Tom Jones (singer)

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Sir Thomas John Woodward, OBE (born 7 June 1940), known by his stage name Tom Jones, is a Welsh singer. He became one of the most popular vocalists to emerge from the British Invasion. Since the mid-1960s, Jones has sung nearly every form of popular music pop, rock, R&B, show tunes, country, dance, soul and gospel and sold over 100 million records.

Jones has had thirty-six Top 40 hits in the United Kingdom and nineteen in the United States; some of his notable songs include "It's Not Unusual", "What's New Pussycat", "Delilah", "Green, Green Grass of Home", "She's a Lady", "Kiss" and "Sex Bomb".[1][2]

Having been awarded an OBE in 1999, Jones received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for "services to music" in 2006. Jones has received numerous other awards throughout his career, including the Grammy Award for Best New Artist in 1966, an MTV Video Music Award in 1989 and two Brit Awards winning Best British Male, in 2000, and Outstanding Contribution to Music, in 2003.

Early life

Tom Jones was born Thomas John Woodward, at 57 Kingsland Terrace, Treforest, Pontypridd in South Wales. His parents were Thomas Woodward (died 5 October 1981), a coal miner, and Freda Jones (died 7 February 2003). Both of his paternal grandparents were English, and his maternal grandmother, Ada Jones from Pontypridd, had English parents. Tom Jones began singing at an early age: he would regularly sing at family gatherings, weddings and in his school choir. Jones did not like school or sports but gained confidence through his singing talent. At 12 he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Many years later he said; "I spent two years in bed recovering. It was the worst time of my life." During convalescence he could do little else but listen to music and draw.

Jones' bluesy singing style developed out of the sound of American soul music. His early influences included blues and R&B singers Little Richard, Solomon Burke, Jackie Wilson and Brook Benton, as well as Elvis Presley, whom Jones idolized and with whom he would...
In March 1957 Jones married his high school girlfriend, Melinda Trenchard when they were expecting a child together, both aged 16. The couple had a son named Mark who was born the month following their wedding. To support his young family Jones took a job working in a glove factory and was later employed in construction.[11]

Rise to fame

Jones, whose voice has been described as a “full-throated, robust baritone”,[12] became the frontman for Tommy Scott and the Senators, a Welsh beat group, in 1963. They soon gained a local following and reputation in South Wales. In 1964 the group recorded several solo tracks with producer Joe Meek, who took them to various labels, but they had little success. Later that year Decca producer Peter Sullivan saw Tommy Scott and The Senators performing in a club and directed them to manager Phil Solomon, but the partnership was short-lived.

The group continued to play gigs at dance halls and working men's clubs in South Wales. One night, at the Top Hat in Cwmfyllt, Wales, Jones was spotted by Gordon Mills, a London-based manager originally from South Wales. Mills became Jones' manager and took the young singer to London, and also renamed him Tom Jones.[13]

Eventually Mills got Jones a recording contract with Decca. His first single, "Chills and Fever", was released in late 1964. It did not chart, but the follow-up, "It's Not Unusual" became an international hit after offshore pirate radio station Radio Caroline promoted it. The following year would be the most prominent of Jones's career, making him one of the most popular vocalists of the British Invasion. In early 1965 "It's Not Unusual" reached number one in the United Kingdom and the top ten in the United States. During 1965 Mills secured a number of movie themes for Jones to record including the themes for the film What's New Pussycat? (written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David) and for the James Bond film Thunderball.[14] Jones was also awarded the Grammy Award for Best New Artist for 1965.[15] In Hollywood, Jones met Elvis Presley for the first time who he recalls singing his song as he walked towards him on set.

In 1966 Jones' popularity began to slip somewhat, causing Mills to redesign the singer's image into that of a crooner. Jones also began to sing material that appealed to a wider audience such as the big country hit "Green, Green Grass of Home". The strategy worked and Jones returned to the top of the charts in the United Kingdom and began hitting the Top 40 again in the United States. For the remainder of the decade he scored a string of hits on both sides of the Atlantic.[16][11][17]

Las Vegas

In 1967 Jones performed in Las Vegas for the first time, at the Flamingo.[14] His performances and style of dress (increasingly featuring his open, half-unbuttoned shirts and tight trousers) became part of his stage act. He soon chose to record less, instead concentrating on his lucrative club performances. At Caesars Palace his shows were a knicker-hurling frenzy of sexually charged adulation and good-time entertainment. Women started throwing hotel room keys onto the stage. Jones and his idol Elvis Presley met in 1965 at the Paramount film stage, when Elvis was filming Paradise, Hawaiian Style.[14] They became good friends, spending more and more time together in Las Vegas and duetting until the early hours at Presley's private Las Vegas suite. The friendship endured until Presley's death in 1977.[14] Jones' guitarist between 1969 and 1974 was Big Jim Sullivan, who also met and formed a friendship with Presley.

