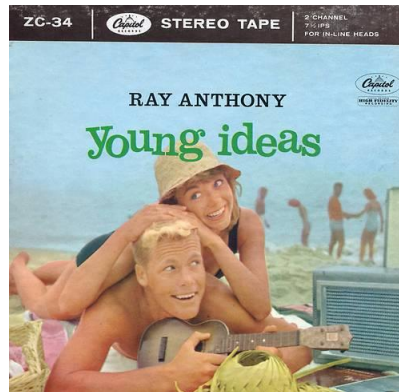


# Beatles Reel to Reel Tapes

Last Updated 05 My 2025



Through a manufacturing agreement with Magnetic Tape Duplicators, Capitol Records entered the tape business on July 22, 1957, as other companies realized that the introduction of stereophonic sound to the market would provide a niche that was otherwise incapable of being filled. At the time, stereo records were several months to one year away. Capitol's first reel-to-reel tapes were prefixed with a Z to indicate the format and a one-letter price code. Saving the prefixes ZB-, ZE-, and ZG- for tapes that might come out at other prices, Capitol's first reel-to-reel tapes had the prefixes and costs listed below:

ZA- prefix	Cost: \$9.95
ZC- prefix	Cost: \$11.95
ZD- prefix	Cost: \$12.95
ZF- prefix	Cost: \$14.95
ZH- prefix	Cost: \$16.95

These were breakthrough releases in that they represented Capitol's first use of stereo for the commercial market. When stereo records came along in 1958, Capitol mixed their most popular albums a second time for stereo – so that the mixes found on these tapes represent the original stereo mixes.



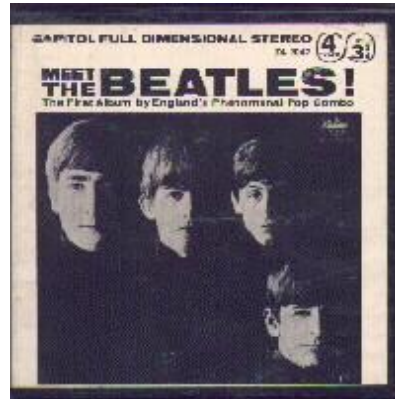
By April, 1958, the impending release of stereo albums by the major record companies was being viewed as a detriment to the stereo tape market. These first tapes were made for inline twin-track machines (sometimes called "half track" by collectors), a hard-to-find format today. By October, 1958, Capitol had released approximately 92 titles on reel-to-reel tape, including popular albums like Frank Sinatra's *Where are You?* (Capitol ZD-17) and Nat King Cole's *St. Louis Blues* (Capitol ZD-59), but this was temporarily the end for Capitol's tape business. Having entered the stereo album market, they were taking no more chances with the tape format.

By April 11, 1960, Capitol had changed their mind: reasoning that the four-track stereo reel-to-reel tape format was going to survive. According to the July 28, 1962, issue of *Billboard*, Capitol contracted with MT Duplicating Company to manufacture the tapes. At first, Capitol Records released all of these tapes at the 7 ½ ips speed. They resurrected the "Z" prefixing for their

tapes but combined this go-around with the LP price code and catalog number. For example, Stan Kenton's *Sophisticated Approach* was Capitol ZT-1674. By late 1963, Capitol was considering adding the 3 ¾ ips speed to their available tape formats.

