

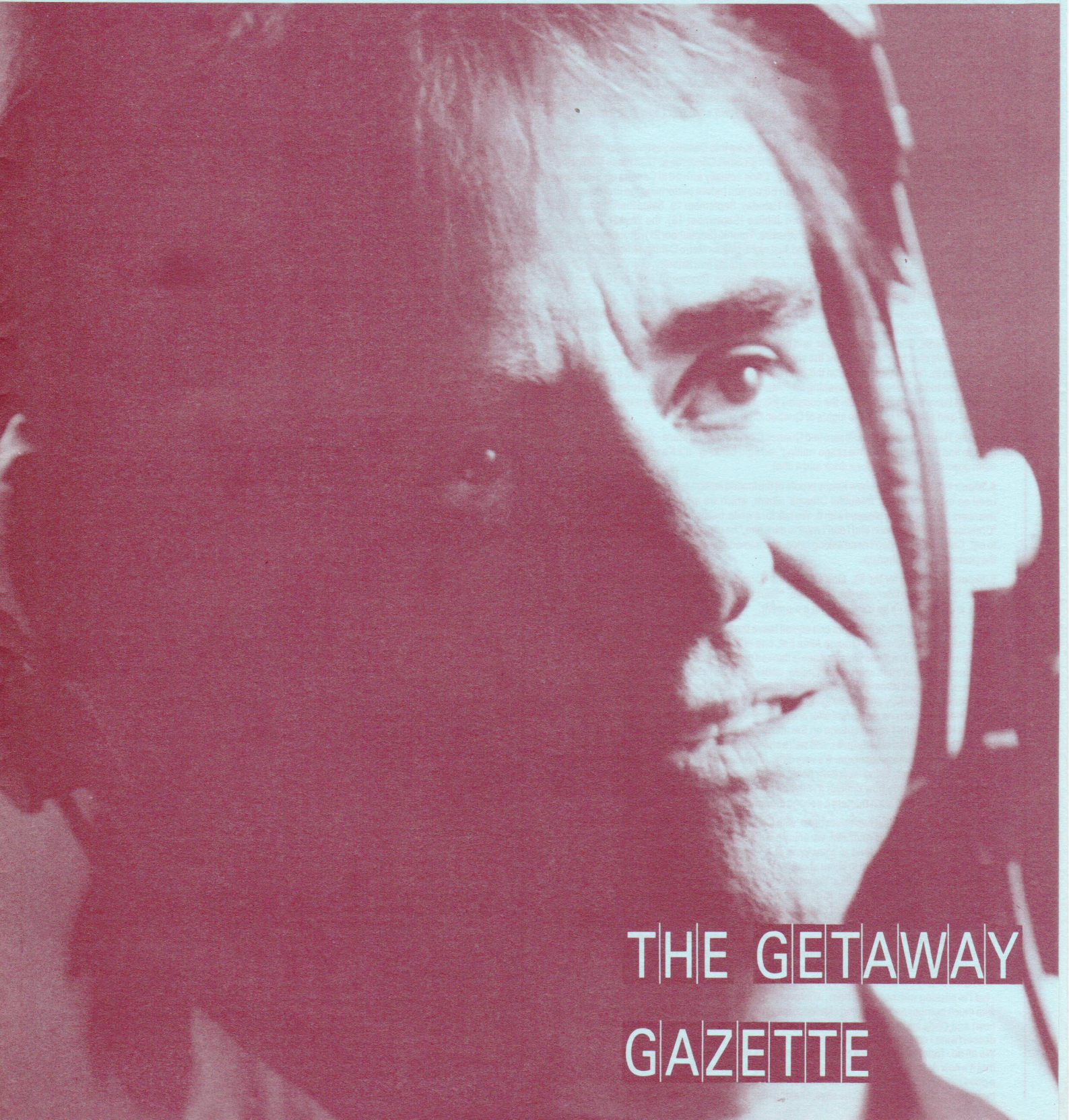
THE NEW

Chris de Burgh

CLUB

P.O. BOX 276 LONDON E2 7BW

APRIL 1997



THE GETAWAY
GAZETTE

STOP PRESS! Chris has just announced another summer show, in addition to those below, as follows: Hylands Park, Chelmsford, on August 23. Tickets are £15 and available from the box office on 01245 606 505. This is an open-air picnic-style event.

Hello, and welcome to the latest edition of the Gazette, our first since October, 1996. In the previous newsletter we promised you an exclusive 'on the road' report of Chris on tour in Canada but, before that, we would remind members of the forthcoming **Classic Summer Concerts '97** shows by Chris in the UK, as follows:

August 1 - Canons Marsh Amphitheatre, Bristol (£22.50).
August 2 - Powderham Castle, near Exeter (£25).
August 9 - Ragley Hall, near Stratford-upon-Avon (£25).
August 24 - Loseley Park, near Guildford, Surrey (£25).

As a club member, you should already have received notification of the shows prior to them being announced or offered for sale to the general public, but if for some reason you have not already ordered your tickets (prices in brackets above) then call **Ticketmaster's** 24-hour credit card hotline now on **0541 514000**. All tickets are subject to a booking fee, and all concerts are open-air summer shows in unique locations, with a full symphony orchestra, band and choir. The show at Bristol is all-seated, whilst the others are unreserved picnic-style concerts to which you are welcome to bring your own food and drink. The three picnic concerts will finish with a spectacular firework finale.

C de B IN CANADA

Every once in a while, your fan club correspondent seizes an opportunity to travel outside of the UK to report on what Chris is doing abroad. One such chance presented itself last September - when Chris embarked on his first Canadian tour since 1989. His visit to Canada, long acknowledged in Chris's career history as among the first countries to embrace and support his music, promised to be a memorable event, from start to finish. After so long away, how would he be received? The fan club has always been aware of a faithful and patient hard-core Canadian fanbase - ever eager and anxious to see him back within its borders - so, in the circumstances, a trip to North America seemed too good to miss. So it was that I flew out to the beautiful surrounds of Quebec to join the tour, with notepad in hand and the intention of writing down whatever I saw in it. Here's what happened...