Tom Jones played at least one week in Las Vegas every year until 2011.

Television and lawsuits

Jones had an internationally successful television variety show titled This Is Tom Jones from 1969 to 1971. The ATV-produced show, which was worth a reported $9m to Jones over three years, was broadcast by ITV in the UK and by ABC in America. From 1980 to 1981 he had a second television variety show, the eponymous Tom Jones, that was produced in Vancouver, Canada and lasted for 24 episodes.

In recent years both television shows have been the subject of litigation with the original license holder C/F International. As of December 2004 C/F International was a secured judgment creditor of Classic World Productions and its principal, Darryl Payne, for approximately one million US dollars, and was the principal secured creditor at the time of the subsequent bankruptcy filing by the company. C/F International's action against Classic World Productions and owner Darryl Payne was based on unpaid royalties from This Is Tom Jones,[18] and related recordings.[19] This Is Tom Jones is currently sold on DVD by Time-Life rather than by Classic World Productions or C/F International.[20]

C/F International's rights to later Tom Jones material were also disputed. In March 2007 Tom Jones and Tom Jones Enterprises sued C/F International to stop the company from licensing sound recordings made from the 1981 Tom Jones series. It was contended that any rights that C/F International had to license the Tom Jones show did not include the right to make and license separate recordings of the performances on the show and that any rights that C/F International had in the Tom Jones show' no longer existed due to numerous breaches of contract.[21] Examples of contentious CDs include "Live on the Tom Jones Show", released in 2006.[22][23]

Jones appeared on 31 December 1969, on the BBC's review of the 1960s music scene Pop Go The Sixties, performing "Delilah" (in a telemerecording of an earlier appearance on Top of the Pops).

In 1970, Jones teamed up with Raquel Welch and Producer/Choreographer David Winters of Winters-Rosen Productions[24] for the TV
Decline and resurgence

In the early 1970s Jones had a number of hit singles, including "She's a Lady", "Till", and "The Young New Mexican Puppeteer", but in the mid 1970s his popularity declined although he did have a big hit in 1976 with "Say You'll Stay Until Tomorrow" which went to No. 1 on the US country chart and No. 15 on the Billboard Hot 100.

In the early 1980s Jones started to record country music. From 1980 to 1986 he had nine songs in the US country top 40 yet failed to crack the top 100 in the UK or the Billboard Hot 100. After Jones' manager Gordon Mills died of cancer on 29 July 1986, Jones' son Mark became his manager. In 1987, Tom Jones re-entered the singles chart with "A Boy From Nowhere" which went to No. 2 in the United Kingdom. The following year he covered Prince's "Kiss" with The Art of Noise. The song was a hit on both sides of the Atlantic, reaching No. 5 in the UK and No. 31 in the US. The video for "Kiss" was much seen on MTV and VH1, and won the MTV Video Music Award for Breakthrough Video.

Jones received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1989, located at 6608 Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles, California in front of Frederick's of Hollywood. In 1992 he made his first appearance at the UK's Glastonbury Festival and in 1993 he appeared as himself on episodes of The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and The Simpsons.

In 1999 Jones released the album Reload, a collection of cover duets with artists such as The Cardigans, Natalie Imbruglia, Cerys Matthews, Van Morrison, Mousse T, Portishead, Stereophonics, and Robbie Williams. The album went to No. 1 in the UK and sold over 4 million copies worldwide. Five singles from Reload hit the UK top 40. The single "Sex Bomb" was released in early 2000 and became the biggest single from the album, reaching number three in the UK Singles Chart.

Into the 21st century

United States President Bill Clinton invited Jones to perform on New Year's Eve at the 2000 millennium celebrations in Washington, D.C. Throughout 2000 Jones garnered a number of honours for his work including a BRIT Award for Best British Male. He was also hired as the new voice of Australia's National Rugby League, singing in an advertisement to market the 2000 season.

In 2002 Jones released the album Mr. Jones, which was produced by Wyclef Jean. The album and the first single, "Tom Jones International", were top 40 hits in the UK.

Jones received the BRIT Award for Outstanding Contribution to Music in 2003. The following year, he teamed up with pianist Jools Holland and released Tom Jones & Jools Holland, a roots rock 'n' roll album. It peaked at No. 5 in the UK.

