

Latest wave of Beatles releases is fab

By Jesse De Leon/Special to the Caller-Times

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CORPUS CHRISTI — It seems that no matter how large their individual collections may be, Beatles fans are always looking to acquire more items of interest. When it comes to Fab Four-related releases, it is either feast or famine. Months will go by without anything at all, and then, new CDs and DVDs arrive at the marketplace one right after the other. Luckily, for fans of John, Paul, George and Ringo, the latest batch of new titles will be great additions to collections of any size.

"Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records" (Chrome Dreams) This DVD attempts to document the rise and fall of Apple, the record company that the Beatles founded in 1968. It was an enthusiastic and somewhat naive business venture that the band, primarily led by Paul McCartney, organized in the wake of manager Brian Epstein's death. The original idea of the enterprise was to be a free-spirited venture guided by hippie idealism. But peace and love and the bottom line seldom get along, and that is what led to the company's demise. Unfortunately, the film isn't edited well, and that only complicates an already complex story. The interviews with Beatle protégés signed to the label like Jackie Lomax and Mary Hopkin are interesting, but the pace is slow and convoluted. Apple's story deserves to be told in a much more riveting fashion.

"RAM Paul and Linda McCartney" (Hear Music) The latest in Paul's reissue campaign, his second solo album was actually credited to him and wife Linda, who also shares cowriting credits on several of the tracks. When it originally debuted in May 1971, it was ravaged by critics, and the majority of fans were somewhat puzzled by the album's ramshackle sound. It has actually aged well, and now it stands as many McCartney aficionados' favorite. Highlights include the slightly sinister "Too Many People," the Beach Boys-influenced "Dear Boy" as well as the album's big single, "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey." The deluxe edition of RAM features the album in both stereo and mono, studio outtakes, and a DVD with a documentary and rare footage. It is all rounded out by extensive liner notes penned by McCartney himself. The album itself is a mix of pop, rock and balladry that would serve as the blueprint for McCartney's subsequent solo work.

"George Harrison: Living in the Material World" (Hip-O) Originally aired on HBO in late 2011, this loving tribute to the quiet Beatle finally makes its stateside debut on DVD and Blu-ray. Highlighted by vintage performances that span his entire career, the movie is lovingly crafted by master director Martin Scorsese. Harrison died in 2001 of lung cancer, but his spirit is very much alive over the course of this fascinating and engaging film. Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, and Harrison's widow, Olivia, share are among the many who their stories and feelings throughout. The most moving moment belongs to Ringo Starr, whose emotional display of affection for his friend and former

bandmate is one of *Living in the Material World's* most memorably honest moments.

"Early Takes Volume 1 George Harrison" (Hip-O) Even though there are no immediate plans to release a full-length soundtrack to "*Living in the Material World*," this ten-track disc nonetheless serves as an interesting audio companion piece. While hard-core collectors probably already have these tracks in some form, this collection offers a look at how meticulous George was when it came to crafting his music. Featuring demo versions of "My Sweet Lord," "Awaiting on You All" and "I'd Have You Any Time," these songs were eventually polished up by producer Phil Spector and featured on Harrison's 1970 solo masterwork, "*All Things Must Pass*." While the finished products were layered with Spector's signature "Wall of Sound" production, these unadorned versions, especially "Behind That Locked Door," offer a peek at Harrison's methodical creative process. These bare, intimate versions strikingly convey his sensitive, evocative flair for eliciting emotion while engaging the spirit.

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