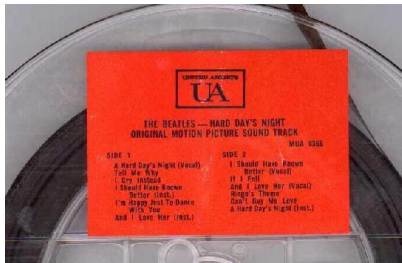
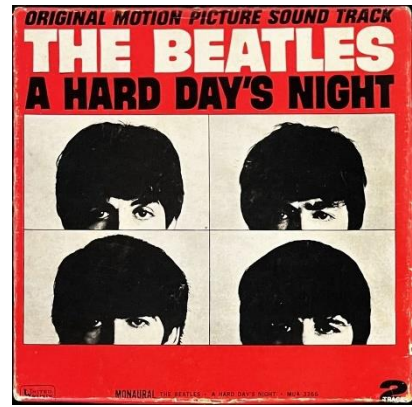
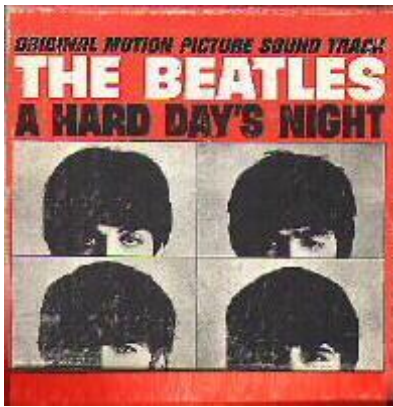
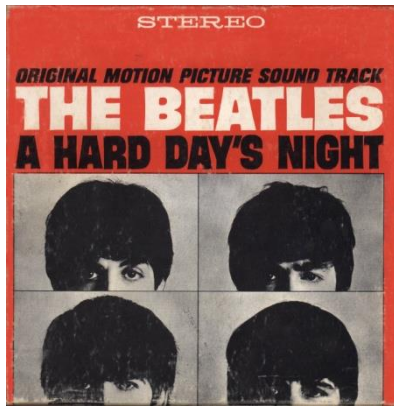
When the Beatles signed on with Capitol in late 1963, the reel-to-reel tape was still the only tape alternative to vinyl. Professional recordings were made on reel tapes (as some still are today). These were reproduced at one half or one fourth of the recorded speed for the public. Purchasers of reel tapes were generally seen as audiophiles, as indeed many of them were. And so, Capitol did not issue all of its "popular" records on reel tape. Also, classical recordings were longer, and thus were better suited to the reel format. The reel-tape-purchasing public generally did not buy tapes that had only 30 minutes of music on them. Capitol solved that problem by offering 5" tapes instead of the standard 7" size and by offering two pop albums on one tape.

**In the following listings, the title of the album occurs first, followed by the label and catalog number, then the tape speed ("ips" stands for "inches per second"), and any descriptive notes.**



<i>Meet the Beatles</i>	Capitol Z2-2047	3¾ips	5" tape with black box, mono	SI = 7
<i>Meet the Beatles</i>	Capitol Z4-2047	3¾ips	5" tape with black box, stereo	SI = 6

This is the ONLY Capitol reel tape listed that was available in both mono and stereo. Capitol Records originally prepared the album in January 1964 for release as a seven-inch stereo tape with the ZT- prefix. However, they elected to make the album available as five-inch mono and stereo tapes, releasing the stereo tape in February and the mono reel in March.



<i>A Hard Day's Night</i>	United Artists MUA-3366	7½ips	60's logo, 7" reel, mono	SI = 10
<i>A Hard Day's Night</i>	United Artists MUA-3366	7½ips	60's logo, 5" reel, mono, for two-track machines	SI = 10
<i>A Hard Day's Night</i>	United Artists MUA-6366	7½ips	60's logo, small rectangular label, stereo	SI = 7
<i>A Hard Day's Night</i>	United Artists MUA-6366	7½ips	60's logo, large semicircular label, stereo	SI = 6

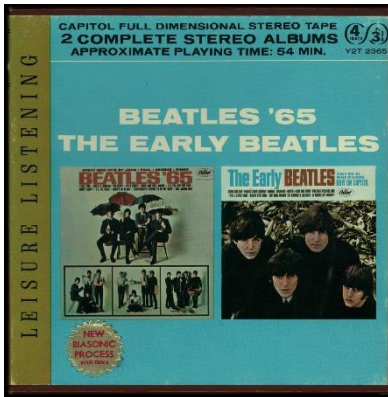
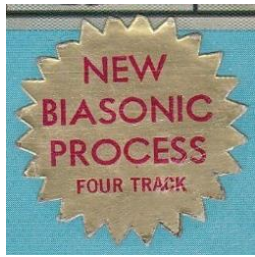
The above tapes were manufactured by Music Tapes, Inc. It was also rare for UA to issue tapes in both mono and stereo. Early copies are found with a rectangular label on the reel, while other, later, copies have a semicircular label. These have been verified on the stereo tape.

The Bionic process was developed by Magnetic Tape Duplicators (MTD) in 1964. In the May 1, 1965, announcement in *Billboard*, MTD's Cliff Whenmouth promoted the quality of their process over that of the newly-hyped eight-track cartridges, stating that the Bionic process "produces 3 ¾ ips tapes with the fidelity of 7 ½ ips." Prior to that the development of the process, Capitol had largely refrained from releasing any further Beatles product in the reel-to-reel tape format.

