The final word on the Beach Boys versus Beatles debate, neglect of American acts under the British Invasion, and more controversial critique on your favorite Sixties acts, with a Foreword by Fred Vail, legendary Beach Boys advance man and co-manager.

BEACH BOYS vs BEATLEMANIA: Rediscovering Sixties Music

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BEACH BOYS vs Beatlemania:

Rediscovering Sixties Music

by

G A De Forest

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1. THIS WHOLE WORLD

Rock is a fickle mistress. While some rock stars go on decade after decade on mediocre talents even the great ones of the Sixties—by consensus Rock's greatest decade—seemed to be here and gone in a heartbeat. And while other great ones of arts and entertainment—actors, filmmakers, painters, even composers—carve out careers over a generation or two the two world-shaking acts of the Sixties, the Beatles and Beach Boys, each had half a dozen years or so of world fame to make marks which have lasted. It is little short of a miracle that many young musicians still revere Brian Wilson (and to a growing extent, Dennis Wilson) as creative figures worth aspiring to emulate.

The Beach Boys are "the golden boys of rock'n'roll" (Nikki Corvette's Rock'n'Roll Heaven*", 1997)—all the more remarkable because it is an image made from their music, without the hype lavished on the Beatles by the record company they had in common, Capitol-EMI. Perhaps better than any other performers in 20th Century show business they thrived through the ordeal of being overshadowed by a new dominating name so soon after starting. What music historian today places the names of Rudy Vallee or Russ Columbo alongside Bing Crosby's, though both were once as big as he?*

They had been on the scene a year and a half, had reached the top, when the Beatles—in many ways similar in essentials—arrived with a jolt to world consciousness, threatening to obliterate any valid place the Beach Boys had in pop culture. A total eclipse was the reward for many pop acts who had served their apprenticeship, built a body of work, and now found themselves irremedially out of fashion. If the Beatles' breakthrough had happened as attempted a year earlier the Beach Boys might exist today in the history of popular culture as a tiny footnote the size of Jimmy Gilmer & the Fireballs'. Instead, they enhanced their career geometrically and staked an enduring claim in the pantheon of pop.

Brian Wilson & the Beach Boys matching the Beatles makes one wonder at other confluences: Botticelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo and

Raphael; Bach vs Handel; Mozart vs Beethoven. Does one inevitably feed off another to make oneself greater? In such doublings-up of artistic brilliance it is as if one artist existed to fill out the possibilities missed by contemporaries—whether of style, technique or emphasis. For, given that true artists might be unconsciously influenced by their fellows but above all must follow their own inclinations, each must expand the sum of artistic knowledge—rather than merely duplicating the work of someone more talented as lesser 'artists' do. In the context of the Sixties, having the Beach Boys, why need we ever listen to Jan & Dean, the Hondells, the Turtles or the Cowsills, except in the occasional mood for nostalgia? And having the Beatles, would accidentally wiping the entire stock of tapes stored at Oldiesrepository.com of Gerry & the Pacemakers, Billy J Kramer, Freddie & the Dreamers, Herman's Hermits and a large chunk of the Bee Gees' and ELO's repertoires be such a loss?

But it is not destined to be, and the general rule of life being that quantity is preferred to quality, we can look forward to another decade or two of readily hummable ditties from Sixties imitators recycling from every source available into every orifice accessible.

THE BEACH BOYS… THE NAME CONJURES VISIONS to those unborn at the time of their last big hit, though for a long while the span across no.1s, 1964-88, was an all-comers record. We are reminded of it by bands who crib on their name for recognition value—the Beastie Boys vying with the closest yet, Scandinavian group the Bitch Boys. A New Zealand guitar jazz group goes under the name of Surfin' USSR. And then there are the Butthole Surfers.

Their personal story, centered on the mercurial, self-destructive personalities of Brian & Dennis Wilson, after a series of tv movies and documentaries, lives in the popular imagination as vividly as that of any show business phenomenon from any time. And in the creative struggle, if there is anything today to match the emotional turmoil of Beethoven or Van Gogh, this must be it. While many from recent generations know little of their music, others know they were led by an eccentric who "spent years lying in bed," as the legend goes; or

that they were the band that spent heaps perfecting their recordings; or they were around at the same time as the Beatles, yet their music sounds somehow fresher.

In speaking of Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys' leader, few if any have noted similarities to Elvis Presley, the embodiment of rock'n'roll. At first sight it is hard to reconcile Carl Wilson's assertion—and father Murry has been credited with similar—that his big brother “could have been Elvis Presley if he'd wanted to.” Not only was Brian not the world's greatest sex symbol, as Elvis was to fans, Brian during his sexual peak was afraid of women. Elvis dissed them, it has been suggested (by biographer Albert Goldman), in reaction to his momma's boy cum good ole boy complex. Both could take the best from contemporaries and absorb their essence, though Brian could also from classical music, twenties jazz… Anyone who has listened to Beach Boys 1964-65 knows he could duplicate the vocals of Elvis, his beloved Four Freshmen and Phil Spector's girl groups.

Elvis and Brian had kindred spirits of a naïf: children at heart, searching for fun things to stave off ever-threatening depression, addicted to junk food and falling prey to the spiritual pursuits of Sixties LA. Both had self-indulgent, self-obsessed private lives. Apart from a common proclivity for self-absorption, Brian, though three inches taller, as he grew heavier came to bear a resemblance at a glance to the later fattening Elvis. Coincidentally, Brian would for some years in the Sixties also share Elvis's exclusive street address—Bellagio Road, Bel Air, Beverly Hills.

While Elvis hid his unconventional side alternately behind a macho veneer in private and a polite Southern Gentleman public persona, Brian surrendered at the most basic level to his impulses, until spontaneity was taken from him by repeated breakdowns and he was reprogrammed in the early Eighties by a therapist. Brian clung to his childlike vulnerability—the better to free his creative spirit from ego-driven concerns.

In following their ‘authentic selves’, Wilson showed more stickability than Elvis, who seems to have been readily manipulated when threatened by loss of his stardom—by the Colonel or movie studio bosses. Early associates at Sun studios have said he wanted

nothing more than to become a second Dean Martin. If there's even a tiny kernel of truth in this it is obvious that post-army he was far more malleable to showbiz dictates and was no longer offering himself as any kind of rebel or candidate as King of Rock'n'Roll. Did Elvis abdicate at the behest of Frank Sinatra, who detested rock as amoral jungle music, in order to regain his high footing on the showbiz ladder via appearances in a Sinatra tv special? Was this his priority—to win the stamp of approval from the showbiz bigwigs? The question can as easily be put to the Beatles, who inherited his mantle.

Both Elvis's and Brian's psyches took temporary batterings at the onset of the Beatles. That said, the Beach Boys and Beatles had more in common than any other two groups who gained world fame in the Sixties (aside from the Beatles and Bee Gees, superficially). Both rock-harmony groups were blessed, and cursed, with strong personalities dragging in different directions. In one, the strain eventually destroyed the group. In the other, though each of the three Wilson brothers embarked on solo careers, breaking from the family fold proved impossible. For the most part, for listeners, the diversity in both was a good thing—so much variety that you might search across the dozen next best groups for a similar creative span.

Based partly on the fact that they were similarly universal, to many Sixties survivors—dedicated followers of fashion—the Beach Boys were passé once the Beatles were embraced by the world in 1964, and further out of it when Bob Dylan became fashionable the year after that, then Jimi Hendrix…. To today's cynical Oldies Radio programmers they are just another niche act loaded at random on a neverending tape loop for a living. These middlemen who market music still refer to Beach Boys 'surf' or 'summer' music, not having the wit or imagination to appreciate it out of that context. Surf was rarely mentioned in their songs after mid-1963, summer post mid-1965. Eclectic works 'Wouldn't It Be Nice?' and 'Good Vibrations' are referred to today with circular logic as surf music simply because they're Beach Boy songs. It's as if the pioneering, transcendent *Pet Sounds* and the "Smile" Era, and the seventies never happened—like the Beatles would have ended up if defined by what they did in their

first two years of stardom, from *Please Please Me* to *Beatles For Sale*.

EVERYONE, IT SEEMS, KNOWS THE BEACH BOYS sound. Music lovers revere them as legends despite appearing on lowbrow tv (*Full House, Home Improvement, Baywatch, T J Hooker*), or as rheumatic middle-agers cavorting with siliconed beach bunnies in a choreographed nightmare for the 'Kokomo' video. On tour they lowered themselves as "… featuring John Stamos" as if the actor in *Full House* (and producer of a miniseries on the group) not only replaced the late Dennis Wilson but was the star of the group.

In 1995 I was browsing in a West Auckland public library, half-aware of three boys in the next aisle, aged no more than twelve. One burst forth at a real find, surreal as it sounded: "The Beach Boys!" They had released one new album in fifteen years and peaked in popularity another fifteen before that—*20 years before this boy was born*; the youngest Beach 'Boy' was nearing fifty. I tried to think of a parallel in history. Did boys of the Sixties crave Glenn Miller? Al Jolson? Bing Crosby? Or today react the same to, say, the Beatles? The Beach Boys may be unique in creating a timeless sound, able to attract the young as readily as nostalgia buffs, their work through the Sixties and their neglected seventies career acknowledged by today's serious music critics, rock's middle-aged statesmen and by hot new bands as maybe the strongest of all influences.

This is surely the supreme test of a work of true art—that it not only impresses experts and musical peers but withstands the erosion of time and communicates to the broadest audience on a fundamental level, continuing to touch people's emotions regardless of changing tastes and fashions. Pinning Wilson's music down, some have called it a cross between Tchaikowsky and the Four Freshmen. If you imagine the melodies arranged for and played on harpsichord (hear his solo original of 'Wonderful' for *Smile*) they are virtually the only pieces in Rock that translate effortlessly back to the Classical Era. That is reckoning without group influences from rock'n'roll (Carl), blues

(Dave), r&b (Mike), folk-Americana (Al), Wagner (Dennis), Doo-Wop and Jazz—Brian; classical/jazz/Easy Listening—Bruce.

It has been described as "the happiest sound in rock music." But this is forgetting the melancholy, the angst, the elemental power, all conveyed through the music. What is meant is their music is exuberant, the opposite of clinical, listless Abba. Classic Beach Boys music of the Sixties might be called deeply enjoyable—like rare great films you want to re-experience, reflecting every emotion, unlike the bulk of rock music and movies, which tread water safe at the shallow end. Its profundity is sensed through sheer gut feeling.

A good word for the group's treatment of music is spirited: Whatever the mood of a piece or its attached lyrics, it came from the soul and was delivered sincerely, in true spirit. Bee Gee Maurice Gibb, speaking not long before he died, might have captured it: The Beach Boys were "great at soul music—not black soul, but music from the soul, from the heart."

The sense of goodwill engendered in the listener is matched by the transparent delight of the performers. No major rock act took themselves less seriously, or their work more seriously. Their histrionic power was considerable: Dennis said that the Wilson father, Murry—a tough nut to crack by all accounts—was at times so affected by their singing as to dissolve in tears. The Wilson brothers repeatedly described music as a "holy" thing. As one would imagine Michelangelo doing before setting out on a demanding work for the Pope, they prayed for the ability to make *Pet Sounds* the greatest ever album—and succeeded. Like all great music it explores the gamut of human feeling, unlike modern rock with its heavy beat and volume belted out with zero finesse. The musical intricacy of chord progressions and subtlety of timbre required are simply beyond the creative nerve or ken of today's pop/rock writers and performers.

The Beach Boys are mistakenly but duly credited with mega surf-and-hotrod hits 'Surf City' and 'Little Honda', both written, arranged and part performed by Brian Wilson but issued by other acts—and 'Little Old Lady from Pasadena' because performed in obvious imitation. Their style was appropriated by contemporaries and has been misappropriated by hack soundalikes for tv and radio jingles

ever since. Their music should not be confused with the likes of the soundtrack of *Back to the Beach* with Frankie Avalon & Annette Funicello (Paramount Pictures 1987)—a superficial facsimile and typical travesty arranged with harmony lines added at random and none of the emotional substance.

Beach Boy music is outgoing, inclusive, speaks directly to the listener on the same level. Unlike the conspicuously indoor Beatles, who cultivated more and more an intellectual veneer, all but Carl had been athletes, Mike distinguishing himself in track, Brian a quarterback and baseballer, maddening his coaches by dumping sport for music. Al was up for selection by colleges as a running back. Carl started out unashamedly fat, Brian meeting him halfway through inactivity. Dennis, lean, surfer-muscled, excelled at everything he took up. Almost too good-looking, he hardly seemed one of the family: “If there wasn't the Beach Boys and there wasn't music, I would not even talk to them. But through music I fell in love with my brothers.” It turned out he was most like his chunky human dynamo of a father in restless temperament.

Their visage was outdoorsy, father-manager Murry struggling to keep Denny's and Dave's sprouting peroxide tops within bounds and Mike's shoes on and shirt tucked in. Older tv-watchers and fans of classic compilation videos see them lined up on stage as fresh-faced kids in the trademark candy-cane shirts and white surfer dungarees (chinos, in Southern California vernacular); matching baby faces of Brian and Carl atop Fender guitars alongside compact sandy-haired Al Jardine, ditto, at stage left. The lean, handsome Mike Love of the receding hair is on mike on the right, and athletic Denny back on drums—the real surfer and bona fide box-office sex symbol, from summer '64 growing his wayward surfer hair into a not-quite-beatlesque thing.

The playful anarchy that connected one to another on stage and in the studio—heightened by family tensions—transmitted a psychic-musical energy to audiences. This contrasted with the sterile Osmonds, that other scrubbed-white vocal group of brothers occupying American tv screens, the darlings of *The Andy Williams Show* from late 1962. Fabricated with their careful choreography,

glowing teeth and cloying sentimentalizing of a rewritten Americana, the brethren from Utah revived a tradition that had died with Vaudeville over thirty years before but has since carried on through an endless stream of over-drilled fivesomes, as ‘boy bands’ and ‘girl bands’ playing no instruments but overperforming carnie style, dancing and singing in unison: something resembling not too distantly a trained animal act.