Wednesday, September 25, 1996 - 10pm: Having flown into Canada yesterday and spent the previous night at another, nearby hotel, I check into the Loews Concorde at 1225 Place Montcalm, Quebec, where Chris himself is due later today. Chris actually arrived in Canada on Saturday, September 14, and had a couple of 'days off' in Edmonton before performing the first concert of the tour at the city's Northern Jubilee venue on Tuesday, September 19. Since then, the tour has rolled through shows at Calgary's Southern Jubilee (September 18), the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg (September 19), the Molson Amphitheatre, Toronto (September 21), St Johns Memorial Stadium, Newfoundland (September 23) and, last night, Halifax Metro Centre, Nova Scotia. I'm in Canada to see the last three shows of the tour. According to my tour itinerary, everybody bar Chris, his personal assistant (Chris Andrews) and manager (Kenny Thomson) are due in Quebec any time now, having travelled overnight from Halifax on a sleeper bus.

10.32pm: By strange coincidence, just as I'm handing in my room key at reception - en route to a quick tour of exploration around Quebec City - a familiar figure strides through the hotel door. It's Steve Martin, Chris's tour manager, and he's fresh off the sleeper bus, which has just pulled into town. We chat briefly about how the shows so far have gone ("Fabulously") and I ask when Chris is due in. "He's flying in later on this afternoon, and should be here around 6 o'clock. There isn't a show today, so he has the evening off." After writing a note for Kenny, to let him know I'm in town, I leave Steve to deal with the complex job of checking in the touring party - a total of 13 people - and head off to see the sights of Quebec City.

5.35pm: Having walked for miles around Quebec City (a stunning place - go there...now!), I get back to find the telephone's 'message waiting' red light blinking. It's Kenny, and we arrange to meet downstairs in the bar for a drink and a chat.

6.30pm: In the hotel bar, I show Kenny proofs of the limited edition signed poster* of the painting used on the cover of the 'Beautiful Dreams' album, which we are planning to sell to fan club members. Kenny is very pleased with it. We talk for a while, but he has one eye on the hotel foyer; "Chris is coming down soon and I don't want to miss him," he explains. "We're going for something to eat. Come along." I don't need asking twice, and immediately head off back to my room to drop the poster off and freshen up.

6.38pm: I'm waiting for the lift. One arrives, the doors open and - hey presto!, out steps Mr de Burgh. "I've come to interview you," I tell him. "Start running now..." Chris laughs, we exchange hellos and I tell him I'll be back down in a moment.

7pm: Chris, Kenny, Chris Andrews and myself leave the hotel, taking a left outside of the doors, which takes us straight on to Grande Allee Est, one of the main boulevards of Quebec City. At the point where we join it, the Grande Allee is flanked on either side of the road by restaurant after restaurant - many of them with tables outside, under awnings or beneath open umbrellas. It's an extremely pretty and inviting sight - but which restaurant to choose? Most palates are catered for here, from Italian and Japanese through to Chinese and Indian - but Chris clearly knows where he's going. He walks past one restaurant after another, before finally settling on an eatery by the name of Louis Hebert, with French cuisine on the menu. It's far too cold to eat al fresco, so we step inside. The restaurant is fairly quiet, and we're shown to a table in the rear by a lady who appears to eye Chris with some recognition. It's very difficult to tell whether she is actually acknowledging his celebrity or merely being discreetly polite as a matter of course. And that's just my angle on the situation - imagine how difficult it must be for Chris to figure it out. Having said that, he probably doesn't give such matters a second thought...

7.10 - 12pm: For the next five hours or so, with Chris sitting opposite Kenny and myself next to Kenny and opposite Chris Andrews, we enjoy a delightful evening out - fuelled by the odd glass of wine here and there. Chris is something of a wine expert, after all, although not the type, thankfully, who feels the need to shout about his knowledge. Indeed, when the wine list is offered at the table, Chris listens patiently to the waiter's suggestions and advice before ordering his own informed selections; a bottle of red, to go with his main course of lamb, and white to go with Kenny (risotto) and Chris's (a prawn dish) choices of meal. Wouldn't you know it? I'd already eaten immediately before meeting Kenny in the hotel bar! I mention to Chris that I'm not much of a wine drinker, and particularly don't like red wine. "I wouldn't know the difference between cheap plonk and Chateau Lafitte", I tell him. Chris smiles and shakes his head. "You can tell the difference," he insists. "Believe me. Try this." He offers me his glass, and I take a sip. He watches. "Now, feel how it enters the throat and the taste it gives. Plonk doesn't do that." He has a point... I think - but I'm sticking with bottles of beer, whatever, thank you very much. And the evening rolls on, with much humour and swapping of anecdotes. We each select a dessert (I'm hungry again by now) and Chris insists that we all enjoy a glass of his chosen dessert wine to go with it. Now, dessert wine I do like, and on this occasion I end up liking several very fine chilled glasses of it. We all do. Indeed, just before midnight, Kenny has liked enough glasses of it to convince him that it's now definitely time for bed. He says goodnight and walks back to the hotel. It seems like a good move, and I tell Chris that I'm going to follow Kenny's lead. Chris looks sternly across the table at me. "Oh no you're not," he says, shaking his head and pointing a finger down towards the

table. "You're staying right here and having another glass of wine." That's the kind of evening it was...