**Developments at 3¾ Ips.** Apparently the recent slow-speed musical releases were entirely too modest in offering only the equivalent of two normal LP/SD or 7.5-ips single-reel programs. Capitol's second 3¾-ips list includes one triple-play reel (Y3W 1613, \$14.98: "The Nat King Cole Story") and two quadruplers. Of the latter, one (Y4T 2201, \$19.98) features four Paul Weston programs: "Music for Dreaming . . . The Fireside . . . Memories . . . Romancing"; the other (Y4P 8607, \$19.98) features some thirty-five "Melodies of the Masters" by various conductors, pianists, etc. These reels have been processed by what Capitol calls its "new Bionic process."

Whenmouth claims his company's "Bionic" duplication process produces 3¾ ips tapes with the fidelity of 7½ ips. "We do not think the public wants to take a step backward, with increased noise, crosstalk, dropouts and misalignment problems."





*Beatles '65/Early Beatles* Capitol Y2T-2365 3¾ ips brown box SI = 4

Capitol issued this tape in July 1965. Early copies have a gold foil sticker promoting the “new Biasonic process.” Later stickers read “full range Biasonic process.”



*Beatles VI/Something New* Capitol Y2T-2382 3¾ ips brown box SI = 6

Capitol issued this tape in September 1965. Early copies have a gold foil sticker promoting the “new Biasonic process.” Later stickers read “full range Biasonic process.”



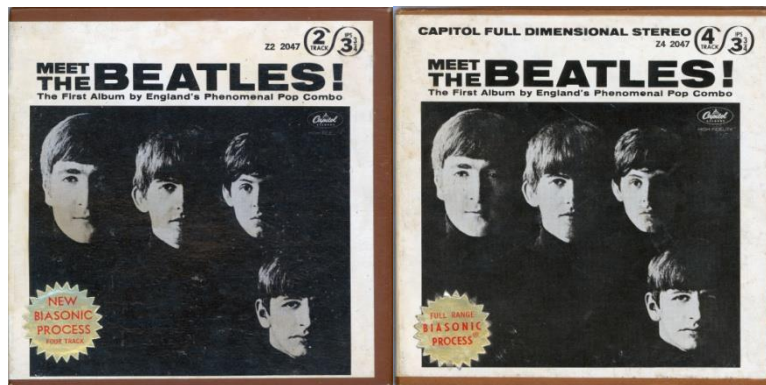
*Rubber Soul/Second Album* Capitol Y2T-2467 3¾ ips brown box SI = 4 or 5

Capitol issued this tape in March 1966. Early copies have a gold foil sticker promoting the “new Biasonic process.” Later stickers read “full range Biasonic process.”



*Yesterday...And Today* Capitol YT-2553 3¾ ips 5" tape; brown box SI = 7

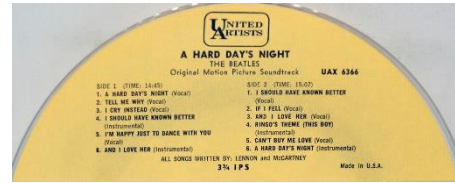
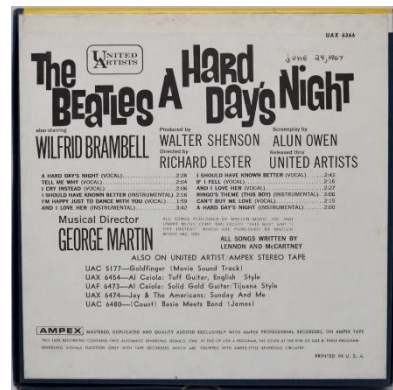
As with ALL tape formats, all of the songs on this tape are in true stereo. At the time, the vinyl LP featured 3 songs in rechanneled stereo, since Capitol did not wait long enough for Parlophone (UK) to send them the stereo masters before preparing the stampers for the stereo LP. The tape was issued in July of 1966. Gold foil sticker reads "new Biononic process."