A Beach Boy tv image transmogrified naturally. From their first appearance summer '62 in Pendleton lumberjack shirts, propelling ‘Surfin' Safari’ live, they were seen early '63 seated as reluctant choir boys lip-synching four-part harmony *a capella*, not quite believable as an angelic, apprentice barbershop quartet— untamable, husk-voiced Dennis watching from behind his drum kit. At the height of fame they donned leather jackets as hotrodders leading the Rockers of the world against the threat of effeminate Mods in back-combed hair and frills; and convincingly imitated a gang of beach toughs intimidating ho-dads Bob Hope and Jack Benny.

Far from Swinging London hyping the latest Carnaby Street fashion, unsophisticated suburbanite Brian Wilson “created an industry—but that's not what he meant to do.” The words are Terry Melcher's, leading Los Angeles record producer of the Byrds and r&b's Paul Revere & the Raiders who would move in and out of the Beach Boy scene, son of Doris Day, world's no.1 box-office movie star through the early Sixties. As songwriter and arranger for his group, and producer of their records, the eldest Wilson brother—inspired by Dennis's rebellious, physical exploits—defined a new setting for them in a creative environment where they could explore new bounds of mind and soul; and as a by-product depicted an enhanced, larger-than-life California for those unable to experience the intimacy of his work. His dual vision, largely fulfilled, was a parallel world in which his music took on a spiritual existence.

The spinoffs were immeasurable. Few of the major recording companies had bothered to keep offices in LA. Soon the movie capital would boast a parallel claim in recorded music, Wilson paving the way for the Byrds, Turtles and the Mamas & the Papas —LA's branch of San Francisco flower children. (The connection revived in

the next generation via Wilson-Phillips, a female trio cooing three no.1s: daughter of Papa John & Mama Michelle Phillips and the daughters of Brian Wilson, the elder Carnie latterly a tv talkshow queen.) The westward momentum created by the early seventies was such that Motown left Detroit in the lurch to resettle in Los Angeles.

Serious music critics not fooled by the unworldly exterior would come to refer to Brian Wilson as an *auteur*—as in the tradition of French filmmakers, the 'author' of his work. If a film director conceived a new movie genre, researched his subject, scripted his screenplays, placed the cameras, played the main characters and chose the rest of the ensemble cast, edited and completed post-production solo, then gave roadshow performances there would be grounds for comparison. His Sixties peers the Beatles, Stones and The Who use everyday superlatives to describe him.

By temperament and upbringing they rebelled against the puffery of show business injected into the ego-driven pretence that enables superstars to swallow their own hype. Their innate humility and loyalty to their public was such that Mike Love, vilified for many things but always a stalwart for the group, once performed with a strep throat and 104° temperature. In stark contrast to the Beatles' awareness and sanguine acceptance of an exalted destiny, when audiences started screaming for the Beach Boys they looked around in alarm. Dennis: "We thought there was a fire." Yet, as they grew up, evolved more complex music and pined for the innocence the world had lost, they lost their fairweather fans because they weren't 'fun' anymore; but they never were remotely the lightweights the undiscerning took them for. Those who couldn't keep up settled for the Hollies or Tremeloes.

The Beach Boys represented the California lifestyle and the hopes and dreams of teen America in facing the English hordes. They were the one major pre-Beatles act to thrive on the competition, their artistic reputation enhanced and fame reinforced worldwide as a bulwark of resistance to all things 'fab'. Not reaching their world pinnacle until three years after B-Day, for a year they surpassed in popularity the Beatles in both the US and UK, most of continental Europe, Russia and Japan: virtually the known rock world. It was

their tragedy that the fine balance of elements that barely allowed their success against the odds was turned on its head. Henceforth they were adored the world over for their real musical achievements but scorned as walking anachronisms in their home country for lack of a sociopolitical stance or Afro hairstyle.

The sound, not any superstar *cachet*, is what made them famous and sustains them in the world's consciousness. In the Sixties the Beach Boys had just thirteen Billboard top ten songs—but 22 taking in other US charts; plus another six that made the UK and other major top tens. In August 2002 Capitol claimed they had "earned some 35 top ten singles… over the course of four decades." In total they have garnered hit status for more than eighty songs in charts around the world (see Appendix I). In a chameleon-like decade they weren't matched for consistency. For almost five years, 1963 to late 1967, every single issued in America made Billboard's top twenty. And for their first ten years every Hot 100 entry—36—refused to settle for the bottom quarter of the chart: Every song that kicked in kicked on. But, fought head to head to a standstill by the Beatles, chart trivia barely hint at the full story.

THEIR DETERMINED NAÏVETE MADE THEM TARGETS. The Sixties abounded in Austin Powers *poseurs*—hangers-on more than musicians. The fashion industry, especially in Britain, was a hotbed of bitchiness dictating *the* 'correct' look, and very quickly, the one correct, latest sound. The Beach Boys, who had perfected their style before British rule, were therefore not even in the race and were short-changed as artists for their unpretentious, single-minded focus on their art. Serious musicians knew better. Bob Dylan, Robert Zimmermann of small-town Minnesota reinventing himself after pastoral Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, Fifties darling of culture vulture America—saw fit to perform with Brian Wilson. But ruling were acolytes—satellites reflecting the lights of Dylan, Beatles, Stones, Simon & Garfunkel, Donovan, poet-guru Leonard Cohen….

This self-serving elitist element championed nonsensical upper middle class rebellion—an inbreeding ingroup boring the pants off those wanting truth in music, seducing the pants off wannabe-

intellectual coeds. These disciples heard music best through clouds of hashish and faded fast as charmless antiques of their era. Dopeheads mellowed out beyond feeling are its only legacy. Today necrophiliac groupies idol-worship self-destructive late-Sixties performers—Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, not for their genuine, sensuous music but as icons of junkie lifestyle, keeping t-shirt and toilet-mat printers in business for forty years.

As a natural development, Brother Records was born—the first independent label founded by artists to promote the lesser known, two years before Apple was hailed as just another first by the Beatles in their effortless makeover of Western Civilization. By that time if the Beach Boys were mentioned at all by mass media it was for draft-dodging, adhering to Transcendental Meditation teachings of a scandalized Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, or bankruptcy; or for the too-adventurous Dennis, buddying up with nascent mass murderer Charles Manson.

These disasters through the late Sixties decimated their career. Carl, a sworn pacifist and physically the least likely to be of use as a soldier, was harassed by the Draft Board for five years, hampering the group's work as unmatched pop ambassadors. The group bowed out of the key Monterey Pop Festival that introduced Jimi Hendrix (a former US Marine but hip), Joplin and Otis Redding and took years to live it down. Months later they were written off as a creative force by hugely influential Rolling Stone magazine to the advantage of the Beatles; a recent generation of Rolling Stone critics voted ‘Good Vibrations’ best song of the Twentieth Century. Two developments to the long-term good were Wilson's collaboration with Van Dyke Parks, producing underrated gems ‘Heroes & Villains’, ‘Surf's Up’ and ‘Sail on Sailor’, and brother Dennis working with outsiders too, embarking on his lasting musical achievements. At the time both of these enormous gifts were overlooked or discounted.

In the Maharishi controversy the Beatles got credit for ‘exposing’ him, leaving the Beach Boys again looking like sad old-timers in something that wasn't cool anymore now the Fab Four rejected it. The barbaric Manson Family—murderers of Sharon Tate, pregnant wife of *avant garde* film director Roman Polanski, and her dinner guests—

also victimised Dennis and Terry Melcher for blocking their leader's aspirations to be a rock star. Brian, acting for Brother Records, rejected fledgling stars Three Dog Night and maybe in frustration Dennis, Carl and Brian too had been tempted to make records with Manson instead.

Unjustly, while the Beach Boys as individuals condemned the Vietnam War in the most personal way, in danger of being dragged into it as cannon fodder and rejecting the Draft, their lack of corporate propaganda *a la* the Beatles hurt their cred with youth in the era of Protest: much better to sit in bed naked like John & Yoko in the cause of Peace or spend your days showering flower petals around Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco with the Hippies. Given the obstacles loaded in their path an intelligent view can only conclude that their music succeeded *despite* the powers that be. It's a near-miracle it hasn't been buried under the mountains of corporate-driven, Grammy-fed dross that has passed for quality popular music over the past quarter-century and more.

The time the Beach Boys lived on their personal Olympus—the five middle years of the Sixties, fall 1962 to the *Fall* of 1967—saw great convulsions become the norm. Anything called cool ruled. Through the middle two years two imperatives directed pop: 1) The Beatles strained to produce American music; 2) White Americans strained to be Beatles. And the infatuation lingers.

In a strange way the career of the Beach Boys combines the tragedies of two Los Angeles forebears. D W Griffith was the world's celebrated pioneer of film technique—and led others to the new creative center as Brian Wilson did for recorded music a half-century later. Griffith's career slowly imploded as his worldview was overtaken and his special genius was deemed passé by the industry—though his films were popular with the public for some years more. His protégée Mary Pickford was the great interpreter of the new art of film acting, playing a girl in ringlets who never grew up, so identified as ‘America's Sweetheart’ that she was rejected as anything else by the public that made her a superstar— doomed to retread the same ground into middle age.

The Beach Boys, based on an image encrusted in amber, long past their prime were dubbed “America's Band” by an adoring public—and exist in the same constricting mold to this day. Against all odds they remained in their prime as artists as long as they flew in the face of public tolerance, daring to wander according to multifaceted talents. It is their Peter Pan collective persona, their eternal boyishness as a group that enabled them to survive repeated scandals over the years—generations. Having built a post-Brian body of work that continues to move fellow musicians, in stark defiance of market expectations they have depths yet to be discovered by music buyers.

5. ENGLAND SWINGS

"Eng-a-land swings like a pendulum do/ bobbies on bicycles two by two/ Westminster Abbey, the Tower, Big Ben/ the rosy red cheeks of the little chil-dren."—Country Music's Oklahoma stump philosopher of the mid-Sixties, Roger Miller, observing the myth of Merry England. By the time of Miller's paean—what, in any other era, would have been a giant pain—England had ruled pop music for two years and was conquering the rest of pop culture. The miniskirt, fashion designer Mary Quant, supermodel Jean Shrimpton (Twiggy to come), and Carnaby Street were all household names around the world. In London they took their fashion so seriously that anyone walking down Carnaby Street or Chelsea's King's Road out of fashion might have been ritually stoned, in both senses of the word.

The coolest tv program was The Avengers*—karate-kicking Emma Peel and immaculately Savile Row-attired John Steed. The chic actresses were Julie Christie on the big screen, by acclaim, and by definition Paul McCartney's girlfriend Jane Asher, and Mick Jagger's, Marianne Faithfull—by her own account blessed by an accident of birth with "The Look" and so doubling effortlessly as a chic rock star.*

The Beatles came in 12th at American box-offices for 1965, 6th UK. America's two no.1 movie stars through 1965-66 were Brits Sean Connery (James Bond) and saccharine songstress Julie Andrews, displacing all-American team Doris Day and Rock Hudson — suddenly hopelessly outdated 40-year-old born-again virgins, plopped down from Planet Quaint into The Swinging Sixties. The British had cornered the movie market (apart from westerns, fading fast): Bond and Michael Caine the nattiest dressed screen spies; Peter Sellers superseded Jerry Lewis as America's most popular comic; Hayley Mills still the world's no.1 child star, turning 20; Margaret Rutherford was the screen's adored septuagenarian. An entire generation of British actors—Peter O'Toole, Albert Finney, Alan Bates, Tom Courtenay, Julie Christie, Terence Stamp, Glenda Jackson, Oliver Reed, Susannah York, Sarah Miles—were said to be the most interesting on screen. The swingingest middle-aged affair

involved fifth-time-around Liz Taylor/Cleopatra and her consort Richard Burton/Marc Antony. And more UK actors—Richard Harris ('MacArthur Park'), Noel Harrison ('Windmills of Your Mind')—were held to be the most expressive vocalists in recording.

For the first time in centuries England defined cool. Three months after the Beatles arrived in America, Chuck Berry and Bob Dylan were trying their luck with extended tours in England, previously a whistle-stop. Those who could fake being English to Stateside audiences were flavor of the month, often literally. New LA groups the Byrds—first goofily calling themselves the Beefeaters— and the Turtles, false-advertising themselves as from England, strained mightily for Beatle accents in the frenzied quest for fame before stumbling on to Dylan and folk rock. Others hoping to fool the public were the Buckinghams and Golliwogs (later Creedence Clearwater Revival). For more than two years Americans were mindlessly Anglophile, and it took an English songwriter, Ray Davies of the Kinks, to debunk it all in the spring of 1966 with the flaying derision of 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion'. Still, only slowly was the spell broken: Britons had nine number ones in America that year.

While it lasted the edict—more powerful than if a law had been passed—shut out the all-too-American Beach Boys for their obvious aural and visible handicaps: being so un-English as to commit a heresy against revealed wisdom. The Four Seasons, older and more brittle, broke—no longer superstars in '65 due to media neglect. Wide-ranging surveys in the mid-seventies by WNBC-New York, WFIL-Philadelphia and WRKO-Boston to discover the most popular hits long term *showed that the Seasons were done in by someone: 'Dawn', 'Ronnie', 'Rag Doll', 'Bye Bye Baby', 'Let's Hang On', 'I've Got You Under My Skin', 'Opus 17', 'Can't Take My Eyes Off You', 'C'mon Marianne', mostly greeted without fanfare on release, ended up like most Beach Boys hits among the top dozen or so Eastern Seaboard sellers from their respective years— rated higher than Beatle number ones 'Ticket to Ride', 'Day Tripper', 'Yellow Submarine'.*

Frankie Valli: "A lot of American groups got lost… Everybody has to have their own identity—it's very important. That's what we

did. We said, 'Sink or swim, but we're going to stay with what we do' and it's the only chance that anyone could have."

