

This book covers the main events of the Beach Boys pop-rock band through their heyday of the 1960s and into the early 1970s -- the period of their creative thrust when they were world famous.

**THE BEACH BOYS HANDBOOK FOR ICONOCLASTS:  
Essential Facts On Essential Hits (1962-1973)**

By G. A. De Forest

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(1962-1973)**



**G. A. De Forest**

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## Introduction

The Beach Boys were supremely unlucky to be cast as "the nearly men" in the pop music age of the British. They nearly had the world by the tail for two tantalising moments in their Sixties career. But then... The world changed just as they were lining up the money shot. Twice.

The Brits had conquered movies in the early Sixties with the overwhelming box-office power of the James Bond features, the celebrity gossip power of Elizabeth Taylor and her consort Richard Burton, the pristine image of Julie Andrews in screen musicals, and cute Hayley Mills in Disney movies was the world's most popular child star. The screen acting talents of a phalanx of men and women captivated out of all proportion to Britain's population. Once the Beatles were established as part of the set, fans who were fashionable but wanted an alternative chose the Rolling Stones—an act who made their name as a pop culture response to the Beatles. (As I write, New Zealand film director Peter Jackson's 8-hour documentary *Let It Be* reconfirms the Beatles as the only game in town for Sixties pop, viewed from an ever-narrowing perspective.) Those who didn't worry about fashion often chose the Beach Boys. As the band themselves said, and showed by their commitment, it was only the music that mattered, not star image.

It was the Beatles, too, who attracted the bandwagoners—those who choose whoever is at top as their personal favorite in whatever entertainment field. In the Sixties there was the all-conquering Mohammed Ali too, unchallenged for years and the name on everyone's lips. If you knew nothing at all about boxing, you still knew this *name* to quote. Now, the New York Yankees—incidentally, baseballers—with their omnipresent

logo around the world stamping a brand of superiority via a cap or jerkin. So it was with the Beatles... There is an element here of taking the middle-of-the-road, safe course—going with the majority, using circular logic so not having to analyse or explain a personal preference. So in pop music, it was Abba or the Bee Gees—usually both to cover the field—in the Seventies. In the Eighties, mainstream Michael Jackson to alternative Prince...

Followers say that there is something about the Beach Boys that even their closest rivals in the 1960s could not touch—and those (several) rivals knew it and spoke of it, but not often in public. No way could their freshness of sound be matched, the spontaneity of spirit that came from those vinyl grooves on 45s and l.p.s. Brian Wilson, their arranger and producer, strove with his band to translate emotions directly to music via what has been called the most versatile vocal ensemble in rock music. Some composers find a way of making each note and stroke just right. Sometimes put down by critics in his day for his "high school" lyrics (along with his high singing voice), that aspect of Brian's songwriting was more than articulate but barely came into the equation at the time—as the spiritual qualities of his *a capella* and instrumental works amply demonstrate. His early obsession with Four Freshmen harmonies and its fruits show that he had no need of lyrics at all (hear *Our Prayer* from the 20/20 album). Brian often used lyricists to just "polish" the theme or simply to save time and energy. Cousin Mike Love was his usual partner. Gary Usher, Roger Christian, Tony Asher, and Van Dyke Parks were amenable to his needs.

In the new millennium Billboard has named them still the all-time biggest-selling American pop group of singles and albums alike. This is a fact either lost to history, or never widely publicized in the first place. Of all American bands they

must be the comeback champions—rebooting their career whenever there was a lull followed by a half-decent hit. The first traumatic career shock came with the arrival of the Beatles at the beginning of 1964; the second, early 1967 with the strain of producing a worthy follow-up to *Good Vibrations*—Could it even be done? Four years on they won credibility all over again as a live band and with monumental albums SUNFLOWER and SURF'S UP.

To listen once to a Beach Boys track from the 1960s is hardly ever enough—almost always rewarded by repeat listening on the spot. Their fully self-contained creative approach, unique among groups forming at the dawn of the 1960s, continued until 1973 and their album HOLLAND, the last in a string of recognized masterworks (with due nods to THE BEACH BOYS LOVE YOU, 1977; THE LIGHT ALBUM, 1979, and THAT'S WHY GOD MADE THE RADIO, 2012). Far removed from this level of music are other "all-time greats" of pop music, the disco heroes Abba and the Bee Gees—whose efforts in the studio sound so processed in perfecting what is so sterile a craft, but who nevertheless took over as rock retreated and disco came on in the mid 1970s.

In the mid-Seventies the commercial win of compilation ENDLESS SUMMER came with defeat to any creative impetus. Big bucks too came with 15 BIG ONES and the "Brian's Back" campaign when their leader came out of bed to perform, shakily... Their final comeback started summer 1985, sustained by a new single each summer/fall till the winter phenomenon that was *Kokomo*, 1988-89. To recent generations this is an old landmark, the band's final—and arguably biggest—number one, with its sand-laden video amid wall-to-wall beach girls young enough to be their daughters. And curious minds inevitably search back to their real youth, not a video one... It seemed fitting that the same year Brian



Wilson—with his solo *Love And Mercy*—and the Beach Boys were two separate acts, one compared against the other. In 2005, 63-year-old Brian was nominated for a Grammy for vocals on his reworked SMILE project.

Beach Boys fans were thrilled each time there was a "single" to be released—because mostly it meant a double feature. In their first four years, before B-sides went out of fashion, listeners never knew which song would be favored. "B"s *409, Shut Down, Little Deuce Coupe, In My Room, Don't Worry Baby, The Warmth Of the Sun, God Only Knows*—and e.p. sides *Little Honda* and *Wendy*—are cherished in rock history every bit as much as the gargantuan hits that were intended to be so.

## Curtain Up

Brian recorded and sometimes released (on a small scale) practice efforts outside the group. One that involved Brian, his mother Audree and 15-year-old brother Carl was *Barbie (Queen Of the Prom)*, recorded and issued early 1962 on the tiny Randy label under Kenny & the Cadets. This was a favor to Hite & Dorinda Morgan, the new band's associates in small-time music business. It featured a pleasant melody and Brian's boy soprano, but otherwise perhaps the less said the better for the sake of pop-rock history. All that came out of it was a very rare, highly collectible disc. For Sharon Marie, a local singer, the melody of what would become *Darlin'* was produced. *Guess I'm Dumb* was for a pre-famous Glen Campbell, who manages to virtually duplicate Brian's high tenor. These efforts went by unnoticed aside from a couple of singles for the Honeys, an L.A. surfer-girl band featuring sisters Marilyn Rovell (to marry Brian), sister Diane Rovell, and cousin Ginger Blake—which got some airplay in southern California and moderate sales in Scandinavia.

A pattern was showing here: None of his projects outside of the Beach Boys were winners. With his band, things were wholly different. With all the family ructions over the years, they were a perfect fit, musically. They needed each other.

## 1962

The seminal minor hit, *Surfin'*, came together within the band: perfected on Labor Day weekend 1961 at the Wilson family home, recorded a month later, and released two months after that on December 8th. Described as "rude and crude" by Murry Wilson in an interview ten years later, it showcased a garage band forced to record in a converted old-time movie studio and making do with rented instruments mainly financed by Al Jardine's mother, once a symphonic musician Back East. Using two-track facilities, Brian tapped on the snare drum to keep a medium pace, having overlooked renting drum sticks (and drummer); Carl played acoustic guitar; Al played an old-fashioned stand-up double bass; Mike and Brian sang; and Dennis, having trained in the rudiments of drumming in music class at Hawthorne High School, kept out of the way, for now.

Three weeks after the appearance of this first single on a regional playlist for the first time (KFWB-Los Angeles), the Beach Boys got their first wide media attention with the Cash Box Top 100 listing of *Surfin'* on January 20th 1962. The following week saw its favorable review and a positive outlook for hit value, noting that it had been selling for some time already. In the meantime too the band and their song were introduced in a popular column, Robert Sylvester's "Dream Street", in the prestigious *New York Daily News* with a huge circulation and international readership. It was only early the following month, February '62 and close to topping the local charts, that their hometown media, the *Los Angeles Times*, got around to featuring them in an article about this new "surfin' music".

However, the Cash Box review described them as "joining in on the stomp craze" (i.e. following the Marketts' *Surfer's*

*Stomp*), typical of the time in that every disc had to be seen in conjunction with a particular dance to gain a toehold. The flip side was described as a "cha-cha". The two songs on their first double-sided hit to come would both be "twist" tracks. With *Surfin'*, the Boys first dipped their toes in international waters, impacting in the Hit Parade Italia—presumably on airplay requests alone—and attracted a cover hit there too by Peppino di Capri, the local king of the twisters.

The Beach Boys' opener crept into the national Top 100 on February 10th, based on its initial West Coast success. Its torturously accounted-for L.A. sales have been put at 55,000 minimum. Then it was in Billboard's Hot 100—peaking here a decile higher at #75. Sales accrued from several pressings by two labels, Candix and X. Soon there were entries on radio station playlists in Yuma in the Arizona Desert, Erie on the Great Lakes... Things were happening for it too on the Atlantic coast three thousand miles away. Mid-February it began a two-month stay on WHIL, which charted the biggest sellers around Greater Boston. It spent four weeks here just short of top twenty into April, then was pipped locally by WMEX, a pioneer in rock'n'roll and now a biggie. Here the Beach Boys peaked at #20 before they bobbed in and out, maybe depending on which weeks stocks were available. Going to #2 in L.A., *Surfin'* top-fived across Southern California in San Diego and San Bernardino, across the Mojave. The rock'n'roller travelled up the West Coast to barely be heard in San Francisco (#61) and Seattle (#84) before the vinyl ran out in March, halting sales and squeezing the small Candix label to fold not long after.

Barely rating in its day, *Surfin'* has been ranked by RateYourMusic (RYM) as the 53rd most popular single released in 1961—higher than most top-tenners of its time.

The channelled, pristine energy of the Beach Boys' sound, first time up and in primitive, homemade form, shone in an environment redolent with the raw effects of an improvised recording studio improved from its original purpose in movie production. With this effort, basic as it was, they demonstrated an appeal that traversed climate and culture alike.

Founder member Al Jardine had jumped the gun, leaving disenchanted even while their first up was listed nationally and before he could be cajoled into the studio to record their first iconic hits in April. In between he had been on hand for the casual reunion in March with band members to record with Kenny & the Cadets. Reluctantly, Brian replaced him with across-the-street Hawthorne neighbor Dave Marks on rhythm guitar licks—for the past two years in the picture pressing his nose up against the goings-on in the Wilson home, as Dennis's adolescent apprentice in teen mischief, and as Carl's jamming partner at guitar lessons from John Maus, a.k.a. Walker, who would go via the Surfaris touring group to the famed Walker Brothers' vocal duo partnering Scott Engel/Walker. Dave would be included on backing vocals at April 19th's crucial recording date but excluded for his "average", untried voice—not what Brian was looking for. All of 13 and a half, he lent a blues tinge to 15-year-old Carl's rock'n'roll licks, together contributing something eclectic to the West Coast rock'n'roll scene as distinct from the twangy, instrumental surf music of Dick Dale & the Deltones, the Belairs, the Challengers, the Surfaris, the Jaguars, and other L.A. favorites flourishing in 1962.

## TO CAPITOL

The Capitol Tower is a striking-looking, circular-framed 13-storey landmark in Hollywood—the world's first such office building, erected soon after British conglomerate EMI took over the American recording label in 1955, 13 years after its founding. Hosting such revered showbiz institutions as Bing Crosby, Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra at their studios, Capitol Records had early on given rockabilly legend Gene Vincent a go—resulting in classic *Be Bop A Lula* (1956). But the only other rock'n'roller the company had succeeded with was Wanda Jackson, a female Elvis Presley by dint of the fact that she had toured often with him in his Louisiana Hayride-Memphis days and some of his sneer had rubbed off. It was a country cross-over success, twice reaching Billboard's lower top 30 recently, and she had fashioned herself long before anyway.

Having recorded *Surfin' Safari, 409* (about a powerful Chevrolet with a 409-cubic-inch engine displacement), and *Lonely Sea* in February 1962 and now honing them in the studio into what they hoped were commercial properties, manager-father Murry Wilson wore out shoe-rubber hawking the master discs around L.A. Only a major studio would do to give them a better shot at following up their opener. He was turned down flat by West Coast "majors" Dot, Liberty, and Decca—none of whom would even see Murry—in an August 1964 interview with *Music Business*, band leader Brian explained the twists and turns of how the band happened on their eight-year music pact with the fourth major label. (Given Brian's eccentric, unprepossessing appearance in youth—his innocent, bland, almost featureless face tending to puffiness, reminiscent of all-American Disney-types Kevin Corcoran or Martin Milner—it is debatable whether he would have got

anywhere on his own.) Alpha-male Murry was first referred to Capitol rep Ken Nelson, who passed him on to staff producer Nick Venet. They waited "five weeks". The casual insult bit hard. Venet and his boss, executive vice president Voyle Gilmore, both leaped on a winning bandwagon. Over-boss of Capitol was Alan Livingston, originator of Bozo the Clown, and taking pleasure in passing on good news about his Boys to the press. Later forced to give in at the behest of EMI, he and his team would wear mop-tops to promote the Beatles.

Why Imperial Records was apparently not considered as a serious option for a destination has never been explained. Specialty, also local to L.A., might have been a bit too r&b-oriented, spearheaded as it was by Little Richard and Lloyd Price. By sheer volume of business, Imperial qualified as a major, and offered the advantage of being rock'n'roll specialists, taking Fats Domino to 60 million discs (and second among black artists only to Nat Cole in sales); making Rick Nelson the biggest, most enduring teen idol; and soon to recruit and make an L.A. superstar of Johnny Rivers. As adolescents, the would-be Beach Boys had doted on black L.A. vocal group the Robins—*Riot In Cell Block #9* (1954), *Smokey Joe's Cafe* ('55)—but their tiny independent label, Spark, founded by ace rock'n'roll writer-producers Jerry Leiber & Mike Stoller, had long been absorbed into the East Coast major, Atlantic Records, with their spin-off group The Coasters. L.A. disc lore would remain an inspiration for the Beach Boys through the Sixties. Capitol obviously qualified as a prime target in Murry's eyes being home to such superstars from his generation as Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra... The fact that they didn't know Thing One about rock'n'roll wouldn't have occurred to Murry. Maybe he even dreamed that some of the "good music" he continually talked about would rub off on his boys.