*Meet the Beatles* Capitol Z2-2047 3¾ips 5" tape with brown box, mono SI = 10

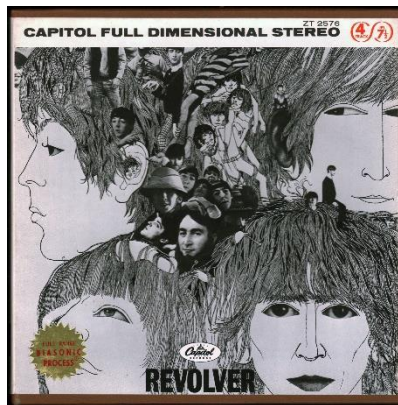
*Meet the Beatles* Capitol Z4-2047 3¾ips 5" tape with brown box, stereo SI = 6

At this time (1966), the *Meet the Beatles* 5" mono and stereo tapes were reissued with brown boxes and a sticker which reads "new Biononic process." Copies made later in 1966 have a sticker reading "full range Biononic process."



**A Hard Day's Night United Artists UAX-6366 3 3/4 ips 60's logo; stereo SI = 4**

UA reissued their only Beatles tape in mid-1966. The reel is clear, and both the covers and the label use the 60's UA logo. Made by Ampex. Earlier copies have the label in white. Later white-label copies add "The Beatles." On copies from 1967 on, the label is a light yellow color.



**Revolver Capitol ZT-2576 7 1/2 ips brown box SI = 5**

Capitol issued the tape the week of November 12, 1966, with a sticker promoting the "full range Bionic process."



Family Way Soundtrack (Paul) London LPL-70136 3 ¾ ips Mfd. by Ampex; black box. SI = 8



Sgt. Pepper's LHC B Capitol Y1T-2653 3¾ips brown box SI = 4

The tape was issued along with the LP.



Magical Mystery Tour Capitol Y1T-2835 3¾ips brown box SI = 4

The tape was issued along with the LP.





*Meet the Beatles* Capitol Y1T-2047 3¾ips 7" tape; brown box SI = 5

In June, 1968, Capitol reissued both of its five-inch Beatles reels onto the standard seven-inch size.



*Yesterday...And Today* Capitol Y1T-2553 3¾ips 7" tape; brown box SI = 5

This reissue of the earlier tape came out in June 1968.



*The Beatles* Apple Y2WB-101 3¾ips brown box SI = 4

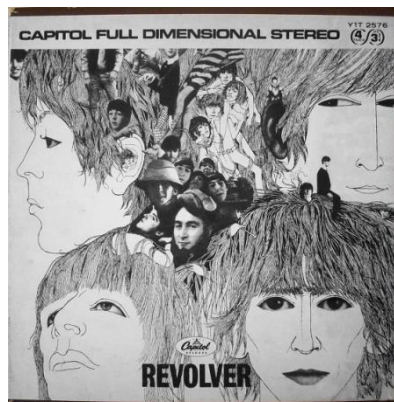
Two records on one tape. The tape and LP came out at the same time.





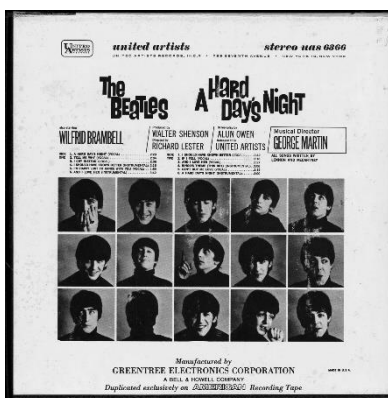
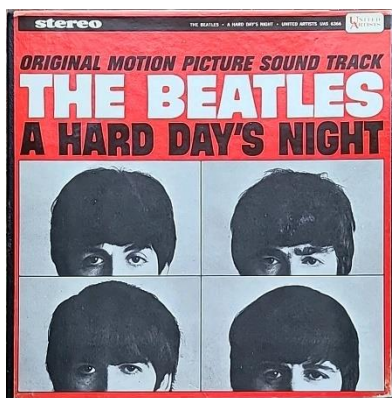
**Yellow Submarine** Apple Y1W-153 3 1/2 ips brown box SI = 4

The above tape came out in January 1969, with the LP.



**Revolver** Capitol Y1T-2576 3 1/2 ips 7" tape; brown box; reissue SI = 5

The above tape was issued, at a slower speed, in March 1969.



