

# LONG TIME STRUMMING

**C**ritical acclaim didn't do it. A famous mother and father (Richard and Linda Thompson) didn't do it. A major record label and big-time producer didn't do it. Constant touring didn't do it. But maybe, just maybe, it will be the movies that finally bring the talented musician Teddy Thompson into the spotlight.

Thompson is featured on "Rogue's Gallery: Pirate Ballads, Sea Songs & Chanterays," an all-star two-CD compilation out Aug. 22 and tied in to the biggest movie of the year, "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest."

Also out is the soundtrack to the documentary/concert film "Leonard Cohen: I'm Your Man," a movie that enjoyed critical raves and an extended run at Film Forum. (Despite an all-star lineup that includes members of U2 and Pulp, Nick Cave and Thompson's pal Rufus Wainwright, among others, the one performance that stands out is Thompson's crystal-clear rendition of Cohen's "Tonight Will Be Fine.")

Hopefully, fans discovering Thompson on these soundtracks and tie-ins will also pick up his second album, "Separate Ways" (Verve Forecast). Given an "A" by Entertainment Weekly, praised by USA Today for offering "supple, evocative melodies" and "tunes that sparkle and linger," it's a triumph for Thompson, who was dumped by Virgin Records practically the day his debut CD hit stores six years ago. He took his time after that setback, recorded songs at his own pace and on his own dime and approached labels only when he had an album that was done to his satisfaction.

"I did feel dispirited," admits Thompson, whose natural pessimistic reaction to good news is to wait for the bad news that surely must follow. "I didn't have a particularly good experience with Virgin Records. And nobody likes to be told they're not wanted."

Born in the U.K., Thompson still feels British at heart, even though he moved to Los Angeles at 18 and has been a longtime New Yorker (he often performs at the downtown space the Living Room).

"I've always wanted to live in New York," says Thompson. "I only went to L.A. because I knew some people there and my dad was living there. When I was 18, I would have gone straight here, but I didn't think I was capable of making it. New Yorkers almost don't know what New York means to people that move here. It's a mythical, amazing place."

The son of legendary folk-rock singers Richard and Linda Thompson, Thompson is currently touring all over the world, performing songs like the plaintive "Sorry to See Me Go" and the droll album opener "Shine So Bright," in which Thompson jokingly longs for overwhelming fame.

For months, that fame has been coming closer. He has been jumping from the U.S. to the U.K. and Canada and then back again, performing to larger and larger crowds every time. His album "Separate Ways" has garnered much more intense media attention overseas. British critics have garlanded the album with rave four-star reviews and compared his intimate songwriting with Jackson Browne, though Thompson himself feels much closer to the pop craft of Crowded House and Cohen.

Like Cohen, Thompson has a wry sense of humor that sometimes gets confused for melancholy or boastfulness.

"Some people think I'm arrogant or don't care, but it's usually me trying to be funny," says the handsome singer-songwriter, who turns 30 this year. "Some people just don't see the humor in some of the songs. You can't expect everybody to get everything. But it's been good for me to be in England.

I feel my sense of humor is a bit more understood right off the bat." ♦

The movies may help musician Teddy Thompson finally break out

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

