

Rolling Stone

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BADFINGER: "Badfinger" LP

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There has always been a certain stodginess about Badfinger, a fatal lack of flair. Partly due to the absence of brio in their vocals, partly to the stiffness of their rhythms, Badfinger tends to trudge along with too much labor and too little musical exuberance. This stodginess, more than the shortcomings of Apple Records, has kept the group from enjoying substantial popularity; and if their label switch to Warner Bros. was an attempt to break the pattern, the first album fails utterly.

In leaving Apple, Badfinger didn't shed the Beatles-ish image, which over the long-run has probably been more of a hindrance than a help. Pete Ham still writes like Paul McCartney, still plays guitar like George Harrison and still is in dogged pursuit of the Big Ballad – but nothing here approaches the sweep of "Timeless" on *Ass*. Too often on *Badfinger*, Ham is merely cloying, even in his titles: "I Miss You," "Lonely You." But ironically, bassist Tom Evans contributes the best Beatles song. His "Where Do We Go From Here?" is a charming bit of Raspberries fluff.

Although his melodies and vocals are inferior to Ham's work on *Badfinger*, rhythm guitarist Joey Molland is more interesting. His songs, particularly "Island" and "Give It Up," have a mordant edge and seem more deeply felt than Ham's dispassionate studies. The group might have to rely on Molland for its life. As of now, Molland's talent cannot carry the band, but in time he may develop, particularly if he collaborates with the more adept Ham.

But the first task confronting Badfinger is to learn how to rock. The uptempo tracks on *Badfinger* are singularly flatfooted and provide an insufficient contrast to the occasional plod of Ham's ballads. To

become a really first-rate band, Badfinger has a long way to go and this album doesn't even begin.