On 28 May 2005, in celebration of his approaching 65th birthday, Jones returned to his homeland to perform a concert in Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd before a crowd of about 20,000. This was his first performance in Pontypridd since 1964. That same year the BBC reported that Jones was Wales' wealthiest entertainer, having amassed a fortune of £175 million. Jones collaborated with English-born Australian pop singer John Farnham in 2005 and released the live album John Farnham & Tom Jones - Together In Concert The following year Jones worked with Chicane and released the dance track "Stoned in Love", which went to No. 7 in the UK and No. 15 on the Billboard Hot 100. Jones, who was awarded an OBE in 1999, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2006 at Buckingham Palace for his services to music. When you first come into show business and get a hit record, it is the start of something", Jones said. "As time goes by it just gets better. This is the best thing I have had. It's a wonderful feeling, a heady feeling."

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On 1 July 2007 Jones was among the invited artists who performed at Wembley Stadium at the Concert for Diana, joined on stage by guitarist Joe Perry of Aerosmith and British soul singer Joss Stone. In addition to performing some of his own songs the group covered Arctic Monkeys' "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor". Jones, a boxing fan, has performed national anthems before a number of boxing matches. He sang "God Save the Queen", the United Kingdom's national anthem, before the Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Ricky Hatton fight in 2007; he sang "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau", the Welsh national anthem, at the fight between fellow Welshman Joe Calzaghe and Bernard Hopkins in 2008; and he sang "God Save the Queen" before the Manny Pacquiao-Ricky Hatton fight in 2009.

In 2008 also Tom Jones was inducted into the Hit Parade Hall of Fame. On 16 November 2008 Jones was invited to perform on BBC's Strictly Come Dancing. He performed the debut single from 24 Hours, "If He Should Ever Leave You", which was named the 9th best song of 2008 by Spinner.com. One of the songs...
In February 2009 he did an exclusive Take-Away Show with Vincent Moon, performing three songs live in front of a camera in a New York hotel room. In 2009 Jones was voted “Sexiest Man In The World” in the Hungarian magazine Periodika.

In March 2009 Jones went to the top of the UK Music Charts for the third time in his career thanks to a cover of “Islands in the Stream”, sung with Ruth Jones, Rob Brydon and Robin Gibb, who co-wrote the original with his brothers Barry and Maurice. The song, inspired by BBC’s hit sitcom Gavin and Stacey, was released in aid of Comic Relief and reached No. 1 in March 2009.

In 2009 he ditched his hair dye and declared he’d moved onto a new stage in his life: “Over Christmas, I always take a month off and let my hair go and don't even shave. “Normally it comes out like salt and pepper which I hated. But this year it grew out a silver colour, so I kept it because it's more distinguished”, he said.

2010-present

On 5 June 2010 a performance at Norwich City Football Club's Carrow Road stadium, two days before he celebrated his 70th birthday, was cancelled due to incomplete improvements to the stadium. Jones announced that his new album Praise & Blame would be released on 26 July 2010. The album, produced by Ethan Johns (who has previously worked with Kings Of Leon, Rufus Wainwright and Laura Marling), would include covers of songs by Bob Dylan, John Lee Hooker and Billy Joe Shaver, and feature such guest musicians as Booker T.

On Jones’ 70th birthday, 7 June 2010, the single “ Burning Hell”, a cover of the John Lee Hooker classic, from the forthcoming Praise & Blame album, was released. In July 2010 it was reported, however, that David Sharpe, vice-president of Island Records (to whom Jones had moved, from EMI, for £1.5m in October 2009), had emailed colleagues demanding that they “pull back this project immediately or get my money back” and asking if the record had been “a sick joke”. Jones later attacked Sharpe and revealed that he was furious about the leaked email. By 2010, Jones had sold over 100 million records.

In July 2010 Jones appeared on the penultimate episode of Friday Night with Jonathan Ross and performed “Burning Hell”. In August 2010, Praise & Blame debuted at number 2 on the UK album chart.

On 11 September 2010 Jones performed for an audience of 50,000 at the Help for Heroes charity concert at Twickenham Stadium performing “Strange Things Are Happening Every Day” and his classic hit “Green Green Grass of Home”. On 22 September, Jones appeared on the Late Show with David Letterman at the Ed Sullivan Theatre in New York.