The towering, enduring irony was that the best to come out of Britain in the Sixties by its best—The Who, the Kinks, the Stones, Cream—was created on vinyl by American record producers, resettling in Britain because anxious to get in on the scene. Foremost among an array of dominating American producers was Shel Talmy, who described Dick Rowe, "the man who turned down the Beatles", as "one of the few people in England who was pro-American". The anti-Americanism was a pathetically hypocritical defensive screen erected by a domestic industry built on a framework of American music as its direct inspiration, and now heavily reliant on imported American talent to make it work.

The Beach Boys would have to overcome the dictates of fashion —a feat unheard of in the pop scene—generated in London and pervading America via New York, always susceptible to trends crossing the Atlantic. In choosing artistic integrity they chose values that held no currency in the prevailing showbiz climate. And if they won they presented a danger that show business might never recover from, a threat to the whole basis of marketing: "Go with the bestselling commodity of the moment. Undersell, then dump, yesterday's goods."

For Capitol/EMI, the Beach Boys' primary business connection —the multinational that manufactured and distributed their recordings but was now dependent on the quick-sale Beatles—the course was clear.

WHEN SIXTIES HISTORIES RECORD THE BEATLES saved pop music from dreary, saccharine crooners of no originality it is partly true—*in the UK*, not the multifaceted, ever-changing American scene. The Cliff Richards, Shadows and Joe Meek acts including the Tornadoes had already made strides in Britain. For all their individual qualities their passing would not be mourned by the Beatles who, pre-fame, derided them as smoothies in suits. While rock'n'roll had cooled from its original white heat, the American mainstream had the vital three-pronged thrust of the Beach

Boys, Motown and Atlantic primed to explode, a mainspring integrating black and white performers now put on hold by the Beatle-led aberration.

The year the Beatles had their first hit—1962—the UK top 20 was full of inferior covers of American records, as bemoaned by Britain's own industry spokespersons: ‘Moon River’, ‘Tower of Strength’, ‘The Lion Sleeps Tonight’, ‘When My Little Girl is Smiling’, ‘Roses Are Red’, ‘Spanish Harlem’, ‘Bobby's Girl’, ‘Up On the Roof’…. These remakes and their performers—Danny Williams, Frankie Vaughan, Karl Denver, Johnny Spence, Craig Douglas, Jimmy Justice, Shane Fenton, Ronnie Carroll, Mark Wynter, Susan Maughan, Maureen Evans, Kenny Lynch—weren't heard overseas except in dutiful British Commonwealth markets loyal to the mother country. Orchestra leaders left over from the big band era purveyed restful ballroom numbers: Acker Bilk, Joe Loss, John Barry. If Kenny Ball—popular in America with ‘Midnight in Moscow’—hadn't introduced post-War-styled ‘Sukiyaki’ it is unlikely Americans would ever have let the original out of the bottle to contribute to the apparent malaise of 1963.

While rare knowledgeable British fans have been praised by American rock'n'rollers for recognising quality, the UK had an all-powerful clobbering machine keeping rock'n'roll down—“Auntie BBC”, which in its duty to young and old ears alike efficiently suppressed black music under the guise of preserving the country's cultural heritage: akin to the White Australia Policy elsewhere in the Empire. It was the brief liberalisation of the airwaves, 1964-67, when they finally got some exposure as private ‘pirate’ radio stations flourished around the British Isles, that the rock'n'rollers were thankful for.

So it was that the run of new UK groups formed by 1963 left much to be desired in originality and style, but what did America's fashion-conscious youths, white middle-class teenyboppers who hadn't heard real rock'n'roll, care? Most British rock'n'roll in the invasion was about as convincing as Italian westerns or Japanese Elvises. The Beatles and other UK r&b groups always preferred the original US recordings, if they could get them—then spoilt the effect by

performing inferior covers themselves, true to the English spirit of anyone-can-put-their-hand-to-it-rock'n'roll, one level removed from the makeshift skiffle groups. Obviously, like the Rolling Stones, the more up-close exposure the Beatles had to American practitioners the better they got.

Still, Music Hall style and sensibility were deeply ingrained in the Brit psyche. David Jones, a struggling singer with several bands, as late as 1967 put out novelty parodies of rock'n'roll: ‘Love You Till Tuesday’ and ‘The Laughing Gnome’ in the style of early-sixties comics Mike Sarne (‘Come Outside’), Bernard Cribbins (‘A Bird Up On My Bike’), Tommy Steele (‘Little White Bull’) and Anthony Newley (‘That Noise’). It was a breakthrough tactic that caused immense embarrassment later. With a leap towards cool and a hefty push by Yank producer Shel Talmy he released ‘Space Oddity’ to be one of the great English figures of the early Seventies. By that time he had changed his name to David Bowie.

A persuasive view contra to Beatle omniscience comes from the British documentary tv series *Dancing in the Street*: American music was progressing very well, thank you, on diverse fronts most broadly represented by an r&b/soul barrage, only to be stifled by a cheapened homogenised product from UK groups with fashionable hair as their claim to popularity, a qualification unmatchable by the black originators of the music.

The coup was resented in some circles to the lengths that a “Stamp Out the Beatles” campaign was organised by Detroit student activists, fans of Motown and devotees of the grassroots r&b and blues of their city. When Paul McCartney heard of it he sensitively riposted that the Beatles would stamp out Detroit. British musicians were by and large clueless to the nuances of Blues, Gospel, Soul and any number of other American idioms of expression. And entrepreneurs of Epstein's ilk would never have understood the dedication to quality and authenticity of Jerry Leiber & Mike Stoller, Phil Spector, Doc Pomus & Mort Shuman, Jerry Wexler of Atlantic, Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil of Brill Building ‘pop’ and many others in the American recording industry of that time: Jewish aficionados of black music.

Fans of Motown invaded the broadcast of the Beatles' second Sullivan show in Miami, in vain. By the end of that year, 1964, a Leiber-Stoller produced, blues-tinged ‘Go Now’ was commandeered by new English group the Moody Blues for their US debut; and the Shirelles' ‘Sha La La’ overwhelmed by a Manfred Mann cover following up ‘Do Wah Diddy Diddy’, yet another song (by Mann-Weil) with girl group written all over it. As *Dancing in the Street* concluded, if the English acts had saved American music, what had they “saved” it from?

THE BEATLES WERE WORKING-CLASS LADS RAISED as pets of the aristocracy and enthroned by America, having freed itself from the British Empire two centuries before only to now don the chains wholeheartedly. Homebred musicians withered from unrequited wooing, shunned by their own media. Who would challenge the invaders?

Not a few bluecoats turned redcoat, going mod in a half-assed process totally out of cultural context. Peroxide-blond ‘surfers’ had carried surfboards through fashion-governed Chelsea in 1963, just for the look, and now the tables were turned with a vengeance. To make the switch was to be “fab”, “smashing”, “gear”. But instead of carrying it off with aplomb as the Beatles and Kinks did, Yanks started looking and acting like Austin Powers: aping foreign fashions, and parroting music alien to them. Just as the English did, to American music. In some twisted sense of karma the Byrds and Righteous Bros latched on to British wartime heroine Vera Lynn, suspecting that her flagwavers of a generation before might be just the ticket, and produced hideous remakes of ‘We'll Meet Again’ and ‘The White Cliffs of Dover’. The Beau Brummels (‘Laugh Laugh’, see John Candy comedy *Uncle Buck*) posed English enough to appear on *The Munsters* as Beatle standins. Their Revolutionary War period costumes were outdone by the bluecoat uniforms of Paul Revere & the Raiders, cashing in on lace and frills but sticking for a while to a tough LA r&b produced by surf music alumnus Terry Melcher.

Ponytailed and knee-breached on the same theme, P J Proby from Texas was befriended by the Beatles, annointed by them on UK tv

and had his career made—in England, joined by Righteous Bros-soundalikes the Walker Brothers. Proby blew his chance of continuing superstardom (or more important, widening it to his homeland) when in early '65 he was banned by UK theatre chains and BBC-TV for deliberately splitting his tight britches to get a reaction. Tom Jones, on the same tour, took over as the star. Jones and Dusty Springfield squeaked in by the back door—welcomed by American audiences who thought they were black. The favored groups in both Britain and America now typically offered a maximum of volume and minimum of finesse, or hummable singalong melodies set amid this mishmash of so-called "rock and roll".

Precipitating all this, the shock of the Beatles hitting America was all the more so when it was realised they were only the tip of an ever-broadening iceberg. England was soon so central to the pop culture of the Western World that within two months of the Beatles landing her two feeblest rock and roll pretenders, Brian Poole & the Tremeloes and Freddie & the Dreamers, were greeted with screaming fits in Australia on a package tour with Gerry & the Pacemakers, Dusty Springfield and adopted Yank Gene Pitney. That May the Dave Clark Five were mobbed by 5,000 fans in Washington DC, helped by well-placed pre-publicity; Fred Vail recalls being told that only two of their tour dates made money. In June the Stones dropped in to Chicago's Chess studio to jam as equals (in fame) with their teachers Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters and Willie Dixon; but in Sacramento the Stones managed an audience of only a thousand, not helped by the exorbitant $6 price (personal communication, Fred Vail). Yet by the end of the year top US acts Bob Dylan, the Beach Boys, the Supremes and almost the entire Motown star roster on a package tour—aside from the Shangri-Las and many less stellar—were obliged to pay return visits to England for sheer commercial reasons, if not to bow to the new Mecca of reconstituted rock and roll.

English teen idols with swished-back hair—but otherwise hardly differing from the Beatles—were not welcome in the US and chief among them, Cliff Richard, had suffered more initial rebuffs than the Beatles. 'Livin' Doll' (1959) had made top thirty, prompting an invite from *The Pat Boone Show* in the New Year. But his only apparent

advance was to lead Elvis Presley's move from rock'n'roll. A huge seller in Europe, especially Germany where Elvis was still stationed in the army, it is hard to believe the song's sedate shuffle beat didn't lead directly to ‘Stuck On You’, ‘Good Luck Charm’ and more sounding a lot like Cliff's pace.

‘Lucky Lips’, another massive world seller, made a reentry and then late 1963 Cliff's remake of ‘It's All in the Game’. Unfortunately the Beatles arrived in America just as Cliff was entering the thirty again and his pompadour went stone-cold-dead out of fashion. Songs like ‘Don't Talk to Him’ and others written by a combination of Shadows/Cliff were better than Beatle music of the time except maybe ‘Please Please Me’. But he was disqualified from serious consideration Stateside for another twelve years, continuing a household name almost everywhere else. His biggest English teen rivals, Adam Faith and Billy Fury, each had a dozen (shrinking) hits into Beatletime at home. Though Faith was pushed by the influential Jack Good, resulting in a solitary US top forty hit backed by the Roulettes, and Fury too had contacts, neither got within a bargepole of American acceptance.

The Shadows too—backing Cliff but having a spectacular career of their own *ex*-USA—were surplus to requirements. They'd been blocked in 1960 by one-hit-wonder Danish guitarist Jorgen Ingmann's cover of their world multi-million seller ‘Apache’; after that, well America already had the Ventures, thanks for askin'.

For UK audiences local teen raves Helen Shapiro, hitting at 14, and Kathy Kirby, specialising in speeded-up Doris Day retreads, vied with Brenda Lee and Connie Francis. Shapiro even went to Nashville to record in 1963 but remained unknown to the rest of the States but for minor Easy Listening hit ‘Tell Me What He Said’. Anyway, Lesley Gore already had the teen girl franchise in America, Connie Stevens runner-up, and sultry Connie Francis and wholesome Annette Funicello between them cornering beach movies. In January of that year the Beatles, with just ‘Love Me Do’ under their belts, were ranked fifth on the Helen Shapiro show touring the UK, behind secondary American teen idols Tommy Roe (‘Sheila’) and Chris

Montez ('Let's Dance'). By the end of the year they were at the top and she was nowhere, her demise highlighting the useless waste and anti-female bias at the onset of the Beatle era. The Beach Boys would choose her as the main support act on their spring 1967 UK tour and she later made a go of a jazz career.

There were legitimate, barely decipherable routes to American hearts other than on the lacy cuffs and billowing shirttails of the Brit Invasion. The husky 'black' voices of Dusty Springfield ('Wishin' and Hopin'', 'You Don't Have to Say You Love Me') and Tom Jones ('It's Not Unusual', 'What's New Pussycat?') saw them embraced as Blue-Eyed Soul, as coined by the Righteous Bros. Neither was quite as successful in the blue-eyed genre as Bill Medley & Bobby Hatfield under Phil Spector, though they lasted longer. And each was courteously credited by black artists with opening ears to black tones, though Britain remained immune for some years yet. In reality, Dusty was an acceptable torch singer, her forté the intimate whisper that Cilla Black did badly. There was a whole vocal ladder between her and Nancy Wilson or Dinah Washington, and a good few rungs up to Betty Everett or compatriot Shirley Bassey. In the UK real soul singers of the day like Madeleine Bell and the Flirtations were hardly appreciated compared with the acclaim showered (mainly justly) on Macy Gray, Joss Stone and Amy Whitehouse two generations later.

Touring America early on with the Springfields, Dusty settled as a solo in New York City and remolded herself from a wholesome Irish-styled colleen belting out country-folk to the first Brit girl replicating Soul. To highlight the new image she took up a bleached-blonde variation of the big backcombed beehive hairdo and black eye makeup of the Ronettes. She cited the Exciters' 'Tell Him' as her style model, and her backing vocalists the Breakaways had done a UK cover of 'He's a Rebel' though Phil Spector and the Crystals' original became the hit. Thank goodness for small mercies because the Brits had accepted everyone from Tommy Steele to Max Bygraves as stand-ins for the real thing—and continued to, as the French did their own in a *rock toujour* spirit.

