

Sam Baker – Bio

Sam Baker was born circa 1954 and was raised in Itasca, Texas in the north of the state. Itasca is located to the south-west of Dallas. Baker's early musical influences - his mother played the organ in the local Presbyterian church, while his father regularly listened to recordings by blues artists such as Lightnin' Hopkins, Brownie McGee and Sonny Terry. During his growing years Sam listened to music as diverse as the soundtrack to **"My Fair Lady,"** Handel's Messiah and albums by Johnny Cash. Baker began playing guitar during his teen years, but never considered music as a possible career. Having graduated from North Texas State, Sam went on to work as a bank examiner in Midland, Odessa and then El Paso. Giving up his business suit and to a nine-to-five routine, Baker qualified as a river raft guide based out of Terlingua and worked as a carpenter during the off-season. These days, as a full time musician, Baker makes his home in Austin, Texas.

A pivotal event in Baker's life occurred during 1986. Taking time out to backpack through South America with a friend, the pair decided to visit Machu Picchu in Peru. Having boarded a train that would take them there, before the train left the station, a bomb planted by Shining Path guerrillas exploded near to where Baker was sat, killing eight passengers including two Americans and wounding forty others. Sam's femoral artery and vein were badly damaged. He should have died, but didn't. Eight hours of emergency surgery in Cuzco, Peru, was followed by seventeen reconstructive operations in the U.S.A, most at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston. At the outset Sam couldn't walk, and his left hand was badly damaged. Of those difficult days, during 2006, Baker told the Houston Chronicle *"I couldn't live a physical life."* Following years of recuperation, having formerly been a right-handed guitarist, Sam learned to play the instrument with his left-hand. That said, in terms of his physical capabilities, he remains deaf in one ear and partially deaf in the other. Baker turned to writing short stories as therapy, and began again to write songs, while in order to put 'bread on his table,' for a time, re-entered the banking profession.

In 1998, Sam's sister Chris Baker-Davies released an album titled **"Southern Wind"** which had been recorded at Reel Grass Studio in Farmersville, Texas. The recording included some of Baker's early songs. After hearing the recording, Sam's focus turned to penning 'stripped to the bone' lyrics that painted a picture and in the process told a story. The song "Steel" on Baker's self-released debut recording **"Mercy"** [2004], recalled those bloody events in Peru. During 2003 Baker opened a show for Walt Wilkins, at a bed and breakfast establishment in Llano, Texas. Musician/album producer Watkins, Texan born but now Nashville based, was much impressed by Baker's material. Watkins arranged for Sam Baker to visit Nashville, and with co-producer Tim Lorsch, the pair recorded his voice, guitar and harmonica on a dozen originals, to which they added pedal steel guitar courtesy of Whiskeytown's Mike Daly, Lorsch's violin, octave violin and mandolin, Watkins' voice and guitar, Ron De La Vega's bass and cello, plus Mickey Grimm's drums and percussion. In addition there were backing vocals from Kevin Welch, Chris Baker-Davies, Joy Lynn White, Jessi Colter and more. Audrey Auld Mezera's Australian based label, Reckless Records, subsequently picked up the album and released it in that market.

When Austin based musician/producer Gurf Morlix heard Baker's **"Mercy"** he immediately appointed himself Baker's unpaid mentor and publicist. At every opportunity Morlix would drop Baker's name to fans, fellow musicians, DJ's, in fact anyone who would listen. When Morlix produced Darryl Lee Rush's album, **"Llano Ave.,"** [2005] he convinced the Dallas based musician to open his album with Baker's "Truale." In March 2006 and 2007 Sam performed showcases at South by Southwest in Austin, and in July 2006 he appeared at the Woody Guthrie Festival in Oklahoma.

With **"Mercy"** scoring radio play in Europe and Australasia as well as in North America, and with his Stateside touring schedule becoming busier by the year, Baker's self-released sophomore solo outing, **"Pretty World,"** was released in Europe in mid-July 2007 and a few weeks later in the States. Recorded once again at Dog Den Studio in Nashville and produced by Messrs Watkins and Lorsch, it featured the same crew of support players. In addition, there were contributions from accordionists Joel Guzman and Fats Kaplan, the pedal steel of Lloyd Maines and the vocals and guitar of Gurf Morlix. Baker still considers himself to be a writer of words and melodies rather than a musician. In performance, his hearing deficiency can prove problematic. His diction when delivering a lyric isn't consistently precise, that said, relative to the consistently jaw dropping quality of his storylines the foregoing is a small price to pay.

Discography : **“Mercy”** [2004] ; **“Pretty World”** [2007] :

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