

I N D U C T E E S



The Beach Boys

THE BEACH BOYS STARTED OUT STRICTLY AS A FAMILY AFFAIR. THE WILSON brothers, brought up in the Los Angeles suburb of Hawthorne, had always been around music; their father, Murry, had been a professional songwriter, and Brian, the oldest son, had studied music theory in school. According to writer David Leaf, the boys simply happened upon their gift for harmonies: "In the bedroom they shared, Brian taught his younger brothers to sing. Drummer Dennis and lead guitarist Carl learned the harmonies that Brian had absorbed from countless listenings to Four Freshmen and Hi-Lo's records. Joining in at holiday gatherings was Mike Love, the Wilson brothers' first cousin." Al Jardine, a teammate of Brian's on the Hawthorne High football squad and a folk-music fan, rounded out this informal group.

Before they became known as the Beach Boys, the Wilson brothers played high-school dances, billing themselves as Carl and the Passions or Kenny and the Cadets (Brian masqueraded as Kenny). In 1961, Dennis, 17, a true Southern California beach boy, decided that surfing would make a good subject for a song and urged Murry, 19, to write something about it. The group, encouraged and financed by Murry, went into a demo studio and recorded "Surfin'" in garage-rock splendor: Carl played acoustic guitar, Al played the double bass, and Brian kept the beat on garbage-can lids. At the time they were using the name the Pendletones, in the manner of popular folk-style vocal groups, but such a discreet moniker didn't seem to suit the strange Southern California doo-wop tune that Brian and Mike Love had created. So they chose a novelty name for what seemed like a novelty song: the Pendletones became the Beach Boys.

"Surfin'" was picked up by the local Candix label in December 1961. On New Year's Eve the newly christened Beach Boys played their first gig, in Long Beach, with a repertoire of three songs. By January the single was bubbling on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart. And surf music, as well as surfer style, was on the verge of becoming a national sensation. As writer Nik Cohn put it in his inimitable, hyperbolic way, Brian "worked a loose-limbed group sound and added his own falsetto. Then he stuck in some lazy twang guitar and rounded it all out with pumped-up Four Freshmen harmonies. No sweat, he'd created a bona fide surf music out of nothing. More, he had invented California."

Murry Wilson, a determined stage father, helped the Beach Boys land a deal with Capitol Records, where they followed up "Surfin'" with "Surfin' Safari." (Murry would put out his own Capitol LP, *The Many Moods of Murry Wilson*, at the height of his sons' popularity.) "Surfin' U.S.A.," however, was their breakthrough. Released in 1963, it reached Number Three on the pop chart. The sound this time was straight-ahead rock and roll — the band had lifted the melody from Chuck Berry's "Sweet Little Sixteen." It was the harmonies, though, that made the song so special; they rolled like waves over the simple, playful riffs. And Brian and Mike's lyrics treated surfing as something destined for world domination, not merely a neat thing to do. It was a fantastic daydream spiked with a dose of healthy rebellion: "Tell the teacher we're surfin' . . ."

"Surfin' U.S.A." was backed with "Shut Down"; the next single, "Surfer Girl," was paired with "Little Deuce Coupe." Just as the Beach Boys were popularizing the lingo and the accouterments of surfing, they were also initiating a hot-rod mania. Capitol had to work fast to keep up: the promotion department sent out a glossary of surfing terms and quickly had to compile a vocabulary for the car craze. But the company had to meet an even greater challenge. Brian, with the support of his father, had demanded the right to produce the Beach Boys himself, an unheard-of request at a time when the company controlled all aspects of recording. Capitol reluctantly granted Brian his wish, and the results were nothing less than extraordinary. The first album he produced, *Surfer Girl*, contained "In My Room" (released on 45 as the B side to "Be True to Your School"). It was a highly personal, austere arranged ballad featuring strings, which suggested for the first time that Brian's deepest source of inspiration came from nowhere near the beach.

Like Phil Spector, Brian was able to ennoble teenage emotion in the stunning settings he devised for Beach Boys songs. At the same time he transcended the subject matter as he approached the realm of pure, exhilarating sound. Think of the way the voices lift off the melody of "Fun, Fun, Fun." Just when the song seems to be over, the harmonies fade in and out like the sound of cars passing on a freeway.