Dusty rivalled Dionne Warwick as top songstress in the States through '64, but then with the second big wave of invasion a songbird

reminiscent of a French-styled Vera Lynn won over sentimental (white) hearts. 'Pet' Clark was over thirty and well established in middle-aged French cabaret when she introduced 'Downtown'. A parallel movie career and accomplished stagecraft assured her place as long as the Invasion lasted and an American career as long as there were musicals on Broadway. In 1967, when Aretha Franklin discovered Soul, Pet's days on Top 40 radio were numbered though two of her biggest hits came the first half of that year: movie director Charlie Chaplin's 'This is My Song' and 'Don't Sleep in the Subway' by her writer/producer Tony Hatch, by his account modeling it after the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds.*

It wasn't until this point, when the thrust of the Invasion was blunted, that Lulu made her biggest impact in the US, 'To Sir With Love', helped by the movie starring Sidney Poitier, America's new no.1 box-office star. Resembling a Scottish Brenda Lee, Lulu went on from her ersatz stab at the Isley Bros' r&b classic 'Shout'— faked well enough for the British Commonwealth—to develop an individual delivery on her classics including 'Oh Me, Oh My'. Some years later the Brits would again show their weakness for little girls in their early teens with big, put-on gravel voices by making Lena Zavaroni a star for her talent-quest renditions on tv of 'Ma, He's Making Eyes at Me' and 'Personality'.

But at the height of the Invasion America was impervious to Britain's two best-liked girl vocalists, Cilla Black and Sandie Shaw, both tressed in Brit bobs, enjoying one Top 40 hit each, 'You're My World' and 'Girl Don't Come'. Cilla, a Liverpool/Cavern mate of the Beatles, was *the* US flop for manager Brian Epstein—but a British institution, moving effortlessly to television hosting. Model-like Sandie, discovered by Adam Faith, scored a small consolation in '(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me' outselling Dionne Warwick's version. But she reached her peak in Eurovision Song Quest winner 'Puppet on a String'—not the Elvis ballad but a horrendous Bavarian-style oompah song beloved of Brits and other Euros that sold four million-plus.

Gawky Cilla, overflowing with English working-class "If she can make it I can make it" appeal, made pseudo-operatic versions of

Bacharach-Warwick's ‘Anyone Who Had a Heart’ and ‘Alfie’. English aping led to such disasters as a cover of ‘You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'’, just pipped to UK no.1 by the original. Cilla, with Manfred Mann, the Hollies, Tremeloes and Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Titch, participated in the decline of British pop in the late Sixties, now reliant on homegrown writers and producers, laid to rest by styleless Marmalades and Love Affairs.

But with all this—1964 being above all a novelty year—the biggest American impact by UK-based females was made by one-off novelty takes. Overshadowing Dusty and Dionne for three months, “Millie”, Small by name and frame, promoted her native Jamaican *ska* beat with ‘My Boy Lollipop’ performed at the World Fair in New York with a bevy of dancers sponsored by the newly independent Jamaica's tourist board. It was a bouncy ditty that went to #2 in Billboard, attracting as much airplay but not sales as the Beach Boys and Four Seasons through early July. The same beat, same everything, was trotted out for lesser hits. Julie Rodgers in early fall trod her footnote in history with ‘The Wedding’, moving seven million in the next eight years—seemingly played at every second wedding in the Western World in that time. The key line “You by my side—that's how I see us” rang out the death knell of a romantic era.

IN AMERICA PRODUCERS AND SIMPATICO ENGINEERS had wholly realized advances in the studio. Hailed above them all was Phil Spector as creator *extraordinaire*—now coming to be rivalled by George“Shadow” Morton and Motown's team Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier and Eddie Holland. All were widely acknowledged for weaving spells at the control panel—a bewildering press-button device looming large in the lives of girl artists as a metaphor for a loss of control over self expression and their own careers. Spector in particular was widely modelled by aspiring Svengalis around the world but living up to the substance was something else. In Britain the dark shades and bodyguard-henchman clearing the rabble for the royal procession were embellishments adopted by Andrew Loog Oldham, the echo chamber effects overdone by independent producer Joe Meek.

Along with the scene came girl group songwriters admired by the Beatles, Rolling Stones and others. Goffin & King, writing for Little Eva, the Chiffons and Cookies (‘Chains’), wrote ‘Don't Bring Me Down’ for the Animals and later Aretha Franklin's breakthrough ‘Natural Woman’. Other major New York spousal teams were Mann & Weil—now with ‘Walking in the Rain’ (Ronettes), ‘We Gotta Get Out of This Place’ (Animals), ‘You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'’ and ‘Soul and Inspiration’ (Righteous Bros); and Barry & Greenwich—an array including ‘Leader of the Pack’ and ‘River Deep, Mountain High’.

Spector, the model of the go-getter entrepreneur, reveled in the *chutzpah* it took to make a hit out of nothing in a make-or-break showbiz world as the rock'n'roll era wound down in 1959 and businessmen who made their livings from teen music looked for certainty in trends—a predictability that the best, most vibrant rock'n'roll abhorred, by definition. Three of the Beatles turned to Spector above anyone to produce their starting projects and reignite their solo careers. But as rock moved on, the spontaneity of the original rock'n'roll would only be recaptured in moments, and by the most talented artists.

It is doubtful whether the Kingsmen, from the Pacific Northwest, qualified for this category. But they were current enough to set a trend. On the spot two months before the Beatles, through the New Year of '64 their garage remake of Richard Berry's ‘Louie Louie’ spent a month as runner-up in national sales, went to number one for two weeks in mid-January and then hung in the top three below the Beatles, selling over two million. Their sound was tougher than the Beatles', as heavy as the Stones and Kinks (to record their own version) would be. With the Kingsmen, two other groups from the Seattle-Portland circuit, the well-established Ventures and the upcoming Paul Revere & the Raiders would be distant runners-up to the Beach Boys as album sellers among US male groups of the mid-Sixties.

The trend was clear—confirmed in a rush by the oncoming dominance by English r&b groups performing along similar lines. Girls needn't apply, playing just a subordinate, supportive role in

English working-class culture, unless the girl was as glamorous as Shirley Bassey, Dusty Springfield or Sandie Shaw—or could belt 'em out at a party like Cilla or Lulu. For the Ronettes, ‘Baby I Love You’, another peak in girl-group music, was climbing the US chart ten places at a time until it hit the Beatle-wall in February. From then on, even with classics ‘The Best Part of Breaking Up’ and ‘Walking in the Rain’, their place was down the Top 40. The shimmering, haunting ‘You Baby’ wasn't released as a 45, and by the end of the year, seeing the girls' epitaph writ large, Spector had switched to the virile Righteous Bros—a well known r&b duo around California who gave the Wall of Sound another year at top.

Poised for a brief turn in the spotlight midyear was ‘It's In His Kiss’, much later remade by Cher. Betty Everett's soulful original sent Dusty back to her seductive Claudine Longet whisper. Leiber & Stoller's Red Bird label, hosting the most successful new girl groups, sounded more like a candy store, far removed from the tough girl-group r&b as it had been four months before: the Dixie Cups with ‘Chapel of Love’ and ‘Iko Iko’; emoting Jelly Beans, ‘I Wanna Love Him So Bad’.

Epitome of the new unthreatening approach were the Supremes, on a fast track to all-round entertainers. Their modest peekover at fame the previous Xmas—‘When the Lovelight Shines Through His Eyes’, covered by Dusty—was more exciting than their subsequent formula hits, that however well crafted seemed fabricated up against the primal spontaneity of pre-Beatle girl groups. Neither could they match the drama and scope of Martha & the Vandellas and the Shangri-Las, the best current ‘girl’ recordings. But the doorway to network television did widen for this particular black group, because they presented as a cabaret act, not rock'n'roll. The Toys made a thorough copy of their sound: ‘A Lover's Concerto’ hit number one on the sales chart, certified a Gold Disc, but stumbled in Billboard unable to win the guaranteed mass exposure of the Supremes, made-to-measure by a hands-on boss of a mainstream corporation.

The Shangri-Las—‘Remember (Walking in the Sand)’, hitting six weeks after the Supremes' first no.1, and the iconic ‘Leader of the Pack’ a bare six weeks later over October-December—made a cult

from a nasal foursome of two sisters and two twins from New York's Queens borough, cajoled to tears—and to perfection—in the studio by self-styled B-movie tough “Shadow” Morton. They followed up through '65, still producing records on the cutting edge in the supposedly outmoded girl-group genre—‘Give Him a Great Big Kiss’, ‘I Can Never Go Home Anymore’. Of similar cult status but without the same success were the racially integrated Reparata & the Delrons, ‘Whenever a Teenager Cries’, and later ex-US ‘Captain of Your Ship’.

While the Shangri-Las were actually white, the Supremes did their best merchandising Supremes White Bread with their photo on the packet. In contrast, the Shangri-Las appealed as hard-boiled and street-wise. ‘Leader of the Pack’ was menacing enough to British authorities to be banned by Independent Television's *Ready Steady Go*. The Beatles conquered the known world that year by wanting to hold your hand. Red-blooded American boys in motorcycle gangs hailed by this new girl group threatened more. In the UK an acceptably polite equivalent was sung by pretty, elfin Twinkle, urging her biker boyfriend ‘Terry’ to “Please wait at the gates of Heaven for me.”

As a follow-up to ‘Baby I Love You’, girl group producer Brian Wilson had offered his best new love ballad ‘Don't Worry Baby’ to the Ronettes, the sexy threesome who had sung his all-time favorite record. It was rejected by Phil Spector, who seems to have taken a defensively condescending attitude to Brian's efforts from the start (“Brian is a very sweet guy… but”): luckily as it turned out. Brian took the ‘feminine’ lead vocal to make it into a Beach Boy classic. Spector apparently found the unremarkable ‘Don't Hurt My Little Sister’ usable after reworking and assigning new lyrics, but Brian kept it to appear as one of the also-rans on *The Beach Boys Today*.

IN THE *DANCING IN THE STREET* EPISODE BRIAN WAS interviewed for in 1997 he was obviously still sorely confused and frustrated thirty years after at how the Beatles could sweep all before them. He had naïvely searched all that time for a *musical* explanation, on the assumption that the throngs of pubescent

girls who fainted or peed themselves at Beatles/Stones/Monkees/ David Cassidy/Bay City Rollers shows were music lovers. And groupies are patronesses of the arts? Yet his ongoing insecurities in no way matched the rivalry within the Beatles that would end after six years in the limelight with their vituperative breakup.

Brian was renowned for his effusive, often overboard praise for anything he liked. By 2007 he was indoctrinated enough in Beatle mythology to concede songwriting honours to them and only matching them in “group sound”. Attending a recording session of the Rolling Stones in LA at the time he had just completed ‘Good Vibrations’, he called *them* “remarkable”. The Stones quickly outdid the Beach Boys as media fodder—a goal only one of them was racing for. It is not known by this writer what Muddy Waters and other bluesmen thought of the Stones. Undoubtedly they learnt quickly but in the UK there was a fair bit of disdain from serious musicians and others, especially when they started out. On being called in 1963 to help with a recording session by producer-manager Andrew Oldham, one of the Shadows, Tony Meehan (at the time manager to Gene Vincent), who could read and write music, remarked horrified that the Stones' instruments weren't tuned and so they weren't playing in tune for the recording. Oldham, basing his boys' success on the “We don't give a shit” image he created and spun throughout, replied, “Yeah, great isn't it!” (*Stoned*, ed. Andrew Loog Oldham, 2001). It was a scene that would be replayed at other sessions, Oldham calling in another producer when frustrated at not being able to get anything coherent out of them.

In fact the Stones' first big hit, after a warm-up from Chuck Berry, was personally gifted to them by Lennon & McCartney. This was late autumn '63—the Beatles' execrable ‘I Wanna Be Your Man’—and as played by the Fab Four a frantic, mop-shaking excuse for a song going for a maximum of rauc and minimum of finesse—that must have set culture vulture William F Buckley's teeth a-grinding and which might just be the very quintessence of the British Invasion. It would be tempting to think the two main Fabs wrote it that London evening they bumped into the Stones as a Liverpool-lad joke to sabotage their upcoming rivals—had they not included it on *With the*

Beatles. Music like this is responsible for the now widespread 'taste' of rock fans for decibels above all. It made the Stones image—if not their commercial success—big enough in Britain to graduate from supporting Gerry & the Pacemakers to the Ronettes, to end up supported by them and dating them, on a UK tour.

For 'Not Fade Away' they were well enough connected to have Phil Spector and Gene Pitney at the session, manager-'producer' Andrew Oldham being UK publicist for both—though Pitney was the facilitator here in the standoff between Jagger-Richards and Brian Jones (Stanley Booth). It was a Bo Diddley riff via Buddy Holly, and for a while "We didn't like anything we wrote, and we couldn't seem to get anyone else in the band to play it" (Keith Richards). For now their UK earning peak was a one-day shoot for a tv ad for Rice Krispies.

They still made only faltering progress in the US. Their June '64 tour was only successful on the Coasts—though 'Its All Over Now' gifted them by Murray the K, hired to be a sixth Stone, became their first UK no.1 and made top 30 US. Oldham got them publicity on national tv by having the group misbehave and get arrested in Chicago. Yet they died in the backblocks where short hair was an unspoken but enforcible law: "We were just entertainment-business freaks, with long hair, just like a circus show" (Richards). It might have been shock reaction to their cultivated wildness that drew complaints from the Stones that Chuck Berry and the Beach Boys "wouldn't speak to us" when they first ran into the American stars (all quotes from Booth).

It was November that they made it big with 'Time Is On My Side' via two dates on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, then to superstardom when their image kicked in with a vengeance on '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' and 'Get Off of My Cloud' from mid-'65. Just prior their first self-penned hit, 'The Last Time', remained their biggest-ever seller in Britain. A proportion of record-buyers realised the group had already progressed as far as it could in its particular groove, yet they inevitably won narrower appeal as the obvious flipside of the Beatles, the official Bad Boys of Rock. Real fans were attracted by Jones-Jagger-Richards' drive to be evermore outlandish, others alienated by

the pose of five rich men pretending to be outsiders. They would switch to reggae or disco at will—hardly rivalling the Beatles or any other creative group in scope or originality. But as the decades went by they were catering for less demanding fans anyway.

John Lennon complained long and hard that the Stones had stolen the early Beatles' image and envied that they had got away with it—even thrived. The thought must have eaten him up that had the Beatles stumbled on to Oldham first, instead of Epstein, his group would never have had to clean themselves up. Yet, that was without factoring in Paul McCartney's proactive ambition to be adopted by the Establishment. And John too always wanted an undivided world audience, not an alternative one. From the Stones side, offered a picture deal by Decca and asked by a reporter if they would be like the Beatle films, Jagger retorted angrily, “We're not comedians!” (Booth).

