

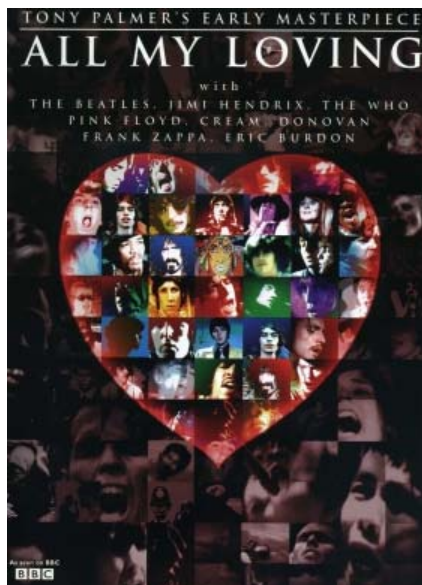
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[Tony Palmer's *All My Loving* - the pop and rock documentary comes of age](#)

24. 9. 2007 | Rubriky: [Články](#), [Multilingual](#), [Interviews](#), [reviews](#)

“It said more about pop than a year of *Top of the Pops*.” - *Observer*, 1968 television review



[by Ken Hunt, London] The 1960s were a peculiar time for popular music in Britain. On the one hand, there was this enormous explosion of pop music (that was increasingly being called rock music) with a phenomenal coverage in periodicals and on the radio - especially pirate radio. On the other hand, British television barely bothered to cover the phenomenon, making at most feeble attempts to treat what was happening as worthy of serious treatment on television. It was a world of pop dominated by weekly programmes like *Top of the Pops* and *Ready, Steady, Go*. A hangover of a world extolling the importance of the Top Ten, when by the late 1960s the single charts were increasingly becoming the domain of bean-counters and teenies.

It was only really with Tony Palmer's *All My Loving* in 1968 that things began looking up. It is the period's one and only television documentary about pop music that burned its way into my memory - even from a one-time only viewing. Watching it again, many things jump out retinally and intellectually. The focus is rock music, mostly British - Jimi Hendrix broke through as a British phenomenon - but touching on the US scene, notably through Frank Zappa's edgy observations. Palmer's editing is relentless at times, especially during the fast montage sequence at the end. Still, there is a line in the documentary about "this time of instant global communication" that will raise wry smiles. Another generation would point to the internet and all that malarkey. Anyone who lived through the period, however, will remember the sheer *paucity* and *inaccessibility* of information about this music - or about folk, or Indian classical music or whatever - at the time. The weekly pop press, primarily *Disc & Music Echo*, *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*, had largely signed their own death warrants, though some would survive years before the overdue executions took place. In their place a wave of low-budget, devotion-driven magazines sprang up, the one that we remember the most fondly being *Zigzag*, steered by the estimable Pete Frame. Usually they were called fanzines, but that was an expression better reserved for the one-act homage magz that followed.

All My Loving

was an intelligent, sometimes a wry or wall-eyed look at this new world of music. It is firmly in the stamp of the times. It has its share of popsters talking to camera, the likes of Eric Burdon, Paul McCartney, Pete Townshend and Frank Zappa. It also includes people in the business such as the Beatles publicist Derek Taylor, the Who's manager Kit Lambert and EMI's hot-shot producer and fifth Beatle George Martin. Casting aspersions, you get the author Anthony Burgess (*Clockwork Orange*), though he delivers a throwaway line accepting of cannabis as a not necessarily *bad thing* like a seasoned pro. Best of all, you get Eddie Rogers, a seasoned trouper with a comedian's timing and delivery, straight out of Tin Pan Alley who brings a lifetime of experience about the business to bear on the subject. Not jaundiced or mentally wizened, more like utterly simpatico, he pops up throughout the documentary to deliver insights and memories. Like the time the singer Tommy Steele won first place in a poll as 'Best Guitarist' - an instrument he got others, notably, Bert Weedon, to play on his sessions. Ah, innocent times! When it comes to the participating musicians, the

one who shines above everybody else is the acerbic Frank Zappa, with Paul McCartney as runner-up. Palmer's editing is well paced and balanced, allowing the talking heads to have their say without editorial interjections of the kind we get continually in music documentaries nowadays. Burgess whinges about "pop prophets"; Zappa talks archly about "carefully packaged classical music at budget prices" and the "culture boom". By way of setting the context, early on in the proceedings, McCartney puts the cat amongst the pigeons, saying, "Pop music is the classical music of now"

1968 was the year of the Paris upheavals, the Vietnam War, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Consequently, the style of the documentary is to intercut music footage - commentary or performance sequences from the post-Animals Eric Burdon, the Beatles, Cream, Donovan, Hendrix, Pink Floyd or the Who - with film of contemporary political events whether the Civil Rights Movement in the States (allowing for comments on the stylistic development of Hendrix's playing style) or the Vietnam War and footage of the *Shoah* and Nazi Germany. The fascist sequences work less well, pressing the wrong buttons. They come across as something approaching forced or contrived. Images of concentration camp and the Vietnam War victims, notably the summary execution of a Vietcong suspect by a single shot to the head in a street in broad daylight, arc across the years. Yet Palmer doesn't, for example, make any musical connections, say, with the Comedian Harmonists during the Nazi era and the political events. (Mind you, in 1968 the Comedian Harmonists would have been a real blast from the past and we had to wait nearly three decades for the likes of Eberhard Fechner to untangle their history.) From memory, from memories of a less questioning time, in 1968 in England, it *seemed* relevant. In 2007 the Second World War footage seems gratuitous and typical of history seen through the distorted prism of history documentary channels that regurgitate the Second World War in all its splendour, diversity and neverendingness daily.

That quibble in no way detracts from this marvellous documentary about the nascent rock scene, about a time when pop grew wings. *All My Loving* is a blueprint for how film-makers should approach contemporary music of any genre whatsoever at the time with context, commentary and, above all, music. The point is to think about what is presented here. What is. Not what is outside its purview. The extras are a good, illuminating interview with Palmer from January 2007 and a series of music-related collage-cartoons by the British cartoonist Ralph Steadman that take Dylan, Judy Garland, the Beatles, the Stones, the Who and that hard-core rocker Tiny Tim as their inspirations (and which could have been far better reproduced). *All My Loving* is a major item restored to the consciousness and marketplace.

All My Loving Voiceprint TPDVD101 (2007) - for more information visit www.voiceprint.co.uk

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