

THE NEW

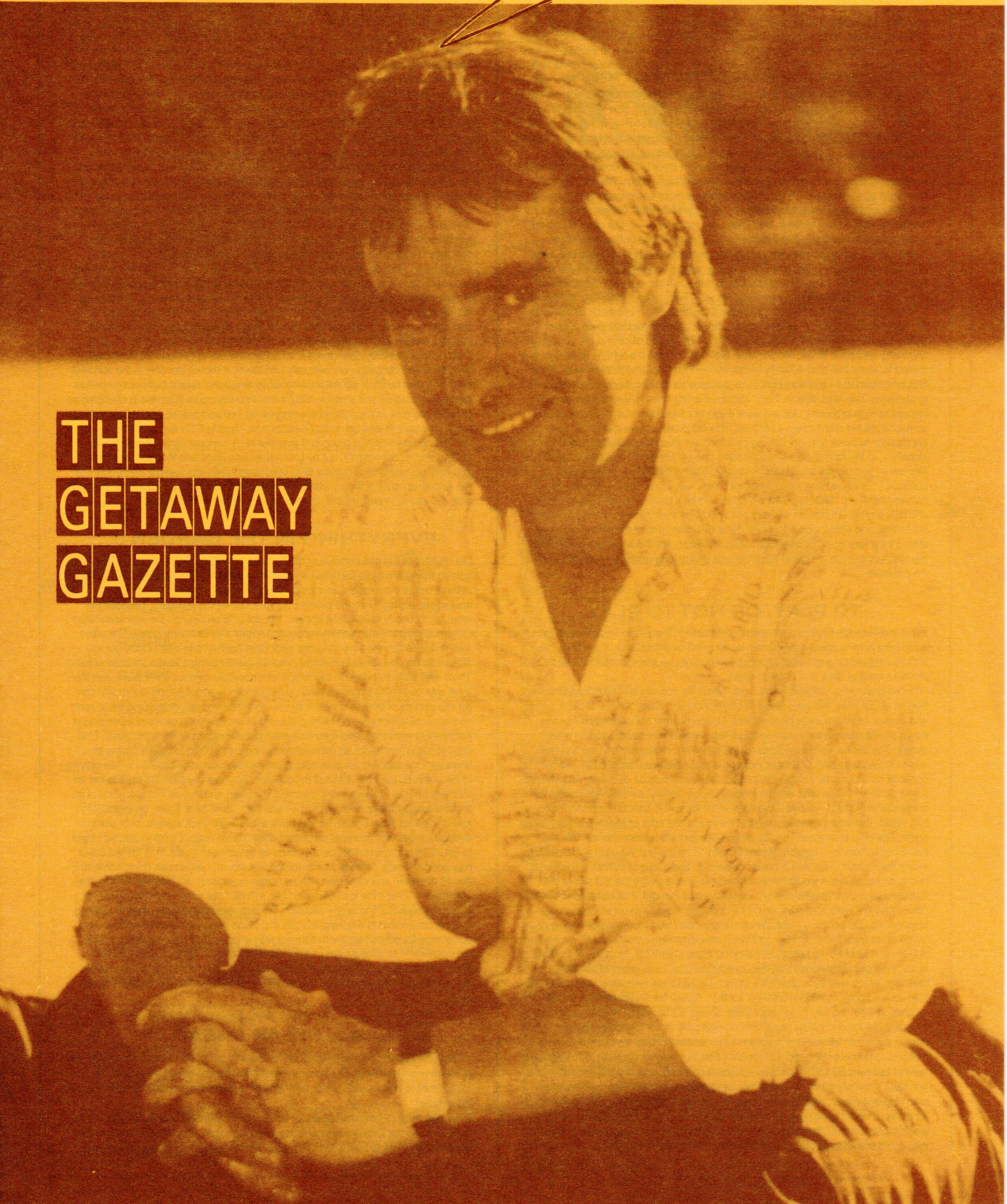
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CLUB

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**THE
GETAWAY
GAZETTE**



THE GETAWAY GAZETTE

Belated greetings once again, and welcome to the first Gazette of 1991. I realise that this edition was promised for February but, as so often happens, a variety of considerations prevented its publication — notably the fact that had we published so soon after the December issue . . . there would not have been a great deal of action to report on the C de B front! By now, there certainly has been. So, sorry again — but we're here at last and, without further delay, I'll hand straight over to the man himself to bring you up to date with his diary and future plans.