It rings true that the deciding factor between the Stones and many other English acts was the well-known needle-sharp business acumen of Mick Jagger—never letting his London School of Economics education and aspirations show lest he let the cat out of the bag—and brilliant management through their first three years by whizzkid Oldham, one of the leading personalities of the Swinging Sixties. According to Bill Wyman, image, publicity, and “putting on a good show” rather than recording great music was most of what counted with the group. Ever conscious of star image and who was in and who was out, they kept almost-Stone Ian Stewart out of the group from 1963 and retained him as a sideman for 22 years until his death while Jones, repeatedly missing dates, and to a lesser extent Richards played up but remained stars—enhancing their appeal to fans. The entry on the band by Peter Shapiro in the intelligent *Rock: the Rough Guide* (1996) asserts convincingly: “Of course, without Robert Johnson, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Buddy Holly, Keith Richards (guitar) and Bill Wyman (bass) would probably be lowlifes propping up the bar at their local pub….”

Lying about their ages to be in step with rebellious teens—Wyman was born in 1937, the same age as the oldest Four Seasons; Jagger as old as Ringo and John but understating his age by three or

four years—they made good on Oldham's image as men "raised by a toothless bearded hag". Reverse Dorian Grays, they morphed into craggy gargoyles ludicrously pretending rebellion as they near seventy and continue to rake in hundreds of millions of dollars every tour, taking great pains to live between homes internationally and shift their tax rate down to 1.6% (from their 2006 income of 84 million pounds)—so low it hardly covers the cost of what must be a labyrinthine collection process.

In the face of the group's less than inspiring survival story, a myth was conjured by rock journalists of a great rivalry between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. There was never any competition in it, both groups obviously recognising that the Stones' success was dependent on playing off the Beatles. Though creating some of the unforgettable moments in rock history with their sound—'(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction', probably because of its borrowed Robert Johnson riff, is today often held up as the greatest song of the rock era—at no time has Jagger or Richards given an inkling that they are capable of the wild flights of creativity produced by the Beatles and Beach Boys at their frequent best as they pushed the boundaries of popular music repeatedly through the Sixties.

"Ironically, the real contender [for the Beatles] was always Brian Wilson, the composer and arranger of the Beach Boys…" (Barry Miles). Jagger had demurred to the Beach Boys, pushed 'I Get Around' in the UK and on the Stones' '65 tour of America used 'California Girls' and *The Beach Boys Today* album to jump-start his day.

Through the Sixties wannabe unwashed rebels lined up for their dose of anti-sociability with each new release of Stones merchandise. Quickly, the group realized that the most striking doom-laden titles—*Out of Our Heads, Aftermath*—had the best chance of going all the way. Before long they came to parody their own creation, to the point of overkill just to sustain the hype and kick for their fans: *Their Satanic Majesties Request, Beggar's Banquet, Let It Bleed, Get Yer Ya-Yas Out, Goat's Head Soup…* Anything revolting would do.

By mid-'67 virtuoso musicians in supergroups like Cream and Jimi Hendrix Experience were taking over Britain. The Stones, trying to

keep step with the Beatles—deliberately cribbing on their music as claimed by Lennon, and timing their single releases so they wouldn't be steamrollered by Beatle sales—had started seven months behind in their recording career and assiduously stayed there, through Oldham and/or Jagger apparently watching every move the Fabs made. Stamping their secondary status as long as the Beatles lasted, they were lost on what to model themselves against after their photo negatives' breakup, finally following 'Honky Tonk Women' two years later with a soundalike, 'Brown Sugar'. In between, ever anxious to retain their market share by an anti-Establishment slant, they participated in the Altamont debacle (see final chapter).

Brian Jones, original leader and a multi-instrumentalist who had lent them another dimension (e.g. the sitar on 'Paint It Black'), was pushed to the background by Oldham and the Jagger-Richards writing partnership long before his sacking and murder by drowning in 1969. Reportedly Marianne Faithfull, a confidante to all three key Stones at one time or another, witnessed Jones on his own roughing out almost the complete melody of 'Ruby Tuesday' —a song attributed to Jagger & Richards.

Of the arty in-crowd, Marianne enjoyed four songs in the top ten at home, all just reaching Billboard's top thirty but not US sales charts. She featured in films too. Described at that time by acquaintances as "spoilt and affected", she performed in a persona "coy and sweet", which she attributed to nervousness. Her vogue lasted less than a year—best known for her version of 'As Tears Go By' that tied her to the Stones, backed by the venerable 'Greensleeves', which would have been fine had she not been posing as part of the rock *avant garde*.

When the Stones and Marianne Faithfull made it, such was the crush of English acts America had to choose from that the Pretty Things ('Don't Bring Me Down', #10 UK) got lost in the rush—as their name ironically suggests, too close to the Stones' image to carve a distinctive niche as antisocial scruffs—though they outdid their rivals in hard-out playing and hard living. A founding Stone, Dick Taylor, had pulled out early on and formed the Pretty Things, but by the time they got into the swing *two* like groups had been selected by

the media. A hilarious just-off-the-plane interview by a young network newsman of Mick Jagger during the Stones' second US tour showed just how little distinction was made between English groups. Jagger, fielding a remark about the Stones' image, jokingly replies “Yeah, the Animal Five”, to which the confused interviewer enquires “You don't like them—the Animal Five?” Jagger, barely restraining from breaking up, explains patiently there is no group the Animal Five, but he likes *the Animals* very much. Groups jockeyed for lucrative positions Stateside. Confusion reigned, and with time the indifference to the early UK scene only grew: In 1976 the editors of the authoritative *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock&Roll* captioned a photo of Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran with English teen idols Billy Fury and Joe Brown as “…with Tommy Steele and a fan.”

The Stones survived though many of their best singles relied on a single fortuitously introduced gimmick. Young surf music writer/ producer P F Sloan, one half of the Fantastic Baggys group, claims to have produced the ‘Paint It Black’ session and to be responsible for improvising with the sitar—found in a corner of the studio— because the track needed something more. Typically, another American, Jimmy Miller, was responsible for what many Stones experts consider their best recording period, 1968-73, directing them back to their roots after two years of inaction and vague psychedlia to produce four of their best albums and tracks including ‘Jumpin' Jack Flash’, ‘Street Fighting Man’, ‘Honky Tonk Women’ and ‘Brown Sugar’. Guiding them hands on, he played drums too on many tracks. Not incidentally, Miller also produced the most admired and progressive Brit groups of the late Sixties including the Spencer Davis Group, Traffic and Blind Faith (Wikipedia.com).

LIKE HERMAN'S HERMITS, THEIR CANDYASS BED-fellows, the Animals were recorded on Columbia by Britain's most prolific producer, Mickie Most. And both were released in North America by MGM, which shrewdly pitted them against each other for prime sales.

From Newcastle in the depression-ridden industrial Northeast, the Animals were the next English band with a number one after the Beatles' six-month rush on America. With the Stones, only more so, they were the first English blues act to be taken seriously by black commentators in the States—who hadn't heard Long John Baldry, Chris Farlowe, John Mayall, etc. Having toured for two years in support of John Lee Hooker, Sonny Boy Williams and other Blues artists, in rotgut authenticity their 'House of the Rising Sun'—Alan Price arranger and keyboards, Eric Burdon vocals, Hilton Valentine guitar, Chas Chandler bass, John Steel drums— stood head and shoulders above any other English contribution that year. They plied the blues with competent renditions of Sam Cooke's 'Bring It On Home to Me', Leadbelly's 'See See Rider' and John Lee Hooker's 'Boom Boom', and after returning from their first US gigs in October '64 they toured at home supported by rock'n'roll veterans Carl Perkins and Gene Vincent. But they were most consistent with definitive versions of new material in 'Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood', 'We Gotta Get Out of This Place', 'It's My Life', 'Don't Bring Me Down'—without ever quite reaching top ten again, as if American youth understood the new "blues"—i.e. hyped antisocial image—was primarily the Stones' turf.

The Who, from London, eventually greeted as the fourth great Sixties group, barely stuck their toe in the Atlantic. Their broad-vistaed leader-songwriter Pete Townshend and bass-playing multi-instrumentalist John Entwistle were obviously influenced by Beach Boy harmonies, just as drummer Keith Moon, an early surf music importer, recognizably borrowed from Denny Wilson. 'I Can't Explain' starting '65, 'My Generation' ("hope I die before I get old")—their enduring theme song, 'Substitute' ("for another guy") and 'I'm a Boy' ("but my Ma won't admit it") defined their theme of alienation. Introduced in New Year '66 with the Kinks on the last *Shindig* show, America was not ready for any radical creativity coming from England.

Helming the first few hits for The Who—'I Can't Explain', which had impressed Detroit and Ohio, 'Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere', 'My Generation'—was a Los Angeles recording engineer, Shel

Talmy. Two years before he had bluffed his way into Britain as a rock producer—Who was there in the UK to say he wasn't?— by presenting himself to Dick Rowe, head of Decca, and claiming to be the producer of 'Surfin' Safari', on the strength of which Rowe was glad to snap him up. Talmy guided the Kinks too into their recording career, saving them from being just another Stones by taking them from blues covers expertly done to power chords and writing their own songs. His work with the Kinks through the mid-Sixties—including introducing the sitar sound to British rock in 'See My Friends' months before 'Norwegian Wood' and 'Paint It Black'—and The Who—introducing deliberate feedback for the first time on record through 'Anyway, Anywhere, Anyhow' and radically rearranging 'My Generation' into the aural storm it was —virtually defined a generation. Talmy, a Yank through and through, is therefore arguably the greatest record producer of the British Beat Boom, perhaps only challenged by compatriot Jimmy Miller and the strongly US-influenced pioneer Joe Meek. In making great records Talmy introduced American production methods, a key one using the best session musicians. In the studio for both the Kinks and The Who that meant, repeatedly, Jimmy Page (guitar) and Nicky Hopkins (keyboards). Simultaneously, Talmy worked with the Nashville Teens, the Fortunes and others before guiding David Bowie and jazz-rock group Pentangle ('Light Flight') to stardom (Wikipedia.com).

Just as Shel Talmy broke the Kinks and then The Who in the States, in his pre-Stones career Jimmy Miller did the same for the Spencer Davis Group, going top ten for the first time with 'Gimme Some Lovin'' and 'I'm a Man', which he co-wrote with Steve Winwood. As Winwood departed to form Traffic, Miller went with him, producing 'A Paper Sun', 'Hole in My Shoe' and 'Feelin' Alright'—and then on to the highly influential *Blind Faith* involving Winwood and former Cream members Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker. It was from there that Clapton, at a loss and in an apparent reversal of fortunes, joined the Plastic Ono Band led by John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

Townshend among many others admired Ray Davies, the Kinks' singer-songwriter. Davies' wittily sceptical and incisive social

comment came before and came on stronger than John Lennon's. England's equivalent of the Lovin' Spoonful—each commenting knowingly on the intimacies of their own society—his group were leaders of the Mod look, getting in before The Who. Alternately in frilly Regency or stately Edwardian attire, Byronic coiffed hair tumbling imitation-casually, they quickly dated the Beatle look as merely cutely fab. They were maybe the Invasion's best-looking group, in an androgynous kind of way.

Scoring big just two weeks before the Stones, October '64, with 'You Really Got Me', the Kinks had two quick follow-ups also edging top five and no.1 UK—its sister song 'All Day and All of the Night' (both featured Dave Davies' much admired fuzzed riffs) and disillusioned ballad 'Tired of Waiting for You'. Though Ray Davies wrote much of his music in the English Music Hall vein as did the Beatles, he was genuinely affecting and didn't pull punches, employing bitter sarcasm. So his best songs were too realistic for America, e.g. 'Dead End Street'; and his most personal songs—'Waterloo Sunset' (1967)—too alien: Their best-loved, most enduring song in England, and #2, it scored #146 US where their career was cut off from mid-'65 by a musicians' union dispute. As a result 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion' was under-appreciated; 'Sunny Afternoon' (#1 UK) fell short of a richly deserved top ten spot. They only returned post-Invasion, with 'Lola'.

Hitting also that fall with the Stones and Kinks were the Zombies, no.1 with 'She's Not There', then 'Tell Her No', but barely known at home. Registering high too occasionally were the Moody Blues and Them ('Here Comes the Night') featuring Van Morrison. The Spencer Davis Group had Steve Winwood as vocalist but like The Who didn't make it in the States until '67.

The Yardbirds—'For Your Love', 'Heart Full of Soul'—were popular as the Animals, rated high as musicians and at their peak one of a handful of truly innovative Sixties bands, seen in 'Evil Hearted You'/'Still I'm Sad'. They had followed the Stones as resident band at the Crawdaddy Club at the height of London's blues boom, each member having studied and grilled them until they knew their entire act (Stanley Booth) and eventually came to challenge the Stones in

international following through 1965. Original guitarist Eric Clapton had given way to Jeff Beck then Jimmy Page, joining multi-instrumentalists Ian Samwell-Smith and Chris Drea, vocalist Keith Relf and drummer Jim McCarty. There were more American hits in ‘I'm a Man’, ‘Shapes of Things’ and ‘Over Under Sideways Down’ but the classic lineup was breaking up by '67. Last straws for Beck must have been a cover for the US of Manfred Mann's UK hit ‘Ha Ha Said the Clown’ and a revival of ‘Ten Little Indians’ for a desperately small hit—as the Beach Boys were moving on to ‘Wild Honey’. A New Yardbirds under Jimmy Page were renamed Led Zeppelin.

Coming in '65 to join the rush of Americans to the UK was Nick Venet, official producer of that first ‘Ten Little Indians’ and justly styling himself as discoverer of the Beach Boys—and reaping tremendous kudos for it. He took over the Walker Brothers, re-imaging them as Britain's answer to Spector's Righteous Bros. The borrowed classic Spector sound translated as one of the true triumphs of the British Invasion in a magnificent restatement of Four Seasons original ‘The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore’.

