

# Ian Cal Ford & The Railmen

Ian Cal Ford & The Railmen are a Country act with a difference. They are possibly unique in the sense that whilst many Country outfits fuse their sets with a mixture of old and new Country, they devote themselves 100 per cent to the earlier style Country music, especially that of Johnny Cash and Hank Williams. The trio is headed by Ian Cal Ford with fellow musicians Steve Tomsett and Dave Greaves providing their own inimitable style of old Country expertise. Ian's love of the early Country music style goes back a long way and owes much to the influence of his father Cal Ford, a Welsh Country artist who toured the UK for five decades with his band, the original Brakemen, during which time he met his idol, Johnny Cash on many occasions. His passion was passed on to his son, Ian, who from an early age was soaking up the sounds of Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Webb Pierce and Faron Young and delighting in it.

Steve Tomsett shares Ian's love of this style of Country music and is regarded as one of the best guitarists in this field. His reputation as a perfectionist has gained him the respect of many and Ian himself calls Steve a guitar genius. Steve has played at some of the largest venues in the UK and supported many musical legends during his career. He has mastered the works of Luther Perkins qualifying him as one of the best exponents of the Cash sound.

Dave Greaves is the newest member of The Railmen having been with the band for six years. As an expert double bass player he is held in high regard by many of his contemporaries. He admits to being a big fan of The Railmen before he got to know them and his contribution to the band is a major asset, both to his fellow musicians and to the band's own fans.

Listening to the lilting dialect of this softly spoken Welshman it is difficult to relate the voice to the dark, gravel tones of Johnny Cash but you'd better believe it because this band are ably equipped to deliver the songs of Cash, Williams and the like, doing full justice to the songs whilst retaining their own unique style.

Ian says: 'We are not a tribute band and don't aim to copy the voices of the original singers but to sing their songs in our own way.'

The main thing that comes across is Ian's total love of, and commitment to, the older style Country music. His direction is clear. He knows what he loves and what he excels at and sticks with it.

He says: 'We play what we want to play and we do it for fun.'

Hearing the band play you are immediately aware of a great respect,



one might even say reverence for the music of the great man himself. Ian continues: 'I had a vision about seven or eight years ago, not a spiritual one I hasten to add, but a strong feeling relating to my dad. He was influenced by Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and Johnny Cash. When he died in 1996 I felt the need to continue along those lines. At first the boys weren't bothered as they didn't want to be known as a Johnny Cash tribute band but as I said, we don't do that. We are ourselves but keeping alive the music of those artists.' Ian still has ties with the Cash family in America, indeed Roy Cash Junior (Johnny's nephew and writer of I Still Miss Someone), emails him regularly and Ian sends him versions of songs he's done over the years.'

Ian clearly loves what the band do and told me how much they enjoy playing the festivals throughout the year. 'We have played most of the festivals in the UK. We love the atmosphere. Scotland is probably one of the best with regard to atmosphere but we enjoy them all. We have also backed Tommy Cash and we have been over to Mississippi.'

If you've attended any festivals over the years you will most likely have come across Ian Cal Ford & The Railmen. If you are a Johnny Cash fan and a festival goer you will most definitely have seen and enjoyed their set. If you are a recent convert following the success of the film, *Walk The Line*, make a point of looking out for them at one of their many gigs or festivals this year. You won't be disappointed.