BARBADOS, BARRACUDA AND BABIES

"The last newsletter took us up to Christmas, as I recall, and right after we left for a holiday in Barbados — in the middle of a dreadful winter storm in early January. As you may remember, it was one of the coldest winters for four or five years and, certainly, Ireland did not escape it. So the idea of lying on a beach across the other side of the world was extremely attractive. It was our second visit to Barbados — as you know, we went last year — and to do it again was just like a dream come true. So we flipped off to Barbados, this time bringing our new baby, Michael, who was then three months. He actually spent the week before Christmas in hospital with a respiratory problem. He got a bronchitis virus, started turning blue and couldn't breathe. We had him in intensive care, right up to Christmas Eve, which was a real problem. And Diane, my wife, had to stay in hospital with him, of course. So it was a fairly fraught pre-Christmas week, as it was post-Christmas, and we all really needed a holiday. Of course Michael flourished out there in the lovely humidity and sunshine, and we had a house on the beach and total freedom. We had a great time; I got up to my usual things of scuba-diving wrecks and playing with barracuda at 100ft! I saw manta rays, too, and it was all very interesting. It's fascinating underneath the ocean; I love it. And Diane is a mono-skier — she goes out on the water on one ski, and she flies like the wind. Even Rosanna got up on skis by herself, which was great. So, we had a very pleasant holiday and I whacked a few golf balls out there — of course! There was a competition with about 70 entrants, and I came in sixth. I was very pleased with that. I ran into a lot of old friends out there, too. People like Nigel Havers and his wife, Polly. It was great fun; Barbados is a really nice place to be, actually, just after Christmas. We came back straight into the filthy weather again, of course, but the break definitely did everyone a lot of good — particularly Michael. Speaking of him, I know a lot of people are curious to know why we chose to call him Michael. Well, we decided it would be quite right and correct to name him after a family friend, Michael Darling, who is the Master of the Rotunda Hospital — and was directly responsible for making it possible for my wife to conceive. That was back in 1982. Michael Darling saved Diane's life when she had her terrible problems, and we were thinking about the name for Hubie but, somehow, Hubie didn't seem a Michael. This lad does, and we thought it appropriate to thank Michael Darling by calling our second son by his name. Hopefully, in the next couple of generations, they will understand why we called him Michael — and maybe say thanks to him for making it possible for the line to continue." "Does he have a middle name? Yes, well, I'm afraid the fathers got involved here; my father and Diane's father. So he's called Michael Charles Arthur, and he's a great lad too. He's a very sturdy boy, he's very funny — and he adores his brother and sister, who adore him. He's all smiles, a very easy baby and very alert. I think he's going to be a lovely little character. Are there any plans to extend the clan further? Oh . . . haha! What I plan is a very long world tour — that'll ease the pressure . . .!"

TO PLAY, OR NOT TO PLAY

In the last Gazette, Chris mentioned what he called 'The Exotic Tours Dream' which envisaged playing concerts in certain far-off or off-beat locations. Since then, the idea has moved on somewhat in particular countries — while, in others, it sadly proved a case of 'let's do it another time . . .'

"We had planned a Middle-Eastern Tour, which we actually started talking about in August of last year. We were going to play concerts in Saudi Arabia, Muscat, Oman and various other places in the Emirates. Of course, that got cancelled — which was a pity because I really wanted to get together with the band and play a few shows. The shows were scheduled for the last week in January and the first two weeks in February and, of course, nobody actually believed that the Gulf war would continue for as long as it did — or, indeed, that war would be declared. As we know, it was declared in January. We were going to play Turkey, as well. Apparently, I'm a mega-star in Turkey — God knows why — but we had to cancel our plans there, too. Again, that was a great shame, but we've had the offer of Middle-Eastern dates again. The offer is now back on the table — it's just a question of when. We also had an offer from the Russian Interior Ministry to be the first Western act to perform inside the Kremlin. That was a great honour but, again, due to events in the Gulf it had to be cancelled. It would have involved two shows inside the hall where the Politburo have their meetings — it's an outrageous thought, that, somehow. It really tickled me! We were also going to do three shows in the Olympic stadium in Moscow, 15,000 people a night. When I heard that, I was thinking 'But they've never heard of me over there.' On the contrary, I was informed; I am extremely well-known in Russia. It would have been an interesting place to tour but, because of the Gulf crisis, the Politburo decided that they needed the hall I was going to play in for crisis meetings all the way through March. In fact, I would have been over in Russia right now, as we speak (April 2) were it not for that. Again, the Russian dates can be rescheduled but the key thing about those shows is that when I'm doing a world tour we really like to concentrate our efforts on doing the major territories. Once you start playing the minor territories, it's still the same amount of time away from home and it begins to become impractical. If you've geared up to play stadiums, you've got a crew of between 30 and 40 people — highly expensive, professional people — and you can't suddenly go off and play very small places. Immediately, the venues aren't big enough or, indeed, the ticket prices aren't enough to sustain such a tour. As it was, it would have cost me a five-figure sum to play Russia; that's what it would have cost me, personally. The cost of going there was way higher than what they could afford to pay us, but I thought, out of interest, it might have been a really