Liverpool and Manchester groups, sharply distinct from London blues, plied their trade in a popped-up rock and roll. And Beatle music, measured against other examples, can be seen to be well within this style. Working alongside the Beatles in '63, the Swinging Blue Jeans had an almost-big US hit with an obvious ripoff of Little Richard, ‘Hippy Hippy Shake’, then blew their scam with the original, identical ‘Good Golly Miss Molly’. As more faces fronted on '64's beat scene the Merseybeats were just as popular at home, with the Fourmost (Parlophone/Epstein stablemates of the Beatles) and Four Pennies—the Applejacks, Mojos and Rocking Berries less so. None made it nationally in the States.

Of course, Epstein's total devotion to the Beatles spelt slow death for his other clients. Cilla Black left Epstein's management because of the inordinate time he was spending with his favorites. It could be argued Paul McCartney, in writing songs for them and mentoring to some degree—giving them hints in the studio—had more of a hand in the British success of the Fourmost (‘Hello Little Girl’, ‘I'm in Love’) and Cilla (‘Love of the Loved’, It's For You’). Epstein acts much less

successful than the Fourmost were solo singers Tommy Quickly and Mike Haslam and a group called the Rustics: just one British top 50 hit between them. They were left hoping some magic from the Epstein name would rub off.

Gerry & the Pacemakers and Billy J Kramer & the Dakotas were both under Epstein's management and impacted America late spring '64, three and four months after the Beatles. Why hadn't Epstein struck with them while the iron was white-hot? Was it so they wouldn't spoil the Fabs' grand entrance, even delaying long enough so not to stand on their bridal train? The Pacemakers' 'How Do You Do It?' and 'I Like It' weren't as successful as most of the Beatles' comparable material. And after 'Little Children', his biggest US hit, Billy's repertoire was restricted to Paul McCartney tunes: 'Bad to Me' also top ten, 'Do You Want to Know a Secret' —his crack backing band doing a better job than the Beatles (the Dakotas had played on the same show at the Star-Club, Hamburg). It has to be said Epstein failed with Billy: a hunk of a modernised teen idol, and just two top-tenners. It didn't help that Billy turned down McCartney's offers of 'World Without Love' and 'Yesterday'—both of which would have been huge hits for anyone in the prevailing climate.

Gerry Marsden scored best with thoughtful, self-penned 'Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying', matched by equally contemplative 'Ferry Cross the Mersey'—in retrospect both better than 80% of what was released in America under the Beatles through 1964. But Gerry and his mates were not in the race for enduring stardom, unable to look or act remotely like rock stars. Their piano-player sat stiff-backed like a schoolmarm, a thin, upright Liberace; of Sixties Brits, Alan Price, Manfred Mann and few others managed to make keyboards look remotely sexy, and only on organ. They did reach a point when their singles did better in the US than at home but were a qualified success; they had just two top 20 albums each side of the Atlantic. Yet, practised showmen Freddie & the Dreamers, who had worked along with the Beatles at Hamburg's Top Ten club, were even more unprepossessing than the Pacemakers, and a two-year delay didn't hurt their hits—even topping in the US, outdoing all Epstein acts who weren't Beatles.

CHAMPIONS OF FORGETTABLE INVASION EPHEMERA were the Dave Clark Five and Herman's Hermits. The Five scored 15 top twenty hits in their three years in America, the Hermits one more, all but seven in total reaching the ten. Most sounded fairly catchy at the time, yet only a handful are at all memorable. The Five were hailed for the "Tottenham Sound" of North London—the greatest local stars since the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club (the original "Spurs") and the media's hopeful successor to the Beatles. Arriving hot on the heels of John, Paul, George and Ringo, and undertaking a full American tour even before them, they at one time outdid everyone but them for big hits —eight their first year—including the Beach Boys '64 and '65. Despite this, they are really only remembered for their breakthrough 'Glad All Over' and 'Catch Us If You Can', best of a limited style. In England they managed just four top five hits.

Through 'Over and Over', their sole US chart-topper, and 'Bits & Pieces', their formula treatment fast grew monotonous but their almost effortless stay near the top only ended when even their fans realised the upbeat "chunka-chunka…" rhythm was most of what they had. Typical of English groups, they couldn't leave American classics alone and six rehashes were big: 'Do You Love Me?', 'Can't You See That She's Mine?', 'Reelin' and Rockin'', '(The Name of the Place is) I Like It Like That', '(Baby) You Got What It Takes' and 'You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby'. Sounding something like Kenny Ball & His Jazzmen would if ordered to play rock'n'roll with a gun to their heads, they looked the part too, with pasted stage smiles. Dave played like a wind-up drummer-boy doll, centre-stage of a semi-circle lineup for tv spots, lead singer-keyboardist Mike Smith off to the side.

Despite poor tour receipts the Five set a record dozen appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the ultimate gauge of Establishment acceptability. They were most impressive in their film *Catch Us if You Can*, showing that with the right director (John Boorman, later of American classic *Deliverance*) they could look as cool as the Beatles on screen. Musically, even in their claim to fame they were outdone by the Honeycombs, who featured the same boomba-boomba beat by their girl-drummer leader, "Honey" Lantree—on the attractive 'Have

I the Right?' (#4), their debut produced by Joe Meek of 'Johnny Remember Me' and 'Telstar' fame.

From the end of Invasion Year One Herman's Hermits were the darlings of the second wave over the Rolling Stones, Kinks, Manfred Mann, even Petula Clark, with three number ones to boot. The Stones didn't achieve that volume of hits, nor as big. They were signed in the States by the faltering MGM, who seized on these English lads as a deliverance, to take up the slack left by fading Connie Francis. Their biggest achievement was to wrest most of the Beatles' pre-pubescent audience from them.

The Beatles had struck on a secret formula through the sequence of influences they'd been exposed to: from Tin Pan Alley and all-round showbiz to Lonnie Donegan, through Tony Sheridan, Easy Listening's Bert Kaempfert and other beat groups gigging in Hamburg. Paul McCartney, adding to his music hall father's tutoring, had fashioned a vocal veneer of Little Richard, whom they'd supported on tour just as they started recording seriously and distilling their own musical image. All was superimposed on a cardboard cutout of Elvis Presley and a template of his music as they were manoeuvred to be the new Great White Hope.

If Herman's Hermits took any inspiration from American music it was from the businesslike atmosphere of New York's 'Brill Building' pop, led by Don Kirshner's Aldon Music and designed to milk every exploitable emotion via teenagers' purses. To the end of 1964 the Beach Boy franchise had scored 26 hits in the US top 100 including the Brian Wilson songs performed by Jan & Dean in such an unmistakable style that most people couldn't tell them from the real deal: an average of one a month. Kirshner, supplied by teams of battery-housed writers, had produced more than that in one year: Not a great deal of soul-searching entered, or delayed, the creative process.

At their best the Hermits' style of delivery could be likened to that of the Cascades, the Southern California group who had recorded the sweet 'Rhythm of the Rain' almost two years before—a gentle, pretty melody. But unlike the Cascades, for the Hermits sincerity of delivery

didn't come into the equation. The key to their sustained success was that frontman Peter Noone, just turned 17 and an actor from soap opera television, was cuter than anyone on the scene—until Davy Jones became a Monkee. Courtesy of Jack Good, Davy was currently performing a Music Hall soft-shoe shuffle with boater hat and cane on *Shindig*, an up-to-date teen pop show except when catering for English proclivities. Herman/Peter had cheeks as rosy and smooth—and Davy had eyes as big and round—as Hayley Mills', all the better for androgynous appeal to the pre-puberty market.

The Hermits' first hit, ‘I'm Into Something Good’ written by Kirschner's Goffin-King partnership, sold over 250,000 in ten days, contending with the Stones' ‘Time is on My Side’, the Beach Boys' ‘Dance Dance Dance’/‘Warmth of the Sun’, Beatle double ‘I Feel Fine’/‘She's a Woman’ head on, and the Kinks, Zombies, Supremes and Shangri-Las. It was catchy—better than nine tenths of what followed. Their next, the thickly candied ‘Can't You Hear My Heartbeat?’, was their first US million seller and made no.1.

If that wasn't puerile enough, their two biggest of all, ‘I'm Henry VIII, I Am’ and ‘Mrs Brown (You've Got a Lovely Daughter)’, cutely sung by Herman/Peter on tv, posing sub-Shirley Temple with a finger babyishly stuck in his mouth, could be charitably called children's songs. The novelty had worn off—but no one, anyway under 13, noticed. They swooped on the subteen niche as the Fab Four progressed to more serious songs though returning to children's Panto with ‘Yellow Submarine’ and many more. Their advance orders were higher than anyone but the Beatles, oblivious that ‘Silhouettes’ and ‘Wonderful World’ were r&b standards mercilessly and thoroughly hashed, among the very worst recordings of the entire British repertoire—and the Hermits' punishment was that they only got to no.4 while selling their million.

In March '65 the Hermits' fellow Mancunians Freddie & the Dreamers, styled more frankly as clowns than musicians, moved in on their territory. Retreading like the Hermits the same bouncy Brit-beat sounds the Beatles and Gerry & the Pacemakers had done two years before, they were another “biggest thing since the Beatles”. Through promotion on Jack Good's *Shindig-Hullabaloo* monopoly they pre-

sold a Mercury label record of their album and drove ‘I'm Telling You Now’ to no.1 for two weeks. Their gimmick was to bend ludicrously from side to side at the hips in unison in a way that was thought mod (or simply ridiculing real rock'n'roll?—they thought of themselves primarily as comedians), in time as they played, looking like Rock was totally foreign to them and so following instructions second-hand from a rock'n'roll training manual; or misprogrammed robots performing calisthenics for a freak circus. Freddie, out front performing rope tricks with the microphone cord, would leap frantically in the air, waving his limbs uncoordinatedly but apparently according to some plan known only to himself and the group (see *The Ed Sullivan Show*, April 1965). This caught on well enough with the least discerning fans for it to become a dance—a feat of bad taste duly called “The Freddie”. A new generation of mods a year on would be left wondering, as ever, What were they thinking?

On the Hermits' May tour of the US, though held from no.1 by the Beach Boys' ‘Help Me Rhonda’, they collected six golden discs from their record company for world sales over their first six months. And they received two of the most elusive prizes of all: official Gold Discs from the RIAA in a year that saw ten awarded in total—and when even the Beatles' latest single was slow getting one. The Hermits were big album sellers too, a “Best of” conglomeration reaching 900,000 its first year in the States—not as high as the Beatles because most Hermits fans only had a nickel allowance.

But as with the Dave Clark Five only their debut song got to the top at home, their four biggest American hits and other big sellers not released in the UK, presumably superfluous effort. They continued into '66, their records using more sophisticated pop arrangements and sounding a lot like Kirschner's Monkees would on arrival in September: ‘A Must to Avoid’, ‘Listen People’. They reverted to oozing Music Hall impishness through ‘Leaning on a Lamp Post’ and ‘Dandy’, losing its bite in translation from the Kinks, and in '67 sold cloying Victoriana worthy of a West End *Oliver* production: ‘There's a Kind of Hush’, their last Gold Disc.

PETER/HERMAN CAME FROM THE ENGLISH VARIETY stage—"panto"—a route also shuffled to American superstardom by Davy Jones of the Monkees. Both Peter and Davy had apprenticed as juveniles in the cast of perennial tv soap *Coronation Street* based in Manchester. Afterwards, Herman/Peter returned home for another eight big hits extending his career in the same sticky-sentimental Music Hall rut….

It was a wide-scatter buckshot, lowest-common-denominator entertainment whose shallow depths the Beatles themselves would continually plumb for their singalong tunes that proved them all-round entertainers appealing to the broadest possible cross-section of the public: 'I'll Get You', 'Baby's in Black', 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band', 'Good Day Sunshine', 'Magical Mystery Tour', 'Ob La Di, Ob La Da', 'Maxwell's Silver Hammer', 'Octopus's Garden' and on and on…. None would have been out of place on London's variety stage circa 1890—hardly what might have been expected from musicians held up as the *avant garde* of the Sixties and the mark to reach for two generations to come. 1964-66 inclusive it all but ruined rock'n'roll and tainted much of what came in '67. From then on the English went back to their Brit Pop, allowing a few genuine converts to American music (the Who, Cream) to escape.

The cherished place in the English psyche reserved for all-round entertainment can't be overstated. Teen idol Adam Faith, Paul Jones, the lead vocalist of Manfred Mann, and Jeremy Clyde (Chad & Jeremy) were equally well known as straight actors, while the importance of films in the careers of the Beatles—Ringo Starr and John Lennon separately—Mick Jagger, David Bowie, et al, is obvious. Ringo and Freddie Garrity were later better known on children's tv. Gerry Marsden, who later took to pantomime, was called by John Lennon "a showman in the best sense of the word," whatever species of beast that be. Cilla Black, top songstress bar none on the home front through the Sixties, later hosted tv game shows. Tommy Steele, who passed as an early English 'rocker', found fleeting fame in Broadway musicals and on film in *Half a Sixpence*. Rod Stewart has found his real home in cabaret, reviving *very* oldies,

dressed in glittering Las Vegas lounge suits. It was as if all were reverting to their true *metier* after years posing as rock stars.

Maybe what is most frightening in retrospect is the reaction of the media to this avalanche of new faces with old sounds. Each one in turn was hailed as a new *avatar* with cynical endorsements. After Dave Clark failed to knock the Beatles off their throne the Hermits and Dreamers thrust to the center of preteen consciousness. The Hermits' impact was such that their fourth big hit—proof they would see their fans through puberty—'Mrs Brown', debuted on Billboard's chart at an all-time high of no.12 (no entries at no.1 in those simple days). To have outdone the Beatles—These must surely be no ordinary musicians, but super-Mods. With the Invasion's second wave came its flip side. Posing as villains opposite the children's heroes on a pantomime level of creativity, contributing to what was obviously the same carnival production, were the Rolling Stones—Punch in the Punch & Judy show. The media on both sides of the Atlantic, recognizing they were in the same game—not journallism but entertainment—collaborated and lapped up the stylized moustache twirling. It was all good for business.

