

Hokey Pokey

The Richard Thompson Newsletter

Issue No. 38 Feb / March 1997

Here We Are Again

Well here we all are again, at last, with another issue of that well known organ Hokey Pokey. I must apologise for the delay in getting this edition out to you all. I won't go into boring details but suffice to say that 1996 was a bad year for me one way or another. I remember when I took over the old green eye shade from Colin he told me he was giving it up because of the terrible time he had had and the pressure of producing a newsletter on top of it all was just too much. Well I've had my bad year right at the beginning of my spell. Fortunately it hasn't put me off the idea of doing Hokey Pokey at all but it has prevented me from giving it the attention it deserves. This will all change over the coming months. I have been offered, and accepted, some help. The person in question is a freelance magazine editor with access to far more tools and technology than I could ever afford. She also has access to the repro houses and printers so as well as making sure Hokey Pokey looks good, we shall be able to keep our cost down too.

A lot has happened since the last issue hit the streets. We've had the release of RT's album 'you? me? us?' to wide critical acclaim, and a fair degree of commercial success. We've had another wonderful Comedy Festival. A band tour of the UK and USA has been undertaken and a tour of the Pacific Basin is taking place as this is being written. The Industry Album project that Richard and Danny have been talking about is in the can and scheduled for a Spring 97 release. There will also be a programme on the subject on BBC Radio 1 FM, more details later in the newsletter.

One of the big stories of 96/97 for RT must be the nomination for a Grammy for the album 'you? me? us?'. He's up against some good competition but we'll be keeping our fingers crossed.

Another big story is the release of the long awaited 'live' 'official' bootleg album. The CD is a double and is entitled 'two letter words' (FLYCD 006). More about it later in the newsletter.

The phenomenal success of the eponymous Norma Waterson album with RT and DT as integral members of the band along with Martin Carthy and Roger Swallow, has also helped to raise RT's profile this year. Norma came second only to Pulp in the Mercury Music Awards, after a long and hard deliberation by the judging panel, Pulp only getting the award by the smallest of margins. As usual Richard managed to miss mass TV exposure by the skin of his teeth, by being elsewhere on the night of the awards. Still the extra exposure given as a result of the award will do RT no harm at all.

As well as all that we've got the usual mix of stuff, interviews, news of cover versions, appearances by RT on other peoples albums plus news of radio slots etc. Well I think that's enough of my rambling. Thanks once again for your patience and here's all the news that is the news. Let's start with the big one.

'two letter words'

Well it's finally arrived, the long awaited live CD from RT and his band. As you will have gathered the title of the album is 'two letter words' a phrase that all you Scrabble 'heads' out there will recognise. We don't know if that was in RT's mind when he thought of the title but we do know that he and Danny are partial to the odd game in the tour bus, bang goes the 'Rock and Roll' life style myth. You will not see this album in any shops, it is only available by mail order, either from us here at Hokey Pokey or from Frank Koenelussen at Flypaper. You will find an order form at the back of the newsletter.

As with 'Live At Crewley' this CD is not meant for review or broadcast so you probably won't hear about it on the radio or read about it in any of the mags or newspapers. I hear that one or two papers have reviewed it and given the fact that it is too good not to review as there excuse. Well I won't disagree with them on that, it really is a great album and well worth every penny of the £ 15.50 (plus P&P) that it costs.

The album is a double CD (No cassettes sorry) and runs for a total of just 55 seconds under two hours. Disc One runs for 56m 29s and Disc Two runs for

62m 36s, good value I'm sure you'll agree. The album was recorded on the US leg of the 1994 Richard Thompson Band Tour, The quality is superb. Several of the concerts on the US leg of the tour were recorded and then the best performances of each song were selected for the album. The band line up is RT, DT, Pete Zorn and Dave Mattacks. The track listing is shown on the order form at the back. If you want one then don't delay.

'you? me? us?' nominated for a Grammy

Yes it's true, 'you? me? us?' has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the USA. The album has been nominated in 'Category 56, Best Contemporary Folk Album.

For Albums only, either vocal or instrumental.

The list of nominees is;

'Yonder'

Jerry Douglas & Peter Rowan
[Sugar Hill Records]

'Braver Newer World'

Jimmie Dale Gilmore
[Elektra Records]

'The Ghost Of Tom Joad'

Bruce Springsteen
[Columbia Records]

'You? Me? Us?'

Richard Thompson
[Capitol Records]

'Revival'

Gillian Welch
[Almo Sounds]

To be fair I'm not familiar with the other albums that are up for the award, not even Bruce Springsteens so I can't tell you how hot the competition is, but needless to say we'll be keeping our fingers crossed.

Talking of Bruce!

I ran across a Bruce Springsteen article on the web in which he talks about a tape he makes for himself of other artists which he plays on the sound system before his concerts:

Bruce:

"When I was young, you couldn't get me to listen to Hank Williams. Then in my mid-20's, the world of country music opened up to me. That's where they

write about family and issues that I like. I put together the pre-show tapes you hear in the theatre."

Interviewer:

Yeah, I was wondering about that. I caught Neil Young, Emmylou Harris, I think the McGarrigle Sisters, and something that sounded very much like the Leadbelly song that Kurt Cobain covered. 'In the pines, in the pines,' but it had different lyrics than "Where Did You Sleep Last Night?" Was it one of the Appalachian folk versions of that song?

Bruce:

"I'm not sure. I know which song you mean, but I can't remember. That Leadbelly song is great. I wanted to set the mood for the audience, let them know what the show would be about. All of them on that tape, well I was going to say, have, are part of the same American character, but then you have Richard Thompson who's coming from the point of view of English folk ballads. I was going to put 'Wall of Death' on that tape, that's off 'Shoot Out the Lights.' I think he's one of the most underappreciated artists around."