The wayward popularity of *Surfin'*, and now early indications of sales of the new hit told the band it was impossible to predict which side of the "double" would sell where. But from now on the company stuck to the labels "surfin' music" (supposed to be popular on coasts) and "hotrod music" (inland buyers) determined by the lyrics—taken on as indelible *genres* by the media in no time. The band was just happy to gouge incremental increases on their initial 2.5% cut of the proceeds, as later recalled in good humor by Capitol president Alan Livingston. Shortchanged for royalties due from the first outing under the Candix label when it went bust, this time the Boys saw sales reports climb through *Surfin' Safari's* eight month run in the States and lasting months more overseas, conquering new territories and, through its long-lasting namesake album, nudging their base royalty up.

The Beach Boys' first double, rock'n'rollin' cousins *Surfin' Safari/409*, was recorded at pokey Studio 3 of Western Recorders in Hollywood in a session lasting 3 hours and 20 minutes, with atmospheric ballad *Lonely Sea* thrown in. The resident engineer was Chuck Britz, techical expert called on to assist for the next five years. The surfin' track bore little relation to a version recorded by the band with a local husband-and-wife team (the Morgans) two and a half months before—released on some budget label compilations in the Seventies. The new version had changed lyrics, better pace and improved all-round into the vital attack of a Chubby Checker twist. The basis of the group's sound was set in one track, in the counterpoint harmonies led by Brian Wilson set against Mike Love's strident masculine lead voice, driven by an insistent beat from a tight rhythm section, and punctuated by a frenetic **Carl Wilson** Fender guitar solo. Carl would later be credited in a Rolling Stone article with influencing the likes of Pete



Townhend, the mastermind of London r&bbers The Who, but he would forever be linked by the mainstream of commentators with producing the "rudimentary" guitar strokes accompanying Beach Boys songs.

Ken Nelson had greeted the double as a sensation on first hearing, but at the a&r department the double inched to the top of the pile at Capitol Tower. Now, in May, this second tier of execs too gave gushing approval. Nick Venet's telling has it that both he and Gilmore, a generation older, recognised the Beach Boys' quality instantly but the older exec turned down Murry's request for \$100 (sic) for each of the three master recordings, and counter-offering \$100 for the three. Venet threatened to resign on the spot and take the Beach Boys under his own wing, at which Gilmore relented. Such penny-pinching has to be heard from the mouths of those involved to be believed.

Gilmore signed the Beach Boys' parents to provisional working contracts—all being legal minors but Mike, who had turned 21 in March. Over the next year two of the sorry majors would sign up for the surf sounds of Jan & Dean (*Surf City*)—Liberty—the Chantays (*Pipeline*) and Surfaris (*Wipe Out*) both on Dot. A week or two before release, Capitol pitchmen cajoled the double-sider on to the playlist of San Bernardino-KMEN. And barely two weeks after *Surfin'* had left regional playlists the Beach Boys' new label released the disc June 4th 1962 with the oomph on *409*. But it was *Surfin' Safari*, after desperate urging from the band to switch the sides, that appeared cross-country by the end of June—in top 30s way inland in Columbus, Ohio and at Birmingham AL; *409* the first Saturday in July, in Salt Lake City, though tentative here at #87.

All while being undermined by the anti-rock'n'roll compact made by radio networks nationwide, *Surfin' Safari*

filtered from San Bernardino to San Diego (L.A. would take another three weeks to catch on), and would first be heard on the East Coast, still the center of the music biz, through the back door at Don Dillard's independent Washington DC station, WDON, as fastest riser to top ten in early July (#6). The hit would reach the very top in Los Angeles and Virginia Beach, a continent apart on surf-pounded west and east coasts, and Buffalo on the Great Lakes; but far inland too at the Twin Cities, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Indianapolis, Dayton, Akron, north to rural Wisconsin, Fargo, and Calgary north of the border. It was a solid number two in New York City—where it broke longstanding Capitol sales records—and in Seattle, San Francisco, San Diego, Phoenix, Dallas, Cleveland, the Scranton Tri-Cities, Providence; top five in Baltimore/DC and Hartford, to Nashville and across the Rust Belt, Columbus and Cincinnati to Chicago, and to Vancouver and Edmonton, Denver and Tucson.

Selling in style in New York City—high and long, was some feat given the wall of resistance this most "sophisticated" market in the US would present to the band in future. It built toward the orbit of a million sales in North America, and played a big part in the 51% rise in Capitol's singles sales compared to the previous year's fiscal quarter of July-September, the Beach Boys song's sweet spot. These were the company's best summer sales since the entire industry's all-time peak year of 1957.

Of the four top charts in the US at the time that measured weekly sales and airplay down to number 100, it scored best in Cash Box for sales, #10; peaked #12-14 in the other three. Most of all, it was a jukebox hit as counted by the United Press International (UPI) nationwide survey, with 12 weeks in its top 20 August-December, peaking #5 November 11th. The UPI list was highly visible, syndicated to media outlets across the

States and overseas. So too, Billboard. Paired with *409*, on September 29th the double reached number one on its listing of America's favorite double spins at juke joints. Of 463,000 jukeboxes owned by 8,000 operators, around forty thousand were sited at teen spots such as burger joints, malt shops, ice cream parlors; another sixty thousand at coffee shops and (non-alcoholic) clubs for under-21s; the rest were "adult" venues.

*Surfin' Safari* created the first big splash for "surfin' music" overseas. But it would be a years-long battle for this rock'n'roll group at home against a radio industry now officially (by a consensus negotiated and agreed among the all-powerful radio networks) heavily geared to an anti-rock'n'roll playlist policy. In its first three months available to Top 40 stations the new surfin' song was taken up by just 8% of them. Then a breakthrough on August 18th showed a bloc uptake raising it to 25% coverage—still very low, but given it had started a fast rise in sales two weeks before that perhaps the networks had no choice. The following week it made it up to 40% coverage and then it was again reduced to a trickle, less than 5% added each week. As it entered its peak selling period in August-September it was still shunned by half of all Top 40 stations. The Beach Boys had defeated the system almost single-handedly.

Radio stations up and down California didn't mind associating with the band as long as they could exploit them, getting them to appear at meet-and-greets for the kids, then "paying" them by agreeing to play their record and thereby skirt around the ban—and avoid any charges of "payola" against themselves because no cash changed hands. Murry Wilson, always the alpha-male as a booster for his boys, started a habit of keeping top deejays, program directors, and radio executives happy with gifts to wives and families, gathered on his trips overseas—never cash.

In the next biggest (English-speaking) disc market, Britain, the Beach Boys died from neglect—not helped by cursory, poor reviews for *Surfin' Safari* and perhaps seen by Capitol's mother-ship EMI and other authorities as too "black". The disc was obviously related to *The Twist*, a disc banned there by the BBC—that is, Chubby Checker's overtly African-American rendition, not the tame covers by British crooners (as Pat Boone and others had covered black r&b in the Fifties). Canada too, perhaps listening to its British roots, was having none of them but for frontier outpost Vancouver—until it was safe, then the big cities jumped in, in October; judicious Ottawa last, in December.

In this atmosphere, despite everything, the Boys were finally thriving across the nation and from one end of the Pacific to the other. By early September they were listed at #7 in Sydney, Australia music stores; then hit in Brisbane (#10 4BC) and New Zealand (#13, 1YD-Auckland). In Europe they topped for four weeks in Sweden, October-November. So the Beach Boys were international before the Beatles' debut in their own country, *Love Me Do* (hear *Think Of Me, Do* as a precursor/comparison sung by Clive Dunn on the British tv series *Dad's Army*). In Sweden the licensee and promotor was mogul Stig Anderson, also taking on the Monkees five years later, followed by his master opus in the Seventies, the local band Abba. In the UK, *Surfin' Safari* was reported late in the year to have fallen just short of the Record Retailer top 50.

With the surf song they won a level of popular acceptance in youth culture and ever-present audibility—and visibility of image—across North America, Australasia and taking a toe-hold in Europe, to sustain with teen masterpieces issued singly and littering albums too. *Surfin' Safari* has been downplayed since the Beach Boys' early-Seventies nadir when it was frigidly assessed as "the top 20 entry that garnered them

national attention." *Au contraire*, not only did it make the band an *international* phenomenon, but a genuine sensation. With the powerful forces arrayed against them, and their stubborn resistance to fashion dictates, there was no way to launch them as a world-beating phenomenon on takeoff like the Beatles, the Monkees, or Abba. They had created the rage for surfin' music, turning it into a vocal form distinct from the instrumental stylings of Dick Dale & the Delltones and the Ventures. The Beach Boys' sound, heard here in its infancy, would *grow* to be a worldwide presence inspiring emulation, even duplication, but staying unmatched by bands around the globe.

*Surfin' Safari's* long chart run regionally meant a high Cash Box ranking of 31st of 1962 songs. In a 15-year survey, New York's WNBC, one of the dozen recognised as "premier stations" across the USA in the 1960s, rated it seventh from its year in popularity (sales and plays) within its then 30-million-strong catchment. In the new millennium, Mediabase placed it 12th nationally in airplay from its year.

The raw r&b sound of the Beach Boys' first car song, **409**, was highlighted by **Mike Love's** "nasty" nasal tone of youth superiority in the lead, adopting the attitude to vocal delivery he picked up in the locker room at Dorsey High, sheddin' with the other guys on the likes of *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Riot In Cell Block No. 9* or the Coasters' *Young Blood/Searchin'* at this predominantly black school. And it all played out at a faster pace and in a more defiant tone up against the Four Seasons' *Sherry* and *Big Girls Don't Cry*—which came across more as novelty songs in the Beach Boys' company—and both went to no.1 on the national r&b chart. Raunchier than its A-side, and fearless in its use of car-motor sound effects moving rapidly from throbbing to revving to roaring at the intro, in **409** the fledgling garage band reinvigorated tough rock'n'roll as a pop

art with its black overtones in tribute—the real thing being largely irradiated from the airwaves by network stations coast to coast since the heyday of the Coasters, Lloyd Price and Fats Domino three years before. These were the Beach Boys playing on both sides recorded in the studio, each knowing his part on his instrument. It must have been from hearing *409*, in the later Sixties, that a British journalist paid the enormous compliment of describing something "as clean as a Dennis Wilson rimshot." The Beach Boys (with the Four Seasons, and the Beatles and Rolling Stones) were a white band who paid tribute to their musical mentors, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and the current Chubby Checker and the twist beat. Today's listeners rate it very highly, ranking with its A-side as 12th most popular single from 1962.

The side made its mark in San Bernardino pre-release. Despite L.A. pushing it as the A, it took three months to take in their home town. *409* was a rocker that refused to be a B-side, topping on its own in Virginia Beach, Minneapolis-St Paul, in Indianapolis (naturally) and in Dayton (third-biggest hit of the year) in the Rust Belt. It was the A-side too and top-fived in Denver, in Chicago—in fall, bringing St Louis with it in another wave, four months after it had arrived in Little Rock; and in the two Texas metros (in winter); not far below in Seattle, Hartford, Louisville; just edging top 20 in Boston and Los Angeles when it was flipped over as the "A".

*409* led the double-sided hit on to the top 20 of the Gavin Report out of San Francisco, a highly influential tip-sheet on national radio airplay used by station program directors to tell them what was hot. And Cash Box predicted it for its Top 100 in its own right, mounting from reports from retail outlets weeks after its A-side had peaked and was falling out of top thirty. So, it was not merely a B picking up airplay on the back of the hit—but driven by requests across store counters. It was

Billboard's Hot 100 that broke the ice—a single week at #76 on October 13th, then off.

*Surfin' Safari/409* hung in the Cash Box sellers list till mid-December, when surprise follow-up *Ten Little Indians*, plucked from the new album by Capitol, failed to overtake it. Yet, so raw and raucous was their rock'n'roll at this time—derived straight from black r&b—that the Beach Boys' uptake around the world would stall, in sway to older-generation sounds. Quiet, more melodic American forms were at home in old-world Europe, Latin America and Asia. For some years yet the crooner ballads of Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard—long since surrendered as rock'n'rollers and turned coat—with Connie Francis and Paul Anka, would be preferred.

The opening engine roar and strident lines of rebellious youth captured by *409*, in contrast, shouted that here was something new, young and confident:

"She's real fine, my 409! She's real fine, my 409! My 4 - 0 - 9! Well, I saved my pennies and I saved my dimes (Giddyup, giddyup 409), for I knew there would be a time (Giddyup, giddyup 409)—When I would buy a brand new 409! (409, 409)...

The Beach Boys made do with what was in front of them through December and into January 1963, riding on their popularity with unheralded, unabashed flop *Ten Little Indians*, a rockin'-rhythm interpretation of the old tune that the band never intended as a single. It was, however, one of the better tracks on their debut album, *SURFIN' SAFARI*, an essay in naive teen rock that many radio networks across America shunned as part of a corporate pledge against giving rock'n'roll music *any* exposure. It did make a big splash for a beat album of the time, rising to #26 in Cash Box and selling 400,000 in

the US alone on initial release—at a time when 150,000 sales passed as a hit. Even Elvis Presley, "The King Of Rock And Roll", had, nearly three years before, caved in to the strong forces of MOR (middle-of-the-road music) and his movie soundtrack albums were lucky to have one or two rock'n'roll tracks. Accordingly, his BLUE HAWAII had set a record for a so-called "rock'n'roll" album by selling a million through 1962 in appealing widely across age-groups.

This time out the children's tune had it that a young brave's girlfriend "didn't care if he never did a thing [in surfer bum style], 'cos she loved the tenth Indian boy." *Ten Little Indians* was a low 26th its first week out in the Cash Box Radio Active Chart, having been taken up by 16% of Top 40 radio stations; after that there were only small weekly increments of new takers. The 45-rpm disc barely made top fifty in both Billboard and Cash Box; sold best in Chicago, spending a month there in the lower-top-thirty. In Philadelphia it neared top 20, as with Dallas and Denver; top 30 too in Montreal, Ottawa, Pittsburgh and Buffalo. Only in the Twin Cities did it enter top 10. A small minority of stations played it, and sales were probably less than a third of their opening double's.

Worldwide, over time, the album has been estimated to have sold a million, placing it eighth of all American albums released in 1962. *Ten Little Indians* narrowly expanded the Beach Boys' visibility in Scandinavia from Sweden (#6) to include Denmark (#20). In France, already making use of Beach Boys discs second-hand, local idol Lucky Blondo chimed in with a #8 cover a few months later in April 1963.

With the B-side *County Fair*, the single release had first been predicted to be another double by Cash Box in the US. The UK's Record Mirror credited it as "well performed but without the appeal" of their first Capitol release. Upbeat and energy-filled but not offering much beyond good harmonies



and a raucous, anarchic guitar solo you might expect from a teen garage band, the disc filled a space in Capitol's singles schedule, but was a step back in growing a superstar career.