Saturday, September 26 - 2pm: This evening's concert is at Le Grand Theatre, at 269 Boulevard Rene Levesque, another of Quebec's main thoroughfares. I'm told the venue is a brisk ten-minute walk from the hotel, so I set off with a map in search of it.

2.10pm: Le Grand Theatre is an impressive venue, especially viewed from the stage, and recent performers here have included L'Orchestre Symphonique de Quebec, L'Opera de Quebec and, rather oddly, the illusionist David Copperfield. Steve Martin has set up his Production Office in a room backstage and is busy making phonecalls. Eavesdropping, I note that his conversations all relate to the future; will the right equipment be at the next show? Are the hotel reservations in order? Have the flight details changed? And so on. I ask Steve what time Chris will be sound-checking. "6pm," he tells me. I leave Steve with his phonecalls, and walk back to the hotel.

6pm: Back at Le Grand Theatre again, I can already hear Chris singing as I walk through the rear doors and into the building. Moments later, standing in the wings, I watch him soundcheck solo - just his voice and guitar. He sings a sort of medley to the empty arena; Ship To Shore, High On Emotion, Just A Word Away...just snatches of each song, a verse here, a chorus there.

6.20pm: Chris puts his guitar on a stand and moves across the stage to a grand piano. He begins singing again but, as before, he sings only snippets of songs - a bit of Here Is Your Paradise, a line or two of A Spaceman Came Travelling. And you get the impression that he's singing far below full tilt. Chris is clearly saving his voice for the concert itself. And here he goes again; excerpts of Lonely Sky, Here Comes The Sun.

6.30pm: Satisfied that everything is in order, from microphones through to monitors (which determine the sound levels that he hears on stage), Chris ends his soundcheck - which actually started at 5pm when his musical director, Peter Oxendale, and the string quartet ran through their paces. In keeping with the overall concept of the Beautiful Dreams shows, venue size determines which ones will feature the string quartet, or the quartet and full orchestra with choir. Where the 'full show' is required, musicians are hired locally.

6.40pm: The doors will open in exactly an hour but, right now, Chris is up on the second floor of Le Grand Theatre - in a room which has been given over to catering. It's time to have something to eat. He sits down with Peter, Kenny and myself and opts for a meal of tortelloni and...mashed potatoes, followed by a chocolate eclair. "I love these," Chris says, holding the cake up for me to see. Chris talks about his bad back; he's been having trouble with it these past few days. We had been due to conduct an interview for the Gazette today, but Chris confesses that he doesn't really feel up to it. In spite of his back problems, Chris is otherwise in rude health and, as ever, tells a selection of funny stories over dinner. His meal finished, Chris retires to his dressing room for some privacy and rest. Nobody will see much of him again now until around 8pm, when tonight's performance is due to begin.

8.18pm: Slightly later than scheduled, Chris walks on stage to what can only be genuinely described as rapturous applause. It's a much over-used description for a wildly enthusiastic reception but, in Chris's case, it really is an appropriate one.

8.19pm - 10.55pm: I take notes during Chris's performance, which is split into two halves; a solo set followed by a second set with string quartet. I won't give you chapter and verse on what I wrote, just a few comments will suffice. "Chris wows the audience with patter between songs, in French and English...borderline - very well received...High On Emotion, Patricia, Ferryman = standing ovation...two encores; The Traveller, Ship To Shore...You know how it is with Chris; he could play all night long if he wanted to...Where Peaceful Waters Flow...Hey Jude..." If you've ever seen Chris perform, I'm sure you'll get the picture. A fabulous concert, with everything given by Chris and nothing held back.

10.56pm: No sooner has Chris left the stage than a crew immediately begin stripping the stage down of equipment. There are a dozen stagehands at work, winding up wires, pulling down lights. That said, compared to the spaghetti junction of electrical cord, stacks of amplifiers and stage props involved with a full rock show, there's not really that much clearing away to do.

11.05pm: Chris had left the venue within moments of stepping off the stage and, by now, he's safely in his hotel room, probably taking a shower. Kenny and I walk back to the hotel together in the chilly night. I speak with Kenny about scheduling an interview with Chris, possibly sometime tomorrow. We'll be travelling from Quebec to Ottawa and there's isn't a concert tomorrow evening so, hopefully, we can find some time, I calculate. "Grab him when you can," Kenny laughs. "It's up to you..."

Friday, September 27 - 12.15pm: Further to our chat last night regarding the interview, I call Kenny to explore today's possibilities more fully. Kenny tells me that he has spoken to Chris, who would like to be interviewed on the flight to Ottawa.

1.20pm: I'm in the foyer of the hotel, ten minutes prior to the pre-arranged 1.30pm time of departure for Ottawa. When you've been toured as frequently as Chris has, or if you're a member of his ultra-professional entourage, you come to expect that *nobody will ever be late for anything*. Far better to meet earlier than necessary because, if anything, the show will roll out of town ahead of schedule. Sure enough, when I arrive in reception, Peter Oxendale, Kenny and Chris Andrews are already milling about.

1.27pm: As if to prove me right, here I am sitting in an Avis Rent-A-Van with Chris Andrews and Peter, ready to go - three minutes before the due time.

1.28pm: And here comes Mr de Burgh, smiling broadly as he steps into the back of a swish and shiny black Mercedes limousine with Kenny. Star treatment, indeed.

1.46pm: We arrive at Quebec's small airport. Our flight is at 2.10pm, but it won't go direct to Ottawa. Instead, we will make the brief 45-minute flight to Montreal, touch down to let some passengers off and collect others, and then take off again for Ottawa. Having checked in, we make our way to the departure gate; Chris, Chris Andrews, Kenny, Peter and myself. We sit down and Peter asks Chris how long the flight is. Chris holds out his hands to indicated a length of something else, by the look of it...a fish! Once again, it's odd to observe Chris de Burgh at large in public. You somehow don't expect to see him here, in this kind of situation. That said, I know for a fact that Chris also goes shopping in supermarkets...