Interviewer:

I know. I love him. I've seen him at McCarter Theatre in Princeton, just this fall was the last time.

Bruce:

"Really? How was it?"

Interviewer:

Excellent. He had a band this time.

Bruce:

"So I'm doing the opposite? Uh, oh. (laughs)"

So it looks like 'The Boss' is a fan too.

Industry Album

The long awaited 'Industry' album by RT and DT is due for release, in the UK, on Parlophone in May of this year. Release in the USA will probably be later in the year and is likely to be on Rykodisc. This one has been in the can for a little while now. It was recorded and mixed at Livingston Studios in January and February of 1996, the engineer was Jerry Boys. The 'line up' for the album was; RT and DT, Peter Knight (Fiddle), Dave Mattacks and Paul Davis (Drums), Dylan Fowler (Electric Guitar), Christine Collister (Backing Vocals), two members of DT's 'Whatever', Tony Roberts (Tenor & Baritone Sax and Medieval and Northumbrian Pipes) and Paul Dunmall (Tenor & Soprano Sax) also contribute. As well as the above

Danny's uncles Albert and Harold play Trombones (with Danny on Bass Trombone !!). Well that certainly sound a bit different to what we have come to expect from Richard. Although Paul Dunmall and Dave Matlock are on the album they will not be appearing at the gigs.

Radio Alert

There will be a documentary programme on BBC Radio 1FM at 7 pm on Sunday the 4th of May this year based on the 'Industry' album. The programme will include music from the album plus additional new music specially recorded by Richard and Danny. Also included in the programme will be a new version of 'Me Rita' sung by June Tabor.

The programme was originally intended to be broadcast on the 30th of March but has been moved, so put a note in those diaries.

'Industry' Gigs

As well as the album and the radio show there will also be some gigs to promote the album, these are;

Fri 23/5/97	Blackheath Theatre, London.
Sun 25/5/97	Theatre Royal, Nottingham.
Mon 26/5/97	Irish Centre, Leeds.
Tue 27/5/97	Playhouse, Newcastle.

The 'band' for these gigs will be, RT, Danny, Paul Lewis, Christine Collister, Peter Knight, Dylan Fowler, Tony Roberts, Harrison Smith. They will perform the album plus related music.

Other Gigs

Apart from Cropredy and the 'Industry' tour Richard also has some solo gigs scheduled. He is due to do the Cambridge Folk Festival on Saturday July 26th and the Queens Hall, Edinburgh on Friday August 15th.

More Fans in High Places

It was nice to see that in the Guardian newspaper dated the 28th November 1996, that columnist and broadcaster Francis Wheen put 'Strange Affair' as one of his books of the year as well as a biography on poet Matthew Arnold. Quoth Francis "Each of them a fitting tribute to an under-rated English genius."
No arguments there Francis !!

For those of you that still haven't read the book, it's still available by mail order from us, see the flyer at the back of the newsletter for more details.

Cropredy 1997

The annual Fairport Convention Festival at Cropredy is a bit special this year. It is the 30th anniversary of Fairport's formation. Cropredy 1997 will climax the band's 30th Anniversary Tour year. This year's Cropredy Festival is the weekend of the 8th and 9th of August. Richard is scheduled to appear as a guest of Fairport only. He will not be appearing in his own right. In a break with tradition Fairport will be appearing on both nights, Friday and Saturday. Other guests so far Ashley Hutchings, Dave Swarbrick, Judy Dyble, Jerry Donahue, Vikki Clayton, Cathy Lewis, Martin Allcock, Ralph McTell and Dan Ar Braz.

Terrific stuff. We'll see if Judy Dyble can do better than 1981 at Broughton Castle. She's up against some stiff competition in Vikki and Cathy.

Other acts include: John Otway and Wild Willy Barrett (back together again!), Osibisa, Julian Dawson Band, The Albion Band (Chris Leslie will have a busy weekend!), Huw and Tony Williams, Tempest, Kristina Olsen and The Blueberry Mountain Daredavils. Good God are Osibisa still going??? I wonder how many of the originals are still left. I have their first two albums somewhere. They must have been going nearly as long as Fairport. Cropredy warm-ups (featuring RT !!) will be at The Mill Theatre in Banbury on Aug 5th & 6th (tickets from 01295 252050). So be there or be somewhere else. The festival will be recorded for a double CD for 1998 release.

Sounds good to me.

Fairport Line Up Change

As most of you are no doubt aware Martin Allcock has left Fairport to be replaced by Chris Leslie of The Albion Band. When I heard this news I E-mailed Maart to ask him his reasons for leaving and he sent me the following reply.

"Hi there Andrew! Hope you had a nice Xmas! Here's the statement:

General Release Statement:

SO WHY DID YOU LEAVE FAIRPORT CONVENTION?

After many years of being a member of Fairport Convention the decision to leave the band has not been an easy one. As the next year (my fortieth) approaches, full of work, I feel the need to consolidate my home life and get to know my children before they grow up. It was obviously best if I left before the 30th Anniversary Year projects got under way.

Also I feel that I have some progress to make musically outside the band, which, because of the work load, I was not able to pursue. Already I have several projects lined up, which will not take up so much time away from home.

I have really enjoyed being a part of Fairport Convention and am grateful for the many happy memories of the times and friends I have known during my stay. I am of course very grateful to Fairport Convention's many loyal fans, many of whom I feel I know personally.