## 1963

**The premature death of rock'n'roll** had come by early '59 as Carl Perkins' career was derailed by a car crash, Little Richard foregoing sinful rock'n'roll for religion, Jerry Lee Lewis disgraced for marrying his 13-year-old cousin, Elvis Presley drafted into the US Army, and now Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and the Big Bopper killed in a plane crash, and Chuck Berry jailed for transporting a minor over a state line. The killing of Eddie Cochran and maiming of Gene Vincent in a road smash on tour in England a year later would screw the coffin nails down on rock'n'roll and slam the lid with a resounding thud. Amid a high tide of teen idols thrown up in Elvis's absence, the most promising, Bobby Darin, turned to follow the smooth jazz-styled sounds of elders Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett. Following a brief stand for r&b-flavored rock'n'roll by New Orleans' Lloyd Price, running parallel with Fats Domino in the same city, only Philadelphia's Chubby Checker had kept the banner flying—and Chubby too had toned himself down (*Slow Twistin'*) to comply with the nationwide cabal of network radio stations out to stifle rock, before the Beach Boys appeared in early '62. As Chubby wound down to West Indies dance pace—*Limbo Rock*—the Beach Boys were winding up to *Surfin' USA*. Among the most popular white acts, along with the Beach Boys only the Four Seasons (*Walk Like a Man*) and Dion DiMucci (*Ruby Baby*, *The Wanderer*), with a convincing growl in his voice, carried the torch for r&b-tinged pop music going into 1963.

The Four Seasons, built around the gymnastic voice of Frankie Valli and the songwriting of new young member Bob Gaudio, were backed by independent producer Bob Crewe. They were the only other major new vocal group owing their

roots to r&b-rock'n'roll *and* accompanied themselves on instruments *and* wrote/produced their own records—and thereby turned around the emphasis to creative new sounds. In terms of authentic Americana, popular r&b kept rolling with the Drifters, Mary Wells, and girl groups headed by the Shirelles, Crystals, the Marvelettes, and newcomers Martha & the Vandellas.

Folk-styled *Walk Right In* started 1963 driven by loud-thrumming 12-string guitars, along with the Kingston Trio's *Greenback Dollar*, and continued with the interpretations of Bob Dylan and other influential writers by the hugely popular folk trio Peter, Paul & Mary; and finished with *Dominique*—in French, from Belgium, by a nun. Countrified ballad *End Of the World* wasn't so much c&w, but set the tone for most of the few confirmed million-sellers that year, a sweet ballad like the mild, pretty pop that followed it: *Rhythm Of the Rain*, *Blue Velvet*, and the Japanese recording *Sukiyaki*. Country music was subsumed in the contrasting stylings of Roy Orbison and Roger Miller. The last big hurrah of the classic Nashville sound in Country & Western were heard through the summer of 1963 in *Ring Of Fire*, *Detroit City*, *Tips Of My Fingers*, *Abilene*... These three movements would be knocked stone-cold dead for the most part on the arrival of the Beatles and the overwhelming dominance of British fashions from the new year of 1964.

*Surfin' USA* was a bold statement in one track—with or without its album that was the biggest-selling in rock that year—that told the world here were the new rulers of rock'n'roll. It was a triumph all the greater for the Four Seasons, in early spring 1963 the Beach Boys' only challengers among American self-contained bands exploring new music, have just scored their third consecutive number one. The Boys

congregate for a recording session, again at Western Recorders—still in Hollywood, but away from the Capitol studio. Nick Venet is again credited as producer but this seems to be for appearances' sake. Recorded January 5th, released March 4th, comes a game-changing switch to modernity, an unforeseen leap forward in pop music at a time when rock'n'roll is at its lowest ebb. In Britain, with new song *Please Please Me*, and much remodelling by George Martin, Parlophone producer, the Beatles improve on their *Love Me Do* debut but are some way short of catching up. Release of *Surfin' USA* in the UK is put back until some time in June, three or four months later, the exact date, and purpose, lost to history.

The most iconic "surf song" of all rises that spring of '63, pegging out as a weekly number three nationally by consensus; number two for a week in the third major trade paper, Music Vendor, kept out only by ska novelty song *If You Wanna Be Happy*. According to Brian Wilson's first alibi, it was "based on" Berry's *Sweet Little Sixteen* melody of five years before, but that was where any comparison ended. The sedate country shuffle of Berry had been turned into a radically updated teen anthem for a new generation. (Yet, in appeasement, Murry gave over entirely to Berry the royalties on Brian Wilson creation *Surfin' USA*.) Supremely confident in every aspect, Brian's rumbling Fender Precision bass thumbed off of Carl and Dave's intertwining guitar licks, and West Coast session drummer Frank DeVito stood in for Denny, away playing for his side-project band the Four Speeds, and then recovering from a crash in the sports car he earned working with them.

The Boys flexed muscle for this track, adding to the usual lineup of Carl on lead, David on rhythm, and Brian on bass—a scintillating Brian solo on organ leading into the middle guitar break. Brian again excused David Marks from backing vocals (he later had spot singing *Louie, Louie* for concerts).

Cousin Mike Love was the constant lead vocalist on these early A-sides, through 1964.

By the end of March 1963 *Surfin' USA* showed every sign of being Capitol's fastest selling rock'n'roll song—until the Beatles' *I Want To Hold Your Hand* ten months later, according to Brian Wilson's autobiography. And it would sell well for years. In April, American International announced a *Beach Party* movie series starring teen idols Annette Funicello & Frankie Avalon, impressing the Capitol execs with beach culture's enduring commercial appeal. Cash Box and Billboard reported the week ending May 3rd as Capitol's biggest selling week in its 21-year history; the Beach Boys dominating, #3, the Kingston Trio at #7 Al Martino #12; B-side *Shut Down* rising on #60. Extra shifts were added at the Capitol pressing plants in Scranton and Los Angeles, and rival companies were needed to meet the shortfall. For a short time there was a Beatle level of craze about the Beach Boys disc. But the Beatles would have more singles hot on each one's tail, and *Surfin' USA* was all on its own for five months before the next scheduled double, and in July it was still selling at number one in Chicago outlets—both main one-stop shops, Singer and Music Box—when the next double was due out. In many places, too, the single was flipped over to feature *Shut Down*.

*Surfin' USA's* mammoth sales showing off the band's obvious, mushrooming popularity with the public flew in the face of an agonisingly slow uptake of the disc by network radio stations—still punishing the Beach Boys for going all out on rock'n'roll. According to Cash Box's "Radio Active" chart, it came in 20th its first week, with just 20% of Top 40 radio stations taking up the chance to play the song—independent-minded stations who hadn't signed up to the radio networks' agreement; the same its second week, and just 13% its third week, making relatively slow progress to get even half

coverage. It took another three weeks to get up to 93%—by which time it was already a best-seller and the Beach Boys were doing radio a favor by allowing stations to make money off their disc. The B-side was hardly recognised by radio once the A-side was decided. Its first week, *Shut Down* gained 15% of stations—hardly behind its "A"—then was dropped, registering add-ons of less than 5% a week from then on. At this rate it would not have collected even half of Top 40 radio stations until at least July.

Nick Venet was evidently the only one on Capitol's executive staff to see the group's creative potential in anything approaching its full proportions—and he was about to leave in frustration, looking forward to producing Capitol's major solo act, Bobby Darin, in New York. The Ventures and other established bands fast jumped on the surfin' brand bandwagon, making sure that the pastime was mentioned in every album title.

Overseas, popularity for the Beach Boys was far from automatic. Worldwide saturation coverage—the norm today—would only come for the Beatles via the industrial strength machinery keyed up for them. And in a world now unused to rock'n'roll the Beach Boys' youth genre would take some time to accrue mass acceptance in Europe, where their songs were likely to be covered in several languages, particularly French and Italian. In the States, according to the radio formatting edicts followed by the New York City pop industry centered on the Brill Building on Broadway, the simple, relaxing, melodious pop songs written to order from songwriting teams (Goffin-King, Mann-Weil, Barry-Greenwich, Sedaka-Greenfield, Poncia-Andreoli, Neil Diamond solo), arranged in cubicles like battery hens, had the upper hand. But the band was an instant big hit in the East Asian tigers, remembering that English language was a barrier to gaining even top ten.

They were #16 in Japan Music Monthly, with two months, July-August, in the top 20—and would return in the summer of '64 to the Japanese top ten; #10 in Hong Kong. This added to their claim to the record-buying public around the Pacific Rim. Around the world the track was licensed out for release. In Belgium it was issued by the Gramophone label in late June. In July, released by Odeon, the song was reported to be "riding the charts" in Argentina (CB).

In Canada, pop music critics gave the nod to *Surfin' USA* as "Top Song" of the year. And before Canada had a recognised national chart, in a roundup of the top tens of 13 cities by Cash Box it climbed to number one there June 15th, accumulating nearly three months top ten. In Australasia, top ten: #8 in Sydney, #5 in Brisbane, #3 in New Zealand's Lever Hit Parade. In Europe it was best received in Sweden (#6) and Austria (#8), and topped the chart in Germany's Rhineland-Pfalz state bordering France. Like their previous surfin' hit, again subject to Euro covers, it still made the Hit Parade Italia though affected by the almost inevitable cover version here (by Quattro di Lucca). It was #39 on France's jukebox chart, #19 in Greece in April 1964. In the UK, due to EMI's delayed issue it got mildly popular enough (#27 NME) by September to have the effect of pinning the "summer music" label on the Beach Boys here too, forever. The Record Mirror's review singled out the guitar and organ solos for praise: Carl and Brian, respectively. Long term it did okay: On top of a ballpark 100,000 on release, the BPI awarded the song a silver disc for the equivalent of 200,000 sales in UK streaming counted from March 16th 2005 to May 15th 2020.

Through its USA run, *Surfin' USA* had reached the very top in local charts in big cities to tiny hamlets along the West Coast, inland at Phoenix and Tucson, Cincinnati and Dayton, Hartford on the East Coast, and Detroit, Memphis, and

Honolulu; topping in Canada from Ottawa, to Kingston to Winnipeg; stopping at number two in Miami, Toronto and Montreal but in the ten top hits of the year; #3 Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington DC. In New York City the surf song stalled at #5 but hung around peak long enough to come in 29th for the year there (WABC).

Common practice was for stations in regional markets to choose which side to feature as the "A" and leave the other to fend for itself. With *Surfin' USA/Shut Down* the Beach Boys' double strategy got into its stride. In Washington DC for example, WWDC, WEEL, and the Milt Grant Network all assessed the nominal "A" as top five, rising to #1 at WINX—where the B showed at #10 anyway. Independent WDON plumped for *Shut Down* alone, taking it to top. At the city's overwhelmingly popular but conservative station, WPGC, with British associations and already a convert to British artists Petula Clark, Helen Shapiro and Frank Ifield, both sides of the Beach Boys disc were ignored. But sure enough, the car song showed up higher as an A-side in some important markets. It was co-A in most other cities.

The A-side continued to rise in the biggest cities Back East as it reached its peak nationally in mid-May. Elsewhere, the double was flipped over to star its B-side. *Shut Down* roared towards the top regionally and was the huge hit in motortown Detroit, across Texas, top three Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston; Denver in the Rockies and anywhere that celebrated car culture—the Ohio River Valley of Columbus, Louisville and Indianapolis. It topped without its A-side San Diego and Denver. It came back to #5 on its own in Los Angeles, rose to #3 in Boston, the same in Chicago for three weeks and lasting in the top ten there until the end of July. It was the band's first B-side to break top 20 in New York City, its sales power



contributing mightily to the double's world-beating success that year. The reserved Record Mirror reviewer on the other side of the Atlantic called the track "a very polished and professional type effort."

For *Shut Down* (see Lucasfilm's *American Graffiti*, 1973), almost a sequel to its A-side and very compatible in style, Dennis was back in the studio on drums, Mike added blaring saxophone chords, and Dave was allowed a little lead guitar work on the fade-out. Its arrangement and rockin' pace made it plain that it was the hotrod equivalent of *Surfin' USA*, and partnered it for five weeks at the top of Billboard's listing of double-play discs on jukeboxes nationwide, beginning May 18th. As the song really caught on in its own right, following six weeks after its A-side, on June 16th it made 7th in UPI's weekly top 20 survey of jukebox play nationwide. It stopped just short of top 20 in the national top 100s.

The Four Seasons' big double of the year, striking in early July, was *Candy Girl/Marlina*, hailed as a million-selling smash by Billboard in raising it to runner-up on the doubles listing, the B-side to #35 in its own right on airplay; #36 in Cash Box. But the Seasons, the Beach Boys' only real competition, were starting to see some misses on their A-sides, that would soon see them moving from the VeeJay label to Philips.

Perhaps uniquely as a B-side, *Shut Down* inspired its own same-titled album (listed under the Beach Boys & Various), but remained largely unknown overseas, rarely if ever included on compilation reissues. It did spark Italian imaginations but not until November '64 after being played on television there with four of their bigger hits, and was reported as their best-selling song during the band's visit.

Long before the days of the reliable counts of Nielsen-SoundScan, in mid- November 1963 a panel convened by

Billboard numbered the most prolific USA discs over the previous 12 months down to ten, according to their chart points accumulated in the Billboard Hot 100. *Surfin' USA* had already been reckoned by Billboard to be one of eight million-sellers that year, and, presumably coupled with its highly popular flip-side making its own 17-week showing, was named as *the* biggest-selling disc of all. The following April the association of recording merchandisers (NARM) short-listed the A-side among 1963's six best sellers along with *Blue Velvet* and *Dominique* that finally came out joint winners when the last two months of the calendar year were taken into account. And these six were aside from two discs not included in the very best list that had nonetheless through the efforts of their labels managed to gain RIAA Gold Disc status as million-sellers in the US: *Hey Paula* and *Sugar Shack* recorded by one-hit wonders.

By late June 1963 Brian and Murry were telling Billboard that they had just formed their own producing/song publishing company, Sea Of Tunes. After a year already producing Beach Boys hits themselves, they gave Capitol's a&r department (artists and arrangement, i.e. Nick Venet) credit for "assisting" them thus far. The album currently in recording would be all Brian.