fascinating thing to do. It may happen again, although it's unlikely to be part of a major world tour. "The great thing about doing it as planned is that it was kind of a quiet time for me, and it would have worked."

MEANS TO AN END

Despite being disappointed by the cancelled shows just outlined, Chris was — at the time of going to press — very much scheduled to play four dates in Portugal during June. The concerts, including shows in Estoril and Opporto, represent much more than just an opportunity for Chris to go out before an audience again; he plans to use the trip as an important part in the process of completing new material for his next studio album — but more about that later.

"Portugal isn't a place that I would have put on a world tour, again, but — it being June — playing there will also give me a chance to get together with the band and go through some new material, which I haven't actually done since 1985 prior to an album. The last time I did that was prior to Into The Light; I didn't do it with Flying Colours. So, I'm looking forward to that. Also, having played the game with my subconscious so often in trying to write for albums, I've discovered that one of the best ways of putting pressure on yourself is by making yourself panic! For example, if I say to myself 'I've got to have three songs together to go into a demo studio and record by next Friday', well, that's one way of doing it. Whereas, if you have an open road ahead of you with any amount of time, then that kind of pressure doesn't apply. It just doesn't work. I think self-imposed pressure is a very forceful thing, for me, when it comes to creating and creativity. Am I saying that agreeing to the Portugal dates gives me a kick to ensure that I'll also have songs ready to show to the band and rehearse with them by then? Exactly. I want to have 7 or 8 songs to show the band in the first week of June, so I will be very disappointed in myself if I don't. It will have been kind of a waste of time, basically. My live band don't usually play on my records. I hire session players to do that, and that's probably the way it's going to be again. Nevertheless, what the touring band bring to completely new songs is a real sense of vibrancy and urgency — and I respect their opinions enormously. The way they initially react to new songs is a very important sounding board for me. So, it may only be four shows out in Portugal but it's enough to justify getting together with the band and doing a little rehearsal afterwards. You see, all the decisions I make at this stage of the game have to be taken on the basis of them being right for more than one reason. For instance, I just rang my office in London, and the guy who answered the phone was my lighting director — Andy Doig — who's already down there discussing what we're going to do in Portugal. We take these concerts very seriously and I think it shows, not only in the concerts but also in the fact that we get a tremendous amount of repeat business — people coming back again and again — after them. And the music business is changing so dramatically now to the point where singles, as I've said before, are almost a dead issue. The people who go to buy records now — mainly CDs and cassettes — are in the 25 and upwards age group and they like to be seriously entertained. Not by serious music, necessarily, but by solid music and lyrics and thoughts and ideas — and they're used to high standards in the concert halls and arenas. It's people like me who have, after putting in years and years of working hard, I suppose, the know-how, the direction and, indeed, the desire to do those kind of shows."

EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN . . .

"As readers of the newsletter may recall, I was having an old summer house in my garden demolished late last year; it was falling apart, so I had it rebuilt. I'm actually sitting there at the moment, in a lovely big, sunny room where I've got my equipment. It's highly sound-proofed with a south-westerly aspect. It's really my room, and nobody else comes in here. I've got gold records on the wall and Persian carpet hanging to help deaden the sound — they also look very pretty! The place wasn't finished by the time we came back from holiday, so I didn't really get any serious writing in until early February, but it's great having a studio so close at hand. There was a studio I used to use which was about 20 minutes drive away, and that drive was beginning to get me down. The great thing about writing is that you can go into periods of intense concentration — but then you've got to relax. Here, I can do that. Interruptions are something else again, so I've got a series of lights set up, just like in a recording studio, so that when people ring in — the lights flash. That way, you don't get seriously interrupted by noise. I'm going to have to come to terms with the fact that I'm overlooking the garden where the children will be playing in the summer, but I can just pull the curtains. So, here at home, if I can't follow an idea any further, I can just walk out into the garden and maybe kick a football of go and have a cup of tea or something — and then come back again, renewed. What kind of facilities have I got in here? I have a little eight-track system, but I use my writing facilities very much as an instant diary. I can't read or write music, so I have to get ideas on tape immediately — and I've never been particularly fussed about how good or bad a demo is. In fact for the last album, I remember doing something like 16 demos in one afternoon with two other musicians. We just threw it together very quickly. That's the kind of demo I like. I think if the song is any good, then it should be able to shine in any situation. I'm quite hard to live with when I'm writing, not that I'm irritable of anything, it's just that I kind of go into another world — and sometimes it's difficult for me to connect with what's going on around me. I mean, the children — as children are — are kind of boisterous, noisy, happy and fun-loving, and what I really have to do is be able to shut all of that off by coming into this room. There's a lot of wood in it and it's very earthy, a very peaceful kind of place . . ."

ALL CLEAR AHEAD

So it would appear, the scene is all set for Chris to get down to the serious business of creating a new record. But just what does that involve for him, how long does he expect it all to take — and what's his frame of mind now that all the hard work is yet to be done?

I think the most important thing about an album is the weeks preceding your hard work on it. At that time, you've got to come up with some kind of resolution on the direction you want to take it. It's like a very slow focus, like an object coming into

focus, and that, for me, can take anything from weeks to months to get some kind of clear idea about in terms of where I'm going. Particularly when you've recorded 110 songs, or whatever it is, you've got to have some kind of stimulus and idea. The good news is I'm feeling hungry right now, and I really want to make music whereas, in the past, that hasn't necessarily been so. This time I'm feeling very powerful and good about the whole thing, and that's what I've been doing mainly, recently. "Now that I've got my head down and I really want to write for an album, which I hope to start recording in Ireland, all going well, in October, I can't really see myself doing much more than just the Portugal tour because a tremendous amount of work and effort goes into putting something like that together. For that very reason, one thing that I haven't done at all this year is planned any of those solo charity concerts which I did quite a few of last year. I did, what, six of them altogether in 1990. Although they don't seem much effort at the time, a huge amount of preparation and thought goes into them because I am a person who likes to have good standards — high standards — when it comes to concerts. Particularly with a solo show, you've really got to be on the money there and get the things right; make sure the sound is right and the venue is right — all the little things which go into a successful evening that a lot of people don't even notice. And I've had requests from the Duke of Westminster, Princess Di — I've been asked on three different occasions this year to perform for her — but, and I mean no disrespect to these people, I've just said 'Look, I'm too busy concentrating on my own project this year, and I can't do it.' So I love to have a clear road ahead of me in that respect and not have to worry about other things. I'm just getting the perspective on things which I mentioned earlier at the moment. Am I talking about a concept for the album? Well, I wouldn't mind coming up with a loose concept. I think a lot of concept albums are very pompous, but what I would like to do is have an album that is loosely woven together — and the alert listener could possibly see the connections. That would be a tempting thing to go for — rather than a concept album all about one subject. I think, for example, you could have a concept album about growing up and living and the things you've noticed and dreamed about and imagined and seen up to date, you know? That would be a concept album. For better or for worse, current world affairs must be a wealth of inspiration for a songwriter of your kind. Lots of international events are happening right now which could be influencing and affecting you . . .

"Well, funnily enough, they are affecting me — but they're affecting me all in the same direction, which is that I think people need, even more than ever, to be taken out of themselves. If you look back on the last major world crisis, which I would think — if I'm correct was about 1974 with the oil crisis, well, that had very serious long-term repercussions. We haven't had anything like that for quite a while, and I think what people want is . . . escapism. But I'm not talking about escapism where it's all airy-fairy drifting up into the clouds, smoking marijuana and looking at funny colours on the walls kind of escapism. I'm talking about imagination coming into play by using reality — but looking at it in a slightly different way. You know, I'm sure the world Number One Enemy right now has to be Saddam Hussein, and to write a song in a Spanish Train kind of a style — where you have the bad guy getting caught and, perhaps, all the victims of his brutality waiting in heaven or hell, or wherever, to hurl him into eternal flame — is something to think about. Most of us are helpless when it comes to something like that because what a dictator of Saddam's evilness can inflict, not only on people but, through its repercussions, around the world, is something else again. Those things can be felt by you and me, and that makes us feel very angry and helpless. Things like that . . . I think that's what artists have to do; reflect what other people think — but maybe by looking at something which they've been seeing for years in a different way.