Or recall the gnarly guitar changes on "I Get Around" — so quirky and unexpected — before the payoff of the soaring chorus. Perhaps the best of the Beach Boys' several 1964 hits was "When I Grow Up (to Be a Man)." Its litany of teen angst — "Will I look for the same things in a woman that I did in a girl?/Will I settle down fast or will I first wanna travel the world?" — seemed heartbreakingly naive, while the arrangement, featuring background voices that ticked off the years, was awesomely assured.

In 1965, five of the Beach Boys' albums went gold: *Surfin' U.S.A.*, *Surfer Girl*, *Beach Boys' Concert*, *Beach Boys Today* and *All Summer Long*. "Help Me Rhonda" became their second Number One single ("I Get Around," backed with "Don't Worry Baby," was their first, in 1964), and the group released what would become in later years their signature song, "California Girls." The year 1966 was different: the Beach Boys stopped being simply a Top Forty sensation, and Brian, as a composer and a producer, grew up.

The Beach Boys' aesthetic leap toward a more mature sound would have seemed sudden except for the fact that Brian had retired from the road in '65 to work on refining his ideas and sounds. He was replaced first by Glen Campbell and then by Bruce Johnston, a successful composer. *Pet Sounds*, a coming-of-age song cycle released in March 1966, was the culmination of his experiments, a hauntingly intimate work that draws its power from the subtlety of its arrangements and the simplicity of its storytelling. Brian, with lyricist Tony Asher, took the prototypical California boy out of a beach-bound fantasy world and stuck him right smack in the middle of real life — to face love and loneliness and leaving home.

Pet Sounds was not a commercial success in America, although the two singles culled from it made the Top Ten. In the years since, however, it has been hailed as a masterpiece equal in scope to the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The album did find instant acceptance in Britain, where it remained in the Top Ten for six months; according to David Leaf, Paul McCartney has often cited it as a source of inspiration for *Sgt. Pepper*. Despite the artistic setback at home, Brian followed up the album with his most ambitious undertaking yet, "Good Vibrations," said to be the most expensive single to be recorded up to that time. It was undoubtedly worth the \$50,000 it allegedly cost to make; the four-minute-and-change pop symphony had a palpably magical feel. Once again Brian had captured the ears of the world.

The Beach Boys wouldn't find satisfying artistic success in America again until "Surf's Up" was released in 1971, on their own Brother Records, distributed by Reprise. (They had left Capitol when their contract expired in 1969.) As the sensibilities of the Sixties changed, the Beach Boys remained beloved, but they were regarded as slightly square. They turned to Europe, where they found considerable acclaim and often stole the thunder from trendier rock stars at festival gigs. By the mid-Seventies, Americans had rediscovered the Beach Boys as they toured with such acts as Chicago and the Eagles. They soon began to fill entire stadiums on their own, performing for audiences that often sang their hits back to them. Brian Wilson intermittently joined the group onstage.

Since then the Beach Boys, fronted by the unfailingly energetic Mike Love, have become perennial concert favorites, drawing unprecedented crowds to their summertime celebrations. Carl Wilson, in the meantime, has also developed a solo career, reflecting the greater role he played in later Beach Boys productions, particularly the lovely *Holland*. Dennis Wilson — the wild one, the guy the girls always screamed for, the bona fide beach boy who first inspired Brian — didn't make it; in 1983 he drowned while diving off a friend's boat in Marina del Rey. Brian, figuratively speaking, has remained "in his room," still searching for perfect sounds the way a surfer seeks the perfect wave. Brian's first solo album is due out later this year. ■

Brian Wilson, born June 20th, 1942, Hawthorne, California.

Carl Wilson, born December 21st, 1946, Hawthorne, California.

Mike Love, born March 15th, 1941, Los Angeles.

Al Jardine, born September 3rd, 1942, Lima, Ohio.

Dennis Wilson, born December 4th, 1944, Hawthorne, California; died December 28th, 1983.

Marina del Rey, California.

