

TOM JONES BIOGRAPHY



In his native Wales, he is known as "Jones the Voice". Today, he is one of the enduring personalities in the music entertainment business. His unique vocal power, ability and charismatic persona make him one of the most respected, admired and loved performers in modern popular music.

Tom's weighty voice is a baritone to tenor range. He is a natural, a Welshman, a worker, an artist.

Tom has a fundamental interest in a wide range of musical expression. He is first and foremost a rocker with a true rhythm and blues soul. In his youth, he was a 'Teddy Boy', a rebel with a mind filled with music, sex and an attitude dominated by the birth of rock 'n' roll. But he also had ears and a natural ability that could appreciate and understand the burgeoning styles of popular music. The kind of material audiences in Wales in the 1950s could expect to hear depended on the venue.

"If we played a YMCA on a Friday night, I would be singing the pop songs of the day... But it was the late 50s, early 60s, so it would be Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, they were all very much alive and kicking. So I would do a lot of that stuff, which I really loved... Then when we would play a working men's club on a Saturday night, I'd throw in a couple of strong ballads like 'I Believe' or a Roy Orbison ballad, because rock & roll was very new in South Wales then, and no rock band had ever been in a working men's club," says Tom.

Tom has sustained his popularity for more than four decades. His recordings have spanned the spectrum from pop, rock and country to classic standards, rhythm and blues to boogie woogie and rockabilly through to contemporary dance and urban soul.

Born Thomas Jones Woodward in Pontypridd, South Wales, Great Britain on June 7, 1940, his father worked the coal mines of the Rhondda Valley, while his mother tended the house and the two children.

Tom was singing at an early age. He sang in the church and with the choir at the Treforrest Secondary Modern School. He would ask his mother to 'Pull the drapes and announce me,' as he sang on his 'stage' in the sitting room. A more or less unsuccessful school career ended, as it did for most boys at age 15, with a wife and son to follow at age 16.

Tom brought in money for his new family from an assortment of jobs, including a builder's labourer, a glove cutter, paper miller and door to door vacuum salesman. He sang in the pubs at night, working with local groups. By 1963, he had gained notoriety with his own group, Tommy Scott and the Senators, and was playing regularly in the demanding atmosphere of the working class clubs and dance halls.

In late 1964, after a move to London, Tom landed a record contract with Decca Records. The first single was not a great success, but the next choice, a new song penned by Mills called *It's Not Unusual*, was a huge international hit. Considered 'too hot' by the established BBC radio at the time, it was broken by the pirate offshore station Radio Caroline. By the next year, Tom found himself opening for the Rolling Stones at London's Beat City and gigging with the Spencer Davis Group. Some of the huge single hits to follow were *What's New Pussycat*, *Help Yourself*, *Never Fall In Love Again* and *Without Love*. The next few years of recording successes found Tom performing a remarkably varied repertoire, cultivating his natural abilities by listening and learning from his favourite artists of the time. His early performance inspiration came from Solomon Burke, Little Richard, Jackie Wilson, Brook Benton, Big Bill Broonsy and many other Blues and R&B greats. The soul of Rock 'n' Roll he found in Jerry Lee Lewis. A long friendship with Elvis Presley was built on mutual respect and admiration. Elvis would warm up his voice to

Delilah before his own performances, and when *Green Green Grass of Home* hit for Tom in 1966, Elvis would call radio stations repeatedly to request the song.

"Elvis came to see me at the Flamingo on my first dates, and afterwards he told me: 'You've given me confidence to do a comeback, because I feel we're very similar in what we do, and seeing you perform on a live stage in Vegas successfully has given me the strength to come and do it.' Elvis had played in Vegas in the 50s unsuccessfully, because Vegas was not ready for rock & roll then, but I'm glad to say that I gave him the inspiration to try it again – and we remained friends until he passed away," explains Tom.

A succession of gold and platinum singles and albums were soon to follow: *Delilah*, *Help Yourself*, *Love Me Tonight* and *I'll Never Fall In Love Again* in 1968, *Funny Familiar Forgotten Feelings*, and *Lps Tom Jones Live*, *Tom Jones in Las Vegas* and *This Is Tom Jones* in 1969. For most of the year, several of the Lps were in the Top 10 Charts in both Europe and the United States.

Tom was offered his own television show the summer of 1969. A contract was drawn with ABC that was the largest ever between network and artist. The show's location was split between London and Los Angeles, and included an impressive roster largely suggested by Tom: Aretha Franklin, Burt Bacharach, Elvis and Priscilla Presley and Stevie Wonder were but a few of the guests involved. Tom has always been a champion of the collaboration, interested in the fusion of talents and styles.

