

MERTHYR TYDFIL 1955-75

MEMORIES OF POPULAR MUSIC
ATGOFION O GERDDORIAETH BOBLOGAIDD

CAL FORD

A TRIBUTE FROM IAN FORD, CAL'S SON



Cal Ford

Cal Ford was born Alfie Calvert, in February 1936. The name change came in the mid 1950s, when his popularity started to soar throughout the music world.

The first four years of his life were spent in hospital, suffering from pleurisy, where his father was off fighting in the war and his mother left him to fend for himself. His visits in and out of hospital continued and it was his American grandmother who used to send over clothes parcels and records from the US, to the young Alfie.

His musical life began, when he used to sing and tap dance for the Italian prisoners of war in the docklands of Cardiff, where he was given a small monkey, that came off a fruit ship. Alfie taught the monkey to collect money in a flat cap, while he danced, skills that were bestowed upon him from watching early James Cagney films.

Spending his childhood in and out of hospital, he became a tough character, singing in the smoky joints around the docklands. Later in the mid 1950s, he became the sensation of the Cardiff dance halls, with his wild stage act.

After moving to Merthyr in 1965, it did not take long for Alfie to descend back into his first love of Country Music, often being compared with the great Johnny Cash, whom he met on a few occasions. Rubbing shoulders with the best of them, he became an unsung hero of the Welsh music world, with the likes of Dave Edmunds taking time out to watch Alfie (by now known as Cal Ford) strut his stuff on stage.

As the years passed, the shows increased and his popularity through radio and TV grew. As a result of regular appearances on television, back in the day when everything was live and not pre-recorded, Cal would spend more and more time away from home. However, as time went by, his health again got the better of him, and as he came into the world with chest complaints and breathing problems, he was to leave us in the same way. He sadly died in the presence of his son Ian, who then took it upon himself to continue with his father's legacy. Cal Ford passed away in 1996 at just 60 years old, but had a full and packed life. Cal was posthumously inducted into the British Country Music Hall of Fame in 2006 (Ian 'Cal' Ford. 22/06/17)



A young Cal Ford in the early 1950s



Cal Ford with some young fans

"Spent many a good night in a pub, The Twyncarmel, when Cal lived there. Great music."



Cal Ford met Johnny Cash on a number of occasions

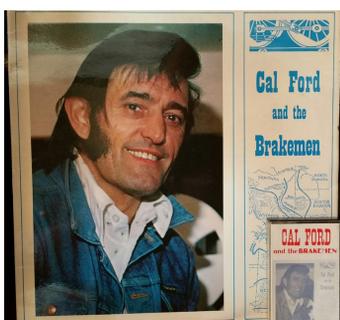


Cal Ford on stage

"[Cal Ford] impressed the hell out of me. They would start the riff, which as you said seemed to go on for ages...but no sign of Cal. Then a deep throated "YEAH!!!" would come from the wings...then a cowboy boot would appear followed by a shaking leg...& then the great man would appear! Frightened the life out of an apprentice rhythm guitarist he did that's for sure! But as soon as I got talking to him it seemed that I'd known him for years. Of course he'd had a lot of experience by then so we all had huge respect for him. It was such a thrill in later years to be able to work with him & I must add he was the fairest guy I've worked with. Whatever Cal got paid, so did I."



Cal Ford with Little Richard in 1963



All photography, courtesy of Ian 'Cal' Ford



To listen to Cal Ford in action, scan the QR Codes above