"So I'm not talking about escapism in the normal sense. Funnily enough, I was recently asked to be the chairman in a university debate 'That entertainers should entertain and not preach.' I'll let you know next time whether or not I accepted, but it's a very interesting point to debate. I think that, just because you're famous it doesn't mean that your point of view is any better or worse or better informed than most other people's. And, in fact, it's my experience that people in my profession tend to be less well informed about current issues — yet tend to talk more about them than anybody else. It's got nothing to do with education; I think it's got to do with spouting off just because somebody sticks a microphone under your nose and asks 'What do you think about . . . ?' In that situation, people just tend to say, to find an answer, and some people say 'I'm afraid I don't know enough about the situation to make a comment.' Well, that would be the smart thing to say but, unfortunately, not a lot of people in that position do say that. I won't mention any names, but there's a young lady who doesn't have much hair who should really, in her own interests and in the interests of her career and her family, just observe those kind of words of wisdom and keep her mouth shut on a few more occasions . . ."

SO FAR, SO GOOD

It's early days yet, but Chris already has more than just an overview of the album in mind, he also has a couple of firm song ideas.

"I've got one or two which I hope very much will be on the new album. One is called *Separate Tables*, and it's about two people who have separated. I haven't quite decided why they've separated — this is a point which hasn't really arisen yet! — but it's just about how they exist within that situation. 'Separate tables, they sit down to eat . . . separate tables, we sit down to write separate letters . . .', and so on. I think it's just about two people who are missing each other, you know; I don't think there needs to be any big deal story about a bust up or the fact that he's seen somebody in the street that he's fallen instantly in love with, or whatever. I don't think that's necessary. You see, one thing has occurred to me — and it's that I've heard so many badly written love songs on the radio recently. It really is getting up my nose! I'm thinking 'There's got to be something else to write about.' Every song I hear seems to be about 'You and me in love' and this and that — there's got to be

something else. Anyway . . . the other song I've got is currently titled *Shine On*. I've actually spoken about this before, in August last year, and it's an idea which has certainly stuck. It was sparked off by an old photograph we found. It could be any old photograph taken at the turn of the century which shows people; all those photographs are a bit sad because you know that all the people in them are obviously dead and gone. The photograph just reminded me of how very much we are caretakers of the places that we live in, and caretakers of the world, basically. It's just one of those things; you look at a photograph and, in a typical *C de B* way, it expands into something else. It starts off 'I was looking at a photograph taken in the garden long before the war', and then the last verse is 'I was looking at a photograph taken from a window way above the world' — from one of the orbiting spacecraft. It's just about how, really, we have to leave a garden for our children. You know, one of those kind of contemplative things — but I feel it's going to be very strong and one of those 'everybody singing along and waving' kind of tunes. Other than those two songs, I've also got a few other bits and pieces that I haven't yet developed. I haven't kicked in hard to the new stuff yet."

At this stage, are you getting music first, lyrics first — or everything all at once?

"The ideal way would be to get it all in one but, as I said earlier, the only way this works is when you start pushing yourself into a position of panic — and then the ideas tend to flow. If things are too easy and there's too much time, too much relaxing, then it's not going to happen".

BEEN A LONG TIME . . .

It's hard to believe, but by the time Chris releases his new studio album — it's planned for spring, 1992 — it will have been more than three years since his last. Has the gap between records caused him any concern?

