

# Sam Apple Pie

**Sam Apple Pie** were a British blues-rock band, of the late 1960s and 1970s, noted for having played at the first Glastonbury Festival in 1970, and for playing a role in the early careers of several musicians including Gary Fletcher, Dave Charles and Malcolm Morley.

## Biography

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Formed in Walthamstow, London, where they ran their own club 'The Bottleneck Blues Club', Sam Apple Pie soon attracted a large live following, with a mix of goodtime blues and boogie, interspersed with humour. In October 1969 they played the Amougies Festival, in Belgium, where Frank Zappa jammed with them.

They wrote all but one of the songs on their first album *Sam Apple Pie* (1969) which featured lead singer Sam "Tomcat" Sampson with Mike "Tinkerbelle" Smith and Andy 'Snakehips' Johnson on guitars, bassist Bob "Dog" Rennie, and Dave Charles on drums.

Following Charles departure to join Morley in forming Help Yourself in 1970 they played the first Glastonbury Festival. After several more line up changes, the band recorded their second album *East 17* in 1973, with Sam Sampson and Bob Rennie from the first album supported by Andy Johnson and Denny "Pancho" Barnes on guitars, and Lee Baxter Hayes on drums.

They disbanded in 1974, but reformed the next year. During the hiatus, from mid 1974 to February 1975, the band members performed with Vincent Crane as Vincent Crane's Atomic Rooster. Further line up changes included bassist Gary Fletcher, who subsequently joined The Blues Band, keyboard player, Steven Golick and drummer Martin Bell. The band continued into the late 1970s, changing its name to The Vipers, (not to be confused with the new wave band of the same name) before disbanding. Michael Smith died at St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco, CA on Monday the 27th of June 2005 at the age of 54 after battling cancer. Former member, Andy Johnson, died from throat cancer on Friday 5 March 2010 in Hastingwood, Essex, at the age of 62.

Sam Apple Pie hailed from Walthamstow (East London) in the late 60's and played all the day's underground clubs and 'happenings', and even appeared at the very first Glastonbury Festival, in 1970.

Fronted by vocalist/harpist Sam Sampson, the group featured an astonishing three guitarists, drummer Dave Charles and keyboardist Malcolm Morley.

Their recorded output was limited to their self-titled debut album (1969) and the appropriately titled *East 17* (1973). The band called it a day in 1976.

Dave Charles went on to play with Kid Creole & The Coconuts and with Dave Edmunds.

He also gained a reputation as a first-class recording engineer, working with Nick Lowe, The Stray Cats, Dr Feelgood, Jeff Beck, The La's and The Charlatans.

Guitarist Andy "Snakehip" Johnson died in Hastingwood, Essex, of throat cancer on 5 March 2010. He was 62.

**Sam 'Tomcat' Sampson**

Vocals, harmonica

**Mick 'Tinkerbelle' Smith**

Guitar

**Steve 'Tomcat' Jolly**

Guitar

**Andy 'Snakehip' Johnson**

Guitar

**Denny 'Pancho' Barnes**

Guitar

**Bob 'Dog' Rennie**

Bass

**Malcolm Morley**

Keyboards

**Dave Charles**

Drums

**Lee Baxter Hayes**

Drums

**Gary Fletcher**

Bass

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This irreverent band was formed in Walthamstow, London, England, where they ran their own blues club, the Bottleneck. A popular live attraction, Sam Apple Pie laced their 12-bar boogie with humour, although this quirkiness was difficult to capture on record. Sam 'Tomcat' Sampson (vocals, harmonica), Mike 'Tinkerbelle' Smith (guitar), Bob 'Dog' Rennie (bass), Steve Jolly (guitar), Malcolm Morley (keyboards) and Dave Charles (drums) completed the unit's debut album, which included the cryptic 'Uncle Sam's Blues'. Morley and Charles soon departed to form Help Yourself and by 1972, Sampson was fronting a new line-up of Andy Johnson (guitar), Denny 'Pancho' Barnes (guitar), Mark DeMajo (bass) and Lee Baxter Hayes (drums). However, by the time the band's second album was issued, Barnes was absent altogether and Hayes had been replaced by Martin Bell. Despite such instability, Sam Apple Pie were still active in the late 70s. The line-up featured Sampson, Johnson, Gary Fletcher (bass) and Jimmy Knox (drums). Fletcher subsequently joined the Blues Band.