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"A sinister cabal of superior writers."

DVD Review: *Strange Fruit - The Beatles' Apple Records*

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Author: [Greg Barbrick](#) — Published: Apr 21, 2012 at 2:13 am [0 comments](#)

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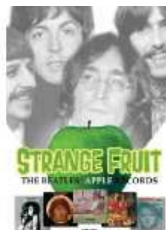
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The saga of Apple Records is a long and very strange one. Although most fans know the basics of the story, the new documentary *Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records* lays it out in the most thorough manner so far. At 162 minutes, the film is exhaustive, and even a bit repetitive at times. What I found most fascinating though is the way the movie illuminates the individual tastes of John, Paul, George, and Ringo during the final two years of The Beatles' existence.



Every Apple signing was championed by at least one member of the group, and they were often deeply involved in the artist's career. Take Mary Hopkin for example. Her "Those Were The Days" was the first big non-Beatle hit on Apple in 1968. Mary was Paul's pet project, and his penchant for old-fashioned show-biz was channeled through her. She was merely 18 years of age, star-struck, and went along with whatever he suggested. Mary eventually began to rue the situation though, and ultimately retired from the spotlight.

The case of Badfinger is one of the saddest and most unusual in music history. They started out as The Iveys, a Liverpool group who were brought to Apple by Mal Evans, who was one of The Beatles' most trusted associates from the very beginning. An Iveys album was released with very little fanfare in 1969. Then Paul McCartney stepped in, and offered them the opportunity to record the soundtrack to the film *Magic Christian Music*, and more importantly his own "Come And Get It." The song was a hit, and Badfinger were on their way. It was George Harrison who really worked with them though, in producing the classic *Straight Up* in 1971. Their career with Apple ended with the *Ass* album, when they left to record for Warner Bros. Both Pete Ham and Tom Evans later committed suicide, but the music they left behind remains a marvel.

George Harrison's real pet project turned out to be another old friend from Liverpool, Jackie Lomax. He is on hand to recount the experience in detail, and it is one of the better segments of the film. George wrote a song for him titled "Sour Milk Sea" that is simply brilliant, although it went nowhere. He was deeply involved in the production of Lomax's sole Apple album, *Is This What You Want?* (1969).

The most curious case of all is that of whom Ringo Starr chose to bring into the Apple stable. Although today he is known as Sir John Tavener and is one of the leading lights in British classical music, in 1968 he was unknown. Of the four Beatles, Ringo seems the least likely to have brought him in, yet that is exactly what happened. Tavener wound up recording two albums for Apple, which is more than many of the label's artists were allowed.

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Greg Barbrick is an old time "music biz" groupie/w riter. He thinks that nothing good has been recorded since 1978.

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