

Richard Shindell –

A live collection titled “Courier,” the song “I Am” and other stuff.....

Part I – “Courier” - a live album and a forthcoming attraction

On February 12th 2002, Signature Sounds Recordings will officially release “Courier,” a fifteen-track, live recording by Richard Shindell. I spoke to Richard after his recent Log Cabin Concert shows.

Why did you decide to record a live album.

Because.....it seemed like a good thing to do. Twelve of the songs come from my three Shanachie albums. That was the purpose.

Was the live album also meant to acquaint your newer fans with the older songs.

Yes, absolutely. Most of my audience has accrued from my third album, “**Reunion Hill**,” onward.

The recordings took place at the Emelin Theatre in Mamaroneck, NY and Outpost in the Burbs, Montclair, NJ during February and March 2001. Were those venues where you had played before.

I had been there before, yeah. We pretty well arranged the shows to record the live album. The Emelin was very close to home, and it was very convenient. It's a nice theatre and it's manageable. I have a good audience there.

If you say that the material on the live album leans toward songs from your Shanachie albums, was it obvious which songs they would be.

They are songs that the band played well and I enjoyed singing. It has to do with putting a mix together for a record and with wanting to create a unit that is engaging with different kinds of songs. It was also a case of making an album where we could sell people, in one package, some of the highlights from the Shanachie era.

You've covered Lowell George's song “Willin'” for this new album. Were you a Little Feat fan.

A huge Little Feat fan. A huge Lowell George fan.

I know in previous interviews, you've told me of your love of British Art Rock and bands like Gentle Giant.

One of my next stages, growing up, was discovering Little Feat. I saw Little Feat with Lowell George, before he died.

Why did you pick Bruce Springsteen's “4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy).”

That was purely accidental. There's no rhyme or reason to it. We started playing it during sound check, and Lucy [Kaplansky] was there. That night we played it and recorded it at the show. It was a totally impromptu, spontaneous thing. I got the lyrics off the internet because I didn't know all the words and there's a lot of words to that song – the phrasing is a nightmare. We ran through it once, literally, backstage.

The Forthcoming Attraction – I mentioned earlier that Richard's live album will be officially released to record stores next February. Signature Sounds will be making the album available to fans via their web site www.signaturesounds.com commencing 1st December 2001. Fans purchasing two copies of “**Courier**,” will be given a free, five-track CD EP. The songs featured, will be live renditions of four songs from Richard's “**Somewhere Near Paterson**” collection – “**Abuelita**,” “**You Stay Here**,” “**Wisteria**” and “**Confession**.” The fifth song is Kevin Blackie Farrell's “Sonora's Death Row.”

Part II – NPR Station WNYC and the Richard Shindell song “I Am”

Richard was at home in Buenos Aires when the terrible events of Tuesday 11th September 2001 occurred. Virtually a *stranger in a foreign land*, Shindell – a quiet man of, at times, unfathomable grace - was much disturbed by what occurred. At the Log Cabin he spoke touchingly of the concern expressed to him by many of his neighbours. Returning to the States for his latest solo tour, Richard had begun work on a song

that he subsequently titled "I Am." During the final handful of dates on the aforementioned tour, he performed the song. On Monday 22nd October, Richard made a recording of "I Am" at Lincoln Schleifer's studio in the Bronx, New York. It is currently available as an MP3 download from the NEWS section of his web site www.richardshindell.com, at a cost of \$5.00. Let me explain why.....

Although born in New Jersey, Shindell was raised in Manhattan and most definitely considers himself a New Yorker. Richard has chosen to express his allegiance to the city and what it stands for, by arranging that funds generated by downloading copies of "I Am" will be passed directly to New York radio station WNYC. There's tons of information about WNYC on Richard's web site. His principle aim is to bring about the restoration of the station's transmitters. They were located on the North Tower, the first building to be hit. A *temporary* transmitter has been erected on the Empire State Building. It is only reaching half WNYC's normal 500,000 listeners. Replacing the FM transmitter will cost \$4M. By downloading a copy of "I Am" you will help Richard support a worthy cause. So what's stopping you.....

You sang Paul Simon's "Bleecker Street" and "America" tonight. Was that for a particular reason.

Sure. They both have a relevance to me emotionally – and explicitly, to what's happening now. I came back on September 18th for a tour, and during the previous week I was distraught. I listened to a lot of music, once I wrenched myself away from CNN. I listened to a certain kind of music and certain kinds of songs that had a certain resonance for me. It was obvious to me, when I was in Buenos Aires, that I couldn't do my normal show. I couldn't do a show as if nothing had happened.

So were those songs by way of making a statement.

Yeah, but not just in terms of making a statement. But for the audience and me – emotionally for the audience, emotionally for me, I needed to do something else. I needed to speak to this and I hadn't written anything which would do that. Also, I felt the need to sing familiar things that were apropos, but not necessarily explicitly so, but more in an emotional way that might make people feel better or remind them of a certain time or era, or a certain kind of – what's the word – connection to things. A lot of it had to do with a sense of identity. Like – who am I, where do I come from, what does it mean to come from there.

You sang your latest song tonight - "I Am." When and why did you write it.

I left Buenos Aires for this tour on October 15th and I began the song the weekend before I left. There was a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk called "Call Me By My True Names" which my brother-in-law sent to me. It triggered something. What I had been struggling with in Buenos Aires was - being an American, an expatriate, having no contact with other Americans – I had been struggling with a sense of identity. In other words, what being assaulted emotionally and so horribly does to a person – especially, someone far away from the actual assault - is to heighten and intensify the sense of being from the place that has been attacked.