ON THE BEACH

By Parke Puterbaugh

BEFORE THERE WAS A BRITISH INVASION, the state of California infiltrated the rock and roll charts with a sound that could have come from nowhere else: surf music. Though the tendency is to dismiss the pre-Beatles Sixties as a period of musical doldrums, the fact remains that the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean and many others created a viable, indigenous music scene in Southern California well before the Fab Four landed on these shores. The Beach Boys actually racked up seven Top Forty hits before the Beatles placed "I Want to Hold Your Hand" on the American charts.

It was only natural that California would evolve as a musical center in the early Sixties. New York and Philadelphia were waning as music-industry hubs in the wake of the payola scandal and other battles with the rock-spurning establishment. Rock and roll had lost some of its founding fathers in plane and car crashes, while others had been led off to prison or the army. California, meanwhile, was poised on the brink of a new age, and its affluent suburban offspring were ready to sing all about it.

The Beach Boys are generally deemed responsible for spinning the California myth, although Jan and Dean (with "Surf City") and the Mamas and the Papas (with "California Dreamin'") certainly warbled a few siren songs of their own. The Wilson brothers' childhood was hardly idyllic — Brian has characterized their home town of Hawthorne as a cow town — but somehow the mystical promise of abundant life in the Golden State transcended the foursquare suburban reality. As Brian explained it in 1976, "It's not just surfing; it's the outdoors and cars and sunshine; it's the sociology of California; it's the way of California."

Southern California — the Los Angeles basin in particular — was the well-spring of the California myth. For those who made their living plowing acreage in the Plains states or who were buried up to their knees in winter snows in the Northeast, it was a potent come-on. The California myth promised everything: health and longevity beneath a bountiful sun that shone warmly year-round; prosperity in a job-filled environment catering to the burgeoning aeronautics and communications industries; and, finally, a relaxed approach to life that had "fun, fun, fun" as its first commandment.

The state of California, like the rest of the nation, was gearing up for an era of change as the Fifties dissolved into the Sixties. In the White House the paternalism of Eisenhower yielded to the youthful vigor of John F. Kennedy. The baby boom was filling suburban bedrooms to capacity, and the suburbs themselves were growing in all directions. America's middle class had never lived so well or been so large. California, Mecca of the miraculous, was at the leading edge of this renaissance.



For anyone under thirty, the operative word was *freedom*, and it was inevitable that it would find expression in the pop-music realm. In communicating all the promised-land fantasies, Nik Cohn wrote in *Rock from the Beginning*, "California pop has always been like comic strips . . . images of sand and sea and sun, everything drawn bright and clean and simple." At first, California music was so stripped down and elemental that it dispensed with words entirely. Until the Beach Boys came along, surf music was an instrumental genre, composed and played by musicians attempting to simulate the peculiar locomotion of riding the waves.

Surfing itself was a sport that California, among the lower forty-eight states, could claim as its own. It was introduced on the West Coast around the turn of the century by native Hawaiians George Freeth and Duke Kahanamoku. They were hired to drum up interest at several fledgling California resorts by demonstrating this odd new sport to curious tourists. Kahanamoku was an Olympic-class swimmer and world-class surfer paid by a railroad mogul to ride the waves at Huntington Beach. Freeth, who was tagged "the man who walked on water," gave surfing exhibitions behind the Hotel Redondo, at Redondo Beach. Both men piloted ten-foot redwood planks, primitive forerunners of the shorter, lighter boards that have since made surfing accessible to anyone brave enough to stand up on a wave. As it turned out, however, no one did more to spread the gospel of surfing than the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean and unsung hero Dick Dale.

Dale was the undisputed king of the surf guitar, a hotshot instrumentalist whose stylistic roots lay in the rockabilly twang of such guitarists as Duane Eddy and Link Wray. It was Dale's particular genius to point the guitar's focus westward and adapt it to the thrill-seeking lifestyle of California's surfing cult. No one had ever done this before, and it helped forge a sense of identity and solidarity within the surfers' ranks. It also gave them something to do on Saturday nights: Dale's weekly shows at the Rendezvous Ballroom on Balboa Peninsula regularly drew a crowd of 4000 looking to dance off the soreness of a hard day's surfing.

