

Richard Shindell - Bio

Richard Shindell was born in Lakehurst, New Jersey, on August 3rd 1960, into a navy family. His father was subsequently posted to Santiago, Chile for a twelve-month tour of duty. Returning to the States, the Shindell's settled on Long Island. Richard's father loved music, although only as a hobby. As a choirboy in church Richard was introduced to singing harmony. A librarian, his mother's passion lay in literature. By the age of eight, Richard yearned to play guitar. "*My father bought Bob Dylan's "Freewheelin."*" After I heard that, I just had to play the guitar." Following an attempt to master the coronet, Richard became the proud owner of a guitar. Between the ages eleven and fifteen, Richard took guitar lessons from jazz guitarist, Joe Gennelli.

A fan of Genesis, Gentle Giant and King Crimson, during his mid-teen years Shindell joined a local garage band. His family relocated to Baltimore when Richard was sixteen. On the second day at his new High School, Richard met Tom Proutt. A friendship blossomed, and Richard was introduced to the music of Gram Parsons, Grateful Dead, Creedence Clearwater Revival and Captain Beefheart.

Graduating from High School, Richard spent two years in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania studying at Moravian College. He was co-opted into the line-up of John Gorka's Razzy Dazzy Spasm Band. Transferring to Hobart College in Geneva, New York to study philosophy, Richard began performing at local coffee-houses on an occasional basis, employing a repertoire of covers. "*I wrote some poetry at that point. To me they weren't lyrics.*" Following graduation in 1984, Richard spent a year visiting Europe. He busked on the streets of Paris and also in the subway. "*I attempted to write songs while I was there.*" Returning to the States, he enrolled in graduate school and started studying theology. A month after Shindell entered Union Seminary he heard David Massengill sing on the radio. "*Something snapped and I sat down and wrote a song.*" His first composition - the stunning "On A Sea Of Fleur de Lis,"

Submitting a tape of three songs to Richard Meyer at **Fast Folk Musical Magazine**, "On A Sea Of Fleur de Lis," sung by Richard, appeared on the album that accompanied the December 1989 issue of **Fast Folk Musical Magazine**. Christine Lavin included Richard's "Are You Happy Now ?" on the 1991 Rounder Records compilation "**When October Goes.**" When Shanachie Records approached Richard Meyer with a proposal to initiate a series of contemporary songwriter recordings featuring New York area writers, the initial quartet of releases featured Shindell.

Richard co-produced his eleven-track debut "**Sparrows Point**" with David Seitz. As soon as "**Sparrows Point**" was released he undertook a tour of Italy and France. "**Blue Divide**" was entirely produced by Steve Addabbo (Shawn Colvin, Suzanne Vega) and featured classic Shindell creations "A Summer Wind, A Cotton Dress" and "Arrowhead." The recording included Richard's best known composition, "The Ballad of Mary Magdalen." In support of his second album, Shanchie released a six track, promotional disc titled "**Scenes From A Blue Divide – (Live) and More**" five songs being live recordings. "**Reunion Hill**" was produced by Larry Campbell, these days a Bob Dylan sideman. Campbell was thoroughly familiar with Shindell's style, having played on his two studio albums. The opener "Next Best Western" was a road song, while within the lyric of the title track, Shindell created a tale of war and loss.

Through the nineties, Richard's reputation as a classy songwriter grew unabated as he criss-crossed the North American continent. During late 1997 he undertook a major European tour as support act to Joan Baez. A six-week tour of America's eastern seaboard in early 2002, will see him repeat that role. Baez's 1997 album "**Gone From Danger**" featured three Shindell compositions. "**Reunion Hill**" won the 1997 National Association of Independent Record Distributors, Contemporary Folk Album of the Year.

Dar Williams, Lucy Kaplansky and Richard Shindell cut a selection of twelve songs by contemporary North American writers such as James Keelaghan, Ron Sexsmith, Buddy Mondlock and Robert Earl Keen in the early part of 1998. The resulting album "**Cry Cry Cry**" was released in mid-October that year. The only band composition "The Ballad of Mary Magdalen." Garnering rave reviews, from the outset, for their album and live shows, Cry, Cry, Cry became one of the major grossing tours of 1999. The trio played their final date on 2nd January 2000 at the Sanders Theatre in Cambridge, Mass.

Concurrent with trio shows, each member had maintained their solo career albeit at a lower than normal level of activity. Richard released his first album for Signature Sounds Recordings "**Somewhere Near Paterson,**" another Larry Campbell production, in early 2000. Following September 11th 2001, for a limited period Richard's web site offered a MP3 download of the song "I Am," and the revenues generated were passed to New York City public radio station WNYC, to help replace the main and back-up FM transmitters that were lost

when the North Tower of the World Trade Centre collapsed. “**Wonderland – A Winter Solstice Celebration**” was released by Signature Sounds in late 2001, and the collection featured Richard performing “Before You Go.” The *live* recording “**Courier**” was recorded in March 2001 and released early the following year. Later that year, Signature Sounds released a limited edition six song *live* E.P. titled “**The Sonora Sessions**.”

Richard relocated to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2001 when his wife took up a professorship at the university. In the late summer of 2004, Koch Records released “**Vuelta**” the production of which is credited to Shindell and Puente Celeste, the Argentinean group that featured prominently on the album’s ten tracks. Shindell self-released the album “**South Of Delia**” in late March 2007. A collection of cover songs it featured material by mega-selling Bruce Springsteen, alongside songs by the young and mighty talented Josh Ritter and Jeffrey Foucault, and much more. Guest contributors on the recording included Richard Thompson, Eliza Gilkyson, Larry Campbell, Lucy Kaplansky, Viktor Krauss and Tony Trischka.

Discography :

Solo : “**Sparrows Point**” [1992] ; “**Blue Divide**” [1994] ; “**Reunion Hill**” [1997] ; “**Somewhere Near Paterson**” [2000] ; “**Courier**” [2002] ; “**Vuelta**” [2004] ; “**South Of Delia**” [2007] :
with Cry Cry Cry : “**Cry Cry Cry**” [1998] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 12/01, 07/04 & 03/07.

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