But somehow escaping the Beach Boys imprint, in June-July 1963 *Surf City* became a legend of a Brian Wilson composition without the band/brand name ever attached to it; though at least two of the band (Brian and Carl) contributed instrumental backing at Jan Berry's recording session. And it certainly sounded "like the Beach Boys" as millions of casual fans will tell you to this day. This move by Brian became a very sore point with father-manager Murry Wilson, who not only saw it as a betrayal of the family but missed out on

royalties that went to established Los Angeles duo **Jan & Dean**. They took it to number one in the US as another undocumented million-seller (reportedly 1,250,000). Dean Torrance tells the story of how Jan had met with Brian early that year and wanted *Surfin' USA* just played for him, and Brian naively palmed him off with the lucrative also-ran.

Released neither on single nor e.p., *Catch A Wave/Hawaii* or *Catch A Wave/Lonely Sea* was crying out for issue as a double early summer '63. Evidently, Brian Wilson was keen to move on from surf as an overriding theme, and their next A-side can hardly be called a surf-bash. Hotrods were uppermost in Capitol's collective mind that summer, building a whole album of "various artists" including movie star Robert Mitchum around the theme of *Shut Down*. But using *Lonely Sea* (which had finally found a place on SURFIN' USA) in a coupling to start their rocker-backed-with-emotional-ballad format would have suited. *Hawaii* would do spectacularly well as a single early the following year in Australia, accompanying the group's Surfside '64 tour along with Roy Orbison (*In Dreams, Pretty Woman*), the Surfaris (*Wipe Out*) and Paul & Paula (*Hey Paula*). It registered at #6 at 4BC-Brisbane, and #2 at 2SM and 2UE-Sydney, the latter considered the unofficial Aussie chart by Cash Box among others—big, but overtaken in the following months by a half-dozen Beatle tunes one by one in their storming of the southern continent, to finish just out of the ten top tunes for the year. The lead sounded for all the world like Dennis's husky tone, but it is said to be Mike's, putting it over well. Guitars were handled by Carl and Dave Marks, piano Brian, bass Al Jardine, and Denny was on drums; Hal Blaine helped out on timbales for the distinctive Polynesian rhythm. The mix sounded superb on the deep, wooden stereograms of the day.

On *Catch A Wave* (see Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, 1973), the opening rap of tom-tom and snare building unmistakably portrayed a wipe-out, and sustained splash cymbaling throughout depicted more caressing wave action. In its time it was left to the tender mercies of (again) Jan & Dean, who made routine pop out of it with blaring trumpets: *Sidewalk Surfin'* (RW #25) a year later. The original outlasted it: a pristine six-man recording going a long way to reflecting Denny's spiritual attachment to the sea, a favorite on compilations and soundtracks. In the event, while *Lonely Sea*, which has also found champions among younger generations of serious musicians, had long been a completed track, the other two candidates were not recorded until the second half of July. And release of SURFER GIRL was delayed until mid-September, ridiculously just three weeks to the day ahead of LITTLE DEUCE COUPE.

Capitol insisted on a strict timetable for singles from the Beach Boys. The nearly five months gap between *Surfin' USA* and *Surfer Girl* yawned wide for an interim double. It didn't happen, giving the Four Seasons opportunity to steal a lead with a flood of chart hits on VeeJay (and soon overlapping with more when they switched to Philips), followed immediately by a tsunami of Beatles' on five labels featuring re-releases. The Four Fabs' Capitol schedule alone saw new singles every two months on average, exploding the truism that a big hit had three months to eke out optimum sales before introducing the next.

Against all odds and scoring no national number ones, in America the Boys came out the biggest singles seller of the year according to Billboard's tally in November, ahead of, in order, Dion DiMucci, the Four Seasons, Ray Charles, Chubby Checker, Rick Nelson, Bobby Vinton, Peter Paul & Mary, Brenda Lee, Roy Orbison. This was all on just three double-siders, A and B, that made top five/top 20 but usually not in

Billboard. Incredibly, the Beatles were tops in Britain on something like five million sales accumulated that year—a total that must have inspired envy even in the USA.

The Beach Boys' new double was recorded on June 13th 1963 in their own choice of studio, Western Recorders in Hollywood—that used by Phil Spector and his artists the Crystals, the Ronettes, Darlene Love, and Bobby Sheen, with a pool of backing musicians dubbed the Wrecking Crew, all arranged by Jack Nitzsche, and engineered by Larry Levine. The Beach Boys, for the moment, had just themselves. Released on July 22nd, the two songs posed a real conflict. After overwhelming pre-release interest in the ballad A-side, entering August it was B-side *Little Deuce Coupe*, an upbeat rocker of the kind the group was already known for, that seemed to be favored by the new rocking Top 40 radio the Beach Boys were central to. This time it was a rocker with a distinctive, driving shuffle beat familiar from r&b (hear the Coasters' *Young Blood*). Brian had sweetened the sound on the track by adding piano and reinforced Dennis's crackling-good drumming track by getting session man Hal Blaine to play over the top of it (Spector style). Frank Zappa's expert opinion was: "One of the most exciting things that ever happened in the world of 'white-person music' was when the Beach Boys used the progression V-ii on 'Little Deuce Coupe'—an important step forward by going backward."

The laid back, romantic *Surfer Girl* (see the movie *Charlie's Angels*, 2000) was treated as its rival on the same single, and greeted as something of a daring new experiment for this band assumed to be tuned solely to hyperactive teen twisters—a candidate for the alternate view, *Lonely Sea*, having been neglected as an album track and forgotten by commentators. Like its B-side the backing was with a tightly-

headed snare drum, giving a high-pitched rap for a sharper attack—at odds with the lush snare sound Brian would come to adopt. After the previous A-side, this charming surfin' ballad too was appreciated by black audiences sufficiently to make a two-month showing in Billboard's r&b top 30—in the bottom half of the listing, not topping as the Four Seasons' tributes to r&b had. In early August the double was reversed with more "smooth stations" through North America playing the ballad, though Billboard would proclaim at year's end that *Little Deuce Coupe* was the group's second biggest seller behind only *Surfin' USA*. This one had dented the r&b chart for two weeks.

For *Surfer Girl*, Brian, at perhaps his most sophisticated, filled out the track by inserting his unobtrusive playing of something called a Hohner Cembaleto piano. But Brian at his most unguarded said later, "What Paul McCartney did with *Let It Be* I did with *Surfer Girl*" in communicating with their respective fans. Most people will be at a total loss to see any musical, lyrical or spiritual connection between the two, given that one was said to have been inspired by Disney's children's song *When You Wish Upon A Star* and was composed by a fledgling teenage writer, and the other by a man nearing 28 with more than a decade of songwriting behind him.

According to Cash Box's "Radio Active" Chart, *Surfer Girl* took two weeks to gather in 40% of Top 40 radio stations to play it—not bad compared to what had been doled out to them on previous releases—but took another two weeks just to get to 50%, and after that fought it out over sharing crumbs of radio space with its B-side. *Little Deuce Coupe* had been first to be taken up by radio, but soon lost ground and took two months to get anywhere approaching half coverage by radio. So, together they achieved not much more than a share of radio play other top acts could expect to get for *one* hit.

The surfer ballad rated top five in almost every national chart: #3 in Variety; third too in the UPI survey of national jukebox play (September 29th) with nine weeks in the top 10; and in the Gilbert-AP survey, September 19th. It held at #5 for three weeks in the Cash Box Top 100 beginning the 21st. And its pairing with *Little Deuce Coupe* replicated the feat of their previous double, spending five weeks at the top of Billboard's Double Play Discs survey of jukeboxes. And, as would be the pattern from now on, apart from split play between the sides it was held back from getting nearer to top by a level of disdain from New York City stations—#16 WABC, and WMCA agreed. It showed in Billboard most of all—#7, with just two weeks in its top 10. This was despite going to the very top not very far away at the Albany Tri-Cities, Hartford, Providence, Erie PA. And in New York City itself *Surfer Girl* had been reported in huge demand from buyers asking for it by name in early July, weeks before release. Cities that did rate it number one unreservedly were Los Angeles and San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose (both for four weeks) and almost every town and hamlet up, around, and inbetween—Monterey, San Bernardino, Bakersfield, Van Nuys, San Mateo; down the West Coast—Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, Fresno, San Diego; and Phoenix inland; Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Dayton, Louisville, Memphis around the Ohio River-Mississippi River valley and Back East in Boston and Hamilton-Toronto. Runner-up place was reserved at Toronto proper, the Twin Cities, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, and Winnipeg.

Again, as with the Beach Boys' massive, definitive *Surfin' USA/Shut Down* double months before, the explanation given for this one's substandard showing in Billboard was split airtime/sales between so-called A and B sides. Ex-USA, *Surfer Girl* was greeted with enthusiasm on opposite sides of the world: runner-up in Canada—which was using the all-

conquering CHUM in Toronto as its national chart-maker—in Australia, #8 in Sydney, #6 in Brisbane; number one said Teen Scene magazine in New Zealand. And it made the Hit Parade Italia, a distinction in itself for foreign discs.

*Little Deuce Coupe* was the nickname of the 1932 Ford Coupe, considered by many in the know as the ultimate hotrod. This was the preferred side across much of the inland United States including Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Montreal, Denver—all top five showings—and made number one by itself in Virginia Beach, Ottawa, Omaha; #2 at Los Angeles-KRLA, and topped as co-A side in San Francisco (for six weeks), Boston, and many other places. It rose into the weekly top 20 in the three major US charts—the only B-side ever rated as high in Billboard, #15, and top 20 for just two weeks—this limited success based mainly on radio play. Nationwide, it rated at only no.154 in airtime among all pop songs for 1963. Not surprising, since Cash Box said it took three weeks to build to even 25% of stations' acceptance, and by the end of August after another two weeks was on barely a third of Top 40 stations. The UPI jukebox survey had it at 13th spot for September 15th, six weeks top 20.

It was among the first of the Beach Boys' songs appreciated on the European Continent outside their usual Scandinavian stomping grounds, coming in as 20th biggest seller of 1963 in France according to one magazine's tally—at a time when European disc-buyers were hugely nationalistic; and scoring #8 on the Salut Les Copains chart. Much later it was assessed as a number three hit in Canada retrospectively (Ted Kennedy charts); #17 in Australia (ditto the David Kent charts) and New Zealand (1YC). In Steven Spielberg's *War Of The Worlds* (2005), Tom Cruise sings *Little Deuce Coupe* to 'daughter' Dakota Fanning as a lullabye.



The album that took its name from the *Little Deuce Coupe* song outsold the SURFER GIRL album, fighting each other to a standstill week by week for many months. The Music Reporter trade paper reckoned LITTLE DEUCE COUPE was the third biggest seller and second most played long-player during Xmas week of 1963. The same journal named the Beach Boys as the top sellers that year in singles *and albums*, ahead of favorites acclaimed folk trio Peter, Paul & Mary—who at this point had released just two that had run up a total of 2,600,000 in the year to October. Their singles *Puff (The Magic Dragon)* and *Blowin' In The Wind* were to sell over the million this year too. LITTLE DEUCE COUPE and its predecessor issued only three weeks previous have since been estimated to be the fifth and sixth biggest world sellers of American albums issued that year. These days both sides of the double *Surfer Girl/Little Deuce Coupe* rank 23rd on the RYM algorithmic measure of popularity for 1963.

Brian proved as prolific in quality as with his previous album. Several of the songs lost to history—*No-Go Showboat*, *Cherry Cherry Coupe*, *Car Crazy Cutie*, *Custom Machine*—were considered of single standard and were issued as singles, but by other bands, such as Bruce (Johnston) & Terry (Melcher), Gary Usher's Hondells, and the Fantastic Baggys. An Italian band called the Jaguars fashioned a cover hit of *Spirit Of America*, about the Craig Breedlove world land-speed record, entitled *Credimi ti amo*. One that was not about cars, *Be True To Your School*, would be honed in the studio for the Beach Boys' next single. Only one other band by the end of 1963, it was said, could boast a similar overflow of material, and they were the Beatles in far-away England.

The swap of Al Jardine for Dave Marks on the last day of summer brought a change in emphasis, the band losing some of its r&b edge and grunt potential. Al was inclined to folk

music but brought a versatile and more melodious voice (encompassing elements of Mike, Brian and Carl) to harmonies and occasional lead vocals.

## **BE TRUE TO YOUR SCHOOL**

Refined and built up from a simple laid-back track on *LITTLE DEUCE COUPE*, for this remake all the fun and excitement of a gala occasion was conjured by speeding up the pace and inserting multiple effects most likely inspired by Brian's production hero Phil Spector.

This was the first Brian Wilson production to go all out for a fuller sound, expansive rock, employing a pool of L.A. session players. Brian recalled his achievements at Hawthorne High as a quarterback on the gridiron—reportedly (by Mike Love) able to heave a football 70 yards. A story he told of an actual incident was sending Al Jardine the wrong way. Result: "He broke his leg." He expressed more pride in writing a stirring song about jock pride ("We're gonna smash 'em now!") in competitive sport and the lively cheerleaders ("Hey, hey, take 'em away, Get that ball and fight!") who supported them: "I think I definitely wrote a song that captured the spirit of competition."

The middle break was taken from the "Onward Cougars! Onward Cougars!" Hawthorne High fight song, in turn taken from a marching song lost in the mists of time. A suitable mellotron flourish representing a high school brass band preceded the customary punchy guitar solo. Cheerleaders' chants by the Honeys, Brian's fiancée Marilyn Rovell's girl band, and the incessant beat of a marching-band bass drum were heard throughout. This A-side was so upbeat musically and positive lyrically—a band of teen drop-outs extolling the

virtues of school spirit, of all things—that it struggled for any radio airtime amid the worldly-wise New York City and Baltimore, and Detroit and St Louis with their more earthy soul-r&b preferences.

Businessmen in the recording industry pointed to the fact that this was the first Beach Boys A-side to *not* include that key syllable "surf" in the title, hoping that whole new sales vistas had opened up to an older generation who weren't interested in surfin' as a sport or a song; perhaps music-lovers didn't come in to their equation. Certainly, this was the hit in which the band came into its own for radio play—*Be True To Your School* winning 71% of Top 40 radio stations its first week (top in the Cash Box Radio Active chart), and going to 95% its second week. Star drummer Sandy Nelson was impressed, issuing an instrumental album opportunistically named for the Beach Boys disc.

The track did extoll a key myth of American culture totally devoid of surfin' connections. Yet, it was unheard in Britain and almost the entirety of the rest of the world; number four in Canada, and top ten too across Australasia with its compatible outdoors lifestyle. In Sweden, having almost nothing in common with Southern California, it was #6 (again) and would be their biggest there for the next half-dozen releases, until *Little Honda*. It saw the end of their surf titles, a field left for hopeful copycats. But it failed to unburden the band of the public's narrow focus as representing the all-American lifestyle of the aspiring middle class. Much later the band would be credited with shifting California to the focus as the new American Dream.