It's time to move on. I wish Fairport Convention every happiness and success in their coming celebratory year. I thank Simon, DM, Ric and Rob (the invisible member) for their support and understanding. May they have many happy travels. I wish all the best to my replacement Chris Leslie, one of the finest musicians I have ever had the pleasure to meet, and especially I give my eternal thanks and love to Dave and Chris Pegg for their continued encouragement and friendship. Most of all I am grateful to my wife Gill for being so patient while I was touring round the world. Now we can spend some time together with our beautiful children.

Thank you all.

Maart >>

All the best for 1997!"

So there you have it from the horses mouth so to speak.

RT and the 'Prof'

With the kind permission of Capitol, RT is scheduled to go into the studio with Professor Phil Pickett this May. Joe Boyd will produce this all instrumental project. As well as RT and PP with JB on knobs PP's early music group the New London Consort and the Fairport rhythm section of Simon Nicol, Dave Pegg and Dave Matfacks. The album is scheduled to be released at the end of 1997, on Rykodisc. This sounds like it's going to be an instant 'classic', a 'must have'. Given what PP and RT et al are in to it looks like it's going to be a medieval rock album. I can hardly wait.

Joe Boyd

A four-part series on the career of Joe Boyd begins on Radio 2, 8.30 pm, Wednesday 19th February. Titled 'Joe Boyd - A World of Music'. I'm sorry to be so late with this but I've only just found out myself.

More Radio News

Whilst we are on the subject of radio. It appears to be all change at Radio 1FM again. One of the champions of RT's music, Andy Kershaw, has been moved off the 'graveyard' shift and back to a more sensible time, 8.30pm on Monday nights. Another RT fan and Radio 1 stalwart, John Peel, has been given three prime evening slots per week. He will now broadcast at 8.30pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Either writing letters to the Beeb works or there really is a God!!

Covers and Guest Appearances Etc.

RT has been in the studio with Nanci Griffith, doing some bits and pieces for her forthcoming album which is a follow up to her 'Other Voices/Other Rooms' album. RT sang vocals on 'If I Had A Hammer' and played guitar on 'Desperadoes Waiting For A Train' amongst others. We don't know if these cuts will appear on the final mix but we'll keep you posted.

According to the October issue of the Iain Matthews newsletter, Iain recorded some songs with Nanci Griffith as well. It says that they duet on RT's 'Wall Of Death' and on Sandy Denny's 'Who Knows Where The Time Goes'. Release date should be in the first quarter of this year. Also reported in the IM newsletter, RT's old 'oppo' Clive Gregson has joined Iain in Plainsong, Clive was also involved in the Nanci Griffith sessions too.

RT guests on the title track of the new Beausoleil album 'L'Amour Ou La Folie' released on January 14, 1997 on Rhino Records.

RT added some guitar parts for the forthcoming album from Eric Anderson. The material was sent to RT on DAT tape from Norway, he added his bits and sent it back.

Julian Dawson has a new album coming up. Provisional title is 'Mad About Music' and features RT's electric guitar on four tracks. One of the tracks is rumoured to be the old Doris Day hit 'Move Over Darling'!!

For those of you that were lucky enough to be at the 1995 Comedy Festival and saw RT do his stuff with the Roy Wood Big Band, you will be pleased to hear that the versions of Marvin Gaye's 'I Heard It Through The Grapevine' and RT's own 'I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight' will be released on FC's next album 'Who Knows Where The Time Goes?' (Woodworm Records WRCD 025)

Emmy Lou Harris's previously unreleased version of 'Dimming Of The Day' finally makes an appearance on the new 3CD box set 'Portraits' on Warner Brothers. Talking of boxed sets, David Thomas has re-mixed his solo material for a set coming out on Cooking Vinyl in the UK. The albums 'The Sound Of The Sand' and 'Variations On A Theme' which feature RT on guitar will be part of the set.

'My Roots Are Showing' (BMG) by K.T. Oslin features a version of 'A Heart Needs A Home' and 'Galway To Graceland' is covered by Sean Kean on his new album 'Turn A Phrase'. 'Dimming Of The Day' (fast becoming RT's equivalent of 'Yesterday' !!) is also covered by 'Ridin' On The Blinds' (Rykodisc), the second album from Rick Danko, Jonas Fjeld and Eric Andersen.

RT is due to go into the studio with Henry Kaiser in summer of 1998. The project will be done in Fiji and will be for Sarrachie Records. Sarrachie have also just re-released the first French, Frith, Kaiser, Thompson album 'Live, Love, Leaf & Leaf'.

Razor and Tie records have just put out two volumes of stuff from The Bottom Line in New York. The albums entitled 'In Their Own Words' are

Odds 'n' Sods

Here are some bits and pieces that have come my way by one means or another.

From Musician magazine dated February 1993. From the story titled 'The 100 Greatest Guitarists Of The 20th Century'

"For 25 years Thompson has been walking on a musical high wire, balancing his deep love of tradition with a mischievous knack for taking chances. With lightning fast fingerpicking, insane double-stop overbends and space-warped chromatic runs, Thompson blazes fearlessly onward without a net." The guitarists mentioned in the article were not placed in any kind of order but were grouped in categories i.e., 'Prototypes' 'Prime Movers', etc. RT's category was 'Fingerprints'! I took this to mean that his style was so unique as to defy being put into any pre-defined category.

RT Interview

I was hoping to publish an interview I had with Richard in this issue but unfortunately there is a problem with the tape. I don't know if it was a phone problem or not. I can be heard as clear as a bell but RT's answers are so faint as to be virtually inaudible. I am having the tape 'tweaked' by a friendly audio freak and he is quite hopeful that he'll be able to bring RT's answers up to a decent level. As soon as this is done I will transcribe it for you.