## Greentree Licensee For UA Reel Items

NEW YORK — Greentree Electronics, a Bell & Howell company, has taken over as the exclusive licensee for United Artists Records reel-to-reel product. Greentree releases will cover UA's standard product as well as new albums.

Greentree also has reel-to-reel tape deals for Warner Bros. and Reprise product.

**A Hard Day's Night** United Artists UST-6366-A boxed UA logo SI = 4

In spring 1969, UA reissued its reel tape again. Copies made from 1972 on have stickers indicating that they were made for Magtec – which later owned Bell & Howell's tape division.

## Capitol's Contract With Ampex



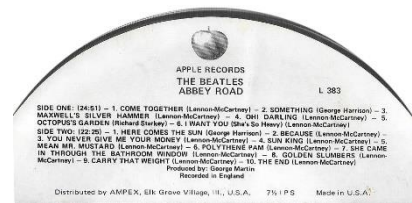
## Cap's Deal With Ampex

LOS ANGELES — Capitol has given its 4-track and reel tape configurations to Ampex to duplicate and sell. Muntz formerly sold the label's 4-track by duplicating the merchandise in its own Van Nuys factory and offering it to Muntz dealers. Capitol continues to duplicate and market its own 8-track and cassette tapes.

The label will phase out of handling its own reel and 4-track tapes, according to a company official. There is a phasing out period in which Capitol will deplete its inventory of tapes and honor exchange obligations to customers.

Capitol's reason for licensing both the reel and 4-track configurations to Ampex, according to a label executive, is to have both systems handled by one company, rather than going with several duplicators.

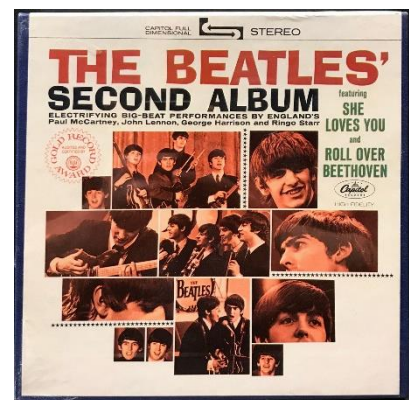
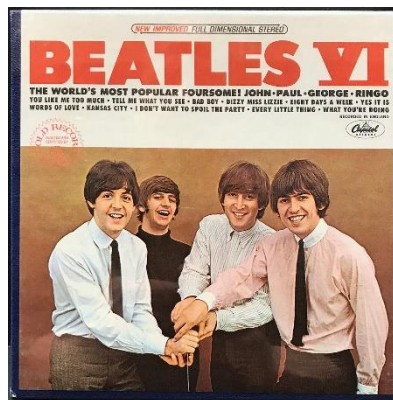
In September 1969, Capitol left the reel tape manufacturing business, contracting out to Ampex Tapes. When the catalog switched to Ampex, there were no qualms about issuing one (short) album on one tape. Capitol (Ampex) stopped issuing new reel tapes in late 1971, but the format survived for at least ten more years through record clubs as a "special order" item.



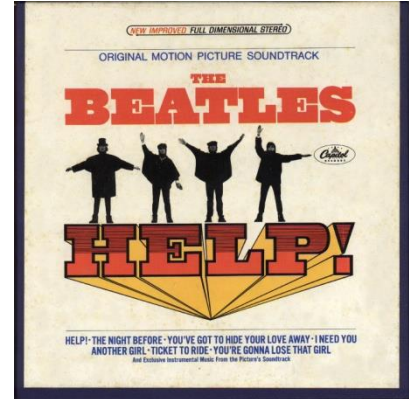
## Abbey Road Apple/Ampex L-383 7 1/2 ips blue box SI = 4

The earlier copies of this tape list "Because" twice on the label. At this point, nearly all of the earlier tapes were all reissued onto Ampex 7 1/2 ips tapes with blue boxes. It is interesting to note that *Something New* went out of print at this time. All combined tapes were split up into two tapes. The reissued tapes were:

- Meet the Beatles L-2047
- Second Album L-2080
- Beatles '65 L-2228
- Beatles VI L-2358
- The Early Beatles L-2309
- Rubber Soul L-2442
- Yesterday and Today L-2553
- Revolver L-2576
- Sgt. Pepper L-2653
- Magical Mystery Tour L-2835