On the afternoon of November 22nd the band mourned their president, just assassinated in Dallas. Shows across the country were being cancelled. "The Great White Way" of Broadway had switched off its lights, and funerary dirges filled

the radio waves from coast to coast. The band waited at home while teenage promoter Fred Vail urged them on the phone from northern California to deliver to the full house of kids lining up at the scheduled show at small-town Marysville-Yuba City "that needing cheering up by their favorite band." Murry gave them the go to catch their flight. At the hotel in Sacramento, the usual after-show high was mixed with deep blues. Until 3am, Brian sat up with Mike, who penned the lyrics to *The Warmth Of The Sun*, an eery ballad about lost love and a changed life.

By now the Beach Boys were a fixture on the American scene, and instead of the usual wary uptake of rock'n'roll songs on radio playlists piecemeal across the nation, they had opened a door. A crack in the armor of Easy Listening radio had opened for Chubby Checker's dance tunes three years before. Cross-over artists from black r&b appreciated on white pop charts had been seen in the likes of Jackie Wilson and Clyde McPhatter, the Coasters, the Drifters and the Bobbettes in the Fifties and continuing in the Sixties with black girl groups. Now the era of the self-instrumental vocal pop-rock group was here brought by the Four Seasons and the Beach Boys, easing the entry of the Beatles to the American psyche in another month.

Regional sales surveys in the States placed the Beach Boys with *Be True To Your School* still making number one routinely blanketing the West Coast, as well as at many secondary centers far afield inland including an Indianapolis-Cincinnati-Louisville-Memphis axis; close to top at points from Salt Lake City to Chicago, from Phoenix to Milwaukee, to Boston and Philadelphia, and high too—#4—at megalopolises Montreal and Toronto north of the border. But in mid-December 1963 an omen was seen on the CHUM chart (Toronto) that reigned over music trends across Canada: the

Beatles' recycled *She Loves You* leap-frogging *Be True To Your School*. The Liverpoolians' triumphal arc was strange indeed, stalling for weeks barely in top five, then creeping to number one towards late January '64, maybe after it was generally known they were commercially acceptable, cheery "mop tops" for teens, having sold over a million in the States already. The world saw the Beatles as a new toy, safe for kids of all ages—until powerful forces were offended, causing them to cease their performing career and retreat to the EMI studio at Abbey Road, London to record their Apple Records.

With *In My Room*, the Beach Boys pair was predicted to be "another twin sales giant for the boys" by one national review (CB), the rocker paired with tearful ballad highlighting the best of the group for the public, and now a recognised artistic/commercial strategy for them. For the introverted reflection of *In My Room*, written with Hawthorne neighbor **Gary Usher** early in 1962, Brian Wilson used the six-beats-to-the-bar pace most notably heard lately from the Jive Five on their summer-of-'61 *My True Story*, a gem of the late doo-wop era. He had employed the rhythm already on *Lonely Sea* (also written with Usher) and *Surfer Girl*, and would again on classic ballads *The Warmth Of the Sun*, *Girls On the Beach*, *Kiss Me Baby*... Wilson knew how to set a mood. Their two key soulful ballads released on singles this year would go on with ongoing plays and sales over the next decade and more across WRKO-Boston's New England catchment: *Surfer Girl* surveyed as the biggest song of the year there over that period, and *In My Room* 4<sup>th</sup> biggest after 'Wipe Out' and the previous two Beach Boy A-sides.

A current hit featuring this mournful beat—slow but inexorable, depicting time remorselessly ticking away—was the r&b gold of *Cry Baby* by Garnet Mimms & the Enchanters. For a generation it had traditionally accompanied hang-dog,

down-at-heel blues. It would next be heard famously backing the Animals' remake of blues standard *The House of the Rising Sun* at the height of the British Invasion a semester or so later. A soulful approach, down to the very timbre of their lead and vocals, would be an aspect of the Beach Boys' discs overlooked (or actively played down) for their entire career. It was this "white", reverent rendering of a choral ballad on the radio that most moved eight-year-old Whoopi Goldberg, she confessed, growing up in one of the better housing projects on 9th-10th Avenue, Manhattan.

*In My Room* was a massive B-side, starting at 10th most added-on song its first week, in three weeks collecting just under half of Top 40 stations. By force of quality it took on a growing "A" status in its own right, going to number one on the West Coast from Seattle to Portland, to San Jose to San Bernardino and San Diego; runner-up San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Back East across Boston-Providence, Cincinnati-Dayton, Indianapolis. It fringed top 20 nationally over the last two months of 1963. *Be True To Your School/In My Room* parked for two weeks at #4 and #16 respectively in the Music Reporter trade paper's Big 100 Singles. On American jukeboxes they peaked at #4/#17 in the UPI top 20 survey of spins at juke joints. Together, they topped Billboard's double-siders survey of jukebox play for two weeks. Both sides accrued hit status (top 50) in Germany, while the A hit the usual #6 in Sweden, and its flip made the Hit Parade Italia. The A and the brothers' heartfelt *In My Room* hit big in Canada (#4/#6) and New Zealand (#3 Lever Hit Parade), while the A-side attracted notice in Australia (#10 Sydney Music Maker) where it was given a fillip by their tour of Australasia in January-February, along with the specially released *Hawaii* and upcoming *Fun, Fun, Fun*.

This was a time of change for the group, beginning in May 1963 when Brian began selecting one-nighters to miss in favor of writing and arranging. For the mid-June tour of Hawaii, Brian elected to stay home and work, and drafted Al Jardine, after 15 months away, back into the band to play bass and sing Brian's high parts. The results showed in the studio lineup for *In My Room*, Dave still playing rhythm guitar and Al taking on backing vocals. Drums (woodblock, bass drum and cymbaling) were handled by Denny, while Hal Blaine assisted on percussion. Maureen Love, sister of Mike, played the distinctive glissando on harp between Carl's guitar intro and Brian's incoming bass introducing the first verse. The recording was elected to the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999.

Cash Box surveys during Xmas week showed that seasonal releases by old-time crooner Bing Crosby and smooth, black balladeer Brook Benton—and from the rock world, Roy Orbison's sweet, melodic *Pretty Paper*—were getting more airplay across the nation than a new Beach Boys single, which turned out the best seasonal seller in time. For now it anchored at #3 on Xmas lists (BB & CB). This side of the millennium, Mediabase rates *Little St Nick* as fourth of all 1963 songs in radio spins, a decile above *Surfin' USA*.

An early review of *Little Saint Nick* claimed "the fellas employ their sure-fire surfin' approach". The surfin' tag had stuck, even when the song was unrelated to that pastime/religion. True, the title recalled *Little Deuce Coupe*. So it was really more of a hotrod song, delivered with that same shuffle beat but less pacey, more relaxed, though not exactly reverent in spirit in renaming Santa's sled.

So, by the end of 1963, after the last surfin' hit the Beach Boys would ever put out had been and gone—and a quiet ballad at that—it was plain that the rockin'-surfer image was

an anchor around their necks used to belittle them. They would continue to butt heads with the determined anti-youth movement raised by the Establishment that would welcome the Beatles and their wide recording catchment of every conceivable genre of pop: English Music Hall, rock'n'roll, soul, girl group, country, Latin American, French cafe, psychedelia, children's novelties, gothic fantasy; a grown-up acceptable approach, delivered as one-size-fits-all. The crass image pushed by Capitol executives in the States cavorting in Beatle wigs for publicity cameras was the kind of novelty sales gimmick that was hardly needed. A certain element of belittling of teen idols (as well as other youth concerns) was built in to the society of the day—that would take a pop phenomenon the size of the Beatles to (eventually) dent. Gradually, overweening respect for their sheer commercial value brought at least the pretence of artistic respect.

Just as the Beatles and a small army of Brits were about to explode across America, the Beach Boys with their Xmas single had to conquer their own land city by city and into every nook and cranny. The Xmas disc did best at opposite ends of the country, the southwest and northeast; across California, topping in Sacramento, nearly in Fresno, San Diego and San Bernardino. It top-tenned in big-city West Coast too, in Los Angeles, Seattle and Vancouver; deep in the interior in Salt Lake, Spokane, Milwaukee; Back East, topped in Providence and made yearly visits to Boston top tens. It was top 20 too, or close to it, in San Francisco-San Jose, Miami, Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, the Twin Cities, Ottawa, and in Nashville, revered as the heart of country music.

*Little St Nick* returned for festive seasons for years to come, sales mirroring its album, BEACH BOYS CHRISTMAS, which had moved 925,000 vinyl copies and tapes when belatedly awarded Gold in 1982 as it neared Platinum. The



single was not released in Britain until its tenth anniversary in 1973, a curiosity piece growing in popularity with the years, tallying the equivalent of 200,000 in downloads and streamings for a silver disc there, New Year's Day, 2021. A Billboard survey of Xmas discs at the millennium put its sales close to the all-time top 30, equal with the Eartha Kitt and Madonna versions of *Santa Baby* combined. The song reappeared during 2019-20 at #4 in Billboard's Hot 100 Recurrents chart.

## 1964

On their January 1964 tour of Australia and New Zealand the Beach Boys learnt a lot from golden-voiced Roy Orbison. The previous year he had led a tour of Britain with the Beatles in support and by the end, with each new Beatle tune raising wails of ecstasy from the audience, they had taken the headliner spot. (The same happened to the Everly Brothers.) "The Big O", as he was hailed in admiration by deejays and emcees everywhere, had scored a series of double-siders around the world—*Crying/Candy Man*, *Mean Woman Blues/Blue Bayou*, *Working For The Man/Leah*—and after one mega-hit later this year—*Pretty Woman*—his hit-making days would go into a gentle decline, punctuated by personal family tragedies, and such classics as *Communication Breakdown* and *It's Too Soon To Know* (If I Can't Forget Her) in tribute to his young wife taken in a motorbike tragedy. Orbison was Elvis Presley's favorite singer, both spawned at the raging, rockabilly cauldron that was Sun Records in Memphis, along with Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins and Charlie Rich.

In the ten months from early March to the end of December 1963 the Beach Boys scored seven big hit songs and were named by Billboard as the biggest sellers of singles in America. Over those same ten months the Beatles were having similar success in their homeland, Britain, with four singles and an e.p. (*Twist And Shout*) that was selling like a hit single. It took until the last week of 1963 for the industrial gears to click into place and then suddenly, on tv, radio, newspapers, and discs, **The Beatles and the British Invasion** had arrived. The superstars were promoted, released and distributed by Capitol, the American arm of the giant British corporate EMI based in London. So the Beach Boys would vie for the

attention and favor of Capitol and EMI with the Beatles. This in itself posed problems—but only for the Beach Boys.

The Beach Boys, Four Seasons, Motown, and all other American acts were swamped by waves of Brits that never let up for six months. With the Beatles—but from other directions—came Dusty Springfield and the Dave Clark Five in January-February, then the Searchers in the next breath in March, followed by gentle duo Peter & Gordon and the Swinging Blue Jeans—one-hit wonders in the States (*Hippy Hippy Shake*, #24) but huge around the world for a moment; from Liverpool but with the handicap of not having Brian Epstein, the Beatles' manager; something only the Searchers, also from Liverpool, overcame, having ingenious Tony Hatch as their producer. Epstein, eminently connected in the UK and US, drip-fed his other, secondary clients straight into the mainstream of the American pop music industry, so as not to tread on the Beatles' toes. As the Beach Boys were about to learn from their recording company, the Beatles always came first. Epstein did not introduce Billy J. Kramer & the Dakotas till April '64, Gerry & the Pacemakers in May, and Cilla Black in June as it was plain the Beatles' sales were settling down. It was Mary Wells of Motown who first broke the Brit hoodoo on the US charts in mid-May, with *My Guy*, number one. Peter & Gordon (Capitol-EMI's new signees) took back top with *A World Without Love*, a song written by Paul McCartney, the Beatles' ace tune-maker.

The Beatles alternately interpreted rockabilly or black r&b-tinged rock'n'roll for their rocking numbers, but as with the Beach Boys something was lost in translation. Beatle favorites were obvious: Paul McCartney fancied himself imitating Little Richard, whom they had met in Hamburg; and John Lennon perfected his vocal screech from Larry Williams—but had to save it to the end of performances

because it wrecked his throat. George admired Carl Perkins. And Ringo Starr—naming himself for two dime-novel outlaws of the Old West—sang as close to c&w as he could, leaning toward Buck Owens. The Boys heard more and more of them as they took over in an atmosphere of literally unavoidable worldwide media saturation that took in front page photos in newspapers and on glossy magazine covers. This unheard-of coverage and cossetting of teen culture showed they were backed as favorites by seriously moneyed men around the world. Mike Love described it as like being wiped out by a tidal wave. The Beach Boys, who performed at least as much black r&b-rock'n'roll in concert as their English challengers—*What'd I Say?*, *Louie, Louie*, *Papa-Oom-Mow-Mow*, *Riot In Cell Block No.9*, *Johnny B. Goode*—had "been at the top" as Carl Wilson recalled it, for a year or so before. But songs selected for their upcoming live album contained few to no rough edges of the Beach Boys, instead focusing on winning harmonies—*Graduation Day*—and keeping it light to goofy with outside material: *Long Tall Texan*, *The Wanderer*, *Monster Mash*. So the word didn't get out on the Beach Boys, except to those who would hear their r&b tinge directly in concert. And to this day the greatest songs in the back catalogue of their rougher period, 1967 to 1973, sell in mere handfuls because buyers cannot relate to the band as anything other than bright and breezy lightweights. In filling the role of a white "black" band—rather, young teens' idea of it—the Beatles took over with industrial might and what was later attributed, by Brian Wilson, to the animal magnetism of the English bands. But the Beatles would show they had many strings to their bow—tv, movies, and as many musical genres as songwriters Lennon & McCartney could reproduce faithfully, or close to it. But no matter how good a copier of

accents is, the difference can always be detected by a native speaker.

Recorded on a busy, not-so-festive New Year's Day 1964 amid the gathering Beatle storm unleashed at Capitol, and released in the middle of the maelstrom on February 3rd, ***Fun, Fun, Fun*** was based on the Boys' adventures set around Foster's Freeze, a milkshake and 'wich stand not far from Hawthorne Boulevard—which the young lady in the song "cruised to" instead of "the library, like she told her old man now!" It was written by Brian and Mike on tour in Salt Lake City, early September 1963. The French cover version had it that the offending young mademoiselle succumbs to cigarettes rather than hamburgers.

