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**Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records (Chrome Dreams DVD, 162 min.)**. This documentary could have been a lot better, but since it was not sanctioned by the Beatles, we have none of their input. Even key Apple artists like James Taylor and Mary Hopkins (the smash hit "Those Were the Days") are missing. However, the subject matter is fascinating. Apple Records was founded in 1968, the year after the Beatles stopped touring and create the "Sgt. Pepper" album. One of the driving forces behind it was the idea of investing in a business rather than paying the very large British tax bill. Paul McCartney named it Apple Corps Ltd. and said music publishing should be part of it. Also part of the original plan were record stores and boutiques. The first Beatles project was the TV film "Magical Mystery Tour," which bombed.

Jackie Lomax was one of the first musicians signed and he is interviewed extensively, as is Ron Griffiths of The Iveys. Of course, The Iveys' real fame came when Joey Molland (also interviewed here) joined the band and they became Badfinger, recording McCartney's "Come and Get It" for their first big hit. Taylor was brought in by A&R head Peter Asher (of Peter and Gordon fame), but he soon quit and took Taylor with him. Taylor then signed with Warner Bros. and started his huge career. Beatle George Harrison signed Billy Preston, who had played on the last couple of Beatles albums, but he never became the star he should have. Two hours into this lengthy documentary marks the arrival of Yoko Ono (John Lennon's wife) and her first two albums. Street musician David Peel ("The Pope Smokes Dope" has his album) and members of Elephant's Memory (they backed Lennon and Ono on the "Sometime in New York City" album) also are interviewed. The record label, however, basically ended when Badfinger's "Ass" was released in 1973, and Apple Corps Ltd. bit the dust in 1975.

Overall, the interviews could have been stronger, but the subject matter covers over a lot of the faults. Non-musicians interviewed include Beatles expert Chris Ingham, author and journalist Mark Paytress and Apple biographer Stefan Granados. There is a bonus interview with Stephen Friedland, a member of the Tokens who, as Brute Force, recorded a satirical song that immediately got banned. **Grade: B**

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