According to the maestro, "Real surfing music is instrumental, characterized by heavy staccato picking on a Fender Stratocaster guitar." It could *only* be played on a Strat, and it helped to have the reverb and tremolo jacked up as well. Dale picked fast and hard over R&B-based changes, mixing in some rapid flamenco-style fingerpicking. A real surfer could listen to one of his fast-fingered solos and feel the surging power of the ocean as it hurtled him toward

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IN CONCERT



shore. One of the most popular surfing beaches on the California coast, off Dana Point, was informally known as the Boneyard. Both the danger and the release of surfing were evident in Dale's two-minute instrumental frenzies, and although he never had a Top Forty hit, such numbers as "Let's Go Trippin'," "Surf Beat" and "Miserlou" were regional classics.

The surf-music genre did leave its mark on the national charts via a pair of one-hit wonders: the Surfaris ("Wipe Out") and the Chantays ("Pipeline"). Both were released in 1963, the biggest year for surf instrumentals before the double whammy of the Beach Boys' vocal innovations and the leaps and bounds of the British Invasion put wordless twanging out of business. The Chantays, a five-man garage band from Santa Ana, rode "Pipeline" all the way to Number Four. The Surfaris squeezed a little more mileage out of "Wipe Out," which soared to Number Two in 1963, then went to Number Sixteen after being reissued in '66. Commencing with a falsetto witch's laugh (courtesy of their manager), "Wipe Out" was a tumbling wave of tom-tom rolls and frenzied guitar breaks. This one had 'em doing the Surfer Stomp at every lean-to on the Pacific Coast Highway – and still does, for that matter. Based on record sales and chart positions, "Wipe Out" remains the number-one surf hit of all time.

Surf music was primarily designed for dancing at beach parties, amusement parks and surfers' clubs. The four- and five-man bands custom-tooled their repertoire for an evening of stomping and sweating by a roomful of tireless surfers. The Routers took a song called "Let's Go," adapted it to a new dance craze – the pony – and had a sizable hit with "Let's Go (Pony)," whose familiar clap and chant has since become a cheerleaders' staple. The main man behind the Routers was a songwriter and producer named Joe Saraceno, who also pointed the five-man Marketts, from Balboa, toward the pop charts.

The Marketts made their mark with "Surfer's Stomp," "Balboa Blue" and "Out of Limits" – the latter a Number Three smash based on the theme from the *Outer Limits* TV show. Then there were the Ventures. Although they weren't technically a surf band, this Seattle foursome recorded an album or two in the style – particularly the 1963 LP *Surfin!* – and they remain rock and roll's most successful instrumental combo. Finally, as a footnote to the surfing sound, mention should be made of the Pyramids, from Long Beach. Not only did they author a bona fide surf classic ("Penetration," which reached Number Eighteen), they epitomized its outer limits as personalities, performing with shaved heads and arriving at shows in helicopters and atop elephants.

Though nearly everything that came out of the surf genre was maximum reverb, high-octane rock and roll, Jack Nitzsche's "Lonely Surfer" was an enchanting exception. Every aspect of the surfer's lifestyle – the risky mastery of the waves, the oneness with the ocean, the blond physicality – has been romanticized by the Great American Myth Machine. But whereas most surf instrumentals played up the rough-and-tumble nature of the sport, Nitzsche explored the sensitive nature of the solitary surfer in this pensive composition, which had a swelling, orchestral grandeur. Nitzsche was Phil Spector's arranger and right-hand man at the time of some of Spector's greatest successes as a producer, including "He's a Rebel" and "Da Doo Ron Ron." "The Lonely Surfer" reached

Number Thirty-nine on the national charts in 1963. It was one of the loveliest pieces of musical driftwood to wash ashore in that decade.

The musical empire masterminded by Spector and Nitzsche – who relocated their base of operations from New York City to Hollywood's fabled Gold Star Studios around 1962 – was a key source of inspiration for Brian Wilson. As the Beach Boys leader, Wilson himself quickly rose to the challenge of the studio, staking out his claim at Western Studios. Spector and Wilson employed many of the same session musicians – now-familiar names like Leon Russell and Glen Campbell, as well as such dependable sessionmen as drummer Hal Blaine and bassist Ray Pohlman.

