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## All My Loving - BBFC Interview with Tony Palmer

When *All My Loving* was originally aired in 1968, it was acknowledged as a definitive statement of where Rock music was at, and one of the first such TV documentaries to consider the music and the times in which it was created. Ernie Sutton spoke to director Tony Palmer for the BBFC on 6th August 2007.

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'I have really enjoyed reading your fan club magazines and I am proud to wear the fan club pin' - Terje Solbakken, Norway.

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'I spent a wonderful year reading your magazine, which I find very interesting and I hope you'll carry on the good job.' - Dimitris Tacticos, Greece.



'Thanks for the badge and membership card. I wear the badge on my school uniform blazer, which is breaking the school dress code slightly as badges aren't allowed. I don't think the teachers mind much though as it's a band they like as well!' - Róisín Mulligan, age 15.

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**When you first saw The Beatles at a press conference at The Regal in 1963 and met John Lennon, did you meet the other three Beatles?**

Yes, they were all there.

**In the new DVD you talk about writing linear notes for Beatles albums, what albums did you write for?**

On 7th November 1968 I wrote a column in The Observer called 'The Beatles Bullseye', which was a review of The White Album. It was this piece that was reproduced on the sleeve of the Yellow Submarine soundtrack album released in 1969. John Lennon had seen the article and contacted me commenting on the article with a PS saying "We would like to use it on our next album", so that's how it came about.

I only found out at this year's Chicago Beatles Fest that it is the only article of its type to be reproduced on a Beatles album.

**When you were making the original film who in your opinion was the most fascinating artist to film and interview?**

All of them were fascinating. I knew Cream already and also Pink Floyd as I was with Roger Waters at school, but Hendrix was so very polite when I interviewed him. He was the total opposite of how he was on stage, which was something I wasn't expecting.

**The Beatles were going through a difficult phase at the time of the filming, after the death of Brian Epstein and the relative failure of *Magical Mystery Tour*, did you see any indications at that time that The Beatles were going in different directions and were possibly heading for a break up?**

Only in hindsight. Yoko was vaguely on the scene by then, and it was with my conversations with Derek Taylor that in his words "There was a Yoko problem". At John's request I interviewed Yoko and found her a very interesting person. Paul was very upset about the *Magical Mystery Tour* film reviews and I did interview him about his decision to apologise for the film on national TV, which I thought he didn't need to do.

**Were you impressed with the artists you interviewed for the documentary, in terms of how they felt about the problems in the world at that time?**

Yes I was, especially Zappa, who I went on to make 200 Motels with. The documentary had two main issues to get across. Firstly it was to give these musicians some exposure on TV, as they were not getting the coverage on Top of the Pops. Secondly, the artists wanted to be taken seriously and wanted to state their views on issues such as the Vietnam war.

**The BBC were clearly uneasy about showing the documentary after it was completed and indeed even shelved it for a while. Did you ever think it would see the light of day?**

The film was finished in March '68 and by June - July I was going through a bad patch. Suddenly by pure chance John Colshaw became Head of BBC and asked me if I had any problems. So I told him about trying to get *All My Loving* shown. I had met John at a chance meeting at Coventry Cathedral in 1962 and we had remained friends since then. *All My Loving* was saved by John Colshaw, without him it may never have been shown.

**The publicity from the music magazines regarding the eventual showing of *All My Loving* after the epilogue, clearly had a benefit on viewing figures. Were you nervous about the reaction after the programme was shown?**

I had no idea what the reaction would be. The quality newspapers of the time wrote some rave reviews. However, I was prepared for the reaction by a telephone call from John Lennon who said "I think we got away with that one Tony".

**Did any of the artists see the documentary before it was shown, and did you get any feedback from the artists?**

As far as I know they all saw it, and were all very pleased with it.

**Did you ever meet any of The Beatles again after the documentary was shown?**



*Yes- I had a chance meeting with Lennon in Manhattan, who asked me if I was doing anything useful. From that meeting my later film All You Need Is Love, came about.*

*Paul was still the spokesperson and I saw him about the new project and he arranged the interview with Queenie Epstein, which I believe is the only interview with her. Paul was interviewed for All You Need Is Love and the agreement with Paul was that I could get an interview and some live songs, as he wanted to promote his new band Wings, provided he could name the place. I agreed. "Where are we doing this?", I asked. "Dundee" came Paul's reply. He played Blackbird and Yesterday. After filming I asked Paul why he had chosen Dundee. His reply was "If I had messed up, at least Fleet Street weren't there to see it".*

**What did you think of The Rutles spoof in which George Harrison appeared?**

*I loved it. I was with Eric Idle at Cambridge and had worked with him on Twice a Fortnight, which pre-dates Monty Python.*

**How did the release of the DVD come about?**

*Some time ago I was sent a bootleg DVD found on sale. The BBC knew nothing of this and then threatened to sue the publishers etc. So I said to the BBC why not release it or lease it to me? Finally the BBC made it available for release in early 2007.*

**Are you surprised the film has stood the test of time? And do you regard it as your best work?**

*I never watch my old films. I was at the Beatles Fest in Chicago this year and we had a showing to 1500 fans. Some thought it was concert footage of the artists thrown together, and when they realized what it was about a small number left. At the end of the showing the audience was silent, eventually turning into applause, so I realized the point of the documentary had got through to them. I don't know what I would regard as my best work.*

Thank you to Tony Palmer.

See also: [preview of the All My Loving DVD](#).

Ernie Sutton.

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