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Come & Get It – The Best Of Apple Records (1968 – 1972 Hits Set/Capitol/EMI CD) + Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records (Chrome Dreams/MVD DVD)

Picture: X/C+ Sound: C+/B Extras: C-/C Music/Documentary: B/B+

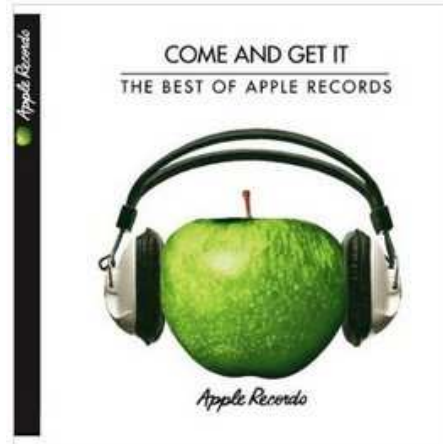
Back in the 1960s, the idea of a music act of any kind having their own record label was considered shocking and surprising. Warner wanted Frank Sinatra so bad that they let him set up Reprise Records and long after his reign of hits, the label lives and included many of his best friends joining him with the result being some of the biggest hits of their careers. Flush with tons of money and with the sudden loss of manager Brian Epstein, The Beatles set up Apple Corp as an all-media entity, but it became especially known for its music.... while it lasted.

These two recent releases show the label and company was not just fore their group and solo works, but had the original intent of being its own powerful entity.

A little while ago, Capitol/EMI issued a single CD collection called **Come & Get It – The Best Of Apple Records** running 1968 – 1972 and featuring the major highlights of non-Beatles work and is a hits set for the most part. It is joined by the oddly titled **Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records** DVD that runs over 2.5 hours and covers much of the rise and fall of the label in its original form.

First the hits form the CD:

- 1) *Those Were The Days* by Mary Hopkin was a huge #1 worldwide hit in 1968 produced by Paul McCartney and (shades of Sgt. Pepper's when you think about it) offered a 1920s-style Russian folk arrangement. It sold millions of singles and seemed a huge start for the label.
- 2) *Carolina In My Mind* is one of the first hits by none other than James Taylor from his self-titled debut album in 1968 with McCartney on bass and George Harrison on backing vocals. It showed their taste in talent was no fluke and they knew talent when they heard it, but it was not a big hit, yet if they could have kept him would have had one of the premiere artists in what became the singer/songwriter movement; the first post-Beatles phenomenon.
- 3) *Maybe Tomorrow* was by The Iveys who later changed their name to Badfinger, brought to Apple by one-time Beatles roadie Mal Evans and was only a small U.S. hit (which was better than the U.K.) and did well in other countries (like Holland) but they were badly compared to The Beatles and would soon make changes.
- 4) *Theme From Thingummybob* was also a McCartney song by The Black Dyke Mills Band for the 1968 British TV comedy drama series. A brass band, the song is known more in the U.K. than most countries.
- 5) *King Of Fuh* by Brute Force is a funny F-bomb song that was hardly distributed, but written by the author of The Tokens' *The Lion*



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 > Danny Phantom – Season 2: Part 1 (Shout! Factory DVD)