The arrival of the Beach Boys on the recording scene signaled the imminent flowering of California music. It quickly passed from a regional curiosity, chiefly instrumental in nature, to a phenomenon that seized the nation's imagination. The Beach Boys were California's foremost cultural emissaries; they did more to promote the state than all of the tourism boards and chambers of commerce put together. Not only did the Beach Boys spread the gospel of surfing – "even in places where the nearest thing to surf is maybe the froth on a chocolate shake!" as producer Nick Venet wrote on the back of *Surfin' U.S.A.*, their second album – they sold a larger vision of an earthly paradise called California to the rest of the world. They also opened up a whole generation of contemporaries to the possibilities of a West Coast sound, based on complex vocal harmonies and a celebration of regional identity.

California was poised on the brink of a new age, and its affluent suburban offspring – like the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean – were ready to sing all about it, with songs like "Surfin' Safari," "Little Deuce Coupe" and "Dead Man's Curve."

The Beach Boys were assisted in this endeavor by Jan and Dean, with whom they worked closely. Jan Berry and Dean Torrence were the other demigods in the car-and-surf-song sweepstakes. This duo from West Los Angeles actually predated the Beach Boys by a few years, cutting their first singles in the late Fifties. (Before Jan and Dean, if you're really digging up the roots, there was Jan and Amie, who scored a Top Ten hit in 1958 with "Jennie Lee." Old pal Dean rejoined Jan a year later, after a stint in the army reserves.) Working on developing their vocal sound for long hours in Jan's garage, they cooked up a Fifties rock and roll tune called "Baby Talk." Their garage tape was given a coat of studio polish by producers Lou Adler and Herb Alpert, and "Baby Talk" went Top Ten in 1959.

"Jennie Lee" and "Baby Talk" were both homemade records issued on small independent labels – Arwin and Dore, respectively – and each found a national audience. Their success encouraged the fledgling Beach Boys, who were fooling around with songs and tape recorders at the Wilson brothers' home at about the same time. With "Surfin'" and "Surfin' Safari" the Beach Boys made that magical, intuitive leap – bridging Chuck Berry and the Four Freshmen and adding their own libretto about surfing and the California way of life – and became overnight sensations.



Ironically, Jan and Dean had the first surfing song to go Number One – and it was Brian Wilson who gave it to them. After the Beach Boys' early hits, Jan and Dean switched gears from their “bomp”-based Fifties sound and went surfing, as it were. The acts became friendly after playing a few shows together, and Jan and Dean recorded their own versions of “Surfin’” and “Surfin’ Safari” for *Jan & Dean Take Linda Surfin’*, on which the Beach Boys provided vocal and instrumental assistance. One day, Brian previewed “Surfin’ U.S.A.” for them at the piano. Needing a hit, Jan and Dean asked for the song, but Brian said he was reserving it for the Beach Boys. Instead he offered an unfinished number called “Surf City.” They worked it up and recorded it, with an uncredited Brian singing falsetto, and “Surf City” – with its promise of “two girls for every boy” – topped the American charts in the summer of 1963.

A torrent of hits followed for both acts. They managed ten Top Forty hits between them in 1964 alone, which established their staying power in the year the Beatles and the British Invasion wiped nearly everything else American (except Motown) off the charts. The Californians' summer fever became a national contagion. Surf music began turning up in such unlikely places as Colorado, which produced the Astronauts, and Minnesota, home of the Trashmen, whose “Surfin’ Bird” went to Number Four in late 1963. Another Midwestern band, the Rivieras, delivered the all-time West Coast tribute “California Sun.” Even sooty old New York turned out the Trade Winds, who scored with “New York’s a Lonely Town.” (The rest of the line went, “. . . when you’re the only surfer boy around.”) That’s just the tiniest tip of an iceberg that floated around the globe. As proof of this one can consult a book entitled *British Beach Music*, a study of *English* surf music of the Sixties.