2.26pm: After a brief delay, we're airborne. This is a very small plane, a 44-seater, and there are only 32 passengers. Chris has a window seat, Number 5A, at the front - and word has just reached me that he would now prefer not to do the interview as we travel. I'm actually very pleased to hear it; knowing my luck, my tape recorder would pick up plenty of engine roar, loud and clear, and precious little of Chris. I settle down to enjoy the flight.

3.28pm: We have now landed in Montreal and have two choices; we can either remain on the aircraft, or disembark and sit out the brief wait until the plane is ready to leave for Ottawa inside the airport terminal. We decide to go for the latter, and Chris is right behind me as we descend the stairs from the plane. As he steps on to ground, Chris turns around to admire the plane - and receives a telling off from a stern-looking jobsworth for doing so. "Sir, you cannot remain here unless you have a security pass. Please make your way to the terminal." Chris shrugs, and does as he is asked. He was probably only comparing notes with the plane we are flying on and, um, *the one not unlike it that he owns himself!*

4pm: Having hung around idly inside the airport terminal for the past half an hour, we are now back

on the plane and our 35-minute flight to Ottawa is underway.

4.36pm: We've landed at Ottawa, and Chris is immediately whisked away by a local TV crew for an interview. I watch the TV crew flank him as they lead him to an upstairs lounge.

5.02pm: Chris re-appears, having successfully completed his interview, and we make our way across town to our hotel. It's raining, and the city looks dull and uninspiring.

5.21pm: Inside the foyer of the Delta Hotel, Bank Street, Ottawa. As everyone is milling around the reception area, waiting for their room keys and chatting, I gently remind Chris: "Don't forget about our interview." He nods. "I won't. I'll give you a call about it later on."

5.48pm: My phone rings and, as good as his promise, it's Chris. "I'm going to have a nap now," he tells me, "but I'll call you after 7.15pm to arrange an interview." I replace the receiver and start to get my bits and pieces together; tape recorder, Person To Person questions...

7.50pm: Chris calls back. As there isn't a concert tonight, everyone has been invited out for an Indian meal by the local promoter (I think) and Chris suggests doing the interview in his room beforehand. I make my way up to his suite on the 18th floor.

7.52pm - 8.45pm: As I close the door to his room, Chris throws a small tub of pills at me from the bathroom. "Could you read the small print for me in terms of dosage and so on," he asks. "The writing's too tiny for me to see without my glasses!" The pills are mild painkillers/antibiotics to help ease Chris's continuing back trouble. Medication sorted out, we settle down to business. Believe it or not, it's quite rare for me to interview Chris face to face - we usually talk over the phone - so it's refreshing to sit across a table and chat for a change. As ever, Chris is charming, open and articulate. He basically interviews himself!

8.46pm: Chris Andrews and Peter Oxendale, both looking very smart indeed - matched only by Chris himself - call at the room to tell Chris it's time to leave for the meal. I tell them I'll join them later, at The Havelli restaurant in George Street, but - ultimately - I opt to remain at the hotel for the evening and make a start on the Gazette, which needs to be published virtually as soon as I get back to the UK.

Saturday, September 28, 5.30pm: Having spent literally all day working on the Gazette and, in between, taking the odd break to read Tony Clayton-Lea's C de B biography (essential stuff and very enjoyable, too, so order your copy right away if you haven't already got one) I book a taxi to take me to the venue for tonight's concert. I literally haven't seen a soul to do with the C de B tour so far today, but later learn that Chris and Chris enjoyed a bit of a sightseeing tour this morning, notably visiting the Parliament buildings. Very nice, apparently.

5.45pm: The Ottawa Civic Centre in Bank Street is a huge hall, normally used for sporting events - notably ice hockey which, of course, is enormous over in Canada - and it's sold out for Chris's show. I notice how cold it seems inside. Hardly surprising since there's an ice rink underneath the covered floor; the Civic Centre is home to ice hockey team The Senators...

6.10pm: Around a dozen winners of a competition to meet Chris, organised by local radio station Magic 100, begin to arrive backstage and are ushered into an empty room while they wait for Mr de Burgh. The room is just across the way from catering, and the winners - who all look pretty nervous and/or excited - are invited to help themselves to something to eat. For the record, tonight's menu, which they, Chris and the touring party will all tuck into, is raw vegetables (broccoli, carrots and cauliflower) and green leaf salad with chicken stuffed with zucchini and soft cheese, and wild rice or couscous. Various gateaux are offered for dessert.

6.29pm: Chris arrives, and immediately makes his way to the stage to soundcheck. He sings In The Ghetto and The Long And Winding Road before announcing that the microphone sound isn't as it should be. "It's too dry," he tells the monitor engineer. The problem is quickly resolved, and Chris continues.

7pm: I make my way to the entrance at the front of the venue. I have a pre-arranged and eagerly-awaited meeting myself - with Terri Holford who, for the past few years has been co-ordinating the C de B fan club for me in Canada. Although we regularly write, we have never actually met but, finally, we spoke yesterday and I promised to try and arrange for her to meet Chris. Terri arrives and we talk for a while about the fan club. For the record, Terri is doing a valuable and much-appreciated job. **THANK YOU!** I take her backstage to wait in the room occupied by the Magic 100 winners.

