

## **Zoo World**

April 11, 1974

### **BADFINGER: “Ass” & “For Love or Money”**

Jon Tiven

Badfinger seemed, at one time, to be the hope of the future for those who relished the past efforts of The Beatles. They appeared to have their heads screwed on straight, acknowledging Liverpool’s Fab Four as the all-time definitive rock band, and were content to humbly follow in their footsteps and try to continue in their natural progression. Apparently, something has shaken them off their confident path, perhaps resulting from the loss of their drummer, or the record label switch-ups. Whatever brought this unnatural change about has certainly muddled their already uncertain present and lazy future. For a group to find a direction and stick with it until it wears out is difficult enough, but to change horses in midstream and come out smelling like a rose is near impossible. As talented as Badfinger is, the boys just can’t do it.

It seems unfair to take the Ass album seriously, as it’s obviously a mishmash of tracks (some fairly old ones from the vaults recorded when Todd Rundgren was their producer) that they owed Apple to fulfill contract obligations. It’s good in spots, but one might find it difficult to cop a feel from the album other than the spiritual essence of a band caught in abrupt transition. It’s also unfair to criticize to the group to criticize the album, for I’m sure if they had their choice, it wouldn’t exist – it seems that they provided Apple with just the tapes required by law and nothing more (no personnel information is listed, and all of the songs are credited to Badfinger, when any simp knows that they write on their own and not together).

For Love Or Money, on the other hand, must be recognized as a legitimate album, and it doesn’t hold together much better. The new drummer is a step in the wrong direction, being a follower rather than someone who sets the pace for the group, often driving the

songs too fast instead of slowing them down to an effective beat (for example “Shine On” and “Love is Easy”)

Songs such as “Why Don’t We Talk” and “Andy Norris” are mere fragments, interesting ideas but not fully developed, lacking in power and distinction. Only “Island” “Give It Up,” and “Lonely You” stand out as complete, well-worked and well-thought out compositions. I suppose some of the burden can be laid upon the producer, Mr. Chris Thomas, who’s had considerable amount of success with Procol Harum and Roxy Music, but he doesn’t seem to have put much effort here. He seems to have had the audacity to sit back and work the controls, letting the Badfingers play on as they wished without really adding much in the way of innovative arrangements, background vocals or intricate effects which have in the past been a successful boost to the Badfinger sound. A record is a record, not a live performance, and the object is to get the music sounding as excellent as possible, which shouldn’t be such a heavy-handed task in dealing with a group as forward-minded as Badfinger.

The outright crappy tunes on here have nothing to do with Badfinger’s style like “Matted Spam” and “My Heart Goes Out,” and we never had to put up with that in days past. I say Badfingers, take your new direction and toss it aside, be content to do what you were doing best and where it takes you, rather than taking chances with borderline stuff like this. These two albums are not half-worthy of the Badfinger talent, and it's pretty upsetting.