But factually, this Invasion led by the Beatles was no revolution in rock at all—rather the opposite, a watering down of real rock music as much as 'Rock and Roll Waltz' and the Elvis imitators were. Aside from The Who, the Kinks and few others, were they even originals, playing music along their own intuitive tracks? The Beatles claimed to be rock'n'roll revivalists, while putting forward such obvious Tin Pan Alley material as 'Ain't She Sweet', 'A Taste of Honey' and 'All My Lovin''. Their signature refrains of "Oh yeah" and "Yeah, yeah, yeah" were the antithesis of the spontaneous rock-rebel yell heard from Little Richard or Jerry Lee, becoming as comforting to listeners as a pair of old slippers, keying automatic responses as the introduction or tag to a song, serving the same purpose as the catch-phrases worn out in the patter of their Music Hall heroes from Arthur Askey to Tommy Trinder to Bruce Forsyth: to reassure the audience that here were their old friends again with a familiar, staged act—here just to share a cosy evening's singalong. The veneer of rock'n'roll rebellion was overwhelmed by an arty new look and strategic mop-

shaking—another signal to the audience to elicit applause. Herman's Hermits, less imaginative in working the crowd and with no song catalogue to fall back on, merely cemented in the retro-trend to Music Hall.

Freddie and his Dreamers 'perfected' the approach, their whole act being a novelty turn; the difference was that whatever appeal it had palled overnight, as novelties are meant to. They were big while "The Freddie" dance lasted, but luckily the US audience that had soaked the whole Brit experience up as a temporary diversion was satiated with this brand of entertainment and the Dreamers quickly wilted. Chubby Checker, please come home!

After his disheartening foray 'Let's Do the Freddie!' not only Chubby, but Elvis was nowhere to be seen, The New York Times in December '64 reporting him to have gone into seclusion at the trauma of it all, coinciding with Beach Boy leader Brian Wilson's nervous breakdown.

AT HOME, FOR THE TIME BEING, THE BRITISH LOVED themselves to distraction, to the near-exclusion of everyone else, even more than America loved them. A pop-cultural revival—in fashion, films, television, music—had begun. Through the entire length of 1963, '64, to the summer of '65, Roy Orbison and Elvis Presley (twice each), the Supremes and Roger Miller were the only Americans to top UK charts. With the rider that two Jim Reeves' hits sold slightly more, Orbison's 'Oh Pretty Woman' was the biggest American rock recording reported in that peak period of sales at 680,000-plus copies: moderate popularity indeed compared with the adoration the British reserved for their own, several selling a million and many more approaching that figure.

Conversely, there is ample evidence that English musicians who troubled to polish their sound were penalised by the US market for sounding American, i.e. 'slick'. P J Proby ('Mission Bell') and Dusty Springfield ('Stay Awhile') had astonishingly good recordings that suffered. One act consistently punished was the Ivy League, so called for modeling their harmonies on an updated collegiate sound; another

the Searchers, who, the further they strayed from the Mersey Beat the further down the charts they slipped in America and at home.

Ivy League vocalists John Carter and Ken Lewis had been on the BBC's *Pop Go the Beatles* radio series and went on to record high harmonies on The Who's ‘I Can't Explain’. At that time (early '65) ‘Funny How Love Can Be’ hit, followed by ‘Tossing and Turning’ (not the Bobby Lewis hit). Both were exquisitely arranged vocally and instrumentally, prefiguring ‘A Groovy Kind of Love’—and didn't register an anthill in the US. The same happened to their Beach Boys/Four Seasons-sounding ‘Round and Round in Circles’ and ‘Run Baby Run’. In loyalty to a cause whose time hadn't yet come they did a version of ‘Don't Worry Baby’. After the heavy-handed prejudice eased in the next year another group going somewhat soulful, the Fortunes, but without the Ivy League's handicap of an American name brand, sold in much better numbers Stateside (‘You've Got Your Troubles’, ‘Here It Comes Again’) and then the Mindbenders' ‘Groovy Kind of Love’ made no.1 trans-Atlantic.

Merry England was what sold, unless you were the musically enterprising, truly nonconformist Beach Boys or Four Seasons or an exponent of the Motown Sound—i.e. so American as to be “alternative”. Nothing was more English than music designed for an English country garden. The pleasantly soporific interchangeable duos Peter & Gordon and Chad & Jeremy didn't exactly hit— they sighed longingly from late spring '64 between the decline of the Everly Bros and the rise of Simon & Garfunkel. David & Jonathan were another—a cover of the Beatles' ‘Michelle’; and still another, the Overlanders, had a UK number one with it.

Peter's sister was actress Jane Asher, Paul McCartney's then world famous steady girlfriend. As *the* trendy young couple through the mid-Sixties, Jane and Paul (with Mick and Marianne) were teen icons. Paul, Peter, Marianne Faithfull's then husband John Dunbar and writer Barry Miles formed a coterie and business partnership in an art gallery. According to Miles, later McCartney biographer, “Peter and Gordon spent two years circulating tapes to record companies, trying to make a name for themselves, but to no avail—until Paul began going out with Jane. Then record companies

suddenly became very interested indeed." Now all were in the inner sanctum, boosted into the royal strata of swinging London, the barometer of social importance. Paul was elevated as a member of the monied, cultured Asher household in London's Mayfair for three years, ensconced in the room next to Peter (where he and Millie Small made out) where the most ambitious Beatle wrote his group's biggest hits with or without John Lennon.

One he wrote was Peter & Gordon debut 'A World Without Love', taking top spot in the US from 'Chapel of Love'; also their second and third hits, 'Nobody I Know' and 'I Don't Want to See You Again', and their best of 1966, 'Woman' "do you love me?". As a test of whether Lennon-McCartney on the label was what would sell it, Paul created an identity called Bernard Webb, supposedly the composer of 'Woman'. As English as the song was, as a result it was Peter & Gordon's first release to miss UK top 20 though it made a respectable showing at no.14 in Billboard.

Aside from the Beatles and the Beach Boys, Peter & Gordon were the only other major new act signed to Capitol through the mid-Sixties. Essentially what Jan & Dean were to the Beach Boys— at worst leeches, at best benign limpets promoting the same genre — Peter & Gordon were to the Beatles. As with most trans-Atlantians adopted with open arms and checkbooks by Uncle Sam their first hit was their only Blighty #1, after which, on a career path wearing a deep trench, they moved on to greener pastures: the USA. Such was the anathema to Americana in the UK at this time, though, for a year Peter & Gordon were bigger sellers at home too than any US act including the Beach Boys.

If Peter & Gordon might be called soothing, Chad & Jeremy were downright sedating. Their sole native hit, 'Yesterday's Gone', barely was and in America was slowed down by a competing version from the Overlanders. Their biggest, 'Summer Song' and 'Willow, Weep for Me', were delivered with the wan spirit of Marianne Faithfull's 'Greensleeves', far better suited to that country garden than a rock movement, even an English one. But, with the *cachet* of the Asher and Faithfull circles, genteel breeding was their trademark—an upper-

class chic that was obviously supposed to be admired for its own sake.

Fortunately for the future of all music that stirred the soul, Chad & Jeremy lasted only to the summer of '65. Peter & Gordon prolonged the agony for another year after their last McCartney hit with, once again, novelty songs dripping with Music Hall cliché —'Lady Godiva' and 'Knight in Rusty Armor', tributes to opportunism that, with much other tripe put out in the mid-Sixties, worked to hammer more nails into the coffin of rock music. Only after decades had passed would it be apparent how many pop acts had attempted a premature burial for this most energetic and energizing form of music. If in doubt stick with *schtick*, and so it was that Peter & Gordon finished in spring '67 with 'Sunday for Tea', extolling the virtues of "lettuce and ham" and "crumpets and jam" among the thrills of the parlor—to a US audience now *formerly* besotted with all things teddibly English.

They had sounded and looked like refined Oxbridge-accented Beatles, so far removed from rock as to be baroque. It had been as much a class takeover as when the wealthy socialites at New York's Peppermint Lounge coopted The Twist under the nose of Chubby Checker—and far more dangerous to rock'n'roll because taken more seriously than Zsa Zsa Gabor and Marlene Dietrich twisting. Rock'n'roll in these hands was a casualty in need of critical care. None showed anything like the musical authenticity of their American cousins: the vocal imagination and upbeat propulsion of the Everlys, or self-penned poetry of Simon & Garfunkel.

As Peter & Gordon left the stage, cue a comeback by the Everly Bros, sublime rock harmonisers coming from deep country roots with their first hit in three years, 'Bowling Green'—thankfully not about the English pastime. They had influenced everyone from the Beatles to the Beach Boys, not least Simon & Garfunkel, who finally succeeded with folk rock. But the exquisite ballad was an isolated success for them.

OBVIOUSLY THE BEATLES LED UK HARMONY ACTS. The Hollies, Searchers, Tremeloes, Fortunes and Ivy

League—all probably better harmonisers than the Fabs on the whole—made attractive recordings for the most part. Irish MOR balladeers the Bachelors ('Diane', 'Marie'), another group under American émigré Shel Talmy, were energized enough to compete — more than American counterparts the Lettermen and Sandpipers, until the Vogues more than matched them ('You're the One', 'Five O'Clock World').

No English harmony group would threaten the primacy of the Beatles until the Bee Gees in '67: boasting a maudlin tear-jerking facility just as tuneful and even more brazen than Paul McCartney's, but the rock was missing. Missing the same broad sweep, they proved to be a singles group—and a wealthy one, especially after switching to disco. Their opening gambit—a highly successful one with the Invasion badly waning—was to still sing in Beatle tones but namedrop for the American market, as in 'New York Mining Disaster 1941' and 'Massachusetts'—this selling five million around the world, one of seven trips to the USA top twenty in eighteen months.

The Tremeloes—now without Brian Poole—made a good attempt at being English Four Seasons, covering 'Silence is Golden'. And the Hollies encroached on Beach Boy territory in 'I Can't Let Go' and its three-part counterpoint harmony, with Graham Nash on this occasion an adequate falsetto stand-in for Brian Wilson. The Who made forays into harmony too towards the end of the Invasion on 'Substitute', 'I'm a Boy', 'Happy Jack', 'Pictures of Lily'; the Kinks to good effect on 'Sunny Afternoon', 'Waterloo Sunset', 'Days'. But it was the Searchers who made harmony their forté from launch time on Uncle Sam's shores and were probably best at it of the UK groups until the arrival of the Hollies. The only major Liverpool act not under Brian Epstein's management, they further dared the fates in not paying obeisance to the Mersey Beat and so fought an uphill battle putting across a defining image, coming from Tony Hatch's rather select stable which included Petula Clark. They were one English group who did better at home —seven top three hits. In America, after a first year full of hits starting two months after the Beatles, but only one top ten, they branched out from the Mersey sound and were soon treated as something of a background hum to the main event.

Carving a niche with Jackie De Shannon's ‘Needles and Pins’, and ‘Don't Throw Your Love Away’, both were UK number ones and more thoughtful than ninety percent of what came out of England in 1964. A routine remake of Leiber & Stoller's ‘Love Potion No.9’ was easily their American summit, a disputed number one, while a subtle, affecting ‘Goodbye My Love’ slid by. Today their brightly performed ‘Sweets for My Sweet’, ‘Sugar and Spice’, ‘Someday We're Gonna Love Again’ and ‘When You Walk in the Room’ are a respite from the usual dross played on oldies stations. Rewarded by posterity as precursors of folk rock, electrifying a jangling 12-string ‘What Have They Done to the Rain?’ from Joan Baez, their rocking version of ‘Have You Ever Loved Somebody?’ in late '66 almost defied its source—Tommy Boyce & Bobby Hart, composers for the Monkees. By then they had given way to yet another wave of mainly light British fare.

Named in tribute to their hero of rock'n'roll, the Hollies spent their career avoiding it for straight commercial pop—after opening with remakes of American r&b (‘Just Like Me’, ‘Searchin'’, ‘Stay’) so average they haven't been heard since. Ranked up with the Dakotas among Mancunian pop musicians, they moved into their own groove and should have gone in with the first wave with ‘Just One Look’ and ‘Here I Go Again’—both upbeat and sporting excellent harmonies but ignored in America. They made a mistake sounding like Gene Pitney if they wanted to catch US attention in 1965—‘I'm Alive’. More going to or near top in the UK, ‘Look Through Any Window’ and ‘I Can't Let Go’, the latter edging out ‘Barbara Ann’, just made top 40 US. At home they were consistent until ‘If I Needed Someone’: Releasing a Beatle song as a 45 only emphasized subordinate status to their Parlophone labelmates.

In a burst from the following autumn—‘Bus Stop’, ‘Stop Stop Stop’, ‘On a Carousel’, ‘Carrie Anne’—they finally broke through as harmony contenders in the US, each presented a gold disc by their record company not the RIAA. Despite their attractiveness all but the first were as cutesie and thumbing-your-nose-trivial as Herman's Hermits could have wished for in their heyday two years before. Hampered from the start by a lack of adventurousness and originality

innate in the derivative British movement, a clear lack of creative nerve resulted in the defection in early '68 of writer-vocalist Graham Nash, who went on to Crosby, Stills & Nash to provide the only real bright spot for harmony singing on the discarding of the Beach Boys at decade's end.

Today, just as the Beach Boys and Beatles can be linked conceptually across the Atlantic, the Hollies can be seen clearly as accordingly toned down, English Four Seasons, their staple recordings catchy harmony-pop ditties (‘Jennifer Eccles’, ‘Sorry Suzanne’) even further from rock'n'roll. A critic could be forgiven for imagining the resemblance extends to snare drum breaks heard on Seasons records in 1962-63 being reproduced by Bobby Elliott.