The new single is immediately faced by two tsunamis the size of Portuguese 90-footers in the first two Beatle discs, *I Want To Hold Your Hand*—which Brian Wilson deemed "not that good a song" but still went on to sell 4,900,000 in the US alone; and *She Loves You*, much weaker but cooling off to 2,500,000. By April there would be five more Beatle singles, a new one on a million and a half, and four retreads that unofficially just made the million. The Beach Boys' classic rocker joined the fight-back of American bands. The Four Seasons, already begun, struggled to mount #3 in Billboard with *Dawn (Go Away)*. They would be joined six months later by (Diana Ross &) the Supremes, three 20-year-old young women suddenly thrust into the lead as the pretty faces of a movement that would conquer the white audience. Their boss, Berry Gordy, estimated 70% of Motown buyers are white. This is Detroit's all-black label, mounted four years before by writer-producer Gordy; Chicago has VeeJay, and New Jersey has Scepter. Starting with Jackie Wilson's *Reet-Petite*, Gordy has fortified his own label at a small neighborhood

bungalow/studio, "Hitsville", with songwriter-performer Smokey Robinson (& the Miracles)—*Shop Around, You Really Got A Hold On Me, Ooh Baby Baby, Tracks Of My Tears*; and Barrett Strong (*Money*), plus prolific writing-producer team Brian Holland-Lamont Dozier-Eddie Holland, and powerhouse, immaculate performers in the Marvelettes (*Please Mr Postman*), Mary Wells, Marvin Gaye, Martha & the Vandellas (*Heat Wave, Dancing In The Street*), "Little" Stevie Wonder, aged 13, the Temptations, and the Four Tops beginning to fire (*Baby I Need Your Lovin'*).

Like this band of four English distant cousins who had rudely gate-crashed American youth culture, the Beach Boys were intent on reviving the memory of original rock'n'roll and r&b—the Beatles usually by duplicating the original disc as well as they could, as just one brand of their production line. Now with *Fun, Fun, Fun* the southern Californian band led off with a guitar intro based on Chuck Berry's *Roll Over Beethoven*—that the Beatles had already covered on an album, unknown to Americans—and continued in the studio in a driving Little Richard rhythm grounded by Brian on piano and a throbbing bass played by Al. The thumping backbeat from Dennis—clear and upfront on the original master recording—was interwoven by Brian's bass lines, and Carl on both lead and rhythm guitar. Brian's Hammond organ solo was reminiscent of but not the equal of his organ break in *Surfin' USA*, this time with a "fun" carnival tone to it rather than rock.

The Beach Boys and Four Seasons in the States, and the Beatles, joined by the Rolling Stones in Britain, were revolutionary in being pop-rock bands who wrote their own material (arguably preceded by Buddy Holly & the Crickets). By the end of 1964 they were challenged in this by the Kinks and The Who, both from London like the Stones—and also to be recognised as important creative units, led by Ray Davies

and Pete Townshend, respectively. The Stones toured the States mid-'64 but wouldn't be widely known until *Time Is On My Side* (#6) hit in November '64, a week behind the Kinks' *You Really Got Me* (#5 CB). Soon after, the Stones would beat the Beatles themselves in the annual Melody Maker poll at home. The Who were disregarded in the US but for minor hits for the best part of two years to come. Another American band of similar creativity didn't join the mix until summer 1965, the Lovin' Spoonful, led by singer-songwriter John Sebastian. The Byrds, too, were fast developing.

Throughout 1964, on all of their hits, the Beach Boys performed all the parts for the four core rock'n'roll quartet instruments—lead and rhythm guitars, bass guitar, drums, and additional keyboards piano, organ, harpsichord. This fuller sound might have been reproduced on stage for live performances—Brian switching to keyboards and Al taking bass—but was hardly, if ever, done (for unknown reasons). In the early days, Mike Love would quite often take on saxophone—hear the audio clip on Youtube of his contribution on stage in Sydney, February 1964, for a rockin'-good rendition of Ray Charles' *What'd I Say?* with Carl taking lead vocal. Late in the Sixties they would augment their live sound with brass and other sidemen.

In a policy that advantaged the Beatles, Capitol electronically enhanced the recordings forwarded from Parlophone producer George Martin in London. On first auditioning mid-1962, the Beatles were lucky to be allowed to play their own instruments by Martin, who at first preferred session musicians. The Beatles were mightily impressed with the extra grunt their master recordings of *Twist And Shout* (a remake of the Isley Brothers' original) and others were treated to before pressing via Capitol's engineers in Hollywood; Parlophone's engineers, and Martin himself, were

inexperienced in rock'n'roll. In contrast, Capitol's interference in the Beach Boys' recordings seemed geared to a wholly different purpose: Instrumental backing was put in the background, especially the all-important bass and drums; the reproduced volume from the disc on a turntable set lower, making them sound more like the label's Four Freshmen, Preps or Lettermen; and the vocals tweaked higher to make them choirboys rather than a rock band. (Murry too had ensured a younger sound by arranging for the tape to be speeded up to heighten their pitch.) A specific travesty noticed by fans was the closing, signature wail of Brian's falsetto and the track's strong rhythm belted out only slowly fading on the original *Fun, Fun, Fun* disc—senselessly cropped off for generations of compilation reissues. Beatle fans had a gripe too at their band's first seven albums being carved up into ten standard-length Capitol l.p.s of 11-12 tracks each, with some repeat tracks like the Beach Boys' l.p.s.

In America, the Beach Boys "car song" rose into that famous Beatle Top 5—among a total of 14 of their songs that gathered in the Billboard Hot 100 April 1964. Early on, it managed to carve off two Beatles' in the Variety chart, going to #4, and the same in the UPI survey of jukebox play nationwide. The band debuted there, fourth, too in the Gilberts' national survey of teens published across the country by Associated Press, then rose to #3 and stayed in designated Beatle territory for a month. This was a minor coup—mainstream trade papers placed the Beach Boys at #5-6, below metropolitan New Yorkers the Four Seasons and *Dawn*—and trading top five spots back and forth weekly with new Englishmen on the block the Dave Clark Five and *Glad All Over*. This was the band who were first hailed with the recurring honor of being "the next Beatles". The invented "Tottenham Sound" of north London featured an unvarying



boomba-boomba beat from Dave Clark's Rogers drumkit, a blaring sax keeping chords, and a good vocalist in Mike Smith. The Honeycombs mastered it better for *Have I The Right* via lady drummer "Honey" Lantree.

There was some strange jockeying with bulk Beatle product apt to swarm in any city's top ten where it landed—which was everywhere. Some stations listed up to 15 Beatle songs jointly at #1—despite the fact that most were album tracks, so how to count sales to place them accurately? The Beach Boys were held off by three of them to #4 in San Francisco-San Jose weekly charts—but still came in as tenth most popular song for the *year* there. If merchandisers and the "sophisticated urbanite" crowds had fallen for the Beatles, the Beach Boys were still tops in Bay outliers Sacramento, Contra Costa, on to Fresno, Visalia, Bakersfield, and on to San Diego (KGB). One Washington DC station (WEEL), Kansas City-WHB and nearby Jefferson City chimed in. *Fun, Fun, Fun* was a solid runner-up in big cities of the Northeast, a Greater Washington consensus, Philadelphia, and all *around* New York City (see below); and spanning the Midwest from Dallas-Fort Worth to Denver to the Twin Cities, Columbus, and Winnipeg. They were top three Chicago, Montreal, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City; same Back East in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Hartford, Providence; Louisville, Little Rock, and Knoxville in a small cluster in the South.

This was the finish of the brief year and a half of the Beach Boys cruising to number one at the big L.A. stations—which were suddenly far too "with-it" to concern themselves. As with San Francisco, they stalled #4 though spending two months stubbornly top 10 in both California metropolises. They reached just #4 level too in Detroit, Dallas, Miami, Seattle, Vancouver, Cincinnati, Virginia Beach. On balance, their latest single had done better than anything since *Surfin' USA*,

and for Yank-boosters overseas earned some hope showing against an irresistible force, Beatles Inc. But it was already a done deal that America's Band was second-best in their homeland.

Biggest bugbear was trying to crack New York City, a tough nut since the band's two surf hits. Now it was a fortress nicknamed "Beatletown", bent on preserving the Fab Four's pedestal even to the cost of homeys the Four Seasons. The big radio stations here had joined the British bandwagon in a rush. While this the Beach Boys' first car-song A-side rose to first runner-up along a line running from Columbus to Erie through the Albany Tri-Cities to Newark, part of Greater New York, in the big stations of Big Apple central *Fun, Fun, Fun* barely grazed top 10—lodging there at bottom place at WMCA and WABC, where it won the honor of 99th most popular single of the year; excluded even from top 30 at popular WINS. Star deejay here was "Murray the K", touting himself as "The Fifth Beatle" over easily more convincing claims for manager Epstein, producer Martin, former Beatles Pete Best and Stu Sutcliffe, even Sir Joseph Lockwood, chairman of EMI. Kaufman was kept busy making trips to London, glad-handing to get exclusive airings of upcoming Beatle hits for his station. The rock'n'roll pioneer in Miami, WQAM, in a move that would be an ingrained policy, excluded *Fun, Fun, Fun* from top 40 entirely, pushing a B-side remake instead of a Beach Boys original.

In Asia, *Fun, Fun, Fun* did best in the Philippines and Hong Kong (both #3), but delayed to late '64 and late '65, respectively. In Europe it showed in Sweden (#12), as ever. It did just okay in the English-speaking world: #6 in Canada; the same in Sydney and Brisbane, Australia; #8 New Zealand. But the Beach Boys' time had not yet come across the Atlantic, though Record Mirror had tipped it to make top 50 UK. Its

reviewer was enthusiastic: "There's a typical Chuck Berry backing on this pounding beater from the boys. It could follow their "Surfin' USA" into the charts, and the great beat, good lyrics and the *white boy group* [my italics] sound could make this big U.S. hit click here." Later in the year it did almost make top ten in the UK e.p. chart (#11), in September. Only micro movements were seen in France (#29 in the jukebox chart) and Germany (#49). German label Electrola said the Beach Boys were having unprecedented sales there along with the Beatles, the Shadows, Dave Clark Five, and the Swinging Blue Jeans. This meant merely that it was an improvement over these bands' total absence previously. The Beach Boys were "beginning to move in quantity", not hot. While this Billboard of March 7th claimed "the Beatles are riding a group-singing boom" in Germany, it was really the other way around—Other bands were riding the coat-tails of the Beatle boom. Capitol-Holland told Cash Box that *Fun, Fun, Fun* was "a steady seller". Belgium, next door, was partial to the flip side.

*Fun, Fun, Fun* was the key Beach Boys song of the moment in their *oeuvre* exploring and exposing American culture for youth entertainment, and getting fun themselves from presenting it to audiences. Along with *Don't Worry Baby* and *The Warmth Of the Sun* from the same album it would live long after first being forgotten—which they were by the late Sixties, when the band was not only starkly out of fashion but excoriated by rock *cogniscenti* and embarrassing to fans sneaking out of record shops with their idols wrapped in a brown paper bag. The current hit was fast acclaimed by Capitol as their best-selling to date, but is said to have made the million landmark around the end of summer '64—apparently after their next big hit (and first number one) had. *Surfin' USA* too had found the mark by then, without counting B-side *Shut Down's* sales, and would jump back into contention as their worldwide

biggest disc by reentering the chart in Japan Music Life monthly and placing #9 for this coming August.

The Beach Boys' iconic car song has recovered since what should have been its heyday. A 1976 survey of long-term sales and votes by New York City's powerful WNBC, taking in much of the Eastern Seaboard, ranked *Fun, Fun, Fun* third among all 1964 hits after *Hello Dolly* and *I Want to Hold Your Hand*. This broke barriers, coming as an important revelation for the Beach Boys—redemption at the very center of power in the media industry that had kept them down, and at a time when the band was launching their Seventies comeback. It would accumulate over two million radio plays in the US, up with the two biggest Beatle number ones that year and a level above three others. In a 1996 episode of tv's *Home Improvement*, comedian Tim Allen introduces the band to "Wilson" the next-door neighbor with a line he addresses to Mike Love, that this single had sold over four million copies. It rates 23rd among all 1964 singles for popularity today in the US (RYM).

*Fun, Fun, Fun's* flip side, *Why Do Fools Fall in Love?*, was a Brian remake of the Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers' doo-wop rocker from 1956 and was attractive and dynamic in blaring style, an old-style "jump beat" rendered with a modern feel in rock'n'roll, and Wall-of-Sound echo effects inspired by Phil Spector productions. In the process Wilson heightened the pitch of 13-year-old Frankie's high tenor into something lilting and light, Brian at his most fragile—what Mike Love teased him over on the same album as "Mickie Mouse with a sore throat". In this new version a heavy beat, prominent saxophones with a solo, and pristine group harmonies updated the sound into angelic pop-rock. The only "doo-wop" elements left from the original were Mike's deep, throaty bass vocal

lines. But it must be admitted that the high-harmony vocal group the Happenings did much more with it four years later in converting it to a slow soulful number, featuring the pristine falsetto of lead singer Bob Miranda.

Given the side's quality, its comparative obscurity must be put down to the fact it wasn't a Beach Boys original, which fans had become used to. Memories of the loved original near the beginning of rock'n'roll were still vivid. Also, now there were the Beatles to contend with, and B-sides that didn't distract attention from the main attraction. "Flipping" sides had gone out of fashion overnight—There were no more double treats from Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, the Everly Brothers... The Beach Boys would continue old-fashioned for a while, producing doubled hits when they could. Soon, too, the Beatles started producing good doubles.

Few regional markets were taken enough with *Why Do Fools Fall In Love?* to find room on their playlist for it. The B was popular in isolated spots from Philadelphia (#2) to Fresno (#1); top-tenned from San Diego back to Pittsburgh and Indianapolis; heard on major stations' top 20s in Detroit, and Miami—#17 at big, established WQAM that chose it as A-side. At some points in the Midwest including Kansas City and Milwaukee it started off as a top 40 "A" but petered out fast. Hit status was hard to find for it after ventured to #94 in Cash Box/ Billboard #120. Off the main drag, it showed at #5 in New Zealand's Teen Scene magazine chart. It has rarely been revived, the SPIRIT OF AMERICA compilation in 1975 being an exception.

