, but I really have to take a look at how my year is going to pan out. I'd like to go back to Canada, certainly. Australia is always a difficult one because it's so far and it's so expensive to go - and it's in terrible recession at the moment. Also, I know that some bands which expected to play 20 shows, for example, in one city were reduced to three. I won't mention the names of those bands but, the point is, things are very, very bad there for long-distance touring - so we might give that one a miss. However, there is also - as I've been mentioning several times on the backburner - the solo tour possibility. So I've always got that one, which I will be looking at a lot more seriously this year. My plans are also to co-write with renowned songwriters - no, I can't mention any names yet! - and I'm very keen to work with an orchestra, sing with an orchestra. That might be part of the new album... Really, I'm just wanting to have a really solid look at the state of the music industry today which, from where I'm standing, is in terrible condition. I'm not talking about talent here, just the state of the music business; it's just awful, absolutely awful. And people like me have to have a look at it in terms of where we want to be inside it, where we belong in it. So, there will be some changes. You know, I'm obviously not going to give up or anything - I want to continue - but I want to make sure that I make the correct moves in future. One of the aspects I'm talking about is an acoustic album. For example, one thing that did occur to me was to make an album of, say, ten real faves from the whole catalogue that I would re-record acoustically, maybe with a little guitar, maybe light strings - but mainly voice - and then do a small tour supporting that kind of a record. That's not outside the

bounds. . . One thing I'm not going to do for quite a while is spend a year writing ten or 12 songs for an album, and then another six months recording them. In today's world that is too much time to spend on a project that you can really only go out and support for a few months now. There was a time when you could do a year's world tour but, as I say, the industry has changed completely and conditions have changed. We are now in a competitive field against video, against computer games, movies. . . you know, it's a rapidly diminishing market. People are often saying to me, in terms of my concerts, how much they enjoy those moments when it's just me singing with guitar or piano and, I have to say, one of the reasons why those moments work is because they are sandwiched between a lot of noise from the band. But it's not lost on me, the fact that this is appealing to the fans - and that's one of the reasons why I did a lot more solo songs this tour, and I talked a lot more. It was done to give people maybe just a taster of what it would be like to do a solo tour. This was part of the plan. . . Anyway, just to finish off about the last tour - although I felt kind of numb at the end, I felt euphoric as well, because we had really pulled off a tremendous success in the face of very tough odds. And, I have to say, that a lot of the credit goes not just to the band and crew - but to Kenny and Dave and Samantha in my management office. Because to really have gone against the wind and brought the ship safely into harbour was a great success - and I also allowed myself the rare luxury of patting myself on the back for having worked so incredibly hard throughout the whole thing. I was talking to a friend of mine who manages a major Irish rock band which, in nine months, played 100 concerts; in 3½ months, I played 80. So I was kind of pleased with the work rate, and happy that it all came together.

YOURS SINCERELY

"I've got something I'd like to mention at this point to do with all of the above. I've received a couple of letters from people recently saying, basically, 'Great concerts' but also containing criticism in them which I feel I should respond to. One of them was from a woman who had been to quite a few of the shows, and she said that when she started hearing the same things, chat and stuff, between the songs, she felt that there was a lack of spontaneity. Well, I would accept that in one way, but on the other hand, I'd say that 99 per cent of the people in the audience on any one particular night have not heard what I have to say before - plus, there is no professional artist out there, on stage, screen or musically, who does not have a standard, as it were, routine. I try to and did change the stuff a lot but, essentially - particularly before Spanish Train - I always wanted to wind up at the same place 'There's a Spanish Train. . .'. 'So, that's the reason I made a little joke at the beginning of that song. A lot of people really loved the jokes, and I had about eight different circumstances, for example, that I'd use to lead into Spanish Train. The thing is, when you're working at a tremendous rate - you can't start being adventurous every night, because that saps your energy. If you start giving yourself the challenge to try and come up with something different every time, the energy that you require to deviate from the smooth-running machine is actually very upsetting and it kind of puts you off. So that's the reason why I tend to stay within the same loose framework. Anyway, that was one of the points I wanted to reply to. I can't honestly remember what the other criticism was now. . . I

PERSON TO PERSON

This, as regular readers of the Gazette will know, is the section which offers club members the opportunity to ask Chris a question personally. Chris has an answer for every conceivable query - even if it is only 'No comment!' - as is witnessed by the following:

Do you know the music of the American singer Jim Croce - and do you rate him?