The remaining Hollies were left with Manfred Mann (‘Just Like a Woman’, ‘Mighty Quinn’) to cover Dylan, a surefire fashion icon. Ultimately, they must be lumped in with the Manfreds and Tremeloes in the chase for the next UK top tenner—a field for chart habitués including Beatle protégés Marmalade and Grapefruit, both about as exciting as their names would indicate. The Grapefruit, conceived by Yoko Ono, had as their high point a poor, year-late 45 of the Four Seasons' ‘C'mon Marianne’; Marmalade, an inferior version of the irredeemable ‘Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da’.

Simultaneous with the Seasons' rare rocker in early summer 1967 the Tremeloes in the UK were basing their career on another Four Seasons B-side, ‘Silence is Golden’, the flip of ‘Rag Doll’ three years before—to be the biggest hit the revived English group ever had. The gulf between original American pop—the Seasons/ Bob Crewe combine—and the imitative from the UK in the mid-Sixties was unbridgeable. The fealty of Brit musicians to an American idiom is all the more striking in the face of UK pride in trumpeting a false independence, even superiority.

MANFRED MANN TOO EPITOMISED THE APPROACH of making it by whatever means. Some of their lineup starting as players of pure jazz and the rest of hard r&b, they were shown up as artistically compromised from their first UK hit as the Beatles were touching down in New York: ‘5-4-3-2-1’, commissioned

as the theme of tv's *Ready Steady Go*. Through 'Do Wah Diddy Diddy' and 'Sha La La', both written as girl group songs, and a dozen far less memorable they clung to a narrow pop format on record (while performing live more to their roots) that showed considerably less guts than Bubble Gum. With the Brit Pop 'Fox on the Run' and 'Ragamuffin Man', nearing the end of the Sixties they were finally sick enough of themselves—by their own admission—to implode. Shel Talmy dallied with them before going on to the better Brit pop of Amen Corner and the (Australian) Easybeats, then to direct David Bowie into rock.

The mindset was of the showbiz trouper—supposedly linking rock rebellion with acting and game-show hosting, treating careers in entertainment as all interchangeable and of equal value—and by implication superficial enough to be acted or posed: "The show must go on," in whatever form. The Brit Invasion had hijacked the mantle of Rock's originators in mid-flight, sapped the initiative of its heirs-apparent and, rather than revitalising it, cheapened it. No pre-Beatle American teen idol had ever released the torrent of trivia gushing from each of a dozen English groups. The Beach Boys, inevitably lightening the shade of Rock with their harmonies and given their mix of talents, sustained the momentum of rock as a movement through emulating the rhythm-drive of Little Richard and socio-realist lyrics of Leiber & Stoller and Chuck Berry. And, far beyond traditional song structures, they introduced layered, complex elaborations through deceptively simple, primal music mosaics, daring to play Russian roulette with commerciality.

What was produced by the Brits and their American converts was more an effect of parody—not art expressing a subculture of youth rebellion (Britain did not even have a word for "teenager" until adopted reluctantly from America in the late Fifties, and then even the concept of youths having their own subculture continued to be mocked by this staid society at large—Salewicz), nor any true emotion but mostly an expedient and artificially reproduced, faded print of the original that turned out an enormous moneymaker and a happy hunting ground for songwriting hacks, pluggers, *artistes*, and producers with more cynicism or pick-and-hope than artistry. Norman

Smith tells the story (Salewicz) of the Beatles turning up to their audition pristine in suits but with pathetic equipment, a very ordinary performance, no visible originality—and of George Martin picking the group on the basis that they kept him and Smith doubled over with laughter for twenty minutes afterward with their Scouse humor. Gimmickry, not inspiration or improving one's craft, would be the common currency of rock—anything to improve business. In diverting rock music onto a false trail (*Dancing in the Street* doco) the Brit phenomenon unjustly ended the productive, innovative careers of many. Pure voices were drowned out by the din of musical chameleons on Top 40 radio who endlessly compromised themselves to be cool.

Of all English groups noticed in America those reaching above and beyond trivia—The Who, Kinks, Animals, Yardbirds, Spencer Davis Group—were among the less appreciated, even the Stones at first until they stamped a strong image opposing the Beatles. It was cuddly Beatles-64 and the other ingratiating Merseybeat groups, the Dave Clark Five and Herman's Hermits that America warmed to in its desperation for sentimental ownership—the prototype Fabs most of all. It was not until two years after they staked their claim on Uncle Sam, when they were ensured a huge fan base to fall back on, that the Beatles dared to break out of teenybopper mode lyrically and musically. Only after they loosened the sentimental straight-jackets they had tethered themselves in, and that America, Brian Epstein and other middle-men had padlocked, were the Monkees (even their name was based on the Beatle concept, a cutely misspelled animal) invented and introduced for public consumption—and the Muzik Biz again had its ideal: purpose-designed entertainers focused on wooing audience sympathy.

Bogusly billed as "America's Answer", this time it turned out to be literally true. The Monkees were groomed and trained into as close a copy of the Beatles as could be made. And the tv series format of non-stop action closely resembled *A Hard Day's Night.* Each was selected specifically to fill an individual Beatle role but inevitably ended up a caricature, American disciples of the British imperative straining to be Mod and ended up merely 'zany'. Even the early

fluffed-up Beatles would never be caught trying quite so hard to please.

The full flourish of UK acts saturating the American scene lasted a little under eighteen months and waned before most noticed. Names that were almost household in that time just stopped having hits—Manfred Mann, after a brief top twenty span of four months (two hits), and Billy J Kramer after a year. The Searchers and Gerry & the Pacemakers too had a year. Freddie & the Dreamers beat all for a disappearing act after a span of ten weeks (three hits) ending May '65 also. Marianne Faithfull left top forty at the end of summer with Chad & Jeremy; Peter & Gordon returned only fitfully thereafter. At the end of 1965 such worthies as The Who, Small Faces, Cliff Richard, P J Proby and the Walker Bros hadn't made a real American impact, while against the odds Herman's Hermits and the Dave Clark Five were still going strong.

By whatever formula of stickability, the DC-5 and Herman's Hermits survived most by two years, going home in summer '67 to enjoy a string of hits more than ever in Music Hall mode. It was as if all had spent their careers to date gearing down to nostalgia acts, now ideally placed: There would always be a warm welcome at British pubs and soccer matches for boozed-up singalongs led by names like the Swinging Blue Jeans, the Merseymen, the Manfreds —and later, the US oldies tour.

In spite of the mediocrity glazed over by transparent hype, to this day program directors the world over deem perky Englishmen to have nostalgia value, dominating the airwaves over committed American practitioners of the real r&b. This travesty hits home when Brian Poole & the Tremeloes' cover of ‘Do You Love Me?’ is preferred to the Contours' raunchy authenticity; Sam Cooke's ‘Wonderful World’ is cooed with a bubbly nothingness by Herman; and classic Spector productions ‘You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'’ and ‘River Deep, Mountain High’ are substituted by local covers that would never have exposure in an ideal world.

THE BRITISH ‘INFUSION’, AS SYMPATHIZERS CALL IT (I can see no net gain) traumatized African-American

performers—thankfully deficient in English Music Hall technique. In Britain blacked-face white performers continued playing Al Jolson-style 'nigger minstrels' on BBC television from 1958 to 1978 in the highly popular *Black and White Minstrel Show*—despite ongoing complaints that embarrassed tv authorities even in farflung, relatively unsophisticated corners of the British Empire. But it was the just claims of genuine black performers that were more likely to irk the BBC. And when a government department acted this way with impunity, how likely was it that the general population would be any more sensitive to Black American music idioms? When black groups finally emerged in the UK they stuck to Brit pop with barely two exceptions, 'Baby Come Back' (the Equals) and 'Build Me Up Buttercup' (the Foundations); it took Jamaica's Desmond Dekker & the Aces ('The Israelites', 'It Mek') to import reggae as an authentic 'native' musical form.

The inroads of the whole British effect showed year by year in drastically reduced exposure for black rock Stateside. The USA's 50 biggest hits of 1963 show near the top such raw, vital discs as Little Stevie Wonder's 'Fingertips' and the Chiffons' 'He's So Fine', then the rollicking good 'Be My Baby' and 'My Boyfriend's Back'; Ray Charles' 'Busted' and the Impressions' 'It's All Right' just below with exquisite *a capella* 'So Much in Love' and ground-breaking 'Sally Go Round the Roses'. Undisputed classics 'Heat Wave', 'Up On the Roof' and 'You've Really Got a Hold On Me' make the big fifty, with 'Baby Work Out', 'Hello Stranger', 'Then He Kissed Me', 'One Fine Day', 'Mockingbird' and 'Just One Look' just missing: every one an r&b gem.

In '64, on the British Invasion, a complete turnaround: The two best-selling black recordings are Louis Armstrong's show tune 'Hello Dolly' and a lullaby treatment of 'Chapel of Love' (which Brian Wilson would revamp out of sight twelve years later); then cooing Mary Wells' 'My Guy' and gooey Supremes' 'Where Did Our Love Go?' and 'Baby Love'. 'Leader of the Pack', the first real stunner—with a black sound—comes halfway down the list. The ultra-pop 'My Boy Lollipop', and better 'Come See About Me', 'Under the Boardwalk' and Martha & the Vandellas' 'Dancing in the Street', the

last two the only other classic performances, follow toward bottom. Below the 50 top: 'It's in His Kiss', 'Anyone Who Had a Heart' and well out, more real r&b, 'Nitty Gritty', 'No Particular Place to Go', the Tams' 'What Kind of Fool Do You Think I Am?' and Sam Cooke's 'Good News'. Out of even the 100 most popular discs are such neglected events in pop history as Jerry Butler & Betty Everett's 'Let It Be Me', Nancy Wilson's '(You Don't Know) How Glad I Am', r&b great Bobby Bland's 'Ain't Nothing You Can Do', and the Ronettes' 'Baby I Love You' and 'Walking in the Rain'—disregarded as much as anything for lack of Brit credentials and mop of fluffy hair.

1965 brought even fewer rewards, for 'I Can't Help Myself', the only big black recording, 'A Lover's Concerto', 'Stop in the Name of Love' and 'I Hear a Symphony' all edging the twenty top discs—two thoroughly infused with Music Hall and recorded as if all sense of spontaneity had been banned. Scattered on the fringes of the fifty are the real thing: 'I Got You' a.k.a. 'I Feel Good', 'Rescue Me', 'Yes I'm Ready', Motown's cookin' 'Back in My Arms Again' and 'It's the Same Old Song', Shirley Ellis's 'The Name Game', 'Hold What You've Got' (Joe Tex) and the rhythmically infectious 'Shake' (Sam Cooke). Losers: 'Papa's Got a Brand New Bag', 'In the Midnight Hour', 'Mustang Sally', 'Tracks of My Tears'—maybe Smokey Robinson's all-time greatest, 'Nowhere to Run'. Next year: Otis Redding's 'Try a Little Tenderness', Carla Thomas's 'B-A-B-Y' and Ike & Tina Turner's rivetting performance of 'River Deep Mountain High' virtually banned from the airwaves.

It was not until mid-'67 that authentic 'Soul' (r&b was something British now) had won back enough ground through James Brown and the artists at the Atlantic/Stax studios—Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, Booker T & the MGs— to launch a multi-pronged offensive against a new English front: The Who, Cream, the Spencer Davis and Jeff Beck Groups, and Jimi Hendrix rebounding irresistibly back to the USA. Justice delayed was justice denied, and to what purpose? Paradoxically, responsible for their sidelining, the Beatles Machine was lent some street cred: the universally hummable Lennon-McCartney tunes adapted to Soul,

injecting the vital juices into rock that the Beatles hadn't. With Hendrix's return and Otis Redding's surge—both in the Monterey Pop Festival, June '67—the wheel was turning full circle. Amid the reclaiming of territory came Soul takes on 'Yesterday' by Ray Charles, 'Day Tripper' and 'Satisfaction' by Redding, 'Revolution' and 'Here Comes the Sun' by Nina Simone, as well as unlikely 'Hey Jude' (Wilson Pickett) and 'Eleanor Rigby' (Aretha Franklin). Taking the process to assimilation, and pointing up an exquisite irony, Black activist Simone embraced Beatle soundalikes the Bee Gees' catchy melodies 'To Love Somebody'/ 'I Can't See Nobody' and crushed the ponderous Englishness out of them.

Of the Invaders today mostly their conventional cores remain, little or nothing of rock'n'roll: Paul McCartney, now looking as well as sounding like his father and taken to writing conventional symphonies; Eric Clapton and Van Morrison unplugged and unguardedly sickly-sentimental; Rod Stewart smarming show tunes; Joe Cocker and The Who—raucous by nature, but somehow lacking the original spirit… and the Rolling Stones. The Stones have prolonged their commercial value by switching to… whatever, as expediency warranted. Variations on the 'Jumpin' Jack Flash'/ 'Street Fighting Man'/'Honky Tonk Women'/'Brown Sugar'/ 'Start Me Up' riffing could only last them so many years, thirteen to be exact.

If the legacy of the Beatles—that is, Lennon & McCartney—is compared to that of the other world famous pair of clever English song-crafters, Gilbert & Sullivan—and it is difficult not t—then this mid-Sixties phenomenon can be seen as a momentary throw- back to English tradition (except authentic blues-based The Who, Cream, etc) which grew into a hydra-headed roadshow saturating the world for three years... the Beatles, Gerry & the Pacemakers, Dave Clark Five, Manfred Mann, Herman's Hermits, Freddie & the Dreamers, Peter & Gordon all inescapable via radio, television, film. Trans-Atlantic businessmen creamed it in an unprecedented bonanza while it lasted. But just as Monty Python might lampoon "The punishment fit the crime", Peter Sellers poked pointed fun at 'She Loves You' and 'A Hard Day's Night'. Just as school children perform Gilbert & Sullivan

today to learn their A-B-Cs of music, so might they Lennon & McCartney a hundred years on.

The Fabs would create such a body of infantile songs that they were memorialised (again) in *The Simpsons*, as Bart explains to Milhous who they were: “The Beatles… They wrote the songs on Maggie's baby records.”

The final word on the Beach Boys versus Beatles debate, neglect of American acts under the British Invasion, and more controversial critique on your favorite Sixties acts, with a Foreword by Fred Vail, legendary Beach Boys advance man and co-manager.

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