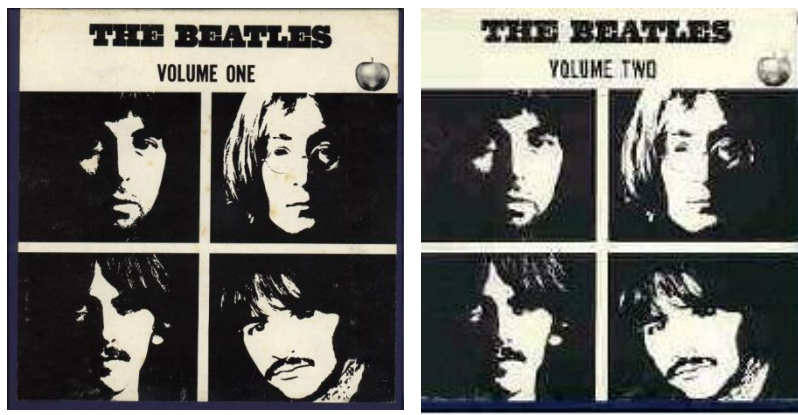


6In addition, Capitol/Ampex issued the following “new” tapes:



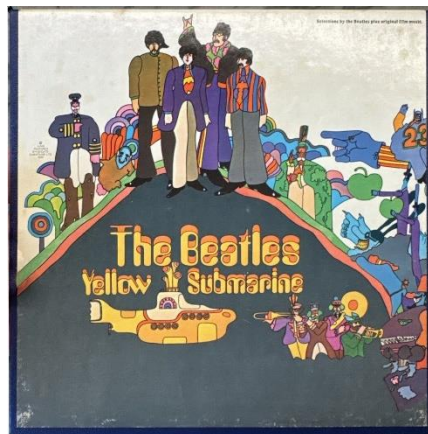
**Help! Capitol/Ampex L-2386 7½ips blue box SI = 4**

This album had not been available on reel-to-reel tape prior to 1969-70, although it had come out on eight-track and four-track cartridges.



**The Beatles Apple/Ampex L-101/L-2101 7½ips blue box SI = 4**

The album had previously been available on one tape. For the Ampex issue, it was split up into two. Furthermore, this tape set contains edited versions of 6 songs. These edits were apparently made at the same time as the "Paul Is Dead" hoax and are found nowhere else. Shorter total times are found on the tape label itself.



**Yellow Submarine Capitol/Ampex L-153 7½ips blue box SI = 4**

For some reason, this tape was switched over from Apple to the Capitol label. All other tape formats of the album were on Capitol originally, except for the four-track.

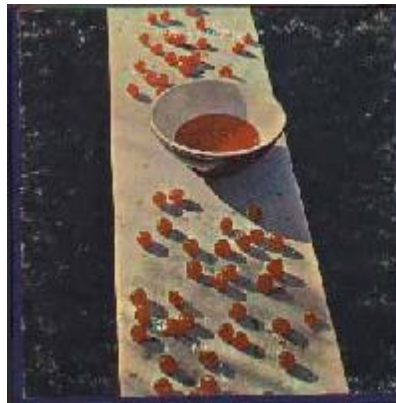




*Hey Jude!* Apple/Ampex L-385 7½ ips blue box SI = 4



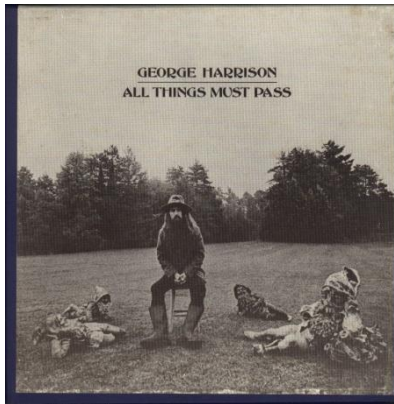
*Live Peace In Toronto (John)* Apple/Ampex L-3362 7½ ips blue box SI = 4  
*Let It Be* Apple/Ampex L-3401 7½ ips blue box SI = 4



