

THE PLAIN DEALER

John and Paul go solo in 'Composing Outside the Beatles: Lennon & McCartney 1973-1980'

John Lennon and Paul McCartney had their share of musical ups and downs in the 1970s. The documentary "Composing Outside the Beatles: Lennon & McCartney 1973-1980," recently released on DVD, looks back fondly on half of the former Fab Four.

After the Beatles broke up, the four lads from Liverpool embarked on solo musical careers in the 1970s, with varying degrees of success. The in-depth, unauthorized documentary, "Composing Outside the Beatles: Lennon & McCartney 1973-1980," compares the efforts of former songwriting partners Paul McCartney and John Lennon as they try to find their footing on their own.

Vintage clips and performances mix with recent interviews with experts. While no Beatles songs are heard, probably due to licensing issues, the film does feature a lot of their solo work, from Paul's "Live and Let Die" to John's "Mind Games."

The dated 1970s fashions sometimes look surprisingly goofy, especially on Paul as he tries a bit too hard to stay current.

Diehard Beatles fans will enjoy the knowledgeable analysis, but the film fusses too much about whether John or Paul is finding more commercial success at any given time. Good grief, they're rich enough that they never have to work again if they don't want to, so maybe they're not all that concerned about having a hit record in the charts. Maybe they're more interested in artistic accomplishments. Or just making music they enjoy.

The film, the third in a trilogy, has an impressive roster of experts, including musician and Beatles friend Klaus Voorman, Wings guitarist Denny Laine and Wings drummer Denny Seiwell.

Unrated, 139 minutes. DVD extras: extended interviews, biographies and more. From MVD Visual Entertainment. Released Oct. 25.

by Chris Ball