In the meanwhile Richard has given a couple of interviews to Australian Radio and these have very kindly been transcribed by Shane Youl. So here for your delight and delectation is an interview given to Angela Cattens on the 2BL Evening Show on the ABC Radio Network. You should be able to work out who's who without me putting AC and RT in front of the different paragraphs.

Richard Thompson live in the studio with Angela Cattens on the 2BL Evening Show.

.... He went on to a rich and rewarding career with his then wife Linda. They divorced and he has continued both solo and with various bands ever since.

Richard Thompson is a renowned singer/songwriter, guitarist and so on. He is said to be in a class all his own. It's my great pleasure to welcome him to the studio. Hello Richard.

Good evening.

I saw a wry smile there, when I mentioned your ex-wife.

Oh, and the rest ;-) And everything else, yes.

Now, Fairport Convention, was that the first band you were ever in?

Yes, that was a band I was in before I left school and then we just drifted in to being professional musicians and we're still getting paid for it.

For your work in Fairport Convention?

Well, no, we never got paid for that. No, I mean I'm generally getting paid for getting up in front of people and making a fool of myself.

Oh I see, I see. I actually remember buying one or two of your records.

B rave woman!

Can you remind us of some of those old songs?

Some of those old songs? Umm....

No, they've all escaped you.

Well, there's millions of them. I don't know. I mean I can't remember any of them. No.

Really?

There's too many to think.

To name?

Yeah. And I wouldn't know what would be reference points for you or other people, really.

Do you remember those times? I mean it was the 60s, after all, wasn't it.

And here you were as you describe it...

I remember bits of it, the 60s.

And you describe it as being in a wimpy folk band. I just wondered if some of the sixties life-style, some of the sex and the drugs, actually infiltrated the folk scene as well.

Oh, I suppose little bits. We got the odd touch of sex and the occasional drug, I suppose. You know, in a very quiet, suburban sort of way.

I mean, did you have your groupies and your acid and that sort of thing in those times?

Well, we were musicians, so if we didn't have girlfriends we didn't have anywhere to live, so you had to find a girlfriend. It was very important.

Do you still have fans that come and see you...

Do I still have girlfriends? Oh, do I still have fans?

No, from those days who come and see you and hope that you'll play some Fairport Convention songs?

Ah, there's a few. And they leave disappointed.

Do they? You don't dredge them out very often?

I mean, I do a few that, I think if you're a musician and if you're not going to be a nostalgist only, if you're still making records, I mean I've made like 35 records or something, so for me there's only a few songs from

that era that really say something to me now. And to be honest, they're the ones I should be playing. I shouldn't be doing songs just because they were there. If people want to hear then I'll try and play them but sometimes it's hard to find meaning in old songs. But I try to keep representative portions of the repertoire through the eras.

Just so no one's disappointed?

Yeah, I don't disappoint people but I really try and play music that I enjoy and I think then that comes across. If you play stuff and you're bored to death then I think that comes across as well.

Yes. You've never really been easily classified, have you? You don't sit neatly with any one genre. What styles have you experimented with or not experimented with?

Well, the style of music that I basically play is somewhere between popular and traditional. Which are the two music's that I really grew up with. And I chuck in bits of everything else, bits of jazz, classical and stuff like that. But I've also been a session guitar player in my time, especially in the early 70s, when you just turned up and you played whatever was there. So, I've played on a lot of country records; and I've played on jazz records; all kinds of stuff. African records.

Really?

Yeah. And that's just a trick, really. That's just learning a style as fast as you can and then simulating it. But it's not from the soul. You're doing what's really a kind of pastiche.

So, is it mainly traditional music that attracts you?

Well, traditional music is an important root for me. Traditional music and rock'n'roll were the two music's that I grew up with. And the music I really want to hear in my head is a kind of collision of the two. And that's always the music I've really tried to create without thinking about it too much.

Richard sits poised with his guitar on his lap. Will you do us a song?

Oh damn!

This early in the piece?

All right. Let's have a go. This is off my extraordinarily long new record.

This is called The Ghost Of You Walks.



A beautiful song, Richard Thompson is live in our studio at the moment. What was that called again?

That's called The Ghost Of You Walks.

The Phantom, obviously ;-)

The Phantom Of You Walks.

Was there music in your family when you were a youngster?

My dad was a keen music fan. He played a bit of guitar, not very well. But he was a big... He had guitar player records. He had Les Paul and Django Reinhardt and that sort of stuff. Plus a bunch of good jazz records, so that was fun. It was great to grow up with that stuff. And then, my sister had all the rock'n'roll stuff. And there was a guitar lying around the house. So, it seemed logical to pick it up.

And so have there been any musicians who have always been your gods? Do you know what I mean? Your role models. Musicians that you've always....

Well probably. It might be people you have never heard of. Someone like Billy Pigg, you've probably never heard of, he's a Northumbrian piper. Louis Armstrong. I'm a life-long Louis Armstrong fan. Charlie Parker. John Coltrane. Stravinsky. Shostakovich. Ooh heavy names. Clunk, clunk.

We like them, we like them.

Oh we like those. Good.

We like them. Feel free.

OK. Shirley Bassey.

Yes, who played in Australia on the weekend.

Oh, there you go.

What about writers, Richard? I mean, the words are as much a part of your music as the notes.

Exactly.

What writers have you admired and read through your life?

Prose writers?

Yeah. Who's been your inspiration, word-wise?

Oh, lots of people. Dickens probably more than anybody else.

Really?

Well, there's a strong sense of theatre in Dickens' novels and the characters are larger than life. And I think in songs, you've got very little time to put things across in so much as you've got to draw characters large. You haven't got time to develop subtly anything. You've only got three verses and two and a half minutes. So you have to get on with it. So that's a good place to learn about that kind of stuff. And I grew up reading Sir Walter Scott and that kind of stuff. It's all very exciting.