**The Beach Boys' media exposure** was limited relative to British bands, as well as Adult Contemporary acts, production musicals and movie soundtracks—extremely popular and enduring in *West Side Story*, *Hello Dolly*, etc, with *Mary*

*Poppins* and *The Sound Of Music* to come. The band's latest album, SHUT DOWN VOL 2, was slow taking off in Billboard—two weeks behind other charts, taking six weeks after release to debut at #105—and failed (just) to make top ten in any of the major charts. It's a puzzle. Teen albums then were made up of a single, a B-side, and 10 routine "filler tracks". This one had three classics including a rocker and two knockout ballads just as emotionally engaging, more complex in composition, and more lushly produced than *Surfer Girl* and *In My Room*—namely *Don't Worry Baby* and *The Warmth Of the Sun*. Even a more routine but sparkling ballad, *Keep An Eye On Summer*, had been made into a hit by Italian band the Jaguars. The l.p. was dropping after three months—not up to their usual longevity—but made a return to top 20 through June and was in the Record World top 30 albums until late August '64 and at the end of the year came to be rated as fourth-biggest rock album of the year by Cash Box. Their previous one, LITTLE DEUCE COUPE, had gone high and sustained—selling 1,170,000 in the US alone—their biggest until it came flat up against the Brits' radio and tv exposure.

Black r&b/soul artists, effectively barred by lack of airplay on most stations, had every reason to feel most aggrieved of all. Otis Redding had sold 750,000 of *These Arms Of Mine* and barely made the top 100 nationally. A few months later "Little" Stevie Wonder had made a huge splash mid-1963 as "the 13-year-old genius" of *Fingertips Pt. 2*, a dynamic blind boy on stage, accompanying himself on harmonica, and nothing was to be heard of him for another three years. In 1964, Jimmy Hughes—not a household name—sold 850,000 of his *Steal Away* hit. This was within cooee of Beatle chart-toppers *Love Me Do* and *Please Please Me*, yet just creased Billboard's top 20. Marvin Gaye now began selling in similar numbers at Motown, yet would wait another four years (*I Heard It*

*Through the Grapevine*) for a superstardom of the magnitude of Diana Ross, lead singer of the Supremes, who was at number one already presenting supposed soul music as cabaret, mixed with show tunes. The famous case of a blues number written by her husband for Bessie Banks saw her as a hit pick by WINS-New York, but ended with the Moody Blues months later running away with *Go Now!*. Other black performers, including formerly popular girl groups, would see their flops turned into huge hits often just months after: by Manfred Mann—Barry-Greenwich's *Do Wah Diddy Diddy* by the Exciters, and the Shirelles' *Sha La La*; Herman's Hermits—Goffin-King's *I'm Into Something Good* by Earl Jean, lead singer of the Cookies, and others who made up the British Invasion. The Animals cut down the flow of songs at source, poaching Brill Building tunes direct: *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place* (Mann-Weil), *It's My Life*, *Don't Bring Me Down* (Goffin-King).

*I Get Around/Don't Worry Baby* has gone down in rock history as one of the best-ever two or three couplings of songs on one disc, in critics' minds really only challenged by the Beatles' *Strawberry Fields/Penny Lane*, more than three years later in their psychedelic phase; in this writer's mind, possibly Elvis's *Hound Dog/Don't Be Cruel* from 1956 and the Coasters' *Young Blood/Searchin'*, similarly a double million-seller from 1957.

Suitably, for a group that would be "America's Band", *I Get Around* brought it all together for them on the 4th of July, arriving at number one in the major American top 100s on that date—Billboard, Cash Box, Record World, Variety. It was the fifth biggest hit of 1964 in the US according to both Billboard and Cash Box. For longevity at number one in the standard top

100s it did best in Music Business—three weeks starting June 27th.

This was the town braggart's song about how cool he was:

"I get around, from town to town. I'm a real cool head, I'm makin' real good bread."... "I'm gettin' bugged drivin' up and down this same old strip—I gotta find a new place where the kids are hip. My buddies and me are gettin' real well known. Yeah, the bad guys know us and they leave us alone."

*I Get Around* was credited to Brian alone until Mike put his claim in on part royalties in the new millennium—on dozens of songs Murry had short-changed him on.

Within three months of the disc mounting its summit would come the band's first tour of the Eastern Seaboard—virtually foreign territory, and a long time after their first concert trips to Hawaii and Australasia in the South Seas, whose cultural lifestyle bore a closer resemblance to that of California. It wasn't until that fall of '64 too that they felt worldly enough to take on the UK and Europe.

Taking full advantage of the new tech toys provided to American youth ever since the unprecedented prosperity of the early post-war period, *I Get Around's* greatest success was via play on American jukeboxes (see celebrated *film noir* movie *Asphalt Jungle*, 1950). A young couple could snuggle in an intimate booth at a cafe, miked for sound and earphones, or a gang of hoods might camp in the malt shop—and play their favorites one after the other for every nickel in the slot. The Beach Boys' new hit(s) had started life at the studio recording on April 2nd, the day they fired manager Murry Wilson after he provoked Denny to put his fist through the wall. It ended up the most played song on the nation's jukeboxes that year—staying four weeks at number one in the UPI's survey of



America's juke-joints starting June 15th, and almost as long at runner-up.

Yet, in Cash Box's national poll of deejays covering the year up to August 15th the song came in as just the 30th most frequently played by radio stations, the bottom position published—below six Beatles', two Dave Clark Fives', a Peter & Gordon, and two Four Seasons' to name just the biggest pop-rock names; plus 10 "adult contemporary", a genre that was receiving the breath of life in this new era dominated by British acts who styled themselves as rockers but just as much represented the old orthodoxy returned. Andy Williams, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Tony Bennett, Louis Armstrong, and Al Martino, mostly twenty years or more adrift from their own time, Barbra Streisand, Wayne Newton, and Jack Jones, were all grateful recipients of the new-old trend. From now on, the peaks climbed by Beach Boys singles in Billboard, that measured mainly airplay, would be lower (almost without exception) than they made in Record World and Cash Box, that were determined by sales.

This was the unspoken prejudice in action that the Beach Boys continued to fight against now two years into their superstardom. Overall through the year, among "vocal groups most programmed" for radio, they were, thanks to their sheer number of hits (and the undeniable ear-candy coming from album tracks), fourth behind the Beatles—who had dominated the year though they had only been played for less than eight months of it—and followed the Four Seasons, and Brian Wilson's ancient harmony mentors the Four Freshmen, who bathed in the broad acceptance of their Americana and cool jazz across radio formats.

Capitol cooperated in Brian Wilson's preference for releasing "doubles". A few began to creep through for the Beatles with *And I Love Her/If I Fell*, which faced muted

acceptance maybe from split play. *I Feel Fine/She's A Woman* and *We Can Work It Out/Day Tripper*, a year apart, made it to no.1 backed with a top-fiver. In 1966 it was realised that any Beatle A-side could triumph in the market if so promoted—*Yellow Submarine* over superior B-side *Eleanor Rigby*.

On first appearance in May 1964, *I Get Around* took A-side in reviews. But then the two sides raced each other. Record World fast listed *Don't Worry Baby* as second in potential of all new releases only to Britain-based Millie's Small's West Indian *ska* novelty song *My Boy Lollipop* (that took the world by storm) and ahead of Elvis and two of the hotter British acts, Gerry & the Pacemakers and the Searchers. Cash Box was reporting the Beach Boys B was red-hot with New York City jukebox distributors buying copies from the factory, and it was this flip-side too that was entering dealers' top tens across the country.

Through its intense two-month run, *Don't Worry Baby*, one of the ultimate emotional ballads (see the movie *Deja Vu*, 2006), claimed spots in the official biggest-song-of-the-year stakes based on the weekly local surveys by some of the biggest markets and distribution centers on the North American continent: Los Angeles (8th), San Francisco-San Jose (2nd), Montreal (2nd), Washington DC-Baltimore (5th), Hartford (9th)... Honolulu (3rd). It went to number one too under its own steam elsewhere on the West Coast in San Diego, Portland, Sacramento, and Fresno; Dallas, Salt Lake, Denver, and Oklahoma City in the Old West; the Twins and Milwaukee in the Midwest; Cleveland and Columbus, Akron, Dayton, Toledo in a blanket across Ohio; Kansas City and Louisville in the South; dealers in Louisiana, Alabama, and Iowa; stations in Pittsburgh, Buffalo, the Albany Tri-Cities. It peaked first runner-up Philadelphia, Boston, Toronto, Miami, Houston, Phoenix; third in Detroit, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Vancouver.

Though defying its B-status in every corner of the North American super-market, *Don't Worry Baby* stopped just short of top 20 in the three major nationals, but rose to #13 in Music Business for the first two weeks of July, and #16 in Variety. The A-rocker gradually took over for what was, after all, a rock'n'roll band.

The very day that *I Get Around*, nominally the Beach Boys' biggest hit so far, topped the US charts, Record World put their overall sales tally under Capitol to date at "six to eight million singles". A gross guesstimate for a band that would forever be fighting in the courts for a legitimate accounting of their sales figures that were hardly ever made public by Capitol, their business partners, and are only vaguely guessed at to this day. (Not long after, in mid-August, Billboard gave the Four Seasons' sale figures as 9.5 million singles plus 2.5 million albums.) Given that the group's two low-showers *Ten Little Indians* and *Little St Nick* would not have sold much more than half a million together to this point this places the balance of 5.5 to 7.5 million singles squarely on the shoulders of their five double-sided hits that had compiled sales records to date—indicating six million- and/or near-million sellers including their current hit.

*I Get Around* came closest to breaking the Beach Boys' New York City jinx, placing runner-up in the weekly count at both big stations—only kept out by the Four Seasons' all-time great *Rag Doll*, then the Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night* of equal status. Another picture was given of New York City in the Beach Boys topping the chart published by the metropolis's vaunted Daily News, June 14th. And they declared their independence when the July 4th issue of Record World reported their arrival at number one, accompanied by the news that "sales for the record head for the one million mark" with "over 910,000 sold to date."

From *I Get Around's* opening two notes grunted out on fuzzed guitar it was heard that here was something new in arrangement with a jinking, varying rhythm that challenged the world of popular music. Brian laid down piano, Hammond organ, and harpsichord to the backing track. Carl did all the guitar work, the impressive lead and rhythm. Denny was on drums and session man Hal Blaine on percussive effects. The fuzz-tone of Carl's guitar that opens the song with a jolt and features rhythmic chording through the verses was a revelation for rock guitarists worldwide including the Beatles and Eric Clapton in Britain. Clapton was starting as the Yardbirds' first guitarist and was knocked out by Brian Wilson's composition and arrangement: "Where do we go from here?" he asked on first hearing. The Rolling Stones requested the hit—before it was a hit in the UK—to be spun on *Ready, Steady, Go!*, the tv show the Beach Boys would play live some three months later. EMI's response to all this kerfuffle among the avant garde of English rock music was to ignore them, and the band's huge current album in the States, which featured their rapidly rising hit in the British charts. Issued instead is SHUT DOWN VOL 2, six months old. It is the second Beach Boys album released by their parent company in the UK, of a total of six. Making a concession to their careful Beach Boys policy, EMI will issue the summer album *next* summer, 1965, understandably to little sales response.

*Don't Worry Baby*, pondering the whys and wherefores of young love, has Brian written all over it, co-writer Roger Christian being collaborator in mid 1963. It was offered to producer Phil Spector for the Ronettes, but was rejected. So as substitute girl group, the breadth of the band's performing talent was brought out—Brian playing piano and providing the emotive lead vocal, Carl on rhythm guitar, Dave Marks claiming credit for the lead guitar work on the track, Al again

on bass, and Denny on drums. All but Dave contributed to the mighty harmonies. It is perhaps unique in the history of recorded music, in that, as a B-side, it accrued over three million plays on US radio. Overseas it was untrumpeted amid the current Beatle frenzy, scoring only quiet listings separate from its A-side in English-speaking stalwarts Canada (#2 in Ted Kennedy's retrospective national chart, seven weeks in the top five) and Australia (#4 in the Sydney Sun Herald). It too made the Hit Parade Italia—though by the time the band got to Italy in November 1964, *Shut Down*, nearly two years old, was their most popular there.

*Don't Worry Baby* saw a revival by B. J. Thomas in 1977, selling 800,000 copies and assessed therefore as selling more than the original B-side. Note: Top 30 B-sides in the Sixties were usually credited with around 600,000 to 700,000 "sales" and were listed by retailers in their own right at one-stop-shops, with rack-jobbers, and as requested by title over the counter.

Again, Canadian critics gushed over the double. Cash Box's correspondent: "There's no stopping the Beach Boys. It certainly seems that their latest two-sider is going to end up one-two on Canadian charts from coast to coast. There's little to choose between [the two songs]. They're both giants." It duly topped Canada's RPM chart on that same 4th Of July weekend. On America's big day the Beach Boys are in Hawaii—far from one of their more devoted markets but named as Denny's favorite place—and have EMI label-mates Peter & Gordon with them to lend Brit Invasion cred on a three-day stay.

Outside home turf of North America, *I Get Around* impacted as a big hit in the UK for once—in contrast to the steady-selling pattern set by *Surfin' USA* and *Fun Fun Fun* that would continue afterwards with *When I Grow Up*, *Dance Dance Dance*, *Help Me Rhonda* and *California Girls*. It came

to rest at #7 with six weeks top ten, and in the ballpark of 350,000 sales during its chart run, then went on selling to accumulate 600,000 for a Platinum Disc from the UK Music Awards. It was the usual top-tenner in Scandinavia—but narrowly, in Denmark and Sweden—made incremental progress in Germany (just top 40) and France—reported at #28 nationally in the jukebox chart, and #3 in Paris. It made their biggest impact yet on the Hit Parade Italia, not counting another hit version by Equipe 84—translated: Team 84, the most popular of the elite Italian beat groups decided by a battle of the bands in summer 1966, challenged only by Nomadi—the Nomads—and very few others. (Apparently under the thrall of the Beach Boys, Equipe 84 recorded *Papa-Oom-Mow-Mow* as their first single. *I Get Around* is translated as *Prima di cominciare—Before You Begin*, and they cover *Don't Worry Baby* for a hit for good measure.) This showing is bettered in Japan—#18 for August in the monthly Music Life, keeping company with *Surfin' USA*—which crept into the Japanese top 10 on its return to the charts, at #9 for August.

In Australia, popular as they are till now on the surfin' East Coast of Sydney and Brisbane, the American champs' eclipse by the Beatles was almost total—for an entertainment media ever on the ball to trends. At Sydney radio station 2SM, meticulously recording the minutiae of teen culture, *I Get Around* began a slow rise from #92 to #80 in mid June. This made it easily overtaken by their rivals' upbeat take on Music Hall evergreen *Ain't She Sweet*, just one of 15 [sic] Fab Four songs defeating the Boys' rock classic in Australia that week. On the playlist of Sydney's premier station 2UE, then widely quoted as Australia's national chart, it eventually rose to #21. Its showing in the top four of Brisbane and in New Zealand was a small consolation at the time.

