



**GIANT ELECTRIC PEA**  
*the first independent label for progressive rock*

## Big Big Train

Andy Poole and Greg Spawton formed Big Big Train in 1991 and were joined by Ian Cooper (keyboards), Steve Hughes (drums) and Canadian vocalist Martin Read. A demo cassette tape released in October 1991 was followed by Big Big Train's first live performances. The demo 'From the River to the Sea' was re-recorded and released as a self-financed CD in May 1992, followed by some higher profile gigs in England.

In January 1993, a second demo tape, 'The Infant Hercules' was released and the band spent the next six months writing the music for its first album, 'Goodbye to the Age of Steam'. This was recorded in a two week period in July 1993 and was released by GEP where they became label mates of IQ.

'Goodbye to the Age of Steam' was a big leap forward for the band and the response to the album was very positive, culminating in a licensing deal in Japan where the CD was re-issued in 1995, with a bonus track.

Ian Cooper left the band in early 1995 and live performances were put on hold while a replacement was sought and a new album was written. Recording of BBT's second album commenced in July of 1995 (with Greg filling in on keyboards) and continued, sporadically, until completion 18 months later. During the sessions, a new keyboard player, Tony Müller was recruited. Some of the songs from the new album were debuted at the band's only show from this period at the Astoria, London. 'English Boy Wonders' was finally released in autumn 1997, although in an incomplete state as the band had run out of money to finish the album.

Steve Hughes left Big Big Train in September 1998 and went on to join The Enid. He was replaced by Pete Hibbit. After disappointing sales of English Boy Wonders, they parted company with GEP, re-grouped, built their own studio and decided to carry on as an independent band.

In February 2002, the third BBT album, 'Bard' was released. At the same time, Steve Hughes rejoined BBT.



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A new vocalist, Sean Filkins was recruited to replace original vocalist Martin Read and a fourth album, 'Gathering Speed', was released in March 2004. Gathering Speed was a concept album which told the story of a fighter pilot in the summer of 1940. It marked a significant change in direction for Big Big Train with the band exploring classic prog-rock territory with the addition of post-rock influences.

The Difference Machine album was released in September 2007 and featured guest performances from Pete Trewavas and Nick D'Virgilio.

In 2008, Big Big Train re-released English Boy Wonders (an updated and completed 'director's cut' version of the album which was partly re-recorded by BBT and fully re-mixed by Rob Aubrey).

In February 2009, Sean Filkins and Steve Hughes left Big Big Train and were replaced by Nick D'Virgilio and David Longdon.

David Longdon was signed to Rondor Music and recorded for Epic records in the 1990's with his band The Gifthorse. In the final days of The Gifthorse, Longdon was invited to audition as a potential replacement for Phil Collins as lead singer in Genesis. He worked with Tony Banks, Mike Rutherford and producer Nick Davis from May to November 1996 on recordings that would become the *Calling All Stations* album. Genesis also worked with Stiltskin vocalist Ray Wilson at the same time and eventually he was preferred over Longdon. Nick D'Virgilio, also played drums on *Calling All Stations*.

Longdon's first solo CD *Wild River* (2004) featured many musicians collectively known as The Magic Club. In 2008 Martin Orford (IQ) invited Longdon to sing on his swan-song album *The Old Road* which was also recorded by Rob Aubrey and once again featured Nick D'Virgilio. Shortly afterwards, Longdon joined Big Big Train in time to commence work on *The Underfall Yard* which was released on December 15th 2009. Guest appearances on *The Underfall Yard* include Dave Gregory (XTC), Francis Dunnery (It Bites) and Jem Godfrey (Frost\*). Big Big Train were also joined on the album by a brass band led by Dave Desmond of the Coldstream Guards band.

A 41 minute EP (*Far Skies Deep Time*) was released in October 2010 as a



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companion CD to *The Underfall Yard*. The EP consists of a cover version of Anthony Phillips' "Master of Time", an unreleased song from *The Underfall Yard* sessions (Fat Billy Shouts Mine) and three new songs including the 17 minute epic "The Wide Open Sea" which is about Jacques Brel.

In April 2011 Big Big Train's first album *Goodbye to the Age of Steam* was re-issued in a remixed version with bonus tracks and new artwork.

In June 2011 the band completed a new arrangement and recording of a song called 'Kingmaker', which originally appeared on the 1992 demo album *The Infant Hercules*. The new recording replaced 'Master of Time' on the import release of *Far Skies Deep Time* by the Russian label MALS. 'Kingmaker' also features on the download version of the EP. Dave Gregory joined the band in 2011.

Keyboard player Danny Manners joined BBT in 2012 and so the line-up became: Danny Manners / Andy Poole / David Longdon / Nick D'Virgilio / Greg Spawton / Dave Gregory. *English Electric Part One* was released in September 2012. The album came second in the Prog magazine readers' poll for best album of 2012, behind Marillion's *Sounds That Can't Be Made*.

*English Electric Part Two* was released in March 2013 and received a nomination for 'Best Album of 2013' at the Progressive Music Awards which were held at Kew Gardens on September 2nd 2013. Big Big Train was also nominated in the 'Breakthrough' band category and went on to win the award.

*English Electric: Full Power* was released on 23rd September 2013. This double album featured all of the songs from the two English Electric albums and four new tracks. The CD release of *Full Power* featured a 96 page booklet. Alongside 'Full Power' an EP called *Make Some Noise* was released featuring the four new songs. On *English Electric* Big Big Train are joined by fellow travellers Andy Tillison (organ), Dave Desmond (brass) and Rachel Hall (violin).

In 2014 Big Big Train recorded a live performance at Real World Studios, due to be released in 2015. In August 2015 Big Big Train play their first gigs this century at King's Place, London.