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Zapple Diaries: The Rise And Fall Of The Last Beatles Label



Synopsis

This is the first full-length look at Zapple—the Beatles' label for experimental music and spoken word recordings and the most ambitious expression of the group's determination to be leading members of the counterculture movement in the late 1960s. Barry Miles, the acclaimed author, was the Zapple label manager and has written an engaging and slightly gossipy you-are-there review of this fascinating period in Beatles history. The book provides insight into the lives and working methods of leading literary and cultural figures of the time, including Allen Ginsberg, Charles Bukowski, Richard Brautigan, William Burroughs, and Frank Zappa. The Zapple Diaries is the fascinating story of an ill-fated experimental venture and a revealing account of the little-known last chapter of Beatles history.

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Customer Reviews

Barry Miles writes about the Beat Generation and 1960s culture and is the author of more than 50 books, including the authorized Paul McCartney biography. From 1975 to 1978, he was a regular writer for New Musical Express, and in 1978 he edited Time Out (UK). He lives in London.

Zapple Records, when mentioned, is usually brought up as a footnote in the Beatles story, known for releasing two unlistenable solo albums and quickly folding. I've always been suspicious as with everything related to Apple Corp, the original intent was much more grandiose, and it turns out it was. While proposed spoken word recordings by world leaders and more avant grade sounds never

happened, a whole series of recordings from important beat and counterculture writers were actually taped, though never released through Zapple. Barry Miles was a friend of Paul's who most famously started the Indica Gallery, where John and Yoko met, and the International Times newspaper. He became the man in charge of Zapple due to his relationship with McCartney, who was most enthusiastic about the project, and his contacts in the literary world. Despite two trips Miles took to the US recording authors, the project was doomed from the beginning, initially due to the Beatles lack of business direction, then due to the presence of Alan Klein and his cost cutting measures. The Zapple Diaries (which aren't a diary) is a quick read, but it's really a short period of time covered here. The actual label was discontinued less than two months after it's first release. If you're into counterculture and beat literature of the 60s, there's a lot here that you're going to enjoy and you'll probably be a little sad things didn't work out like planned. My only issues with the book were that there were some details that an editor should have caught such as incorrect release dates of things and Ran Blake's name misspelled but more importantly, I would have liked to have seen a discography of where these recordings ended up, as it seems almost all of them were released in some form or another. The first is easier to overlook, but the second is a little more of a disappointment and a missed opportunity. I also feel it's worth mentioning that if you are strictly a Beatles fan and have no interest at all in literature, this isn't the book for you. Yes, there's stuff in here about Apple and how that was running into the ground, but it is presented in context to the Zapple story. For instance, Miles talks about the Hell's Angels setting up camp at Apple, but only because Ken Kesey, who was with them, was eventually on schedule to have a Zapple release (and no one could figure out who authorized it!) If you're just looking for the Beatles story, you'd probably be better off with a book like "The Longest Cocktail Party."

Enjoyed this!

By 1968 one can see how far one of the most legendary bands had come since their beginnings in Liverpool, England. But the creative elements that influenced John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr artistically and creatively during their formative years in the 1950s and by the time they reached their early stardom in the 1960s came full circle after 1967 and the creation of Apple Records and Zapple label. Beatles biographer and historian Barry Miles writes an appealing examination of the years after one of their most creative and innovative recordings in musical history 1967 Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band and the eclectic Magical Mystery Tour compilation and television film. Miles shares with readers the provocative and

unpredictable projects that members of the group took part in and documents in *The Zapple Diaries: The Rise and Fall of the Last Beatles Label*. As one begins to read the opening chapters of the book, undoubtedly the events and recent projects that have been produced and released to the general public of Beatles related fans in the past 50 years, ring back to John and Paul's vision first with the creation of Apple Records that expanded with the Zapple label. A label where under its umbrella launched a variety of innovative projects that signed new artists, bands, writers, sell merchandise of artwork, publications, and a clothing line. The list of who's who are numerous but at the core of those that signed on and unless one is exceptionally versed in the repertoire of Zapple recordings or publications, readers may be surprised to see members of the counter-culture generation of Beat poets and writers from Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Charles Bukowski, Charles Olson, and many others; Already, Paul McCartney hinted at the fact that he was a fan of these writers including William Burroughs whose image appears amongst the cavalcade of celebrities and well known figures that the members of the band adored. Miles includes an array of photographs and documents from the period of activity that occurred during Zapple's inception that as the title asserts rose quickly and fell as fast as anyone could see its enormous impact. For readers that have read the history of the Beatles during the years of 1968-1970, the time period was of utmost intensity and attempts to keep the band going in its original form of the four members working together in one room. However, as Miles writes each member was moving in different directions, either solo or as duos and with other people within the Beatles circle, Derek Taylor, Neil Aspinall, Yoko Ono, Peter Asher as well as with Ginsberg, Bukowski and Ken Kersey and even the Hell's Angels. One can say that Zapple was a diversion of the imminent, the delay of the final break-up of The Beatles. Signs were already evident as A and R man Peter Asher recalls of how projects were not completely communicated with all of the members that participated in Zapple. For example, when a new artist was signed on, The Beatles did not know anything about it, and also the constant personal squabbles that generated creating an intense atmosphere. In spite of events that showed the eventual demise of the band, Zapple achieved in its short existence a platform for experimentation within the recording world, especially for its time. As they had done years before, members of The Beatles never stopped creating within or outside the dynamic of four of the members. Consider the two most notable albums on the label John and Yoko's 1968 *Unfinished Music, No. 1: Two Virgins* and 1969 release *Unfinished Music, No. 2: Life with the Lions* and George Harrison's *Electronic Sound* that were the last recordings on the label. Retrospectively, when the band came together as four in the final years they created beautiful

music with Abbey Road and Let it Be.

Mostly concentrated on the author's recording of writers like Brautigan, Ginsberg, Bukowsky etc. reading their work for audio records, some of which were never released. Delivered a few new bits of Beatle gossip. You couldn't call it essential, but it was a pleasant, quick read.

Interesting additional information regarding this little known aspect of Apple. Not essential.

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