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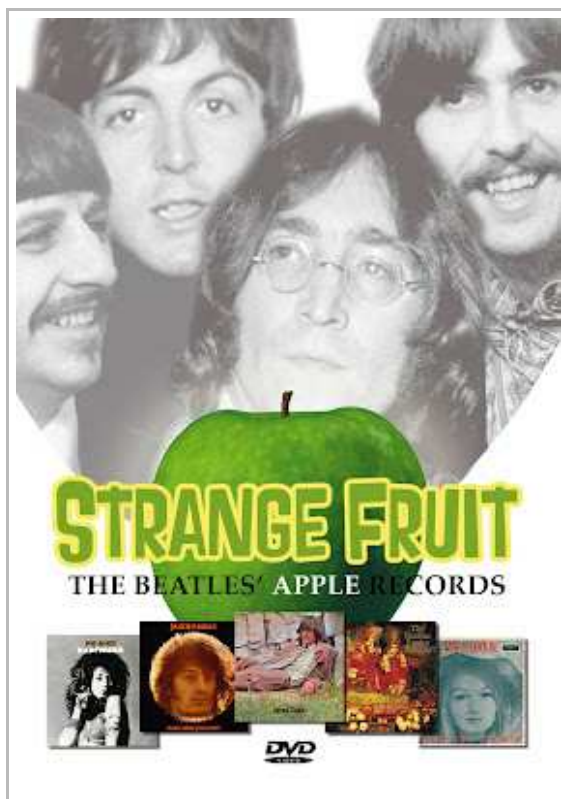
FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

TUESDAY, MAY 29, 2012

DVD Review: Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records

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Images from the Internet



Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records

Executive Producer: Rob Johnstone

Narrator: Thomas Arnold

Sexy Intellectual, 2011

162 minutes, USD \$19.95

Chromedreams.co.uk

MVDvisual.com

Money and musicians produce a strange fruit, indeed. In the U.S., Frank Zappa took his royalties and created two labels that brought the fringe element to the forefront by putting them on record, such as Larry "Wild Man" Fischer and Captain Beefheart. While there was more of a straightforward music direction for Apple than focusing significantly on "outsiders," we learn of Apple Corps' full roster of musicians of various stripes.

It was 1968, a time of peace, love, and, well, lots and lots of pharmaceuticals that gave all that the extra oomph. Out of the true

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About Me

Robert Barry Francos
Currently living in Saskatoon
(email at RBF55@msn.com for
address). From 1977-88, I used
to publish a print version of a
music magazine in New York
called Ffanzeen, which dealt with
the wide-ranging independent
music scene. I also photographed
many bands from the period (and
since). Now I write this blog, and
have a column at jerseybeat (dot)
com (slash) quietcorner (dot)
html. And the beat goes on.

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nature of “All You Need Is...” etc., the collective Fab Four decided to open their own recording studio and label, and free themselves up from the chains of their major label’s big biz outlook. Without the commitment of a record deal (e.g., *X* many releases in *X* amount of time), amid spiritual journeys to India and, well, mind trips, they opened their arms and wallets to those who possibly may never be heard.

It is important to remember that their manager, Brian Epstein, who was incredibly and truly devoted to the boys (pun not intended) was also infamous as a terrible business leader when it came to finances, licensing, and other matters of royalties. So with no real role model and being zoned out as much as they were, it is hardly surprising that the Apple venture would be a financial fiasco.

Apple Corp. certainly started off strong, with the likes of Mary “Those Were the Days” Hopkins and “Sweet James” Taylor. Even though Taylor would quickly jump ship after his first Apple LP, it was just enough of an impetus to get the ball rolling, with many charting songs, a starring role in the bleak film *Two-Lane Blacktop*, Carly Simon, and a heroin addiction still ahead for him. Hopkins would stay longer, but would feel typecast and leave to follow her own folk roots.

However, Apple’s biggest success, other than by the Beatles as a group and as individual members, would certainly have been Badfinger. Their brief shot in the sun (I am including their many reunions received by a lukewarm fanbase) would result in monster hits such as “Come and Get It,” “No Matter What” and my fave cut of theirs, “Day After Day.” But even they would scurry to a major label thanks to the lack of tour support by the Beatles and Apple management (though, as is pointed out here, they actually lost money on the deal).

But ya know what, anyone who is the least bit knowledgeable about these bands, well, this won’t come as any great surprise, though in the case of Badfinger, it is good to hear it first-hand from Joey Molland and Rod Griffens, Badfinger’s guitarist and bassist / lyricist, respectively who are interviewed on this DVD.

However, the most interesting moments for me on this Chrome Dreams British special, is the more obscure musicians that were signed, such as Jackie Lomax, Brute Force, and the very annoying David Peel, all of whom are represented on this, including Elephant’s Memory bassist Gary van Scyoc (I saw them play a free show in ’74 in Central Park with the more enjoyable Brownsville Station opening).

As with most other Chrome Dreams recent DVD releases, there is a mixed representation of musicians, music journalists (for me, the lesser interesting as I want to hear “what we did,” not “what I was told”), and Apple Managing Director Tony Bramwell, to discuss the period (essentially 1967 through 1973). It’s rare they have women to talk about the time under discussion, however; I would have liked to have seen Mary Hopkins included, for example.

On a very positive note, at well over two hours, this is pretty comprehensive, including narrative info, photos, music, and videos to bring the big picture, bit by bit, to the viewer. Lots of interesting facts abound, including how Badfinger backed Harrison at the Madison Square Garden Concert for Bangladesh despite his partially abandoning the production of their LP to Todd Rundgren, how

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Elephant's Memory dis John Lennon's work on their record (giving them a more pop feel rather than classic rock), and especially how the Beatles' manager and Apple executive Allen Klein essentially alienated and drove away everyone until Apple was irreparably broken, even after he was brought on board to save the Corp in the first place.

While the DVD focuses mostly on the artists, where it is weak is discussing how people who worked for Apple were essentially doing nothing but receiving pay for sitting around and getting stoned, and from what I've heard over the years, stealing the place blind (e.g., office equipment). This was part of the reason Klein needed to come in to rescue Apple, including adding time clocks and firing layabouts. His work habits wasn't the problem, it was how ruthlessly he did it (even if it needed doing).

Along with the usual two extras for Chrome Dreams, namely bios of the contributors (interviewees) and a link to access to more info online (never have done this), there is also a 9-minute gem called "The Fuh King Speaks!: In Conversation with Brute Force." Here, BF (aka New Yorker Stephen Friedland) discusses how he got in touch with George Harrison (through Tommy Dawes of the Cyrkle), and the history of his great song, "The King of Fuh" (much of which is played in long sound clips). I saw Friedland play once at the Housing Works Book Store on Crosby Street in New York City. It was a great experience.

Chrome Dreams is an amazing brand, who specializes in rock history (mostly British, but apparently the '60s-'70s West Coast U.S. scene is on their radar) in as thorough a way as I've ever seen, and as time goes on, they get more impressive. As for this one, nearly every one of my music-related friends wants to see this, which is a nod in itself to the efforts put into it. I'd like to see them do some work on both American and British punk, while some of the core creators are still alive. But that's just my wish list...

Posted by [Robert Barry Francos](#) at [8:39 PM](#) 

Labels: [1960s](#), [Apple Corp](#), [Apple Records](#), [Badfinger](#), [Beatles](#), [Chrome Dreams](#), [FFanzeen](#), [George Harrison](#), [James Taylor](#), [John Lennon](#), [LSD](#), [Mary Hopkins](#), [MVD Visual](#), [Paul McCartney](#), [Robert Barry Francos](#), [Strange Fruit](#)

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