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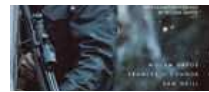
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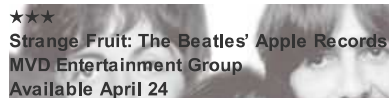
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Strange Fruit: The Beatles' Apple Records is an overlong, exhaustively researched documentary, but it will hold your attention thanks to its interesting subject matter

BY: AMANDA STEFANIUK
19/04/2012 1:14 AM | COMMENTS (0)

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In 1968, The Beatles put their worldwide fame to use by creating an artist-friendly record label that would give new bands a fighting chance in the cutthroat music business. This nearly three-hour documentary attempts to explain the history of the company that, despite good intentions, ultimately failed to produce any real talent.

Not only did the business provide a tax break for the band members, it also gave them something to do after their decision to retire from touring. The company ran an ad in the trades seeking unknown artists to record, but it was a recommendation from supermodel Twiggy that produced its first hit artist.

Mary Hopkin was a Welsh singer whose performance on Twiggy's show caught the attention of Paul McCartney, who produced her hit 'Mystery Juice', the label's first No. 1 single.



ENLARGE IMAGE

Not all the artists signed had such luck. Jackie Lomax failed to chart with a George Harrison song, Sour Milk Sea, and chances to sign bands such as Yes and Fleetwood Mac weren't pursued. Another failure came with The Beatles' BBC special, Magical Mystery Tour, which played to low ratings and dismal reviews.

In the mid '70s, John Lennon took interest in Apple, releasing the soundtrack of Alejandro Jodorowsky's El Topo and signing edgy artists such as David Peel, whose song, The Pope Smokes Dope, was banned in several countries.

Strange Fruit is an often-interesting, sometimes-exhausting talking-heads documentary with a lot of information but not much star power. Former Apple Records artists including Lomax and a few members of Badfinger — the only band that had real success — are some of the interviewees. At best, the film will whet your appetite for obscure bands of the late '60s and send you off to the Internet in search of their music.

★★★★
Patton Oswalt:
Finest Hour
Paramount
Available April 24

Patton Oswalt's latest special finds the inventive comic talking about his experiences as a new father, his appreciation of sweatpants and the inherent creepiness of the circus. While pop-culture obsessions still sprinkle his act, his vivid observations of the bizarre people he's encountered are brilliantly funny.

Like all good comedians, once Oswalt records a show, he vows never to perform the material again, but his infamous mockery of the KFC Bowl, now with added Double Down material, is included as a special bonus



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Amanda Stefaniuk is a freelance writer who literally grew up in a video store.

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