

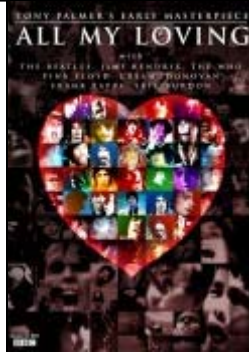


Since 1996

## THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

Your Gateway to Music and More from a Christian Perspective  
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All My Loving DVD  
 Director: Tony Palmer  
 Distributor: [MVD Entertainment Group](#)  
 Time: 52 minutes

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It was 40 years ago that a film rocked the British public and shocked their sensibilities. Most of the mass television audience dismissed pop music as bubblegum something they didn't take seriously. But that would change with the premier of a BBC film that first aired after the traditional station sign-off.

In this his first major movie, now acclaimed director Tony Palmer introduced to a public enamored with "Top of the Pops," artists that previously had no television exposure. It was John Lennon, whom Palmer had met some years earlier, that insisted that artists like Jimi Hendrix, Cream, The Who, Pink Floyd and Frank Zappa needed to be on TV.

Here was a group of musicians who took their work seriously and in so doing were redefining pop, extending its boundaries and changing the culture. Willing to break with convention to wake people from apathy, the revolutionary nature of their music and actions could not be ignored. The film opens and closes with a pointed line from the song "Yellow Submarine" by The Beatles, "As we live a life of ease / Everyone one of us has all we need."

Being glad for someone like Palmer, who took them seriously, the artists share candidly about the music of their time and how they hoped to change the world. Along the way we get snapshots of rare performances and interviews plus scenes from the cultural and political realities some quite disturbing, including a man being shot in the head and another who was set on fire. We get behind the scenes with The Beatles, Donovan, Eric Burdon and most of the previously mentioned artists.

This is an accurate and riveting look at the late sixties that weaves everything together in an artful way, which makes it an extraordinary piece of filmmaking. It was the forerunner of the many rock films that would follow.

The performances by the artists are mostly brief but raw and rare. Hendrix performs "Wild Thing," and The Who are shown at the end of a song destroying their equipment. Pink Floyd is

captured in a swirl of psychedelic colors on "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun." At the end, the film features an extended live performance by Cream that serves as a plea for people to open their hearts. Even today this remains an eye-opening documentary of a generation that sought change.

Ironically, it almost never made it off the shelf. The BBC was reluctant to show it, given its controversial nature. It sat for six months until inquiries prompted its airing. It was deemed too political to be shown in the U.S. Images of social upheaval and war are intermingled throughout, and scene changes are sometimes marked by the sound of a gunshot.

In January 2007, to mark the 40th anniversary of the film, Jon Kirkman interviewed director Tony Palmer. The 40-minute session, which is full of insightful commentary and colorful stories, is included as a bonus feature. It adds wonderful perspective and is a valuable addition to this groundbreaking film.

Michael Dalton  
September 19, 2007



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