7.36pm: Chris pops into the backstage room to meet the competition winners - and Terri. For many artists, 'meet and greets', as such events are called, are considered something of a chore and, indeed, lots of performers simply opt not to bother with them. Chris, however, is not one of them. Instead, he takes time to chat with each winner, pose for photographs, sign autographs and, generally, put the people he meets at ease and give them an experience they will remember for a long, long time. The way Chris sees it, meeting the people that support his music is a very necessary part of the job he does. It's a form of promotion, albeit a more enjoyable form than most - and Chris has certainly not been idle when it comes to promotion since his arrival in Canada. He has been filmed on eight occasions for TV companies, and also conducted 10 interviews for radio and 30 for the press. More than that, prior to arriving in Canada he spent two days at home in Ireland clocking up 12 interviews each day for radio and press. Make no mistake about it; the media - and, therefore, the public - certainly know that Chris de Burgh is in the country, and in *your* town. Promotion is crucial to the business or selling records and concert tickets - and Chris knows it. He's also extremely good at it.

7.48pm: Having chatted individually with every person in the room for as long as his schedule allows - bearing in mind he's due on stage in around 20 minutes - Chris leaves the winners and makes his way to his dressing room to prepare for the concert.

8.07pm: A smiling Chris makes his way towards the stage. He's clearly looking forward to the evening's performance.

8.11pm: Chris appears on stage, to be greeted by a rousing round of applause that lasts for a full 30 seconds.

8.22pm: Chris is now well into the first, solo, section of his show. I'm watching from the wings and a voice whispers in my ear: "Who's that bloke?," it says, as an arm reaches over my shoulder and points to Chris. "He's *useless*. Where's the main act?" I turn round to face a grinning Peter Oxendale...

8.35pm: Chris has now reached the well-received audience participation segment of the performance, where a microphone is handed to people so they can sing along. The section is fondly referred to on tour as 'Karaoke Queen'. Peter is back at my shoulder again. "He's forgotten the words!," he laughs, pointing at Chris as a young lady warbles into the mike. Now it's the turn of another member of the audience to sing another song. Peter is still cracking jokes. "He's done it again!" he says. "I thought he wrote this song..."

8.41pm: Chris is obviously enjoying the show. "I was walking around Ottawa today and saw a poster for this concert," he tells the audience. "It said 'Three hours of music'. I thought 'What? You must be joking! I can't sing for three hours!' He then invites the audience to call out requests. There's a chorus of cries for 'Patricia!' Chris shrugs. "I don't do that any more," he says. "Not since my religious experience." Here's another demand; "For Rosanna!", somebody shouts. "Oh, I can't remember that!," Chris complains, before immediately singing "This is for Rosanna, sweet girl of my-ee-ine..."

8.42pm: I decide to go for a walk to check out the venue and surrounds. Bizarrely, right next door

to the concert hall, in the adjacent car park, is a Truck Show - featuring rows of gleaming lorries with customised cabins and fenders.

8.47pm: Back at the concert again, I find a position way up in the tiers at the back of the hall, facing the stage. Chris has stopped taking requests and is now singing solo, with guitar. To say the audience is rapt is an understatement; you could quite literally hear a pin drop.

9pm: I'm now sitting sidestage, in the wings to the right-hand side, just behind the string quartet. It's a thrilling position, a privileged view.

10.12pm: Intermission. I'm still in the wings, sitting next to Kenny, and we talk as the string quartet entertains the audience between Chris's two sets. Chris is no doubt in his dressing room, taking a well-earned breather.

10.13pm: I feel a hand on the back of my chair, and turn around to be confronted by...Chris! He's leaning down between myself and Kenny, peeping out at the audience. "It's difficult out there," he says, nodding to the crowd. "They're so far away..." I tell Chris that I've been right up to the top and back of the hall and the audience is having a great time. "They're as silent as mice; listening," I report. Chris nods. "We'll have to wake them up and make some noise, then," he smiles, walking slowly away.

10.20pm: Peter Oxendale and the string quartet walk offstage, to great applause. As they walk past me, I applaud them, too. "They laaaaarve it!," he grins.

10.26pm: Chris is on stage, talking to the audience. He makes reference to Hull, the wilder side of town, just across the river, where the bars remain open later than anywhere else in Ottawa. It's where everyone goes to carry on partying when everywhere else has closed. Chris says he might just go there himself, after the show, because he's heard about this little place... Of course, it's his way on introducing Patricia The Stripper. The audience applaud wildly - but can Chris get people out of their seats and on their feet?

10.30pm: By the end of the song, the majority of the audience is on its feet - at last. Chris keeps the momentum up with High On Emotion, and hears thousands of people belt the chorus back out at him. Don't Pay The Ferryman takes the pace up yet another notch, although Peter Oxendale - now standing beside me in the wings - has a different chorus to the song. "Don't play with paraffin!", he sings. He walks away, laughing, but returns just in time for a new slant on the next chorus; "Don't frame my terrapin!" Peter, just like Chris, is obviously on a roll, because he has yet another alternative chorus to share with us all: "Don't paint my caravan!"

10.39pm: Chris leaves the stage to the sound of clapping, shouting and foot-stomping. An encore is clearly demanded - which is Peter's cue to come back with some final thoughts on his favourite chorus; "Don't drink me sherry, Stan!" and, most peculiarly, "Can't find me Jerry can."

10.42pm: The arena erupts as Chris walks back on stage, waving in acknowledgement of the wild reception. First song of the encore is Where Peaceful Waters Flow and, as Chris begins to sing, a lone girl at the front of the stage holds up a flame from her lighter. Her action ignites similar displays all across the hall. Watch those lighter flames go up; dozens and dozens of them. It's a very impressive sight - particularly bearing in mind the 'No Smoking' signs everywhere. Chris's popular rendition of Hey Jude gets even the laziest among the audience up on their feet. Chris smiles as everyone sings along, and turns his microphone around to face the audience. He claps his hands, bringing the crowd in time with his rhythm, before applauding the audience - and finally walking off stage for the last time tonight.

10.55pm: With the audience still howling for more, I watch Chris disappear backstage towards his dressing room. I imagine he's probably smiling to himself - and who could blame him? The evening has been a total, memorable success.

