Love Is All Around

The stereotype of the Troggs that is fixed in the minds of many listeners is that of the crude cavemen of "Wild Thing" fame. The Troggs did indeed offer lewd beat on that song and many others, but it mustn't be overlooked that they had a surprising facility for tender ballads. There is no better, and better known, example of that talent than **"Love Is All Around,"** a Top Ten hit in 1968 (and their only big hit in the United States aside from "Wild Thing").

Love Is All Around

For the Troggs were a *"three-trick pony".* Their most famous genre was dirty, distorted, 'caveman' garage rock, and clearly that was the genre where they excelled at most, being born to do that kind of stuff: as subtle as your local brontosaurus poking his head through your window, as unprofessional as you yourself on your very first day of guitar playing, and occasionally, as catchy as your local national anthem. 'Wild Thing' was this genre's culmination, and though they never recorded anything as primal and ferocious, they occasionally came close - especially early on in their career.



The Troggs

Their second trick was bubblegum - in fact, bublegum and dirty garage rock do have a lot in common, don't you think? The simplicity, the shortness, the up-to-the-point vibe... overall, garage rock is just bubblegum done with speed, distortion, and roughness. So occasionally the Troggs just dump the roughness and distortion and stay with the bubblegum skeleton, and again, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but in any case, it makes them legitimate predecessors of the Ramones... doncha think?



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Finally, the last thing the Troggs were quite fond of were sappy ballads... yep. AC/DC these guys were not, and they regularly allowed themselves a bit of inner contradiction, with lead vocalist Reg Presley sounding like a sex-obsessed maniac on one song and then sounding as the International Romeo Contest Winner on the next one. This is, of course, an ungrateful genre, and while I've certainly heard a lot of balladry compared to which the Troggs were a collective bunch of Brian Wilsons, this doesn't mean I'd be the first person to recommend you to spend all your days listening to 'Love Is All Around', no sir.



The Troggs

Troggs lead singer Reg Presley wrote this in about 10 minutes. He was inspired by the Joy Strings Salvation Army band he'd seen on TV. Presley recalled the inspiration for the song in the July 2011 edition of Mojo magazine:

"I got back from America, I smelt the Sunday lunch cooking (inhales deeply), phaaaaw - after about 25 years on burgers - I kissed my wife, my little daughter, four years old. We went into the lounge and those Salvation Girls, The Joystrings, were on television, banging their tambourines and singing something, 'Love, love,' love.' I went over to turn it off, knelt down and hearing that 'Love, love' I got a bass line, (sings) 'doom, doomdoom, doomdoom, doomdoom, doom,' and I got: 'I feel it in my fingers, I feel it in my toes. My wife, my kid… And so the feeling grows.'"



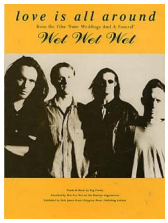
Reg Presley

The record opens with a gentle, playful, circular guitar riff, with little backup rhythm save a light metronome-like tick-tock. Reg Presley's vocals often blended a sardonic sense of camp with suppressed fury, but in this case they were, to all appearances, sincere in their loving tones, if witty in their images of feeling love through fingers and toes. The vocals, too, are either double-tracked or fattened by backup unison harmonies from the rest of the band. The constantly rising melody is simple but ingratiating, the basic guitars joined by tasteful strings in the latter verses. "Love Is All Around," in sum, is one of the loveliest flower-power ballads of the hippie era, working in no small part because it's understated.



Love Is All Around, single 1967

The song was first released as a single in the UK in October 1967, peaking at number 5. On the Hot 100, peaked at number 7 on 18 May 1968, was on the chart a total of 16 weeks, and ranked number 40 for all of 1968. On the UK Singles Chart Top 50, the record debuted at number 50 peaked at number 5 on 22 November 1967. In 1994 this became a huge hit when Wet Wet Wet covered it for the movie Four Weddings And A Funeral. Their version was UK #1 for 15 weeks and became the best selling single in the UK in 1994. R.E.M.'s cover was a B-side on their 1991 "Radio Song" single, and they also played it during their first appearance at MTV's Unplugged series that same year.



Wet Wet Wet - Love Is All Around, poster

The Troggs tempered their first image on subsequent ballads, which utilized a sort of pre-"power ballad" approach. These weren't bad, and a few of them were British hits, but they weren't as fine as the initial blast of singles which established the band's image. "Love Is All Around," which restored them to the American Top Ten in 1968, was their finest effort in this vein. It was also their final big hit on either side of the Atlantic.



Love Is All Around, Fontana Records 1967

Love Is All Around by Reg Presley

I feel it in my fingers, I feel it in my toes. Well love is all around me, and so the feeling grows. It´s written on the wind, it´s everywhere I go. So if you really love me, come on and let it show. You know I love you, I always will. My mind's made up by the way that I feel, There´s no beginning, there´ll be no end Cause on my love you can depend. I see your face before me as I lay on my bed I kinda get to thinking, of all the things you said. You gave your promise to me, and I gave mine to you. I need someone beside me in everything I do. You know I love you.....(etc) It´s written on the wind.....(etc) Come on and let it show Come on and let it show Come on and let it show



Love Is All Around