

## **Rolling Stone**

January 31, 1974

**BADFINGER: "Ass"**

Bud Scoppa

The album title is the band's reference to themselves as unwitting followers of some enticing but unrealizable dream. That dream may have been Badfinger's expectations of their place in the Beatles' initial plans for Apple as the nurturer of worthy talent, or it may have been in the group's fantasy that, by being in close proximity to the Beatles, they could somehow become them. In discarding that dream, they've discovered their own identity as a group, and that discovery gives this album its surprising forcefulness.

"Apple Of My Eye," which opens the record, is both a decisive expression of disaffiliation and a sentiment-filled song about leaving an old lover behind – namely, the label for which this is their last LP. This nicely sets up the album's ambivalent tone, the product of a confrontation between aggression and sentiment that is surprisingly effective.

The aggression is manifested in the group's unusually muscular playing, the sentiment in the typically sweet, almost shy singing. The album consists almost entirely of bracing rock & roll, snarling and snapping at the choir-boy vocals hovering just above. Producer Chris Thomas is to be commended for his underscoring of Badfinger's particular dynamic strengths. "Get Away," "When I Say," "The Winner" and "I Can Love You" (the last two presumably remixed outtakes from the Todd Rundgren sessions for the last album, *Straight Up*) form the core of the most viable self-representation Badfinger has yet recorded. But the most exciting moments on the album come last, on "Timeless," which builds into a passionately melancholy instrumental section that might easily be mistaken for an inspired Clapton-Harrison collaboration.

This is a surprisingly vibrant album from a group that has never managed to string its scattered hits into a distinguishable identity, and which seemed to be headed for oblivion or dissolution, whichever came first. It would qualify as a comeback if it weren't so clearly an introduction to the band beneath the veneer.