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# Review: 'Strange Fruit' doc a serious, unvarnished look at Apple Records history



**Steve Marinucci**

Beatles Examiner



[http://www.examiner.com/sites/default/files/styles/large\\_lightbox/hash/1333053979\\_strangefruitskybox.jpg](http://www.examiner.com/sites/default/files/styles/large_lightbox/hash/1333053979_strangefruitskybox.jpg)

The cover of "Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records."

**Credits:** Seeofsound



<http://www.examiner.com/beatles-in-national/strange-fruit-the-beatles-apple-records-picture>

**Slideshow: "Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records"** (<http://www.examiner.com/be>

Despite reports to the contrary, "Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records," an unauthorized documentary on the history of the record label founded by the Beatles, is still scheduled to be released. Though Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk reportedly aren't taking orders for it at the moment, it can still be ordered directly from the distributor [at this link](http://www.seeofsound.com/p.php?s=SIDVD570) (<http://www.seeofsound.com/p.php?s=SIDVD570>).

The film itself, nearly three hours long, is a lengthy and **very detailed discussion of the record label's history** (<http://www.examiner.com/beatles-in-national/new-documentary-delves-into-beatles-apple-records-era>) and its purpose to not only release the Beatles' music but also be a uniquely run label that was more artist friendly. It combines vintage footage with new interviews and commentary from both people who were involved with the Apple Records story and authors discussing its story.

"Strange Fruit" is not a **"Beatles Biggest Secrets"** ([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000PC6YRQ/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thatwhatiwant-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000PC6YRQ](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000PC6YRQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thatwhatiwant-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000PC6YRQ)) tabloid film filled with sex, drugs and rock n' roll. It comes from the same company that produced the series of "Composing the Beatles" and "Composing Outside the Beatles" DVDs, which were serious studies of the Beatles' music that were scholarly in tone.

[atles-in-national/strange-fruit-the-beatles-apple-records-picture\)](http://www.examiner.com/beatles-in-national/strange-fruit-the-beatles-apple-records-picture)

**Rating for Strange Fruit: The Beatles Apple Records:**

But "Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records" is a very watchable analytical history of the label with liberal doses of vintage video scattered throughout. Though long, it's not overbearing and stays well above the tabloid trash level.

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There's nothing new from the Beatles themselves because they didn't participate, though a brief clip of the often-seen Lennon-McCartney Apple press conference discussing the formation of Apple is included.

But there are comments from those directly involved in the story. Tony Bramwell, who was label CEO in its later years, provides extensive comments. Also seen throughout the film is Jackie Lomax. The discussion of his album, "Is This What You Want?", is a centerpiece for the difficulties the label faced both internally in the organization and in the marketplace.

Others directly involved with Apple Records who contribute to the film are Joey Molland of Badfinger, Ron Griffiths of the Iveys, Gary van Sycoc of Elephant's Memory and singers David Peel and Brute Force. Force's interview isn't included in the main documentary, but is one of the special features.

Also on board are musician and author Chris Ingham, Mark Paytress of Mojo magazine and Stefan Granados, who wrote the book **"Those Were the Days: An Unofficial History of the Beatles Apple Organization 1967-2001."** ([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/190144712X/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thatshatiwant-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=190144712X](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/190144712X/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thatshatiwant-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=190144712X)) He also penned liner notes for some legitimately released CDs of rare Apple Records tracks, including **"94 Baker Street: Pop Psych Sounds of Apple."** ([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0000BZYRA/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thatshatiwant-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0000BZYRA](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0000BZYRA/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thatshatiwant-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0000BZYRA))

There is a lot of music included in video excerpts, some rare. One of the first videos seen in the film is Jackie Lomax with his early group the Undertakers (in full costume) performing "Mashed Potato." But there is a wealth of video clips of music

released by Apple Records, many from TV clips of the Iveys (and later Badfinger), Mary Hopkin, Lomax and others.

Author and musician Chris Ingham sums up the label's history saying Apple was a great idea, but given the Beatles' history which led to their breakup, it wasn't going to work.

"The thing that was exciting about it in the first place was that it was a record company run by artists helping other artists," he says. "It's also the thing that meant it was never going to work because artists essentially have to take care of themselves as well. And if you've got artists who are falling apart at the seams as this great group who no longer want to be together, how on earth are they going to be able to give the attention to other artists who need nurturing, who need producing, who need songs written for them, who need promoting in an effective way. It was never going to work."

"Strange Fruit" is a very comprehensive look back at the history of the label that's also very honest and opinionated. How detailed? The documentary includes a brief discussion of the importance of Yoko Ono's Apple releases. But all of the label's music, including that of Badfinger, Mary Hopkin, Elephant's Memory, David Peel, Brute Force, Lon and Derek van Eaton, is discussed.

For anyone interested in the history of Apple Records, "Strange Fruit" does a great job retracing its past and getting a look behind the scenes at the difficulties it faced at various points.

While some of the opinions of the writers are subjective, the film stays pretty much in focus throughout in discussing its ups and downs. It will be a welcome addition to the essential body of knowledge about the group.

<http://abbeyrd.best.vwh.net> - is widely regarded as the most accurate Beatle news source on the internet. A former journalist for over 30 years at the San Jose Mercury News, he has interviewed celebrities including Yoko Ono, Bruce Johnston and...