11.28pm: Unlike Elvis, Chris has not left the building. Here he is now, taking time to meet 20 or so people gathered in a room backstage. As Chris enters the room, an elderly lady - somewhere in her sixties - greets him with something of a back-handed compliment. "Not bad for an old fella," she says. Chris is not offended at all. "Thanks," he smiles back. Chris is wearing a suit and looks smart and relaxed as he answers questions from fans or signs autographs.

11.36pm: Chris is ushered out of the room. "Coming for a drink or something?," he asks me as he walks by...

Sunday, September 29, 11am: Kenny and Peter Oxendale leave the hotel for Montreal.

12pm: Myself and the girls from the string quartet board a mini-bus for the 120-mile trip from Ottawa to Montreal. Estimated time of arrival is two hours later - a full 90 minutes or so before Chris is even due to depart; Chris won't leave Ottawa for the airport until around 3.30pm. As our mini-bus makes its way through downtown for the freeway, I reflect that the journey is revealing more of Ottawa to me than I've so far seen since arriving here around 48 hours ago. During my time in town, I've witnessed no more of Ottawa than the following; the short drive from the airport to our hotel, the drive from the hotel to last night's show (and back again!) and now, finally, the drive from our hotel out of Ottawa. I can't help thinking that I really must come back and actually see the place I've just spent the last three days in. Rock 'n roll, eh? Now you know what being on tour is really like...

2.03pm: With almost alarming punctuality, we arrive at our hotel, the Marriott Chateau Champlain, at 1 Place Du Canada, Montreal. That said, it's relatively easy to predict the length of a journey here in Canada or, for that matter, anywhere in North America; maximum speed limits on freeways are rigidly adhered to and enforced. So, 120 miles to travel? That comes to two hours at a maximum speed of 60 miles per hour, sir. How shocking it must be for Americans to tootle along on British motorways where, for most drivers, a speed restriction sign is that little blur you whizz past on your way to 100mph...

4.20pm: Chris arrives at the hotel and is taken straight to the venue for this evening's performance, The Molson Centre. Its location, 1250 de la Gauchetiere, is actually just a brief 5-minute walk from our hotel. I discover this as I stroll over to watch Chris soundcheck.

4.52pm: This evening's concert, to another sell-out audience of 7500, is a biggie. I'm reminded of this as soon as I enter the Centre - where Chris is already up on stage rehearsing Discovery with full orchestra, band and a 12-voice choir. It's a fraught experience to watch, let alone be involved in - and I'll tell you why. Prior to Chris's arrival on stage, Peter Oxendale has had just *three hours* - including the statutory union break demanded by musicians over here - to rehearse and brief a 33-piece orchestra, a five-piece band and the choir. None of whom he has ever met before, never mind heard. To compound matters, none of the musicians or choir members have had more than a couple of hours to study the sheet music (it had been available at the venue in plenty of time, but nobody had bothered to collect it!) - and few, if any, of them have ever actually heard the material they'll be performing tonight. If Peter wasn't already as mad as a hatter, then the experience ought to prove enough to send him scuttling off into the distance, tittering insanely to himself. Or so you might have thought. "I love it!," Peter will tell me later when I ask him about it all. "It's of my choosing. I wouldn't have it any other way..." I think about this briefly. "No wonder you're mad," I tell him. By the time the soundcheck is over, everybody will have had just *half an hour* of actual rehearsal. This would explain why, as Chris sings the opening verse of Snows Of New York and a stray acoustic guitar wanders in, he turns around and firmly advises "Just me. Just me..." As I say, these are anxious moments... Typically, Chris shows no outward sign of being phased by any of it. As he leaves the stage at the end of the soundcheck, he turns to the assembled musicians behind him. "Thank you," he says. "I hope you'll enjoy the evening as much as I'm going to."

6.30pm: I have a date to keep; I've arranged to meet Joe De Rouen - the brains behind Chris's now official home page on the Internet - outside the venue. Joe has travelled all the way up from Texas to see tonight's show, and is a completely devoted C de B fan. By way of an introductory gift, and a thank you for his hard work and enthusiasm, I hand Joe a copy of Tony Clayton-Lea's book, which I have asked Chris to autograph and inscribe with a personal message from him to Joe. Joe is most pleased. At this early stage, his fledgling website is already spreading the C de B message around the globe most effectively, and the point of our meeting is to discuss ways of incorporating the fan club into the great job he's doing. As I write, the home page has developed and improved even further - so if you're on line, you can visit [The Official Chris de Burgh Home Page on the World Wide Web](http://www.crl.com/~jderouen/cdeb) by pointing your browser to <http://www.crl.com/~jderouen/cdeb>. The site has lyrics to all of Chris's songs, as well as sound samples, a complete discography and much more. If you have access to the Internet, this is a must-see site for any Chris de Burgh fan.

7.15pm: Our talking over for the moment, and having arranged to meet Joe again backstage after the show so I can introduce him to Chris, I go off in search of the man himself to find out what he's up to.

7.23pm: Chris is doing a TV interview with Music Plus, a kind of Canadian equivalent of MTV.

7.28pm: Chris returns to his dressing room. Meanwhile, people are still streaming into the venue, even though the doors opened at 6pm. I peep out from backstage to have a look at the scene which will greet Chris in a few moments - and my heart misses a beat. The Molson Centre is a brand new facility - it first opened in March, 1996 - and it's quite magnificent. It is tiered on all sides, high up to the roof, but somehow retains an intimacy which will suit Chris's purposes perfectly. It's not unlike London's Royal Albert Hall crossed with, say, Wembley or Sheffield Arenas. Two large video screens are situated either side of the stage.

