

# Ten things you didn't know about... *Richard Thompson*

Folk rock legend Richard Thompson is over from LA with his millennium-spanning show '1,000 Years of Popular Music'. He plays the Barbican on Thursday, and again on February 3.

## His worst hangover ever was...

'On tour with Sandy Denny in New York, when the rhythm section decided to have a drinking contest. After the sixteenth round of some hideously strong German beer I was just totally out of it. I woke up covered in sick. I gave up drinking in 1974 – it was stop or go down the long dark road. Sandy could drink all of us under the table.'

## What he misses most about England is...

'The England that doesn't exist anymore, the England of the '50s and '60s. I now live in a very sunny place and it sounds stupid but I miss the fogs, the old pea soupers. Sometimes you actually couldn't find your way to school, how cool is that? Luckily you can get Radio 4 on the internet or I'd also miss 'I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue', the greatest radio programme of all time. It has the right balance of the various traits of British insanity.'

## He coached Arnold Schwarzenegger's son at football

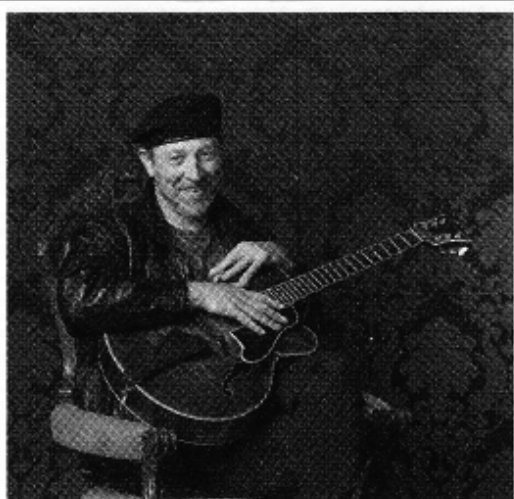
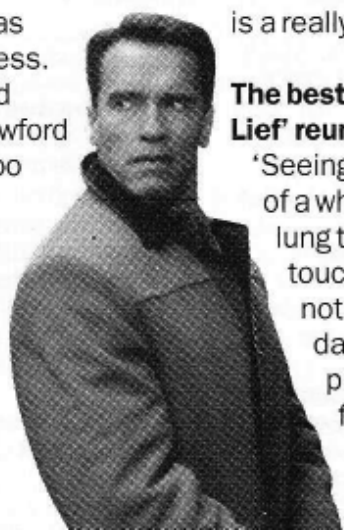
'Arnold's son Wolfgang was in my son's team. There're always a few competitive parents screaming instructions to each other from the touchline: "Wolfy, schnell! Schnell!"'

## He's writing a musical play

'It's not "Mamma Mia 2". It's not even "Oklahoma! 2" It's a commission from the International Society of Bassists (you wouldn't think there'd be one would you?) to write a piece of music that features the double bass. Which is fairly simple, but I had to make it really complicated. It's about a talent contest set in hell. I have watched "X Factor". As Werner Herzog said, "The poet must not avert his eyes".'

## He spent a year as an antiques dealer

'This was in the '70s when I was a bit confused about what I was doing in the music business. So I opened a shop called Leopold Antiques on Crawford Street in London. I was too nice to be an antiques dealer; you're supposed to be a bit harder on the old ladies. Luckily punk came along. For me that was a great musical restorative and I could suddenly see my way again.'



## He's gradually learning to speak 'LA'

'I say "kind of" all the time. And in order to be understood in America I now say, "I'd like a glass of warden", because I know if I say water they'll smile and say, "Yes, the bathroom's second on the left." Actual English is incomprehensible to them.'

## Ice hockey is his absolute favourite thing in the world

'It's the combination of speed and skill. And they'll get hit in the face with a puck, get stitched up and come back on. The LA Kings are my team. Oh yeah, I've got the merch: a team jacket, shirt, various hats and a goalie's hockey stick signed by the whole team.'



## He recently reunited with old school chum and bandmate Hugh Cornwell

'We met at a festival in Spain for the first time in 30 years. His mum used to go swimming in the pond on Hampstead Heath every day of the year and I asked him, "It's not possible that your mum's still alive, is it?" Apparently she's 90 now and still going every day.'

## His 17-year-old son is now in a band

'He used to say, "There're too many musicians in the family, I'm going to be a biologist," and I thought that was great because I quite like biology myself. But when he turned 13 he said, "I'm a bass player now." I said, "Well, we'd better go and get you a bass then." He learnt it in two days. His band's called Mangrass. Their songs don't sound like other people's, which is a really good thing.'

## The best part of the 2007 'Liege & Lief' reunion was...

'Seeing [fiddler Dave] Swarbrick out of a wheelchair. He had a double lung transplant and it had been touch and go. Suddenly to see him not only standing up, but kind of dancing around while he was playing, was just amazing. It's for a good reason that his new band is called Lazarus.'

Interview: Bella Todd