

THE REPORTER

All you need is 'All You Need is Love'

By Barry Garron

A little more than 30 years ago, Tony Palmer, a documentary maker for the BBC, set out on one of the most ambitious projects you could imagine. He planned to write a book that would tell the entire history of popular music. Just thinking about it boggles the mind.

As he began his work, the book turned into a documentary series. Palmer went around the world conducting interviews and acquiring rare and sometimes previously unknown footage of performances. He tried to leave nothing out, including Jerry Lee Lewis, Edith Piaf, Al Jolson, the Beatles, Dizzy Gillespie, Liberace, Eric Clapton and even Wilson & Keppel (a vaudeville-style dance act from English music hall days).

Palmer wanted to know where popular music came from, who were the most influential performers and how different types of music influenced each other. He narrowed more than 1,000 hours of film into 17 episodes, each like a chapter. The series, "**All You Need is Love**," was broadcast on TV stations around the world from 1976 to 1980.

And then it just sat there gathering dust. All the fabulous interviews with performers, many of them no longer around. All the performances which, unlike today's documentaries, were shown in full and not just in 15-second clips. Vaudeville. Tin Pan Alley. Protests. Country music. Truly incredible stuff.

Palmer knew the Beatles and other top artists but he focused on all of popular music, not just rock. In fact, rock and roll doesn't even appear until the 13th episode, after ragtime, jazz, blues, vaudeville, music halls, musicals, swing, rhythm and blues and country music.

You could debate whether any performer or music form got too much or too little attention but you have to come away in awe of what Parker had assembled, all in less than a year.

And now it's back. A five-disc DVD set, digitally remastered, has the entire series, all 14 hours and 45 minutes. "**All You Need is Love**" will be released Tuesday with a list price of \$99.95 but you can get it for less. At amazon.com, for example, it ships for \$69.99.

Seeing it now, it is amazing how much of it holds up and speaks to a new generation. In fact, only in the last episode, in which Palmer tries to spotlight the most significant performers at the time this was made, does he strike a few sour notes. The reason is obvious. We all see so much better in hindsight.