In 1987 Tom was asked to perform a musical play with a bullfighting theme called *Matador* on the CBS Epic label. The single *A Boy From Nowhere* reached no.2 on the British charts that summer, prompting insistent requests for It's Not Unusual in the London clubs and a very successful re-release of the song in the charts. A new interest in Tom Jones emerged amongst a whole new generation of fans.

Late in 1988, the British avant-garde techno-pop group *The Art of Noise* requested a collaboration with Tom on a cover of Prince's *Kiss*. The results were sensational and highly contemporary, and the record put Tom back into the Top 10 charts in Europe and the Top 40 in America. The video of *Kiss* was seen in strong rotation on both MTV and VH-1, winning the Breakthrough Video MTV Award that year. Tom Jones was once again seen in a format reaching across all demographics worldwide.

In 1991 Tom recorded an album for Chrysalis Records, UK. The project, entitled *Carrying A Torch* is highlighted by a collaboration with an old friend, Van Morrison. Van wrote, produced and played four songs while his band provided the backup. The songs were recorded live in one afternoon and although not released in America, this collaboration was acclaimed by critics and listeners as a sincere and successful blend of unique talents.

1991 also saw Tom involved in a number of high-quality projects in the UK including two benefits, *The Simple Truth* and the 30th Anniversary of Amnesty International, aired in the States on MTV. Backed at both events by members of Pink Floyd, Tom was in the company of Paul Simon, Whitney Houston, Sinead O'Connor, Gloria Estefan, Lisa Stansfield, Seal and many more. Towards the end of the year Tom was asked to participate in *The Ghosts of Oxford Street*, a new Christmas production conceived and directed by legendary punk impresario Malcolm McLaren. Tom was cast alongside Sinead O'Connor and The Pogues. He sang two songs within the context of the story, including *Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out* produced by Dave Stewart.

In 1992 a six-part television series, *Tom Jones: THE RIGHT TIME* was produced for the ITV network in the UK aired to wide critical and commercial appeal, and following the production of *THE RIGHT TIME*, Tom accepted an invitation to perform as the 'special guest' at Glastonbury Festival in Somerset, England. For over 40 years it has been the largest festival in Europe, with four stages that showcase contemporary, alternative, jazz and world-music artists as well as performers of other medium. Tom stunned an audience of 75,000 at sundown, giving perhaps the watershed performance of this career period.

In November 1992, Tom appeared as himself on the animated hit comedy show *The Simpsons*. The year closed with a truly special experience: participation in a live stage performance of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milkwood*, directed by Sir Anthony Hopkins, in aid of The Prince's Trust and performed in the presence of HRH.

In 1994, the extraordinary album *The Lead and How To Swing It* (Interscope) was produced by outstanding talents including Trevor Horn, Teddy Riley, Flood and Alan Moulder, Youth and Jeff

Lynne. Each producer welcomed the opportunity to interpret Tom's artistry in his own way; the result is a diverse work critically acclaimed as one of the year's best.

Also in 1994, Paddy Maloney of the seminal Irish band The Chieftans approached Tom to contribute the song *The Tennessee Waltz* to their collaborative project *The Long Black Veil*.

In 1995, Tom enjoyed co-hosting the prestigious American Music Awards in Los Angeles; afterwards continuing his regular tour of the US along with visits to Europe, Australia, Japan and the Far East.

Highlights of 1996 included a performance for HRH Queen Elizabeth at the Royal Variety Show in London, and playing a role in the hit movie *Mars Attacks!* (directed by Tim Burton) with the wonderful ensemble cast that included Jack Nicholson, Annette Benning, Danny DeVito and Pierce Brosnan. Closing out the year, Tom went into the studio in New York to record an album of rhythm and blues/soul songs. The material being a mix of new tunes and lesser-known covers; the tracks were recorded 'live' with Bernie Worrell, Waddy Watchtel, Cornell Dupree, Pino Paladino, Steve Jordan and The Memphis Horns. This album was never released.

1997 saw Tom back at work in the US, Europe, Israel and South Africa. He also recorded the Randy Newman classic *You Can Leave Your Hat On* for a key scene in the independent UK film *The Full Monty*, which went on to become a huge critical and box office hit world-wide, including winning the Oscar for best movie soundtrack.

In 1998 Tom enjoyed a sensational and memorable few moments as he performed a medley of *Full Monty* songs at the BRIT Awards with UK hit act Robbie Williams.

"Singing with Robbie, that was great, because I didn't expect the reaction to be so big. We just wanted to sing together, the songs from *The Full Monty*. But he was so good, he bounced off me – he was wearing the leathers instead of me! Afterwards, he told me: really I was doing you to you! But it worked!" says Tom of the performance.

A few weeks later in the summer, he was pleased to contribute a set and the Princes Trust concert in Hyde Park, London. An audience of 210,000 helped raised much needed funds for the vital work of the Trust. Closing out the year, Tom was invited to play 'himself' in a film directed by and starring Angelica Huston called *Agnes Brown*.