7.42pm: Flanked by the ever-present Chris Andrews, Chris emerges from his dressing room and strolls to the backstage area. True to form, he appears to be as cool as a cucumber, cracking jokes and smiling all the while. Not a single visible trace of nerves.

7.44pm: Chris walks on stage and is greeted by a total standing ovation. The cheers and applause are deafening, and it's a full two minutes before it subsides sufficiently for Chris to utter his first words of the evening; "Bonsoir, Montreal," he says simply, again to an overwhelming response. This fantastically enthusiastic reaction sets the tone for the entire performance and, by the end of it, Chris will have received a further *ten* - I counted each and every one of them - standing ovations. Truly outstanding.

Again, I won't go through the concert chapter and verse, but I will share some of my scribbled notes made during it: Spanish Train - standing ovation...fantastic girl singer from the audience takes the microphone during the 'Karaoke Queen' section - she gets a well-deserved standing ovation!...Spaceman - standing ovation...Borderline - standing ovation...Patricia; the audience sings along so loudly it must think it's at an ice hockey match...Ferryman - standing ovation...

9.28pm: Intermission. I applaud Chris as he leaves the stage. He nods. "Sex police are after you," he says, making a reference to a table dancing establishment I had, um, stumbled into by accident - honest - back in Ottawa. Kenny walks by. "There's Doctor Note," he grins, pointing at my ever-present pen and pad.

9.44pm: Chris makes his way back for the second half of the show, but not before enjoying another dig at my Ottawa evening out, en route. "I won't mention it again tonight," he smirks. "Promise..."

9.45pm: Back on stage, Chris is joined by L'Orchestra Gala Philharmonique, conducted by Nat Raider. I'll hand you back over to my notes: Lady In Red - standing ovation...Snows Of New York - standing ovation...

10.42pm: Off stage, to immediate shouts of "We want more!"

10.43pm: Back again with High On Emotion - another standing ovation...Riding On A Rainbow - standing ovation.

10.55pm: Chris steps into the wings once more, but returns a minute later. It's a further full minute before he can get a word out; the applause is so loud. "We could be here all night, you know," he tells the audience before beginning Ship To Shore. Chris has now reached the part of the show where he sings his medley featuring snatches of some of his best-loved songs. When he reaches the part where he sings "I don't really wanna go, but it's the end of the show" he is greeted by a loud volley of...boos! Of course, the booing is for all the right reasons; nobody wants this night to end. Chris is clearly taken aback. "Well, I can tell you," he announces to the crowd, "this is one of the best concerts I've ever been at." He promises not to stay away so long from Montreal again in future, and adds: "Thank you for bringing a tear to my eye tonight. You were overwhelming with your love and affection." With that, he plays Where Peaceful Waters Flow which, as ever, segues into Hey Jude. The singing from the audience in the chorus and as the song plays out is...huge. My notes tell me it "lifted the roof." It very probably did...

11.16pm: To the by now obligatory standing ovation, Chris finally leaves the stage. The performance is over and, I have to say, tonight is one of the finest concerts I have ever seen in my life. In fact, it's the second best performance I've ever seen in my life - surpassed only (and then only just) by Bruce Springsteen at Wembley Arena in 1978, when Bruce opened with Born To Run (at that time, his most famous song by a mile) literally leapt off stage halfway through it, to be carried on the audience's shoulders from the stage to the rear of the arena and back again, and the gig just got better and better and better from that point onwards. Half-way through that show, the tiers where I was standing were literally bouncing up and down so precariously that I genuinely feared they might collapse. And now, 18 years later, this. I may have handled Chris's fan club since 1983, I may have seen too many of his shows, all over the world, to number but I have never seen one like this. It's really hard to describe just how fantastic it actually was, and to remain impartial when I write about it now. Suffice it to say that I have been to quite possibly more than a thousand pop or rock concerts in my time - from The Rolling Stones to The Who and Michael Jackson to Paul McCartney - and, believe me, every one of those performers could learn from Chris de Burgh. He genuinely is the very best at what he does. In terms of showmanship, interaction with his audience, building a performance to a peak and...sheer blood, guts and stamina - he's out there on his own. Whatever anyone thinks about his music, whether they love it or loathe it, there's no denying that Chris de Burgh is a communicator without peer. But what I saw that night went beyond mere opinions, beyond criticism. All I can do is try and report it like it was - and it was unforgettable. It took my breath away and thrilled me to the bone. It reminded me why I'm in this business; because, when it's this good, there's little in life more exciting, invigorating or emotional as music. You really should have been there in Montreal - and if you were, you witnessed one of the great performances - and receptions - of our time.

11.46pm: And what do you imagine Chris might do after such a triumphant experience? Crack open a bottle of champagne? Do a couple of laps of honour around the arena? No; Chris somehow finds the time and energy for another meet and greet backstage. At a rough count, there are 50 or 60 people here for him to chat to or sign autographs for. As ever he does so with humour, good grace and patience. Freshly showered, he looks smart, healthy and happy. Equally beaming are Briggitt and Paul Carter, who I am introduced to backstage. It's a very great pleasure to meet this young married couple - she from North America, he from England - because...they fell in love and made their vows having first discovered each other through the fan club pen pal service. That's right; in a roundabout kind of way, I played Cupid. I tell them I shall have to figure out what kind of commission I'm due on their happiness - a fee for introducing them must be in order, surely? - and enjoy chatting to them very much. I tell them that they are not the first couple to have started

out as fan club pen pals and ended up as husband and wife, however. I know of at least two other 'club' marriages over the years. If you're one of the people concerned, do drop me a line at the club. It'd be great to know how you're doing...

12.24am: It's been a l-o-n-g day for Chris and, with a parting wave, he leaves the room. He's headed for the Buona Notte, a downtown Italian restaurant, for a well-deserved meal and, quite possibly, a glass or wine or two.