In May 2011 Jones appeared as guest vocalist on the debut album Let Them Talk by Hugh Laurie. On 15 May 2011 he appeared alongside Laurie in the UK ITV series Perspectives, singing music from the album in New Orleans. On 25 May 2011, he appeared on American Idol after a medley of his hits performed by the American Idol “Top 13”.

Jones released a single on 19 March 2012, written with former White Stripes frontman Jack White, called Evil. The single was first made available through independent record stores in 7” vinyl on 5 March. An exclusive three-coloured vinyl was also sold at only one shop Spillers Records in Cardiff. The shop, from which Jones bought records as a schoolboy in the 1950s and early 1960s, was founded in 1894 and is listed in the Guinness World Records as the oldest record shop in the world.

From March 2012 Jones has appeared on the BBC talent show The Voice UK, where he is a judge alongside Jessie J, will.i.am and Danny O’Donoghue of The Script. He mentored Leanne Mitchell to win the competition.


On 4 June 2012, Jones performed at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Concert in front of Buckingham Palace, singing “Delilah” and “Mama Told Me Not to Come”.

On 18 August 2012, Tom Jones performed a fifty minute set at the V Festivals Weston Park site in Staffordshire.

Personal life

Jones has remained married to Melinda since 1957, despite his many well publicised infidelities. At the height of his fame, Jones has admitted to sleeping with up to 250 groupies a year. His philandering once led her to beat him black and blue. They have one son, Mark Woodward (1957). She snapped after reading about one infidelity in a newspaper. She punched and kicked him, but Jones did not fight back: “I took it”, Jones said. Jones has had affairs with such well-known women as Mary Wilson of The Supremes and former Miss World Marjorie Wallace, Cassandra Peterson, better known as Elvira, Mistress of the Dark, claims that she lost her virginity to Jones.

One affair resulted in the birth of a son. In October 1987, while on tour in America, Jones had a brief relationship with model Katherine Berkery. Three months later Berkery discovered that she was pregnant. After a lengthy fight and DNA testing an American court ruled...
in 1989 that Jones is the boy's father. He flatly denied paternity for 20 years but finally admitted it in 2008. However he made no suggestion that he wanted to meet his son Jonathan Berkery.[75][76]

Jones moved to the United States in 1974 on the advice of his accountant to avoid Britain's newly introduced 83% top rate of tax, buying Dean Martin's former mansion in the East Gate Old Bel Air in Los Angeles. In 2009, after 35 years in America, he revealed that he and Melinda were planning to move back to the United Kingdom. "I've had a great time living in Los Angeles", Jones said, "but after all these years, we think now is the time to move home".[31][77] However, on The Chris Moyles Show on 27 July 2009, he said he still lives in Los Angeles and will remain there for the foreseeable future as he still frequently visits the United Kingdom.

Tom Jones is the father of two sons and grandfather of two grandchildren.[78]

Discography

Main article: Tom Jones discography

Filmography

- The Special London Bridge Special TV special, UK/US (1972)
  - A fantasy story about London Bridge being brought to America
- On Happiness Island, BBC TV special, UK (1974)
- Pleasure Cove, feature film, US (1979)
- Fantasy Island, TV series, US (ABC, 7 April 1984)
- The Ghosts Of Oxford Street, TV special, UK (1991)
  - A TV musical celebrating the 200th anniversary of London's most renowned Oxford Street
- Fresh Prince of Bel-Air; TV series (Guest: As Himself) (1991)
- The Simpsons, TV series, Season 4 Episode 7 (“Marge Gets a Job”) (1992)
- Agnes Browne (a.k.a. The Mammy), feature film (1999)
- The Emperor's New Groove, animated film (As the Theme Song Guy) (2000)
- Duck Dodgers, opening theme and a guest appearance in episode “Talent Show A Go-Go”[79]

In popular culture

Space and Cerys Matthews released “The Ballad of Tom Jones”, a song about a fighting couple who are calmed down by listening to Jones' music on the radio. The song reached No. 4 in the UK in 1998.[80]

Compositions


References

3. entry of birth, sub-district of Pontypridd in the County of Glamorgan
5. See entry of birth, sub-district of Pontypridd in the County of Glamorgan where Jones' birth certificate clearly states 57 Kingsland Terrace as the place of birth
6. Lucy Ellis & Bryony Sutherland, Tom Jones Close Up, p. 3.
7. Sir Tom Jones 'is English' Telegraph. Retrieved 9 April 2012
9. Lucy Ellis & Bryony Sutherland, Tom Jones Close Up, p. 9-10.
11. 11.1 “Tom Jones NNDB”
Tom Jones began his career during the 1960's performing a wide range of music.