(Desi Evengelides, England). "Of course. Jim died in an air crash, oh, I can't remember how many years ago - but I thought he was absolutely phenomenal. I particularly liked Time In A Bottle and a song I've always called Operator. It's about a guy ringing his girlfriend 'She's living in LA with my best old ex-friend, Ray.' I know all the words off by heart; it's a very clever song - and it's very sad. I was really sad when he was killed, as was America; I think all of his albums were in the Top Ten simultaneously afterwards."

I love old houses - do you? - and which Century would you like to have lived in? (Angela Hales, England). "I'm very fond of old buildings. I think they just absolutely reek of history, and I find them very exciting places to be. I have a fairly strong psychic sense and I respond to the warmth or the coldness of buildings. As for the other part of the question, it's romantic to believe that you could have lived in a certain Century and, for example, I would say the 13th Century would have been very interesting; medieval times. The 18th Century would have been very interesting, as well. They were hard times - you didn't have electricity or cars or running water and all of that - but, you know, that was an era I would like to have been around in."

What does the voice-over say at the beginning of By My Side on Power Of Ten?

(Valerie Metz, France). "It is an air traffic controller talking to a pilot in pilot jargon - but it all makes sense. In fact, if you listen very carefully on the stereo - to the righthand side, which is the pilot talking - he's requesting guidance. He's actually lost, and he's asking for bearings as to where he is from the air traffic controller. Who's doing the voices? No, it's not me - it's actually my producer, Rupert Hine. He did them, which was quite appropriate since he does in fact have a pilot's licence himself."

Are you thinking of making a new album? (Yves Vanhoucke, Belgium).

"Certainly not yet, but I also will not spend as long away from recording as I did with the most recent album."

Where do you get all your lovely 'frillies' from when you do Patricia The Stripper? (Brenda Chalmers, England). "Some of it is stuck in my pocket prior to doing the song - and quite a lot of it gets thrown up on to the stage, some of which has actually been freshly removed from the wearer!"

What do you think about the United Europe and the ECU starting in 1999?

(Annett Sommerschuh, Germany). "Well, I think Federalism is an objective attitude to have towards Europe, but I think most people are scared of what will happen to language and culture. Personally, I don't think it's a good idea."

What's your favourite food? (Sabine Stay Germany). "Now, that's tough one! I'd have to say it would be either Italian or French cooking. I'm very fond of both. I eat meat rarely, but I like pastas and sauces and all sorts of stuff."

I have The Lady In Red sung by you in Spanish. Can you actually speak Spanish? (Doreen Gardner, England). "Yes! My first language was Spanish and, in fact, I spoke it fluently for, I suppose, the first two years. Then I forgot most of it, but I spent a year in university studying Spanish. So, I've got a terrific accent - but very little vocabulary at the moment. . . I As for the song, it was extremely difficult to get to grips with in the sense that I didn't write the translated lyric, so I had to really get my tongue around the words and get the correct movement. That's very hard to do. I know that quite a few people do sing from their native tongue, like English, into other languages - but it is tricky to do. I'd be much more comfortable with French than with Spanish."

Is it possible that Chris will give concerts in Taiwan in the future? (Chris Lee, Republic of China). "It is possible. Funnily enough, I went to a dinner in Berlin once and I met some people there from the music industry in Japan who expressed interest in me doing shows all over the East. So, you never know; it's certainly a nice idea. . . at which point, for some reason, I have suddenly remembered the second criticism of my recent concerts which I wanted to respond to! I've had letters from people complaining that the sound was too loud for them. Well, it's always very difficult when you have a speaker system that's designed to throw sound 40 feet or so in front, because people who are caught up in a particular critical area may find it too loud. But there's very little that we can do about it; technology hasn't yet arrived at the point where we can have strong sound to the taste of everybody in a building. That's unfortunately, the case. However, on a more positive note, most of the reaction I heard to this particular tour was that the lights were absolutely sensational, the sound was the same - and I gave every appearance of really enjoying myself. Which I did. . . I"

If you have a question you'd like to ask Chris for a future edition of the Gazette, then simply send it into the fan club address - clearly marking your name and address - and we'll publish a selection of his answers, depending on space available.

PEN PALS

Once again, here's the latest list of club members seeking correspondence from other C de B followers from around the world. . .

Ines & Bert Aschkowski, Ostseeallee 16, 0-2520 Rostock 22, Germany. (Aged 33).

Hazam E. Haddad, Taibeh - Irbid, Jordan. (Aged 19).
Vicky Martin, 360 Finglesey Road, Burton Upon Trent, Staffordshire, DE14 3NN, England. (Aged 17).