You write songs with an amazing take on love and relationships, with a real bite, with a real sting. Has love been like that for you, or is this just a device that you use on a regular basis?

Well, I think it's an attempt to tell the truth. I think, if you're going to write a real love song then you've got to say what love is really like. You love people sometimes in spite of problems or you go through a lot of twists and turns before you find out what love is or you find out who someone is. So to be honest about relationships, I think sometimes you really have to go a bit deeper. It's not just the Sound Of Music view of the world.

Well, yours is definitely not, is it?

Yeah. And human beings are a devious lot. There's all sorts of stuff going on. And to try and write songs about all that, it's a real challenge.

In fact, the guy in your songs is often the weak one, the powerless one, isn't he? He's at the mercy of the woman he loves, or wants to love, or wishes loved him.

I think it's 50/50. I think some of the songs I write about men and women, it's going back, it's trying to decode stuff from the past. You know, maybe go back twenty years, even. You look back at your own life and you're just trying to figure it out. Oh dear, perhaps the wimp is me! I don't know. But I think it's usually just wishing that you'd done things differently sometimes. When you go back to those situations and you try and sort stuff out, untie the knots, the convoluted knots of your life and just wish that you'd done things

differently or you'd been more up to the task here and there.

There was a wonderful song of yours that came out on a record and as you said. How many records have you released Richard, by the way?

I think me, or me and bands, it's about thirty.

It's about thirty. So, obviously we can't hope to comprehensively cover them all.

We'll have a go. I've got this medley. I've got this two minute medley that gets most of them out of the way.

Have you really?

No.

No. Thank God for that! I would love to play for the listeners a song that has you spitting chips called Don't Tempt Me from your Amnesia album, which I just love. I mean it's quite aggressive, isn't it.

It is quite aggressive, yeah. I haven't heard it for years.



How tough is that? Are you really like that?

No, I'm a big teddy bear, as it says in the song, I think.

That's wonderful. It's fabulous.

It's a kind of jealousy thing, I suppose. Isn't it, really.

It's sort of threatening and possibly terrifying.

Well, that's one of the functions of music, I suppose. Threatening, terrifying. Yeah, yeah. I can live with that. As a balance to Julie Andrews.

Absolutely. Now your new album is a double album. You mentioned before that it's incredibly long - that's because its two CDs.

Two records, but it's incredibly cheap as well.

Two CDs for the price of one.

Virtually, yes. So don't let that put you off, though. Gentle listener.

y?m?u? is the name of the album but it is a little schizophrenic isn't it, in that one is extremely rocky, rock'n'roll, quite hard, and the other is very gentle and acoustic.

The reason we put it on two disks is because it was very hard to program as one record and it was much easier to break it into two quite distinct moods, really.

Are your live performances a little like that?

Yeah, if we have the band out, when we do band shows we have quite adequate acoustic segments and we use the members of the band in many different ways. We go on as solo and duo. But we do quite a long, mixed kind of show for all the family ;-)

So Richard, it's true that you live half your time now in the UK and the other half in the US. That's very schizophrenic also.

Yeah, I suppose that's true. I probably spend more time in America at the moment. Well, I work there more. There's more work to be had there, so it's a better place to be based and to keep my family. So I'm not away nine months of the year, or something.

So, is that LA?

Yeah, just outside Los Angeles.

Do you enjoy LA?

No, it's disgusting.

Do you enjoy living in the US?

I enjoy living in America. Yeah, it's great. Los Angeles is horrible. It's like a sort of depraved Sydney, I suppose. But, like a lot of places, if you find a little area that you like, and you've got friends, it's great. We're near the mountains; we're near the sea. So, it's a more outdoor life than Britain we're you have to cover indoors for about eleven months of the year, avoiding the weather.

And so, that's home for you at the moment, LA?

Yeah, and London a bit as well.

Are there things that you miss about London when you are in LA?

Well, you know. London, obviously the weather. And California, obviously you miss the culture.

I've heard that line. Read that line.

I thought I'd just made it up. I thought it was quite good.

No I know that you use that line quite a lot.

Damn, damn, damn.

So now, Richard, I guess while most music lovers know your name and have at least one of your many albums, you don't seem to have set the charts on fire. What's been your best selling album?

The best selling album was *Rumour & Sigh*, which was I think 90/91, and that did about a quarter of a million, which isn't bad for an old folkie like me.

That isn't bad, at all. Do you resent not being at the top of the charts for a long time?

Yeah, I'm really jealous - those kids out there :-). No, not really, I wouldn't expect it because I don't play real mainstream music. It's a little on the edge, really, it's a little off-kilter, and it's a little more challenging, perhaps, for the listener. So, I wouldn't expect to get on the radio all the time, I wouldn't expect for people to buy records all the time. But I have a fairly dedicated following, which is great. The fans tend to stay there, they don't migrate to Pet Shop Boys, or anything else.

I just wonder though if plugging away, as you have, for so many years, if it's sort of disheartening to see, well, inferior, mediocre acts.

Absolutely, but that's the nature of popular music. It's always been like that. Certainly since the 50s, it's just always been like that. And it's almost part of the fun, is to see people, sometimes people who don't have any talent actually. They've just got good trousers or something.

Or good hairdos.

Yeah, the hair and the trousers. And they do really well and the next year they're back throwing hamburgers at MacDonalds. And it's just all part of the fun, I think, really. It's nice to actually be on the edge of that and not be too involved in it. And have some perspective on it.

Will you sing us another tune?

