



Richard Shindell **“Courier”** Signature Sounds Recordings/Richard Shindell Recordings

The fifteen *live* songs featured include two covers – “Willin” the Little Feat anthem composed by the late Lowell George, and the early career Bruce Springsteen tune “Fourth Of July, Asbury Park (Sandy).” Other than that, the songs featured are all previously recorded Shindell originals. In fact when I interviewed Shindell last fall he admitted that the main thrust of this collection was to reinterpret material from his trio of Shanachie albums. Twelve out of thirteen Shindell compositions pretty well substantiates that premise, the exception being “Transit” – a Friday evening *rush hour* tale of freeway gridlock and frayed tempers, and much more - from the album **“Somewhere Near Paterson.”** In any assessment of significant singer/songwriters of an acoustic persuasion who appeared and rose to a position of deserved prominence during the nineteen nineties, Shindell’s name should be close to the top of everyone’s list. Aiding and abetting Richard vocally on this disc is his long time friend, Lucy Kaplansky. The bulk of the material was recorded at the Emelin Theatre in Mamaroneck during two consecutive nights in March 2001. Richard’s *road songs* “Next Best Western” and “The Kenworth of My Dreams” are segued with the aforementioned “Willin”. “Next Best Western” and “On A Sea Of Fleur De Lis” are drawn from a February 2000 show at the Montclair, New Jersey venue Outpost In The Burbs. A usable *live* version of “Reunion Hill” – Richard’s tale of sustenance and shelter set during the American Civil War - wasn’t forthcoming, so a *new* studio version is included here. Always a consummate storyteller, in this *career [to date] compilation* Shindell delivers tales of, a messenger attempting to deliver a vital despatch in the heat of battle - “The Courier,” and the interrogation of a suspected spy – “Fishing.” Elsewhere, “A Summer Wind, A Cotton Dress” and “The Ballad Of Mary Magdalen” recall affairs of the heart in modern times and in simpler, bygone days.

While stocks last, if you purchase *two copies* of **“Courier”** direct from Signature Sounds Recordings [www.signature-sounds.com] they will give you a *free* six track EP that principally features songs from Richard’s most recent studio disc **“Somewhere Near Paterson”** [2000]. Having had time onstage to grow into songs that were ostensibly composed in the recording studio, Richard’s interpretations of “Confession,” “Abuelita,” “You Stay Here” and “Wisteria” are vigorous, yet full of fresh nuance. Completing the EP is a rendition of Kevin Farrell’s “Sonora’s Death Row,” a song first brought to the public domain by Leo Kottke’s 1978 Chrysalis album **“Burnt Lips.”** Robert Earl Keen [1989], Tom Russell [1992] and Michael Martin Murphey [1993] have also covered the latter tune.

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

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