*McCartney (Paul)* Apple/Ampex L-3363 7½ ips blue box SI = 4

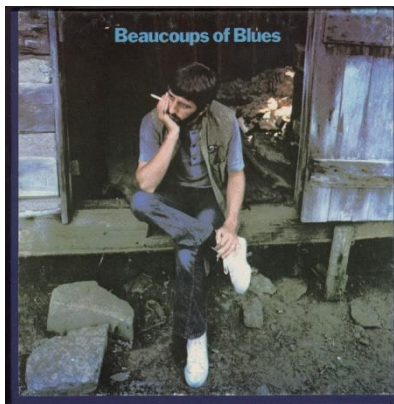


*Sentimental Journey* (Ringo) Apple/Ampex L-3365 7½ ips blue box SI = 6

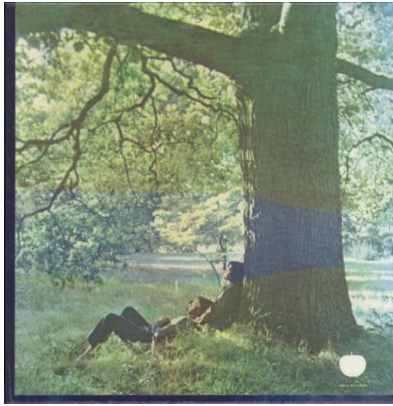


*All Things Must Pass* (George) Apple/Ampex D-639 3¾ips blue box SI = 4

All three records on one tape.



*Beaucoups of Blues* (Ringo) Apple/Ampex L-3368 7½ips blue box SI = 5



*Plastic Ono Band* (John) Apple/Ampex M-3372 7½ips blue box SI = 6

This tape comes with a lyric insert.



*Ram* (Paul) Apple/Ampex L-3375 7½ips blue box SI = 5

The *Ram* album was issued without an Apple logo on eight track and cassette. The reel tape release sports the usual Apple label.



*Imagine* (John) Apple/Ampex L-3379 7½ips blue box SI = 6

This tape comes with a lyric insert.





**Concert For Bangla Desh (George) Apple/Ampex ZRX-31230 3¼ips black box SI = 6**

This tape is numbered as a Columbia record. It comes with a postcard that could be mailed in for a free booklet.



**Live and Let Die (Paul) United Artists/Magtec UST-100-A 7½ips black box SI = 7**

This tape was manufactured by Magtec and is scarce to rare.

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In addition, six non-Beatles Apple records are known to exist on reel tape. These include:



<i>Post Card</i>	Y1T-3351	Mary Hopkin	SI = 5
<i>Magic Christian Music</i>	L-3364	Badfinger	SI = 6
<i>No Dice</i>	M-3367	Badfinger	SI = 6
<i>Yoko Ono Plastic Ono Band</i>	M-3373	Yoko Ono	SI = 7
<i>Earth Song; Ocean Song</i>	M-3381	Mary Hopkin	SI = 9
<i>Straight Up</i>	M-3387	Badfinger	SI = 8

Others may exist but have not been verified: [*James Taylor, That's the Way God Planned It* (by Billy Preston), *Wild Life* (by Wings)].

The sixties saw a proliferation of tape formats. By late 1973, only the eight-track and the cassette were to survive. After 1982, the cassette (which Capitol introduced in 1968) emerged as the sole survivor. The reel tape, the original “innovative” tape format, became one of the casualties of innovation. Beatles related reel tapes are much harder to find than their LP counterparts.

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The reel-to-reel tape format survived the record labels' purge from retail shops. Some albums were available on reel-to-reel tape through the Columbia Record Club until the mid-1980s. Meanwhile, all of the major labels continued to release promotional radio spots on reel-to-reel tape until at least the late 1980s. Radio shows also came out in the format into the 80s.



### Scarcity Index

We introduced a Scarcity Index to indicate the relative rarity of records. The rating ranges from 1 to 10, with 1 being "very common" and 10 indicating that fewer than 20 copies are known to exist.

The *Hard Day's Night* reel in mono rates a 10, and the most common reels rate about a 4. This means that they are sold with frequency less than one fourth that of their LP counterparts -- at a rate of at least one per month in online auctions.

With few exceptions, then, since all of the Beatles' Capitol and Apple albums "went gold," most of the reels were also reasonably good sellers. In the highest condition, however, they become much harder to locate. Sealed copies command premium prices -- at least double the price of an open copy. With the exceptions noted above, all original reels should be considered somewhat plentiful in average grades.

### *Beatles Reel-to-Reel Tapes*

[Frank Daniels](#)

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