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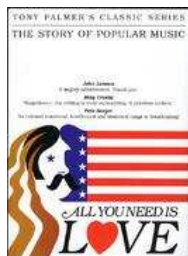
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From rock to hip-hop, classical to franco, Words & Music will keep you posted on the good, the bad and the ugly in the world of music. Our team includes Gazette music critics **T'Cha Dunlevy** and **Arthur Kaptainis**, editor and writer **Jordan Zivitz**, reporter **Bernard Perusse**, veteran music critic and columnist **Juan Rodriguez** and music writers **Kate Molleson** and **Adam Kinner**.

### DVD Review: All You Need Is Love



Documentary  
 All You Need Is Love  
 MVD Visual  
 Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

There's no way to overstate the importance of All You Need Is Love, Tony Palmer's near-definitive history of popular music. After making your way through the five-disc, 17-episode, 885-minute series, you'll know far more about the sounds of the 20th century, how they connect and how they got corrupted along the way. And education has never been so exciting.

Make no mistake, though: this is not the history of rock n' roll. There are plenty of those around. In Palmer's series, rock n' roll doesn't even come in until Episode 13. We start in Africa, discover ragtime, experience the shock of jazz and thrill to the blues in the first four installments – and we're only beginning. Vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley, Hollywood musicals, swing, rhythm and blues, country and folk each get their own history-within-the-history, with each episode clocking in at just over 50 minutes. The project is unspeakably ambitious, immensely satisfying and indescribably essential.

What immediately leaps out is how many crucial artists were still alive to tell their story or provide insights into their chosen genre when Palmer completed the series in early 1976. Eubie Blake, Muddy Waters, Roy Rogers, Bing Crosby, Dizzy Gillespie, Hoagy Carmichael, Benny Goodman, Liberace, Buddy Rich, Ernest Tubbs and John Lennon are

only a few of the musical VIPs who were interviewed by Palmer. And he approaches his subjects without preconceptions: some, like Tina Turner, come off surprisingly poorly, while others, like Pat Boone, defy expectations by getting comfortable in the hot seat and presenting their case eloquently.

No matter how much of a music geek you might be, there is stuff here you have never seen: Carmichael, sitting at the piano and explaining how he discovered the blue note, is as wonderful a sequence as any you could name. Elsewhere, Tin Pan Alley composer Irving Caesar explains his craft, Blake reminisces about his friend Scott Joplin; Goodman remembers his first Carnegie Hall concert; Rich demonstrates why so few modern drummers have any imagination; Roy Acuff speaks out against vulgarity in the new country music; Phil Spector, armed with a wig and an acoustic guitar, waxes incoherent and massacres a couple of his biggest hits; Jerry Lee Lewis rambles drunkenly about the pre-Beatles decline; Sam Phillips analyzes the birth of rock n' roll and Boone talks about his first meeting with Elvis Presley. This is no clinical talking-heads affair, either: there's plenty of killer performance footage.

The series, which ran on selected television stations between 1976 and 1981, is frozen in the mid-70s. Inevitably, the final episodes are informed by that lack of perspective: a rather self-important Lester Bangs dismissively predicts a short shelf life for Bryan Ferry and David Bowie; Tangerine Dream are suggested as blueprints for music's new direction and great things are expected of Mike Oldfield (Palmer actually finds greater significance in the Oldfield story. You'll be able to read about his observations in an upcoming Gazette interview with the director). But if the seemingly premature climax is problematic, allow us to fill you in: punk, rap and Nirvana happened. Their absence, and the lack of any bonus material on the DVD set, do nothing to diminish the scope of this work.

If there's any justice, *All You Need Is Love* will become a staple in classrooms. On both a social and musical level, it has so much to say.

--- Bernard Perusse ---

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Published Wednesday, May 21, 2008 12:43 PM by Bernard Perusse

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