Oh, OK then. What should I do now. OK I'll do this one, I think. This is called *Razor Dance*.

Yes, fabulous.

OK Hope I get through this without breaking my arm.



Beautiful. Was that a bit of a strain, that one?

It's a bit high for this time of .., for this state of jet lag.

Richard Thompson is our guest, live in the studio. It's 25 minutes to 10.

And you're on a very extensive tour of Australia. Which is great. It's good to see you going to places like Hobart.

Yeah, great.

Have you been there before?

No, I'm looking forward to Hobart very much.

When was the last time you were in Australia, Richard?

It was about ten years ago.

Oh, a long time. You've obviously just arrived so I can't ask you for your observations and things that have changed.

It would be hard for me to say things that have changed. I mean, Sydney actually seems very similar to the last time I was here. And it's a great city. It's a good country. It's a really good place to live. I'm not surprised that so many Brits would rather live here than in England. So, look out for those immigration laws or there'll be millions of them.

Richard, are you a political animal? Do you interest yourself in politics much?

Yes I do. I'm not aligned to a political party, or anything like that. I'm probably more of an anarchist than anything else. But I take an interest, yes.

Which issues interest you or burn you up at the moment?

Well in Britain, the big one is Europe. That's going to be the big dividing line that goes right down the middle of political parties at the moment. Whether to go into single currency. How closely to be tied to Federal Europe. And, personally I think it would be a disaster. More and more people seem to be realising that. It's a totally impractical idea. So I hope Britain will stay really on the fringes of it. And on the fringes of Europe. 'Cause Britain's actually economically doing very well at the moment. And Germany isn't and France isn't, so I hope that if we just stay out on the edge I think we'd be much better off.

What, you think it's in danger of losing its identity in the European Union?

Oh, I don't think it would have a strong identity in the European Union. I mean whatever they say, the European Economic Unit will be basically... you may as well call it a Deutschmark, 'cause that's what it will be and the tune will still be called pretty much by France and Germany. So, I think Britain would be better off.. I think it would've been better off never going in, in the first place, actually. It made a lot of sacrifices to do so. And at this point it's already given away a huge amount of sovereignty, already to Europe, very, very slowly and quietly. A lot of things have become federalised. It's interesting to note that a state in America, somewhere like Delaware or Alabama, has more freedom than Britain has in Europe already. This is before we go any further. Delaware gets to set its own speed limits, it gets to set a lot of its own laws, it gets to set its own taxes. In Britain, you wouldn't be able to do any of that. You have to toe the Euro line. So it's a model more on the lines of Russia than the United States, and I thought we were trying to demolish those sort of large megalithic countries.

So, Richard, I hear that this new album of yours has been nominated for a Grammy.

Well yes.

Does that excite you in any way?

Yeah, I think that's pretty good.

Has that happened before?

Yes, I got nominated in 91. No, it's good. I mean I'm not looking to clear a space on the mantelpiece for another trophy. It's more a matter of people take notice in the music business. And it gives you a little more leverage and a bit more credibility which, unfortunately, is a kind of game that you play. But you sort of have to do it, so it's very helpful.

Will you be there for the ceremony?

I'll be in Australia, so I'll have to satellite in my thanks from Wagga Wagga.

And who will you thank first, Richard?

Oh, Mum.

God?

Ooh, gosh. Yeah, I hate it when they do that, don't you. It's absolutely loathsome. No, mum... mum, dad... and that special teacher at school.

Fair enough. It's been a delight to have you into the studio. Thank you so much for your time this evening.

Thank you very much for having me in.

I should give out the dates of your tour. Richard Thompson is on tour, in fact with Loudon Wainwright. Are you sharing the stage at any stage?

I'm sure we will. We haven't talked about it but..

Who's on first?

I know we will. I think Loudon's on first this time. In fact, the last time I came to Australia, I was opening for Loudon, so, we'll just swap.

It's only fair isn't it, that he should open for you?

And then in 2007 I'll open for him again.

Good, I'll look forward to that, too. And so you can catch Richard Thompson at

Richard Thompson, thank you so much for coming into the studio. Really nice to meet you.

Thanks very much indeed.

Should we go out with a track from the album?

Oh why not.

Or a live one?

Oh, go on, play one.

All right, I'll play one. I'll play Cold Kisses from Richard Thompson's latest album y?m?u? Thanks so much.

Thank you.



Richard Thompson

live in the studio with Jenny Oldershaw
on the 2111 Morning Program.

Right now it is a great pleasure to welcome into the studio, with his guitar we're very lucky to say, Richard Thompson, founding member of 70s folk band FC. For a long time now a performer in his own right, Richard is regarded by many as a musician's musician and one of the world's great guitarists. Richard, good morning.

Morning

Is that the way you see yourself? Are you happy with that?

Not when I look in the mirror in the morning, no. It's nothing quite that exciting. Really, really, really boring.

What, to be a musician's musician?

No, to be me ;-)

To be you!

No it would be lovely to be a musician's musician. Well, we'll see how I get on in the next few minutes.

We'll see if the listeners agree with that. The new album *y?m?u?* is offered as two CDs - acoustic and electric. I notice in the bio material that you interviewed yourself for this and you asked yourself the question "Why two different styles?" and gave yourself a fairly incoherent answer. If I put it to you, would I have much more luck?

[Snores] I could probably manage slightly better. Well, we had a lot of songs and we thought how on earth are we going to program this into a record and it didn't work to make it into one long CD so that the only way to really, successfully do it was to put it on two records and give people the chance to break it up. 'Cause, personally I hate long CDs (and I don't know how this came up about...). As I mentioned, the record company hates long CDs and the public hates long CDs. Why did I make this record? I just do not understand.