Yves Vanhoucke, Wilgenstraat 9, 9840 De Pinte, Belgium (Aged 21).
Catherine Anderson, 68 Bedford Road, Aberdeen, AB2 3LP, Scotland. (Aged 21).
Judith Baggenstos, Tiergartenstr. 46, 5303 Wurenlingen, Switzerland. (Aged 15).
Carol Thomas, 67 Mile Lane, Cheylesmore, Coventry, CV3 5GB, England. (Aged 15).

Julia Harwood, 9 Leyland Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV11 4RP, England. (Aged 24).

Carin Drenthe, Brinkseweg 48, 3971 VC Driebergen-Rijsenburg, Holland. (Aged 31).

Mrs Chris Cosgrove, 7 Morgan Way, Rainham, Essex, RM13 9JT, England. (Aged 29).

Mrs Sabine Stay, Beinstr. 9, W-6845 Gross-Rohrheim, Germany. (Aged 23).
Mrs Doreen Gardner, 11 Keldhead Orchard, The Orchard, Kirkbymoorside, York, YO6 6EF, England.

Chris Lee, Room 208, First Boy Dormitory, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China (Aged 19).

Rosario Vigilante, Via Virgilio 4, 84100 Salerno, Italy. (Aged 30).
Mrs Lynne Smithson, 31 Shelley Drive, Welling, Kent, DA16 3NY, England. (Aged 41).

Mrs Janet Scase-Hughes, 46 Bridgeway, Shawbury, Nr. Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY4 4PG, England. (Aged 30).

Nicola Bond, 22 Park Road, Lower Compton, Plymouth, PL3 5DR, England. (Aged 19).

Ms Chris Wright, 9c Chaucer House, St George's Grove, Tooting, London, SW17 OPZ, England. (Aged 30).

Anita Sivy, 4 Rue des Sapins Verts, 56160 Lignol, France. (Aged 22).

Mrs Margaret Jones, 3 Kingswood Avenue, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 4RL, England. (Aged 45).

Pamela Hopkins, 21 Newstead Road, Southbourne, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH6 3HJ, England. (Aged 20).

Claudia Lenberg, Im Oberfeld 4, 5860 Iserlohn 7, West Germany.

Cigdem Onal, Kayisdagi Cad. Hamle Sk, No:9/5 81080 Goztepe, Istanbul, Turkey.

Jeannine G. Williams, 3016 Blue Heron Dr.N., Jacksonville, Florida 32223, U.S.A.

Remember, if you would like your details included in future lists of pen pals, then please write your name and address clearly and in BLOCK CAPITALS - specifying your age if you wish - and send to the club address. If we can't understand your writing, we can't pass the information on. . .

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Too many among you to mention have recently written in seeking two essential accessories for any serious C de B fan; copies of the three-part Radio Two 'Chris de Burgh Story' and video of Chris appearing on This Is Your Life last year. Either people were unable to catch the broadcasts when they were first shown - for one reason or another - or they did, but would like to again. All of which tied in very appropriately with an excellent suggestion - all the way from America - which we would immediately like to adopt. Many thanks to Geir Jaegersen of New York for the idea of having a 'Collector's Corner' to enable club members to buy, sell, swap or borrow items of C de B interest among themselves. So, if you've got something which other people might want, or want something others may have - simply send in the details to the club address. As ever, we're constrained by space within the newsletter, so please keep any entries as short as possible. . . or we'll edit them down ourselves. Once again, hats off to Geir for a great thought.

The rest is up to you.

UNTIL THE NEXT TIME. . .

As usual, we'll close down this I-o-n-g overdue newsletter with a few appropriate words from Chris concerning how he feels about the people reading this:

"I've always said, and I'm totally open about saying, that the fans are the oxygen to my life. There's absolutely no way that I could not only become successful but sustain my success without the constant support from my fans and the people who write to me. I get to read a lot of the letters, and I'd like to say that, in my desk, I have requests for autographs, letters and gifts sent by people - but I'm just so under pressure at the moment that I can't respond individually to them all. But I will attempt to when I have the time. Other than that, I'd just like to say thanks for the genuine concern from a lot of people about me in my private life, my family life and the fact that they want to support me and say 'Keep it up, Chris. Continue with the good music and don't ever stop; you mean an awful lot to us.' Well, the people that write to me and say 'You mean an awful lot to me, Chris,' I say to them 'You mean an awful lot to me. . ."

Until the next time, please remember to send any Pen Pal addresses, Person To Person questions or entries for Collector's Corner - along with any ideas or criticisms about the club or the newsletter - to me, Mike, at: The New Chris de Burgh Club, P.O.Box 276, London, E2 7BW.
One more time; thanks for waiting.

PS: A quick 'hello' from me to everyone who survived the trip to see Chris in Paris in October - it was tiring, but fun - and to all the great people I met briefly during November in Dublin. See you all again sometime. . .