- Sleeps Tonight* and released in 1969. Amusing.
- 6) *Sour Milk Sea* is by white soul singer Jackie Lomax who the label was never able to break in and despite Harrison, McCartney, Ringo Starr and Eric Clapton on the track, it was not a hit.
 - 7) *Goodbye* was another hot for Mary Hopkin by McCartney who played on it and though not as big, kept her a big star at the time.
 - 8) *That's The Way God Planned It* was recorded by "other fifth Beatles" Billy Preston and also included Harrison, Keith Richards, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton performing on the track. However, I was never a big fan of it, but it was a hit.
 - 9) *New Day* was another attempt to give the talented Jackie Lomax a hit that also did not work out.
 - 10) *Golden Slumbers/Carry That Weight* by Trash is one of several remakes here by a Scottish group that did a decent job of covering it.
 - 11) *Give Peace A Chance* has the Hot Chocolate Band doing a reggae version of the Lennon classic when that genre was new. They are the same British band who later had much bigger hits in the Disco era when they simply called themselves Hot Chocolate including the classic *I Believe In Miracles*.
 - 12) *Come And Get It* was a big hit for Badfinger that was produced and written by McCartney for soundtrack of **The Magic Christian** feature film with Peter Sellers and Ringo Starr, but it came from one of the group's members publicly complaining they were not getting enough attention, so McCartney decided to do a song with irony to get the last laugh and it was a massive hit much bigger than the film it was cut for.
 - 13) *Ain't That Cute* was co-written by its singer, Doris Troy with Harrison and issued in 1969. It is not bad, but did not do well.
 - 14) *My Sweet Lord* has Billy Preston covering Harrison's biggest hit, as well as most controversial song (he was sued over its originality) in a version produced by Harrison. Not bad, but I like the original better.
 - 15) *Try Some Buy Some* has Harrison teaming up with singer and Rock legend Ronnie Spector on a song that Harrison later remade himself. Interesting, but not a big hit.
 - 16) *Govinda* is by the Radha Krishna Temple of whom the label (especially at the behest of Harrison) issued several albums from who otherwise would likely have remained in obscurity. This gives you an idea of how those releases were, Harrison plays on it and it was even a minor hit.
 - 17) *We're On Our Way* sung by Chris Hodge happened because of Starr discovering him and the result was a hit, though not a big career.
 - 18) *Saturday Nite Special* by The Sundown Playboys landed up on the label because one of the members of this Louisiana band sent a demo of it to the label's offices.
 - 19) *God Save Us* by Bill Elliot & The Elastic Oz Band was a special single by Lennon and Yoko Ono to raise money for the defense in the famous Oz Obscenity Trial of 1971. A lesser heard political song from the duo, it makes sense to include it here.
 - 20) *Sweet Music* is by Lon & Derrek van Eaton, one of the final acts to sign to the label before it folded and became a legacy label. Ringo played on it and Harrison produced it.
 - 21) *Day After Day* by Badfinger was a massive worldwide hit, only the band's third single for Apple and was produced by Harrison who also sang on the record. Sadly, it was their last hit before leaving the declining label for Warner Bros. in a deal that eventually caused the co-writers to self-destruct. It later became the basis for Joe Jackson's great hit *Breaking Us In Two*.

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A booklet on the songs and artist is the only extra.

Strange Fruit is one of the British company Chrome Dream's longer documentary works and they have done plenty on The Beatles (including the great series on Lennon & McCartney as writers, friends and rivals (reviewed elsewhere on this site), but the title will remind music scholars of the political anti-lynching hit by Billie Holiday. However, that has nothing to do with the story, which covers the songs and artists above and much more.

The only major problem is that for whatever reason, the program never tells us that all four Beatles had their work on Apple after the group broke up. You'd think Paul and Ringo signed at other majors. Otherwise, this has great interviews, tons of licensed original music and the usual well-researched history with more detail on the rise and fall of the label than this review could cover. As you may know, McCartney called the company *Western Capitalism*, but that was before they lost so much money that

Come & Get It – The Best Of Apple Records (1968 – 1972 Hits Set/Capitol/EMI CD) + Strange Fruit: T...
western capitalism, but that was before they lost so much money that Lennon noted this in an interview and Rolling Stones manager Alan Klein convinced all but McCartney to run Apple for five years with mixed results that caused it to collapse.

Another shocker are all the major acts they failed to sign because they did not have a good A&R rep to get that job done, so they missed Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Yes and David Bowie! Imagine if they had signed them and kept them, Apple would still be an active label today. The Beatles' last few albums arrived at this time and their sad break up also happened. If only Epstein had lived. This is one of Chrome Dreams best and you should go out of your way to see it. A featurette on the story of *King Of Fuh* is the only extra.

The PCM 2.0 16/44.1 Stereo on the Best CD sounds as good as it is going to in this format and has been nicely remastered without losing any of the quality or character of the songs. The 1.33 X 1 image on the DVD is a mix of old film and vide footage with new interviews, nicely edited as always and just fine to watch throughout, but while the lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo has some Pro Logic-like surround information, there are too many simple stereo and monophonic moments for that mode to be consistent throughout. Pro Logic can put it too much in the center channel of home theater systems.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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