Well, you had a lot of songs I guess. When you work with songs...

I was artistically driven, Jenny. It's my soul, I have to express my angst.

Well you also said that no one understands your pain the way other musicians do.

Who said that?

You said that. You said that about yourself. No one understands the pain. Is there a lot of pain in the process?

No, not really. No. Who said that? I didn't say that!

For a lot of our listeners they may have only really become aware of you via their favourite musicians talking about you. In fact, I think I remember reading an article with Bob Mould talking about you; impressed with your guitar; your guitar playing and your musicianship. Are you happy with fans to come across you that way rather than "Richard Thompson? Oh sure. A new record from him" rather than "Bob Mould likes this guy".

It doesn't matter. I mean, it's nice to have people listen to you wherever they come from. I think, if you're not hyped in the first place, then the people who find you tend to stay with you. Which is nice. If you get a kind of an artificial audience through being publicised, or something, to some remarkable degree - it's never happened to me ... but there's hope - then I think your audience can disappear very quickly as fast as it comes. But, I've got a very loyal audience, which is fantastic.

A huge loyal audience amongst people that actually do write about your music. Critics always write fantastic things about your music, but, dare I say, it never seems to translate into record sales. Does that frustrate you? That you put so much effort into this work, and it's obviously appreciated by those that understand it, but the great unwashed don't seem to flock to the record stores.

We don't want them anyway ;-)

I mean, I sell a reasonable number of records, really, and I don't really play music that's immediately commercial. I don't really play like Die Straits, I don't play white r'n'b or white blues, or something. I don't play the lingua franca of the day. The style's a little off for people; and sometimes the mood's a little off for people. So I wouldn't expect to be considered remotely mainstream. And I'm glad.

Yeah. Have you ever said "Oh, bugger it! I just wish I could get really famous for a little while" and ...

Yes, it's nice. I try and make commercial records, I try to be accessible. But I think you have to do it on your own terms and be true to your own musical goals. Otherwise, it's going to be a very hollow experience, I think.

Yeah. Have you ever had any offers from people to join their bands? People who love your music.

Not for a long time :-)

Have you in the past?

Oh, the Eagles, maybe.

Maybe they offered you? You weren't quite sure? It was a bit late, was it?

No, no. Apparently I was asked to join the Eagles, they just didn't ask me. They asked somebody.

Would you have taken them up on that? Obviously, you didn't.

Oh Traffic. I was asked to join Traffic at one point.

And..

Well, I mean a bunch of really morose Americans. Have you ever seen the Eagles smiling in a picture or on stage? Miserable. Absolutely miserable.

No, not that I can remember. I think I've seen Traffic smile, maybe.

Yeah, Traffic used to smile.

What stopped you from taking up an offer like that? Perhaps if REM, or someone, came up to you and said "Come on. Kick along with us for a couple of years".

No. Well I really have a lot of fun and I do well enough without being desperate, so. And I really play a slightly different style. There's a lot of Celtic elements in the music I play. So, I don't really want to play country rock with the Eagles, or... I'd rather just plough my own furrow if I can.

Your name has been associated with folk music in the past, and I guess to an extent now as well. Do you keep an eye on where that scene is at? Or if it still exists as a scene?

I do, yes. I'm always interested in new people coming out of traditional music and out of folk music. It is interesting. I just like roots music generally. And I'm particularly interested in the British Isles - what comes out of there.

What is coming out of there that's taken your fancy?

A singer like Kate Rusby who's a wonderful traditional singer. Really, really fantastic. I think she'll be here to stay. What else...

What about the American scene? Anything coming out of there that attracts you, that interests you?

Yeah, yeah. There's always really good singer/songwriters coming out of America. There's a girl called Gillian Welch, who I think is very good. Up for a Grammy this year. Sorry, mind's a blank. Jet lag.

It is early in the morning for you. We played a few artists last year and there was quite a bit of talk about new folk and the new style of it, coming particularly out of America, with bands like Folk Implosion and I guess Beek's name has also been associated with that. Where do you see him coming from? Do you see that there is any link between what Beek is doing and what's been done in the past in terms of folk.

Yeah, there is a connection. Hopefully, it's a slightly different interpretation which gives it its originality and its credibility and its contemporary aspect. So, I think that's something that will always happen. People will always reinterpret the roots of music and the indigenous music of where they come from in a way that reflects the way the world changes. That's what we were trying to do in the late 60s. Really, it was just to contemporise traditional music and to give it back to people because people had forgotten it. And it was, and is, beautiful music.

And it also seems to be one of the best ways you can communicate an emotion or a feeling, or an impression, I think. Lyrically, particularly, it's a great style of music for lyricists.

Oh, absolutely. It's one of the best places to learn how to write songs - is to look at an old Scottish ballad, or something from 16-something. Or you look at a song that has been sung for three or four hundred years; and all the rubbish has been left out, all the bad verses, all the bad lines have all been improved and honed. You get a song that's incredibly tight and powerful and every line just hits home. There's some fantastic stuff there. It's a great place to learn.

Are you saying that in rock it's a little bit easy to hide behind the noise and behind the guitars?

Yeah, it is and I suppose since the Beatles it's been the thing for bands to write their own material and for singers to write their own songs and I think that probably means that the quality is diluted a little bit because

not all bands are great songwriters. But before the Beatles set such a high standard for everybody you used to have songwriters used to write songs, and arrangers arranged them, and orchestrators orchestrated them, conductors conducted them, and singers sang them.

Specialists in the field.

Yeah. So if you were a great singer, that was enough but I think these days you're expected to reflect your own experience and your own view of the world if you're a band or if you're a singer. So, you have to write your own stuff.

