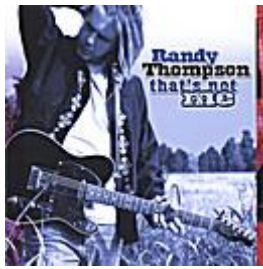


## Mp3 Randy Thompson - That's Not Me



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A Singer-Songwriter with a broad but catchy palette of Alt-Country, Americana, Country, and spicy Roots Rock. 9 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Modern Country, COUNTRY: Country Rock Details: RANDY THOMPSON Randy Thompson isn't interested in the easy road. He'd rather follow the sound in his heart than try to take a path someone else maps out for him. He's not interested in someone else's idea of what he should sound like. That's why the title of his third album, That's Not Me, is a tad ironic because the music Randy Thompson makes is completely, wholeheartedly his own. "I've always been into music that's real," says the Virginia native. "I like music that's raw rather than overly produced or processed, and I like songs that sound like they are torn from someone's life rather than being overly sentimental or slick. For me, music is about emotion and what we feel in our daily lives. It's not just entertainment." That's why when Thompson names his influences - Hank Williams, Waylon Jennings, Joe Ely, Steve Young among them - he cites artists who have lived the songs they sing. Like those artists, Thompson takes real-life situations and turns them into red-dirt poetry with a pulse. "I've written enough and studied country music enough to know about the craft of songwriting," Thompson says. "But songcraft isn't what turns me on. It's the blood and the soul that you put into those words, the feeling you get when you hear the rhythm and the melody -- that's what it's about for me. I don't want people to hear my songs and say, 'Wow, that's well-crafted.' I want them to hear a song, and say, 'Man, I know how he feels.'" There's a deep, honky-tonk stomp at the core of Thompson's modern country sound, and there's a smart swagger to his concise, colorful lyrics and arrangements. Call it "outlaw music" if you must, or call it Americana, alternative country or any other term tagged to those who make roots music that doesn't easily fit into categories. Strip away the marketing terms, and what exists is the sound of a talented, broad-shouldered man who knows what he wants - and whose songs acknowledge that even the best-intentioned souls

can't control the forces of life around them. "I wrote the songs for this album all around the same time," he concedes. "My marriage was breaking up, and that had a lot to do with the subject matter. These songs are really autobiographical. I'm writing different songs now, because I've moved on. But this album captures that time in my life. I couldn't have written these songs at any other time." These songs also ought to further introduce Thompson into mainstream country music and its 'off the path' Americana cousin. It's a worthy follow-up to his previous album, *Wearin' Blue*, which brought Thompson a heap of critical acclaim and started spreading the word beyond Virginia about his unique talent. The *Washington Post* said, "Thompson delivers a sad lyric with a quiet intensity that makes his sorrow all the more palpable," and his songs show "a gift for composing memorable laments that are at once clever and moving." *No Depression* called him "a strong songwriter and evocative singer" with "a real knack for a good line." And fellow singer-songwriter Kevin Welch said Thompson's music "is better than 95 percent of what comes out of Nashville." Thompson has deep roots in Virginia. His family has lived there since the early 1700s, and he still resides in Clifton, a tiny town of 200. Although it is just an hour from Washington, D.C., driving into Clifton is like "going back in time 100 years," the singer says. On his *Wearin' Blue* album, Thompson featured an epic story song about one of his great-great-grandfathers, who fought in the Civil War. "I've always been in touch with my roots," he says. "That's probably why I'm so into roots music. It relates to my life, where I come from and who I am." Thompson connected with music early. As a very young boy, he became obsessed with Hank Williams, constantly playing the greatest hits collection his parents owned. The obsession stayed with him, and he started writing his own honky-tonk songs by age 13. "Growing up when I did, there weren't a lot of other kids into the same kind of music that I was," he says. "I was kind of the oddball among my friends in that respect. There's always been a big bluegrass scene in that part of Virginia, and there were always a lot of bluegrass pickers around. But there weren't many people listening to Hank and Lefty Frizzell and Jimmie Rodgers and all that sort of thing. For some reason that music just spoke directly to me." While in elementary school in Virginia, Thompson befriended an older blues singer, John Jackson, who lived nearby. Jackson performed in Thompson's class one day, and the young student was taken by the old blues tunes and how the guitarist played slide with a butter knife. Jackson recorded for Arhoolie and Rounder Records and ranked as the D.C.-area's best-loved acoustic bluesman before his death in 2002, and he took the young Thompson under his wing, regularly inviting him over to teach him chords and guitar licks. "I thought he was so cool," Thompson says. "He did

all these classic old songs, like 'Diddy Wah Diddy' and 'Midnight Special.' And he had such a great simple spirit for life. He loved people and music. Before I could drive, I would sometimes walk the mile and a half through the woods over to his house and pick with him, or just listen. He would play his blues songs, and I would play these country songs, and it was just all music to us. I could see that our music came from two different worlds, but it was the same on a certain level, too." As he matured, Thompson also became a fan of the progressive country artists of the '70s and '80s, soaking up the music of Joe Ely, Emmylou Harris, Steve Young, Larry Jon Wilson and Mickey Newbury. "There was something about that music that I related to more than the commercial country that was on the radio," he says. "To me, those types of artists had more in common with the true spirit of country music than the pop country of that time. There was something real there that connected with the music from the past that I loved." Thompson recorded his first album in 1988, making it in Nashville with such respected studio pickers as steel guitarist Lloyd Green. In the early '90s, music took a backseat as Thompson dedicated himself to the responsibilities of trying to make a living and being a father to two small boys. But by the late '90s he couldn't resist music's pull, and he re-dedicated himself to making music his way. "Right now all I want to do is write music and perform," he says. "I feel as if I've come into my own as an artist in the last few years. I've got the musical experience to know what's good about what I do, and I've had enough life experience to write from a place that is real. You get to a certain age, and you know who you are." Since then, Thompson has returned to performing regularly, playing such high-profile music rooms as the Birchmere and the Bluebird Caf as well as opening concerts for everyone from George Jones and Sawyer Brown to Kevin Welch and Shelby Lynne. Thompson's new album reveals just how fully formed his artistry has become. Concise and full of punch, the songs cut hard, featuring fierce rhythms built around the guitar rather than the drums and packed with propulsive picking that lights a fire under themes of turmoil, perseverance and self-discovery. "The restless moon is going my way," Thompson sings in "Sound of the Rain," and the entire album deals with the tension between the tug of freedom and the road and the anchor of relationships and responsibility. Lyrically, the songs mix danger and regret with hard-earned truths. Thompson acknowledges how all of us can be lured by the wild side of life - "Dark shadows have got their own kind of beauty," he sings in the stunning "If Love Is What You Want" - but he also knows that there are consequences and things of greater value worth holding onto and fighting for. That's what Randy Thompson means when he says he wants his songs to be real. And it's that sense of reality, in all its

trouble and glory, that runs throughout Thompson's songs.

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