Late 1999 saw the release of Tom's latest recording *RELOAD* on the UK indie label Gut Records. This highly successful project (not released in the US) is a collection of duets and collaborations with a diverse set of partners. Artists included are: The Cardigans, The Divine Comedy, Van Morrison, Mousse T, The Pretenders, Robbie Williams, Cerys Matthews (Catatonia), Stereophonics, Nathalie Imbruglia, James Dean Bradfield (Manic Street Preachers), Portishead, Heather Small, Barenaked Ladies and Simply Red. *RELOAD* is Tom's most successful project since those of his early career, garnering a selection of certifications:

5 x Platinum, UK; IFPI 2 x Platinum Award, Continental Europe; 2 x Platinum, Australia; 2 x Platinum, Germany; many other platinum and gold awards in various territories worldwide. At the end of 2000, Music Week certified *RELOAD* as No. 8 in Top Albums and Sexbomb as No. 3 in Top Singles year-end sales charts for the whole of Europe.

At the start of 2000, Tom was invited by President and Mrs. Clinton to perform at the Millennium Celebrations in Washington, a stunning evening of historical reflection and wonderful entertainment that was set at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial. A major tour followed in Europe, Australia, US, Scandinavia and the UK. The UK tour included five Wembley Arena dates and seven shows at the Cardiff International Arena, making it the largest and most successful tour of his career.

In the meantime, Tom recorded *Perfect World* for the soundtrack of Disney's feature animation film *The Emperor's New Groove*, penned by Sting and Dave Hartley.

Throughout 2000, Tom garnered several honours for his work, including: BRIT Award for *Best Male* (UK); Amigo Award for *Best International Male* (Spain), NRJ Award nomination for *Best International Act* (France) and Echo Award nomination for *Best International Male* (Germany). A profile of Tom was presented by Vicky Mabrey on 60 Minutes II early in the year, and by Lord Bragg for *The South Bank Show* at the year's close.

2001 was a highly successful touring year for Tom in such diverse places as the Middle East, Western Europe, the US, United Kingdom and Eastern Europe. A highlight was a performance with Pavarotti at his festival in Modena, Italy, benefiting Afghan children in Pakistan. In London,

Tom was honoured with the prestigious 'Silver Clef' Award for Lifetime Achievement by the UK music industry charity Nordoff Robbins, who work with autistic children using music therapy.

2002 saw the release of *Mr. Jones*, a collaboration with ex-Fugee Wyclef Jean and Jerry Wonder Duplessis, and a year later the four CD *Definitive Collection* catalogued some of the highlights from Jones' four-decade long career. Tom also released his Greatest Hits package in the UK and US, undertook a massive tour of Europe and was presented with a BRIT Award for *Outstanding Contribution to Music*.

2004 saw a collaboration with Big Band leader Jools 'the piano' Holland. *'Tom Jones & Jools Holland'* is a barrage of timeless tracks, with Howlin' Wolf's *200lbs Of Heavenly Joy* kick starting the collection. *Good Morning Blues/One O'Clock Jump, My Babe, Who Will The Next Fool Be* and the classic *Hanging Up My Heart For You* add to the mix and offer the most intimate insight into the influences of two of the UK's most distinguished performers.

Tom's 65th birthday and 40th year in showbusiness was celebrated in 2005 with a 25,000 strong crowd at an emotional homecoming concert at Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd, Wales, where he was surprised with a birthday cake presented by fellow Welsh singer Katherine Jenkins.

The new year of 2006 heralded the exciting announcement that Tom Jones had been included in the Queen's New Year's honours list and was to be given the title Sir Thomas Woodward. The knighthood ceremony was held on March 29th at Buckingham Palace.

Tom enjoys a consistent international touring schedule throughout the year. He lives with his wife of 49 years, Melinda, in their home in Los Angeles. His sister lives close by. His son Mark, and daughter-in-law Donna, have managed his career since 1987. His grandson Alexander was born in 1983 and granddaughter Emma in 1987. Both were born in Los Angeles and then educated in England.

Tom Jones continues to both deliver and surprise. At the age of 66 he has managed to grow and sustain his career like few others in the pop music industry. His voice is recognised worldwide and his live performances are legendary. His delivery is as driven as it is seasoned, his persona bold, witty and charming. He is completely devoted to his craft and talent, and hopes only that the quickly changing faces of popular music will embrace him and allow him to be challenged as an artist. This incomparable voice and unique talent will be touching the minds and hearts of music lovers for many more years to come.

"I really have to hold myself back not to sing, so I can't see me retiring. I can't see it at all. I might slow down in years to come, perhaps not work quite as much, but I hope I'll always be able to go out and do shows as long as I live."

More information: office@tomjones.com