Back on the West Coast a small cadre of writers, producers and performers – in addition to the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean – was turning out the real thing (or at least turning it out in the real environment). Among them were P.F. (“Flip”) Sloan and his partner Steve Barri – a.k.a. the Fantastic Baggys – whose “Summer Means Fun” was the final word on the subject. In addition to cutting their own sides for Imperial Records, the Baggys provided backing vocals on many Jan and Dean songs. Curiously, in the space of a year, Sloan would metamorphose from surfer to folkie – or from “Tell ‘Em I’m Surfing,” one of the Baggys’ early singles, to “Eve of Destruction,” the Sloan-penned protest song that, sung by Barry McGuire, went to Number One. Sloan released a couple of Dylanesque solo albums on the side, which didn’t stop the Sloan-Barri songwriting team from penning pop hits for the Grass Roots and the Turtles in the mid-Sixties.

Sloan was one among a number of accomplished California lyricists whose vivid, often highly technical and jargon-filled lyrics animated the world of cars and surfboards. Gary Usher and Roger Christian, for example, were both frequent collaborators of Brian Wilson’s. It takes a certain kind of genius to compose a coherent set of lyrics about a hot rod, as Usher did in the Beach Boys’ “409” and as Christian did in “Little Deuce Coupe.” A short time later Tony Asher, an ad writer turned lyricist, became Brian’s collaborator on *Pet Sounds*, and the message evolved from cars and girls to young love, self-

doubt and growing up.

A future Beach Boy, Bruce Johnston, was chummy with the circle of musicians and producers around L.A. who created the California sound. Johnston was acquainted with Phil Spector and played on Sandy Nelson’s “Teen Beat” back in 1959. In the early Sixties he jumped on the surfing bandwagon with a series of 45s and albums released under his own name (*Surfers Pajama Party*, by the Bruce Johnston Surfing Band, for example). He formed a partnership with Terry Melcher – a record producer and the son of Doris Day – and the pair made records under various guises: Bruce and Terry, the Hot Doggers and the Rip Chords. The latter outfit, which was essentially Johnston and Melcher masquerading under a group name, charted some of the biggest car hits of the day with “Hey Little Cobra” and “Three Window Coupe.” Johnston’s credentials were in order, in other words, when the Beach Boys approached him in 1965 about joining them on tour. (Brian’s on-the-road replacement had been Glen Campbell.) Johnston became a full-fledged Beach Boy, remaining with the group through 1972 and then rejoining it in 1978. On occasion, Johnston would work with Melcher in the mid-Sixties. For instance, Melcher produced and Johnston sang on several of Paul Revere and the Raiders’ biggest hits, including “Just Like Me.”

The Raiders were just one of many West Coast groups that rose to prominence in the wake of the attention the Beach Boys and their allies brought to California. The medium of television picked up where “California Girls” left off, spreading the word that the West Coast was the hot new center of rock and roll in America. The Raiders became the band on *Where the Action Is*, Dick Clark’s popular weekday-afternoon rockathon. Then there were the nighttime rock variety shows – *Shindig* and *Hullabaloo* – all based in L.A. and all of them showcasing local bands alongside the visiting headliners from Britain. Don Kirshner moved his headquarters from New York to Los Angeles and launched the TV show *The Monkees* on September 12th, 1966.

In the mid-Sixties a new wave of Southern California-based acts, spiritual heirs to the Beach Boys and the first wave of surf and hot-rod bands, swept the Top Forty. Among them were the Turtles, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, Sonny and Cher, the Mamas and the Papas (discovered and produced by Lou Adler), Johnny Rivers (another Adler protégé), the Byrds (who were produced by Terry Melcher) and, of course, the Monkees.

In 1967, California would enter a whole different stage: the Summer of Love, the Monterey Pop Festival, the San Francisco Sound and the darker side of L.A., as represented by the Doors and the acid-rock bands. But it all really began – the California dream, if you believe it, or myth, if you’re skeptical – with five barefoot, Pendleton-shirted Beach Boys back in Hawthorne, one of whom lived the worry-free life of a surfer, while another set that fantasy to music. Years before a generation of antiestablishment pilgrims headed west to forge an alternative lifestyle, the Beach Boys had unwittingly drawn up the blueprint. As Beach Boy Carl Wilson has said, “People wanted to hang out at the beach. It was really an early hippie thing.” The Beach Boys were the Pied Pipers; it was they who first put the rainbows in everyone’s ears. ■