



ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE (Voice Print) (5 DVDs)

Documentarian Ken Burns once said he refuses to do a documentary about anything until after 25 years. To do otherwise throws out historical perspective. If only Tony Palmer had taken his advice.

For the record, Palmer is a multiple award-winning musical historian whose works range anywhere from directing Frank Zappa's *200 Motel* to a recent documentary on Fairport Convention and on to classical composers like Benjamin Britton. Done in 1977, this series attempted to cover the story of pop music from ragtime to its present. What's sad is it also shows how Ken Burns is so correct at his base.

This 17-part series starts off promisingly enough, showing the roots of American and modern European pop music is based in part in sub-Saharan musical forms fused with North British religious and folk songs. From there we are given the tour of ragtime, blues, jazz, country, Tin Pan Alley and the schmaltz that dominated the early Eisenhower era. Even the chapter on pre-Beatles rock'n roll has its merits. Got to also admit, interviews ranging from Bing Cosby to the late, great music critic Lester Bangs also have their value.

It only falls apart with the entry of the Fab Four. The comprehensiveness starts developing gaps large enough to drive trucks through. The way this documentary goes, black music pretty much stops with 60s Motown. On the rock front, it falls apart with the psychedelic movement. By the last chapter, where it predicts the future of pop music is the likes of Mike Oldfield, Tangerine Dream and Black Oak Arkansas the whole shebang loses all credibility. Being this is 1977, I can see why Palmer missed the boat on the likes of Michael Jackson, Prince and P-Funk, but missing disco? Love it or hate it, it had an effect. Also, what about punk? The Ramones and Sex Pistols were certainly making waves by this time, not ignoring everything from Blondie to the Clash.

In all, this is a well-intentioned time capsule that starts off fascinating but hits a lot of sour notes at the end.

- Steve Fritz