

Monday 20 May 1985 stands out as one of the finest days in my 40 years of gig-going. I had already been to the Camden Palace that afternoon to see a recording for ITV's Live From London series (of the appropriately named Pallas) before heading to the Dominion Theatre in Tottenham Court Road for that evening's performance by China Crisis. As I always sought to do, I made the effort to check out the support band, of whom I had never heard. How glad I was that I did. Whilst I wouldn't even in hindsight suggest they blew the headliners offstage, I enjoyed The Big Dish immensely, and they remain one of the finest support acts I've ever witnessed. And they soon became one of my favourite musical acts.

The Big New Beginning single later in the year cemented my recollection of the quality I had seen on stage, followed of course by the Swimmer album and its singles the following year. I was slightly hampered by being rooted in the south while most of the band's action inevitably took place north of the border, but fortunately they toured quite extensively for at least the first couple of albums and I saw them at every opportunity I could.

The most notable - or notorious - of these saw me "immortalised" on the Thames TV recording for its Meltdown series at Teddington Lock in 1987. Essentially supporting Nik Kershaw (although the performance was broadcast in its own right), the majority of the audience inevitably comprised Kershaw fans. I decided I would show my support for TBD by squeezing my way to the front, politely explaining to the bemused Nik fans that I would be retiring to the back once this unknown-to-them bunch of Scots had finished their set. The resulting broadcast shows a very - ahem - animated audience in Big Dish t-shirt towering above a static and silent row of much shorter and younger females. I have no doubt they enjoyed Messrs Lindsay and co. Just not as much as the video proves this idiot singing along to every word clearly did.

Creeping Up On Jesus proved that "sophomore" albums are not always as disappointing as debuts, and I still think it is possibly better than Swimmer. A pre-release show at the Marquee was a particular highlight, although as much as it was a surprise at the time that they performed European Rain twice at it, this seemed even stranger upon discovering that Steven Lindsay does not especially care for the track. Record company pressure for that elusive hit, huh?

That - almost - hit came of course via Miss America, released on the final day of 1990. Did the change of record label mean success was finally theirs? We all know that was sadly not to be and resulted in

the last of their three albums. As much as Satellites has some great moments, I've never enjoyed it as much as its predecessors and together with the line-up changes saw a slightly different band. Yet the accompanying tour included a gig at the larger and more prestigious Town & Country Club in London which remains a positive final memory of the band in action.

Sadly, I was unable to attend either of the sets of reformation gigs by the band, but did get to see Steven (supporting Nerina Pallot) at London's ICA when he was promoting Exit Music. And as well as continuing to follow his solo career, I am a big fan of the work Craig Armstrong has done since leaving the band - featuring Steven on a few occasions - and remain optimistic that Brian McFie's Lola In Slacks will venture far enough south that I can get to witness him on stage once more.

If (with the exception of Armstrong) there is not enough new music from the components of this wonderful group for at least this greedy fan, we still have that excellent catalogue to which to return time and again. And fond memories of an all-too-brief six year blaze of musical glory.

Personally notable TBD tracks. (In no particular order.)

Big New Beginning. How could any such list *not* include this? A statement of intent. Housed in what became a set of gorgeous sleeves, reflecting the visual art leanings of members.

Jealous. The cliché of picking your favourite child applies to Swimmer. Yet there's always that one that little bit closer, right? Or is it the title track...? Or...?

Second Swimmer. TBD do prog? Stands out for its individuality.

Faith Healer. Now *this* is the one I think should have been the hit.

Swansong. The whole first side of Creeping... is just a perfect flow. This just tops it off.

Presence. As with all the best artists, the strength of the b-sides demonstrates the quality of the output. There could be many arguments over which "cast-off" should have been on the album. For me, they just made the singles all the more worthwhile and added to the confidence about and excitement in acquiring every release.