"Well, *Flying Colours* came out in 1988, and then 1988/89 was the World Tour — which I finished in July '89. Straight after that I went back into the studio and did two more songs for *Spark To A Flame*, the greatest hits, and that came out in September/October '89. There was a lot of work to be done around that; a lot of TV and stuff. Then, in 1990, we started work on the live album — which was released that year — and that was also a lot of work. Then, of course, we also did the major concerts in the summer of 1990. So . . . I've not been idle in between! In fact, I was talking to someone recently and saying 'Look, surely people must have forgotten about me in Europe and England. Shouldn't I be doing something this year; trying to get out a record?' And all the advice I got from the promoters and the record companies was saying 'Leave it alone.' They said 'You really ripped the world apart there last summer, as far as the big concerts were concerned, and the people are now waiting for that new album.' That album can't be any later than spring of next year, mind you. It would be a disaster if it was, but spring next year sounds good to me. But, yeah, it's a long time since the last studio record but, you know, time just slips by when you're having fun! So I'm happy about the gap — it just means that the next record can't be a flim-flam affair. It has to be a really very strong record which, again, is exciting to contemplate. After its release, there will be a substantial tour to support the record, of course. That's another reason why, when I'm writing songs, I'm thinking particularly of performance of these songs. That's one way of ensuring that you don't get lost in studio techniques. So, when you write a song, you don't say 'Well, this is what I'll do in the studio' and so on. What you should do is write a song actually for performance. What I often do, when I'm writing, is I actually imagine myself performing that song in Wembley or in the Olympia Halle in Munich or somewhere in Norway. You know, by imagining yourself in that kind of a situation, it creates a quantum leap in power. It's very important to do that."

PERSON TO PERSON

Your invitation to be so bold, this is the regular section in the newsletter which gives club members the opportunity to ask Chris anything and everything about himself and his work. Here are some of his answers . . .

Do you ever plan to make videos for some of your older songs like *Spanish Train*, *The Traveller of Crusader*? (Lidia Dobrucka, Poland). CHRIS: "Well the answer is I'd love to, but it would be very expensive to do that, unless you've got a reason to do it, although we have been approached several times about making a film around *Spanish Train*. But film makers tend to be very . . . fly by night, as far as ideas are concerned. They can get a great idea, promise you \$30 million — and the next week you never hear from them again. So, for *Spanish Train* at least, the idea is still there; it's a cracking good story and I'm sure something will happen one day — even if it's a short cartoon."

Will you be writing a song for Michael, as you did for Rosanna and Hubie? (Angela Dowdeswell, England). CHRIS: "I will, but whether I put it on the album or not is another question. I don't know whether people feel that I'm inflicting my personal family life onto vinyl, or CD, and so on. It depends; if it's a good song — and it's good enough — it will definitely go on the record. And I think he deserves it. With the songs for Rosanna and Hubie, if they were good I was going to put them on the record, and if people didn't think they were much good, I wasn't going to. But they turned out to be nice. So, if I do another one that can be tucked away nicely on the record, I'll do it."

Chris and I share the same birthday. Does he ever read his horoscope and does he see himself as a typical Libran? (Jo Bailey, England). CHRIS: "I think, like most people, I do sort of flick my eyes over the horoscope — and if I agree with it because that's the way things are going, I think 'Gosh, this person is perceptive!' Then, I believe in the stars and horoscopes. I don't think there's a typical Libran in as much as how can one twelfth of people worldwide all share the same characteristics? But there appears to be, possibly in the more outlandish aspects of some of the starsigns, a possibility that you can spot certain behaviour patterns that may link them to a certain starsign. For example, I find Gemini people quite easy to

spot — on occasion. I'm often making mistakes, however! I'll say 'Are you a Gemini?', and they'll say 'No. I'm Sagittarian.' But I'm not surprised if someone who acts like a Gemini is one. They say that a typical Libran trait is indecisiveness. Well, I'm not indecisive, but I do like to have as much information about something as possible before I make a decision. So I'm not indecisive in the sense that I can't make up my mind; I usually make up my mind pretty fast, but if it's an important decision I like to have all the facts, and spend as much time thinking about them as possible. I don't like the consequences of a rash decision."

Chris once mentioned in an interview that Gene Pitney had recorded one of his songs, but didn't mention which one. What was it? (Karen Muldowney, Ireland). CHRIS: "Hold On. He pitched it even higher than I did — and it sounded like he was being strangled as he did it! It wasn't a bad version, actually. That question aside, you can also say, on my behalf, something to all the people that I know Karen is trying to pull together for her fan convention called No Borderline. I think it's a terrific idea and I love the idea of people coming from all over the world to get together to enjoy a concert and to enjoy being with each other. Obviously, I'd like to support it — and even make an appearance if that's feasible. But if the event is going to be put around a concert then, regrettably, I'm not going to be doing any in the UK or Ireland until after the new album is released — and I can't put a date on that."