Of course you were raised on Long Island.

Right. I lived in Manhattan for years. I found myself experiencing a kind of patriotism and a belonging and a sense of identity that I had always taken for granted. I was having a hard time putting that into words in a way which was, not uncritical or which was not mindful of the broader world context for what is happening. This song attempts to address my own sense of identity and patriotism and outrage and my own desire for justice, but at the same time being mindful of the rest of the planet. It's a very hard thing to do those things in one song. I didn't want to say "*This is nothing different than what has been happening in the world for thousands of years.*" In so doing, minimising, or somehow, defusing or disarming the horror of what has happened in New York. At the same time I didn't want to say, "*we are victims,*" because it's not that simple. I wanted to draw a parallel between the sense of outrage and hurt that the American people feel - New Yorker's in particular, with the same outrage and sense of hurt that the rest of the world feels. The song starts from the point of view of New York – "*I am a stranded traveller*" and "*I am the fireman climbing*" and then takes on a larger view of the world. At the end, I repeat the first verse thereby book-ending the song. I hope we can harness this sense of justice that we crave for the hurt that has done to us, and extend it. Take this as an opportunity to enlarge our view of the world.

Part III – A Richard Shindell song titled "Before You Go," and the seasonal album "Wonderland – A Winter's Solstice Celebration"

Conscious of the forthcoming festive season, Signature Sounds Recordings have released a fifteen-cut recording titled **"Wonderland"** featuring new songs from Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer, Mark Erelli, Nerissa & Katryna Nields and Richard Shindell, alongside covers from Peter Mulvey, Erica Wheeler, Louise Taylor and others. Richard's song is titled "Before You Go." In the vein of "I Am," proceeds from **"Wonderland,"** which sells at \$14.00, will go to benefit a charity – in this case, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. After performing "Before You Go" at the Log Cabin, Richard recalled *"I was asked to write a song for a Christmas record. At least I thought it was going to be a Christmas record. It turns out that it is more of a holiday cheer record. It doesn't have any sectarian or denominational affiliation. So my song is going to stick out like a sore thumb."* He was, of course, joking. The album, a unique and eclectic seasonal concoction – *very successfully avoids employing the usual Xmas tunes* - is currently available from Signature Sounds web site and Richard's web site. The album will not be generally available in record stores till October 2002. So there you have it....don't procrastinate.....help your fellow man.

With regard to setting up and conducting the above interview, many thanks are due to Michaela O'Brien, Charlie Hunter, Tim & Lori Blixt, and finally, Richard.

Arthur Wood.
Kerrville Kronikles 11/01
1650 words.

Courier : Track List

The Courier
Memory of You
Next Best Western
Willin' [Lowell George]
The Kenworth of My Dreams
Arrowhead
Reunion Hill
Nora
Fishing
A Summer Wind, A Cotton Dress
On A Sea of Fleur-de-Lis
The Ballad of Mary Magdalene
Are You Happy Now?
Transit
4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy) [Bruce Springsteen]

All songs by Richard Shindell unless indicated otherwise.

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Wonderland - A Winter's Solstice Celebration : Track List

Peter Mulvey River
Rani Arbo I Saw Three Ships
Mark Erelli This Ain't No Time Of Year To Be Alone
Erica Wheeler Song For A Winter's Night
Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer American Noel
Nerissa & Katryna Nields Christmas Carol
Pete Nelson You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch
Erin McKeown At The Christmas Ball
Richard Shindell Before You Go
Louise Taylor Let's Make A Baby King
Jim Henry The Tree
Brooks Williams I Wonder As I Wander
Maria Sangiolo The Cherry Tree Carol
Matt Haimovitz Gigue From Bach Suite III
Waters, Moore & Arbo Nowell Sing We

Produced by Carol Young & Mark Thayer

Recorded at Signature Sounds Studios and various locations

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Before You Go

Love, just a word before you go
Just a few things you should know
Come and sit here by my side
Love, how I wish that you would stay
There can be no other way
I must send you on your own

Love, here's a place and here's a name
Love, she will hold you in her arms
And show you who you are

Love, you'll be hungry, you'll be weak
You'll be tempted, you'll be free
To turn away from me
Love, dressed in rags and far from home
You will wander all alone
You will wonder where I am
Love, you will laugh and you will cry

Love, you will live and you will die
But only for a while

There's a world that you must bear
They're waiting for you there
To lead them from the night
And bring them to the light

Love, here's a place and here's a name
Love, she will hold you in her arms
And show you who you are
And show you who you are
And show you who you are

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I Am

I am a stranded traveller
I am the distant home
I am the family waiting
I am the silent phone
I am the stricken faces
I am the settling dust
I am the strangers shoulder
I am the ocean breeze
I am, I am, I am

I am the coffee vendor
I am the CPA
I am the fireman climbing
I am his new born son
I am the churches filling
I am the passing peace
I am the choir singing
I am the swelling hymn
I am, I am, I am

I am New York Harbour
I am the Promised Land
I am the closing borders
I am the Rio Grande
I am the River Jordan
I am the raging sea
I am a world in anguish
I am a refugee
I am, I am, I am

I am a stranded traveller
I am the distant home
I am the strangers shoulder
I am the ocean breeze
I am, I am, I am

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