Being aware of that, do you put as much effort into every single part of the song or do you ever skip out on kind of "that verse is not quite perfect but it's a really good guitar part in there". When you present a song, is it a complete whole for you? Are you not satisfied until the music and the lyrics and the arrangement is absolutely perfect?

Yeah, you have to be really satisfied, I think. And you can be wrong; you can prove yourself wrong the first time you play it in front of an audience and you think "Maybe this isn't such a great song after all". But I think you have to think that you've put a song to bed, that you've actually checked it, and that everything fits really well. Unless you're writing in a great hurry where you're going to be a bit sloppier about it. Sometimes there's deadlines and that's tough.

Really? I work by deadlines, I didn't know that you had to work by deadlines. What, the record company says "Now!"?

Well, yeah, albums. You have to be in the studio in a week and you have to write five more songs or you're writing songs for a film and the film's already finished and it's...

But, there are bands that go into studios without even a single thing written on paper. It must be an incredibly pressured situation for those...

Yes, of course. It's a way of doing it and I wouldn't criticise it. I think that's fine if it works for you. Quite a lot of people do go in with absolutely nothing.

You don't, though?

I like to get everything finished before I go in. Well, it's cheaper.

A bit of preparation never goes astray. Richard you've got your guitar there. I'd like to hear you, too. It's right in front of you. I'd love to hear something from it.

Alright this is a song called Hide It Away. It's off my new album, thank you.



An audience of one goes crazy. Richard Thompson on JJJ and Hide It Away which appears on his new record y?m?u? Richard, watching you play, and knowing what people have said about you in the past, do you feel that you have anything left to learn as a musician? Where do you find that you still have things that you'd like to learn?

Yeah, I feel that if you're any kind of musician you're always learning, and it never stops. And I've got a lot to learn about harmony and things like that. So I listen to classical music and jazz and try and up my knowledge in that direction. As a lyricist you can always borrow ... no, that's like stealing isn't it?

Be inspired by?

You can always be inspired by poetry and other writers. I think you have to keep looking and keep studying and be a student. You are a student until you die, really.

You're touring with Loudon Wainwright. The two of you, do you get together and teach each other stuff and compete on the guitar?

Compete, yes! Teach each other? Oooh I don't know ;) We're really old friends and it's great to be touring with Loudon 'cause I don't see him as much as I'd like to. So that's a wonderful thing. I think he's upstairs in this very building, somewhere. And I think he's one of the great songwriters. People think he's a comedian, which he is. He's very funny. But he also writes incredibly perceptive, poignant songs. Really beautiful, beautiful songs. Some of the best songs that I know, he's written.

Do you ever hear one of his songs and go "Damn! I wish I'd written that. God that's a good line".

Oh, absolutely. He's got lots of those. I'm very jealous.

Well, you two are touring together from this week onwards. I wish you a fantastic tour. Great to have you here. I was going to ask you for, I will actually ask you for a second track. Can you do a quick one? I was going to play something off the record but I thought, now, I've got you here.

This one's called The Ghost Of You Walks



Richard Thompson live on the Morning Program and The Ghost Of You Walks. Catch him and Loudon Wainwright as they tour around the country. Check your local gig guides for details. Once again, thank you very much, Richard.

Thank you, Jenny.

Stop Press

I've just heard that RT didn't get the Grammy he was up for. Surprise, surprise, they gave it to Bruce Springsteen. This is a quote from Bruce at a post Grammy party and was quoted in the Boston Globe newspaper on 28th February. "...I was surprised to win because I was up against so many good people. I really like Gillian Welch, and I think Richard Thompson is unbelievable. And I have been listening to Peter Rowan since I was a kid and he was in [The Boston Band] Earth Opera." Nice one Bruce.

RT still has something to put on his mantelpiece though. He may not have won the Grammy but he did win the prestigious Oville H. Gibson award for the 'Best Acoustic Guitarist'. The nominees were, RT, Eric Clapton and Dave Matthews. The award ceremony was held at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York on February the 25th. RT was unable to be there because he was touring 'down under' and the award was accepted on his behalf by his wife Nancy.

RT has also picked up the 'Best Overall Guitarist' in the 27th annual 'Guitar Player' magazine readers poll.

'launch' a CD-ROM arts review includes an interview with RT in it's issue #8. The interview features RT talking about his solo albums up to 'Minor Blue'. A text interview about songwriting and 'you? me? us?' as well as an exclusive video clip, recorded in the

'launch' offices, of RT doing a solo version of 'Razor Dance'. 'launch' can be contacted at; P.O. Box 433, Santa Monica, CA. 90406-9909, USA., or, if you are 'on line', at; <http://www.2launch.com>

There is a brand new web site for information on RT. It is being maintained by one of the founders of Hokey Pokey, David Suff of Fledgling Records. It's well worth a look if you have the facilities and can be found at; <http://www.thebeesknees.com>

The Next Hokey Pokey

As I explained at the beginning I am now able to give more attention to Hokey Pokey and have worked out a publishing schedule, so we shouldn't see any more very long delays. The next issue will be the June/July 1997 issue. If any of you have any material that you think would be appropriate for inclusion in the next issue then please send it to me. You can send it by post, fax or via e-mail. You can also send stuff on floppy disc if you wish, I am currently using Microsoft Word 6.0c and my machine can handle both 3.5" and 5.25" floppy discs.

The address to send your stuff to is;

Hokey Pokey, Field Corner, Millham Lane, Dulverton, Somerset. TA22 9HQ. ENGLAND.

Tel/Fax. (+44) (0) 1398 324114

E-Mail. Hokey_Pokey@compuserve.com

Until next time take care.

Andy