What does Chris' record/tape/CD collection consist of? (Eileen Ray, England). CHRIS: "I can have a look right now, actually. Well, I've got a whole bunch of Supertramp records, because I'm looking through them to remind me what it was like being on tour with them all those years ago. That's very interesting. I've got Del Amitri . . . Mozart and all that stuff . . . Steve Winwood . . . I've got The Beatles, Sting . . . I've got an awful lot of Chris de Burgh here, unfortunately . . . I've got Springsteen, Genesis, Don Henley, Dire Straits, Mike & The Mechanics, Eurythmics, Police, Bee Gees, Dylan, Paul Simon, Gary Moore, Beverley Craven — nice voice — Whitney Houston, Gloria Estefan, Robert Palmer, Richard Marx . . . basically people who know what they're up to. There's no beginners there, I suppose, although I do listen out on the radio for new stuff — but I haven't been turned on by anything I've heard recently."

Have you ever thought of working with other well-known musicians? (Anna Armbrust, Switzerland). CHRIS: "Yes, I have, but I don't know, it would have to be in the right circumstances. I feel I could do that if it was a charity record, but I wouldn't be that mad about it on one of my albums. I just feel a little bit uncomfortable about doing that kind of thing on a C de B album. I have been asked, frequently, to do stuff with other people — and if it was in aid of something specific, I would be very interested. But, pretty much, a Chris de Burgh album is a Chris de Burgh album, I think. It might be a great idea at the time to record something with someone else on one of them, but I think as the years roll on, I'd probably regret having done it."

"Why did you never record the song At The War Memorial?" (Anne-Rose Fischer, Germany). CHRIS: "For those who don't know, this was a song I wrote following the tragic Enniskillen bombing in Northern Ireland during 1987. Well, at the time I wrote it, I said I never would record it — and I didn't want to break that promise. The song was an instant response to an outrage, it's as strong now as it was before — and the only way I could ever record it is by erasing the words and starting again. When I said I'd never record it, I meant it and I wanted to stick to it. I know that people have asked for it to be released but, you know, I'm proud of having done it and proud of the fact that, as a songwriter — just like anybody else — you can react to any situation that arises. For example, if I felt so inclined and if there was something similar again or, indeed, if something happened to somebody else I know, then I might again respond with a song. Carry Me (Like A Fire In Your Heart) was a response to a friend losing his wife. But that was different; I wanted to record that, and I said I would at the time. At The War Memorial is just a little something I'm going to stick at the back of my mind, and maybe drag out and look at in the years to come."

How tall are you? (Claire Johnson, England). CHRIS: "I'm actually 5ft 6ins."

Why don't you include the song Man On The Line in your stage shows? (A. Dean, Wales). CHRIS: "Well, I did a whole tour with it as the kind of key song and, indeed, the whole stage set was designed around the telephone cable motif featured on the album cover. But, you know, one moves on and you discard songs. I can only physically get through about 22 songs in a show, and when you're out with a new album you tend to want to play the new songs — as well as go back to some old favourites — and design a package of a stage show that feels right. I'm very interested in dynamics all the way through a concert, and we just felt that Man On The Line wasn't one of the songs that was working as well as others might in the same situation."

What's the story behind the two different album covers for Spanish Train & Other Stories? (Bob Bryant, USA). CHRIS: "The black and white cover with the picture of me on the back with the Christ figure was done in England, for worldwide release. But when the American people heard the song Spanish Train, they all went crazy for it and an artist in the record company designed this amazing picture, on a reddish background, of the train — and they all went for that. It was also the Canadian cover as well. It's quite possible that they simply didn't like the black and white sleeve, I suppose, but I'm very fond of the North American version, certainly."

Have you ever been to the Isle of Skye, Iona or the Outer Hebrides? (M. E. Hirst, Scotland). CHRIS: "I've travelled a fair bit around Scotland, but I haven't been to any of those places. The furthest north I've been, I suppose, is Aberdeen but I love Scotland and it is a place I would plan to spend a little more time in years to come, looking around the more outlying places."

Isn't it sometimes boring for you to have so many fans? (Silja Muller, Switzerland). CHRIS: "Boring? It's not something I would call boring — I would say it's stimulating. I went out last night with four adults and five kiddies to a little restaurant in the Wicklow Hills, called Wicklow Heather. It was a very nice family restaurant — and you should have seen the people's faces as I walked in! I guess they'd expect you to be eating 5-star cuisine all the time, but we really fancied

nipping down the road, having a pint and a good steak and chips — and there we were. After the initial shock, a lot of people came up for autographs, in between mouthfuls, and there were occasions when I was thinking to myself 'Crikey, you know . . . please!' But, on the other hand, you know that it's going to create an awful lot of interest and excitement and something that the people can talk about. And the fact that I get fan letters from all over the world I find very interesting, very exciting. Also, without fans, there is no artist. Oh God, yeah; I'd be nobody without the fans, absolutely."

