

# Abu Bakr Salem

“Music and poetry are one instrument.”

Abu Bakr Salem Belfkih was an exceptional Saudi-Yemeni singer, composer and poet born in the historic town of Tarim in Yemen's Hadramout province in 1939.

As a child, Belfkih was raised by his mother, grandfather and uncles after his father had passed away. He grew up in a family immersed in poetry, literature and spirituality, which had a significant influence on his work. His powerful voice was first witnessed in his teenage years, allowing Belfkih to call the prayer in mosques and to sing *nasheeds* (spiritual odes) at Tarim's ceremonies.

After moving to Aden in the 1950s, Belfkih began composing and singing professionally. His first single, *Ya Ward Mahla Jamalak Bayn Al Worood* (O 'Rose How Beautiful you are among the Roses) was recorded and debuted there in 1956. Few years later, he moved to Beirut, a hub for musicians in the region at the time, offering Belfkih more opportunities to grow and reach a bigger audience. He released a number of popular songs in Beirut such as *24 Sa'aa* (24 Hours). With the Lebanese Civil War in the 70s, Belfkih fled Beirut and settled in Riyadh where he made a life-long contribution to the development of Khaleeji (Gulf) music.

Belfkih was known for his unique voice and performance on stage. He developed a wide range of works throughout his career, from romantic musical ballads, folk music to contemporary patriotic songs. He received many medals and honors from various Arab countries for his influential work.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Belfkih established a close relationship with Yemeni poet Hussain Al'Mahdhaar, together they crafted some of Belfkih's greatest songs.

## FUN FACT

Abu Bakr Salem Belfkih was nicknamed by many music critics as “the father of Khaleeji (Gulf) music” and the “golden voice” of the Arab world.

## MUSICAL TERM

**Folk music:** The traditional music of a particular region or group of people. It is typically transmitted orally from generation to generation.

