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All My Loving
directed by Tony Palmer
Isolde Films

Director Tony Palmer's examination of the world of rock 'n' roll in 1968 serves as a fascinating time capsule. Broadcast on the BBC 39 years ago, *All My Loving*, "a film of pop music," was not shown in the U.S. and hasn't been released on DVD until now.

There was a lot going on in pop music in England in '68: The Beatles had just released their masterpiece, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Cream and The Who were taking the country by storm. As he explains in a recent interview included as an extra on the DVD, Palmer's entrée into the rock world was through John Lennon, who he'd met a few years prior. The Beatle wanted to see rock get the serious attention it deserved, and introduced Palmer to the major players on the scene from Paul McCartney to Jimi Hendrix and Frank Zappa.

Judging by the documentary's psychedelic style, one might guess that Lennon may have turned Palmer on in other ways as well. Utilizing mind-bending special effects, rapid-fire editing and juxtaposition, Palmer crafted a kaleidoscopic mosaic of words and sound.

After a very British "ex-Tin Pan Alley publisher" longs for the good old days when songs had better melodies and lyrics, McCartney opines that "pop music is classical music of now." Later Palmer cuts abruptly from Hendrix in full feedback mode, throwing his guitar towards a bank of amps, to an "ear specialist" warning of the danger of exposure to loud music. We get author Anthony Burgess bemoaning the dearth of aesthetics in modern pop, while Donovan dreams of a cultural Renaissance.

In between talking heads we see snippets of Cream, Pink Floyd, The Who and others in concert, and now and then a jarring reminder of current events that helped shape the music: the flash of a protesting monk on fire, or a child covered with burning napalm. As "Yellow Submarine" plays on the soundtrack — "as we live our life of ease ..." — the film cuts from a Beatle on the bow of a boat to now famous footage of a Vietnamese police chief executing a Viet Cong prisoner with a shot to the head.

I imagine viewers from different g-g-generations will relate to the film differently. For baby boomers, it will serve as a flashback; those younger will get a snapshot of a seminal time in rock history.

— Bob Doran