When you wrote Crusader, had you already envisaged the increasing danger and the Palestinian problem in the Holy Land? (Sabine Pichler, Germany). "Well when you refer to history, you find that history is built on prejudice — and that's a quotable quote. The fact that what happened in the 12th and 13th Centuries is repeated again and again — not just through prejudice but also through misunderstanding and greed — cannot be ignored. I think economic pressure and prejudice causes these things to happen. The Palestinian problem was drifting around my mind when I wrote the song, but it wasn't just that. I think the critical factor in that song was the fact that all these people came together, for all different motives, to unite against a common enemy. In fact, the parallel with that just happened in the Gulf war, when I was stunned to see so many people come together. Many of them trade enemies, many of them not particularly fond of each other — you know, France is not particularly fond of the United States. But the fact that they all came together to recognise the evil of Saddam Hussein was very interesting to me indeed. Actually, I was waiting to hear Crusader on the radio drawing that parallel, but I didn't hear it. Maybe I wasn't listening . . ."

PEN PALS

The latest list of club members wanting to write to fellow C de B followers from around the world . . .

Barbara Gil, Ul. Nad Sudolem 22/30, 31-228 Krakow, Poland. (Aged 22).

Claudia Lenberg, Im Oberfeld 4, 5860 Iserlohn 7, West Germany. (Aged 14).

Mrs Carolyn Harvey, 16 Llanthewy Road, Newport, Gwent, NP9 4LD, Wales. (Aged 31).

Angela Dowdeswell, 12 Rossall Grove, Little Sutton, South Wirral, L66 1NN, England.

Mrs Nicola Durber, 22 Nayland Croft, Hall Green, Birmingham 28, England. (Aged 33).

Marie McCrum, 35 South Meadows, Dipton, Stanley, Co. Durham, DH9 9XL, England. (Aged 18).

Mlle Marie Therese Perrier, 26 Rue Roger Aini, 14100 Lisieux, France. (Aged 28).

Pamela Hopkins, 23 Newstead Road, Southbourne, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH6 3HJ, England. (Aged 18).

Martina Kehl, Potsdamer Str. 4, 6505 Nierstein 1, Germany. (Aged 29). Mrs Christine McGowan, 309 Kingshill Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex, England. (Aged 39). Remember, if you would like your details included in future lists of pen pals, then please write your details clearly and in BLOCK CAPITALS — specifying your age, if you wish — and send them to the P.O. Box address printed below.

UNTIL THE NEXT TIME . . .

Here we are, once more at the end of yet another Gazette and — as usual — the closing words go to Chris. They're well worth absorbing, too, if you ever had any doubts about his intentions to continue his already long-term career . . . "A year ago, reading a newsletter of the time — which I did, recently — it sounded like I was down about it all. But I was being reflective and I was . . . serious. I was saying to myself 'What's the point in carrying on when I've got really very little to say?' I was also thinking that the way the current music business is going is very depressing — and that I didn't really want to be involved in that part of the business. I'm not saying that the business has changed since then — if anything, it's got weaker — but everything I've learned and so on . . . I can't just dump that out of the window. I really want to use it now and I'm excited, very excited, about writing new songs and performing new songs."

So, there you have it; new songs from C de B are most certainly going to come your way. In the next newsletter, I'll be talking more with Chris about how the songwriting is progressing. I've long given up predicting when that next Gazette will be published (!), but I'm confident it should be with you by August time — all things going well . . . However, until the next time, please remember to send any Pen Pal addresses, Person To Person queries or Wax Lyrical questions — along with any ideas or criticisms about the club or newsletter — to me, Mike, at: The New Chris de Burgh Club, P.O. Box 276, London, E2 7BW.

Thanks for your patience and support.

STOP PRESS:

The previously mentioned Portuguese dates, are correct at the time of publishing, they are as follows:

JUNE 7 — Estoril Casino.

JUNE 8 — Lisbon Praco de Touros Campo Pequeno.

JUNE 9 — Lisbon Praco de Touros Campo Pequeno.

JUNE 10 — Oporto Coliseum.