



**Richard Thompson:
Walking on a Wire:
Richard Thompson
(1968-2009)
(Shout Factory)**

What's today's indie connoisseur to make of Richard Thompson? Like Bob Dylan or Neil Young, he's been making records every few years for what seems like damn near forever. And with everyone from R.E.M. to Bob Mould to Sleater-Kinney covering him, Thompson's received lots of props from younger musicians over the years. But unlike Dylan or Young, he's never really been catapulted into iconic dorm-room poster status—or even pseudo-ironic garish '80s-tour thrift-store t-shirt status.

Walking on a Wire probably won't change all that. But maybe it should. It spans Thompson's entire career—his early days in Fairport Convention, his famous '70s and '80s albums with his then-wife Linda, and his recent solo work, among others—and does it well. Like most retrospective collections, a few live and alternate takes are scattered throughout, but in most cases they're good substitutions for the original.

Most importantly, *Walking on a Wire* captures Thompson's tremendous range while still managing to mix in the best-known Thompson tunes ("I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight," "Shoot out the Lights," "1952 Vincent Black Lightning," etc.). Stylistically the set moves from propulsive, polished '70s pop-rock worthy of Fleetwood Mac at their best ("Don't Let A Thief Steal Into Your Heart") to plaintive acoustic folk ("From Galway To Graceland") to punishing Young-esque guitar rock ("Hard on Me"), while lyrically it showcases Thompson's ability to write everything from a borderline-saccharine love tune ("Beeswing") to a deceptively poppy social protest song about plant closings ("Pig Iron").

Sure, *Walking on a Wire* might not convince anyone that Thompson's in the same league as Dylan or Young—or even convince them to start mining thrift store shelves for '82 Shoot out the Lights tour shirts—but it sure makes a compelling case.

(www.richardthompson-music.com)

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