1.35am: Kenny and myself arrive at the Buona Notte. The place is empty bar one table, and it's occupied by Chris Andrews, Peter Oxendale and Chris. We join them to toast a very successful Canadian return. I've only seen three of the nine shows on this tour but, as I've said, I won't forget them in a hurry - and nor will anyone else. Salut!, Mr de Burgh. Chris flies back home tomorrow evening but, for now, he's quietly enjoying a few drinks and, no doubt, reflecting on what a great tour this has been. If anyone deserves beautiful dreams tonight, it's C de B...

CHRIS SPEAKS

Most of the interview conducted with Chris in Canada was printed in the previous Gazette but what follows is, for the record, the remainder of what was said - with specific reference to the Canadian tour...

Prior to this tour of Canada, it had been more than seven years since you'd played there. To echo the question asked by all of your North American fans - why so long?

CHRIS: "Well, we did an awful lot of performance in Canada in the past, and I felt that we should give it a break. Secondly, once we decided to come back again, we ran into all sorts of logistical problems about running a Canadian tour together with other tours and people's availability. There was just a whole host of difficulties. But this last tour happened because I wanted to come; I said to Kenny (Thomson) 'Kenny, I want to go out to Canada.' That was last summer and, as you saw, the response was magnificent."

Did that surprise you?

CHRIS: "Well, you take a risk playing somewhere that you haven't been for seven years! But it paid off, and there's still a tremendous amount of respect and affection for me out in Canada - and it means that I have now elevated my status even higher, and I can go back again. And I will go back again in the next couple of years."

But, surely, that very first show of the Canadian tour, in Edmonton, must have been nerve-racking for you...

CHRIS: "Nope! It was great. I really enjoyed it. You know, Canadians have got a really great sense of humour. The toughest one of the tour was probably Quebec City, because I had to go into the French stuff (French is the main language of Quebec). Trying to think my way through all of the French was...interesting! But I got by. There was a stunning review of that concert in the paper the following day. Just extraordinary; it was really...great. The sort of thing you ought to keep forever."

Was there a particular highpoint during the Canadian tour?

CHRIS: "Well, every show was a highpoint, I think, in its different way - but the first show that we did with the orchestra, in Toronto, was fantastic. I did the first half - an hour and 40 minutes - solo. And some people, who had arrived slightly late, hadn't heard me saying that there was going to be a second half - and they left! Some of them actually starting leaving, and had to be physically restrained and told 'No! That was the first half...' Because they're only used to hearing a concert for an hour and 40 minutes! In its entirety that portion of the concert, my solo performance, worked dynamically as a show. It worked fantastically. Then there was an intermission and I came back and played with the orchestra. So I was on stage that night for...three hours, as I was in Quebec City; nearly three hours. Toronto was also a highlight for the fact that I only had an opportunity to spend about 15 or 20 minutes with the orchestra before I did that performance. That was scary."

Another peculiar aspect of the tour, on top of performing with orchestras you'd only just met, was the travelling - much of which meant passing through different time zones. Was that a problem for you?

CHRIS: "That was very difficult. Enormously difficult to control. There was a lot of flying, a lot of time zones - and trying to keep in touch with your...head in all that is almost impossible. As we speak, I'm actually exhausted."

At the concert in Quebec City, you played a song which I don't believe you've done very often for a long time; The Tower...

CHRIS: "Prior to Quebec City, I had played it a couple of times on the Canadian tour but, prior to that, very rarely. You see, the album it was from, Spanish Train & Other Stories, was huge in Canada. That was released back in 1976, and people in Canada just yell out for that song. As you noticed, I was just taking requests from people; I did five in a row in Quebec that people called out. I had just strapped on a guitar when someone said 'Rainy Night In Paris!', so I went back to the piano, sat down - with the guitar still on - and did that one. It's just that you should have an idea of what you're going to do, don't get too distracted by people yelling stuff out, but alternatively, you should also play what people have come to hear."

UNTIL THE NEXT TIME...

Once more, that brings to a close another edition of the Gazette. Unfortunately, due to the usual lack of space, we have been unable to include many of our regular features - notably Pen Pals, Collector's Corner (for anyone wishing to buy, sell or swap any items of C de B memorabilia) and Person To Person (your chance to 'interview' Chris by writing in with any questions you'd like to ask him). That said, we fully intend to resume normal service in the next Gazette, so - please - send in entries for any of the above to the club P.O.Box. Particularly any Pen Pal details (to include your name, address and age); you could end up getting married! Also, our P.O. Box is where you should send any comments or criticisms to.

The next Gazette will be out towards the end of the summer and will feature news on C de B's activities so far during 1997, plus details of what's in store for the rest of the year. As ever, Chris has not been idle; he's recently completed an Australian tour, followed by his first ever shows in countries including Taipei, Thailand and Malaysia. By kind of a co-incidence, your club correspondent 'bumped' into Chris at a TV studio in Sydney. Actually, it was inside Status Quo's dressing room! - but that's another story, which you can read about in the next newsletter.

Until then, thanks for your support and your famous (around here, anyway) patience. Don't forget to call **The C de B Hotline** on:

0891 334 225

to keep up to date on the latest C de B news. **NB: Calls now cost 50p per minute at all times. Please ask permission of the person paying the phone bill before making a call. This service can only be accessed if you are living in the UK.**

STOP PRESS: Word has just reached the fan club that Chris is to spend the summer working on a very special album, for a planned Christmas release. At this stage, we are unable to announce any further detail but we'll feature an update on the record's progress in the next newsletter. In the meantime, do check the Hotline for further information.

* The previously mentioned Limited Edition Beautiful Dreams print, can still be ordered via the integral merchandise form within this newsletter.