The bigger picture showed that over a six-month span the Beach Boys had produced three iconic songs that would score in the 20 top 1964 discs spun in the new millennium (Mediabase in 2007): *Fun Fun Fun*, *Don't Worry Baby* and *I Get Around*. The next few months would be short of landmark singles due partly to the release schedules of the Capitol label and the insecurities of the band's leader and creative force, Brian Wilson, who had started on marijuana and was open to more exploratory stuff. In the long term the A-side came to stand at 11th in sales and votes for 1964 songs, said a longitudinal survey on the Eastern Seaboard conducted in 1976 by a less popular but more thorough station, WNBC. As of New Year's Eve 2018 the double rated as the very top single from 1964 in America; 7th of the entire decade of the 1960s (RYM)—and so assessed as currently the third most popular of all Beach Boys discs.

The Beach Boys were credited at this time, especially by British critics, with an advance in the average quality of their music—that the Beatles are said to have attained from the start. This supposed step up was in *ALL SUMMER LONG*. It did, incidentally, rise higher in charts—#3 in Record World mid-August; and Music Business, blocked by two Beatle albums. The band would set a record by placing five albums in the U.S. charts at once; six if the Christmas album was counted. In Britain it made no mark, as ever. From *ALL SUMMER LONG*, most tracks were of single or at least B-side quality—*I Get Around* of course, *Girls On the Beach* (to be their movie title song), *Drive-In*, heavy rock, maybe even the title song; and four songs left to wait months for issue on an e.p.: *Little Honda*, *Wendy*, *Hushabye* (a remake of the Mystics'), *Don't Back Down*. The album's title track would succeed via radio play in

Manchester-Greater Boston, Sacramento, San Jose, but would be a throwaway single in the UK.

The Beach Boys even won the fascination of the Beatles themselves. (As if they hadn't already studied them as they had other American rock stars.) Tv star Peggy Lipton, later to marry legendary black music producer Quincy Jones, told Teen Set magazine she was once in the company of Beatle Paul McCartney (her current boyfriend as an 18-year-old model) and John Lennon, who told her soon after release that they were "infatuated with the Beach Boys' sound" and "fascinated by Brian's style of composing and arranging." On this occasion the two Beatles played ALL SUMMER LONG "all night long" (Wikipedia). This was two years and six albums before the universally acknowledged masterpiece PET SOUNDS would be played in Britain, at another private session blowing Lennon & McCartney's minds (among many others').

On the same day that the Beach Boys' first big UK hit entered the top 10 in the official chart—August 9th 1964—riding on its coattails into the e.p. top 20 was a four-track release led by *Fun, Fun, Fun*, only now reaching some sort of British hit status. In that same issue of the Record Mirror it was reported that Murry Wilson's research had revealed that low European ticket prices could not sustain a Beach Boys concert tour—as many other American acts had found in the early Sixties. (Frank Sinatra was willing to take a quarter of his usual fee to visit Germany but the cap on ticket prices there made it impractical.) It was now that SHUT DOWN VOL 2 had its UK release—so long since the last one (SURFIN' SAFARI, delayed until April 1963) that it was wrongly reported in Record Mirror as their *first* l.p. there.

*Little Honda* and *Wendy* together comprised a vinyl 45rpm disc that never was, instead restricted to half the space



of an e.p. (extended play release) in the States. Yet in the minds of fans and others in the know, together they have been seen as one of the band's special doubles ever since.

In early August 1964 Brian Wilson told a Music Business interviewer, amid a three-page print spread on the Beach Boys, that a track from ALL SUMMER LONG, *Little Honda*, was being played on the radio "like it was a single". The time was right for it, and he took the hint. But he was dissuaded by negative feedback around him. Gary Usher's purpose-named Hondells, produced for the studio by Brian's former collaborator, took honors releasing it as a single, and their version sold a million (RW #7). Brian seemed satisfied that it had created a new youth trend to tiny Japanese motorcycles. He announced, "Surf music is strictly passe." Brian was way ahead of the pack but outside of the field of music showed little finesse. He openly declared that Dennis was the only real surfer in the band, and heralded their next single—*When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)*—as an expansion of the group's subject matter. No one in the media heeded the clue. After all, the new leaders of teen culture, the Beatles, were still singing boy-girl romances much in the mode of soap operas. But million-seller was a commercial species of 45 that the Beach Boys were now running short of. Karl Engemann, the Capitol sales exec looking after Beach Boys product (as it was called in the industry), called for "another *I Get Around*". Creative process—and progress—didn't enter the equation in the future the international conglomerate EMI had control over.

Brian's summer-of-'64 assessment of his rivals? "I admire the Beatles. They have a lot of creative ability and they present their music well. It's a *synthetic* [my italics] sound in a way, combining Chuck Berry, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly and others. But they do it very well." (Music Business, 15th August). This was Brian with his creative self-assurance still

fully intact, before the drugs took their toll on his vulnerable ego, pegging his biggest competitors just right, even sounding a little patronising towards his Liverpool nemeses. In April there had been a trans-Atlantic, trans-continental conference phone call arranged with the Beatles, and each side gave as good as they got, poking fun at each other's vocal styles. They had been lumped in together for a movie distributed nationwide to theaters displaying each band's live talents just before this, and each was aware of the other as more than just commercial rivals.

Others were remarked on that same interview. "[Burt Bacharach] fascinates me. He has incorporated good music with the teen stuff and it just knocks me out to think about it... Phil Spector. Some say he's cold now but there's no such thing as a cold great talent... And Tamla Motown. Well with them it's so obvious—like saying the sky is blue. And Chuck Berry. It's hard to really state how much his revival has meant... If there's a soul of rock and roll, Chuck Berry has to be it."

After a few months of wall-to-wall Brit Invasion, by summer '64 California bands had started agitating in the trade papers about not being represented on New York's Sullivan show—then a necessary step to superstardom. *Wendy* was that long-delayed step for the Beach Boys, performed on network television, September 27th 1964: *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the American equivalent of a royal command performance, and a ratings institution around the world that pushed the song to as high as #29 on the (New York based) Variety chart. "Old Stone Face", on chatty terms with frequent guests the Beatles, introduces America's Band to America as being from Sweden. The band's dynamic, lip-synching performance to a tape of *I Get Around*, surrounded by muscle cars on stage, came across much better than the unaccountably static, even sedate, rendition of *Wendy* that did it no justice. The Honda song, in

contrast, was seen a year later, showcased on the popular *Andy Williams Show*.

This belated debut with New York's finest was maybe in Beach Boy minds a taster of what was to come—good or bad. But they would appear only twice more on Sullivan in the seven years left it. The next day they were back on home territory 5,000 kilometres away at Santa Monica, playing for the all-star *The TAMI Show* doco-movie hosted by Jan & Dean to be shown in theaters across the land and in Europe. Here were Smokey Robinson & the Miracles, James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Chuck Berry, Lesley Gore—and the Rolling Stones introduced to America along with the up-to-now neglected Diana Ross & the Supremes, revived from their great *When The Lovelight Shines Through His Eyes* (#20 CB) nine months before. The Beach Boys topped the bill. In the days pre-inflation and pre-celebrity worship the band's fee was \$50,000—about the level of a B-movie star or top character actor then but more than double that of the Rolling Stones; parity was achieved within a year. The Boys' sublime performances of *Surfer Girl* and upcoming single *Dance, Dance, Dance* (just recorded and two months short of release) with a roof-raising blast of *Surfin' USA* and *I Get Around* were all wasted. Brian quickly nixed his band's movie stardom, having their footage cut completely from the film that would have afforded priceless promotion in the UK and Europe (where they wouldn't tour for two years), and across the States. He was afraid their performance would "date" them in no time. Still, no change to their candy-striped barbers outfits on stage.

They would not be reinvented into the company of Sullivan for eight months, as an afterthought the day after *Help Me Rhonda* had reached number one; and then not for more than three years. England's Dave Clark Five would rack up a dozen slots in less than that time; the Beatles, even wiring

performances in from London, and later the Supremes, apparently as many as they wanted. An acknowledged phenomenon then was the risk of "over-exposure" leaving fans jaded: Acts were better appreciated by the public for sheer talent, but unlike today not obsessed over and identified with to the point of needing a daily fix.

*Wendy's* harmonies have been compared to those on the Four Freshmen's hit of *Day By Day* years before. But the most striking effects of the song are heard in the introduction, Carl's sparse, arhythmic minor notes creating the haunted air of a young man regretting the break-up of his late love. The group's muffled nightclub performance of it for Sullivan lacks its full-throated impact, as if told to turn down the decibels to pleasant Lettermen level. (Assertive bands like the Rolling Stones and the Doors would agree with the producers' instructions on how to modify their performance, and then disobey.)

In what has been described in one rockumentary by its host, Beatle drummer Ringo Starr, as "a classic performance" by the Beach Boys, Carl later remarked on the recording process involved in getting the scintillating signature rhythm of *Little Honda*—saying that it sounded "like shit" when he was playing it how Brian insisted; then it sounded "hot" in the play-back booth. The effect is particularly impressive from modern remastered versions. With or without the fuzz tone, from Dennis's "Go!" the band generates excitement throughout, not least with Brian's booming bass in quadruple time (that makes the intro) and drum combinations, and changing rhythms that conjure visions of racing along fast straights and climbing hills.

Brian and Carl had experimented with mild fuzz tone during session time on April 2nd, and now in fall 1964 for the Kinks' opener *You Really Got Me* and follow-up *All Day And All Of The Night* guitarist Dave Davies had stumbled on and

extended a gaping whole that appeared in his speaker producing a raucous chordal assault. It was Davies that was credited for the innovation, but not until another age. It was a year later that heavily fuzzed guitar (through a so-called fuzz-box) would become a staple in rock, virtually compulsory for British blues bands from the Yardbirds (*Heart Full Of Soul*) through the Spencer Davis (*Keep On Runnin'*) and Jeff Beck Groups, to Cream and finally Led Zeppelin. The Four Seasons early on showed they knew what the Brits were up to when they over-fuzzed just the intro of *Let's Hang On* (September 1965).

Both e.p. songs were disadvantaged by not featuring until October, weeks after the *When I Grow Up* single, the chosen hit following up *I Get Around*, had peaked. It was a muddle that must have confused the public and hampered sales through a months-long period when umpteen "Beach Boy" sounds were issued by copyists. Gary Usher of the Hondells kept an eye on Brian and would try to preempt *Help Me Rhonda* too. Jan & Dean's *Sidewalk Surfin'* was an inferior remake of *Catch A Wave*—and Brian had co-written *Ride the Wild Surf* for J & D's last big hit.

In not-very-long hindsight the Beach Boys must have realised their mistake. The e.p. as a form was fast on the way out in the US (not for another three years yet the UK). During 1961 and 1962 Elvis Presley had sold 600,000 in two months of each e.p. issued. In 1963-64 the Beatles were estimated to have sold 650,000 of their *Twist And Shout* e.p. over the best part of a year in the UK alone. In a rapidly declining American market, the *4 By the Beach Boys* e.p. of *Little Honda/Wendy/Hushabye/Don't Back Down* moved a modest 150,000 on first pressing. This prompted Capitol to expect from 200,000 to 300,000 on the upcoming *4 By the Beatles* entry to the series—though in the event its first shipping from

the factory was 125,000 in one week (said Music Business, February 27th '65) and its charting was lower than the #65/#44 Billboard Hot 100 peaks achieved by *Little Honda/Wendy*. A concurrent Rolling Stones e.p. for Decca without any standout tracks sold 180,000 based on their deliberate image conjured by manager Andrew Loog Oldham of Beelzebub's answer-to-the-Beatles. (Impresario Oldham and partner Eric Easton were taking a bigger royalty than the Stones for their trouble.) But in the UK the Beach Boys scored #3 on the NME e.p. chart reported by Cash Box on November 28th '64, at a time and place when this format still meant something and sold well.

Overseas, *Wendy*, on its own, was celebrated Down Under in Australasia—going all the way to number one in the Sydney Sun Herald and the same in New Zealand's top showbiz magazine, Playdate. At home it was a top fiver in Boston (#4), Washington DC, the Twin Cities (#4), Louisville (#3) and Regina; topped in Providence and was runner-up in Seattle, Denver, Tucson. Reissued in the UK two years later as the B-side to *Good Vibrations*, it went on in mid 1967 to score well in its own right in Switzerland and moderately in Germany.

The Beach Boys' *Little Honda* found its real sweet spot overseas too: Xmas/New Year, in Japan, where it went to number one of English language singles (CB) in January after a steady rise and for a long stay; the same in Sweden, above the Rolling Stones and Beatles for the February '65 chart. Elsewhere in Scandinavia—Denmark (#5), Norway (#8). In Germany and Italy it was just top 40, along with Switzerland. In the UK's NME there was the #3 e.p. spot. In Canada it was a single, on the B-side of *When I Grow Up*. *Little Honda* had already been played incessantly by several stations, said Cash Box early on (August 29th 1964), and rose to #15 in Walt Grealis's RPM trade paper—undercooked at that, supported as it was by top five placings in Ottawa, Vancouver (#3), Calgary

(#2), Winnipeg, Edmonton (both #4), Halifax (#2); #6 in Montreal and #14 in Toronto. In the U.S.A., it was number one in tiny Greenville OH, runner-up in Los Angeles, Washington DC, and the Twins; #3 Philadelphia, #4 Richmond, #5 Baltimore and Louisville, #6 the Scranton Tri-Cities, #7 in Boston and Buffalo, #11 Detroit, #12 Miami and San Diego, #13 in Cincinnati.

In the new millennium the racing, throbbing *Honda* has received a standout, roaring audience reaction when played live, notably in Auckland, New Zealand in 2006 by the touring Beach Boys band led by Mike Love on most lead vocals, with Bruce Johnston also on lead/harmony vocals and keyboards, John Cowsill on drums with some lead vocals also.

The upbeat, jerkily rhythmic *When I Grow Up (to Be a Man)* was a switch featuring not only baroque playing of the harpsichord by Brian, but a specially devised drum riff by Dennis—one of the original beats in pop-rock, starting with a splashy slap on hi-hat, followed by a three beat thrum on snare, and completed by a snappy double-beat on bass-drum and floor tom-tom together. Called a cha-cha rhythm by one reviewer, it repeats through the verses. It saw echoes, simplified, in the rhythms used in variations through the following few months by the Zombies' drummer for *She's Not There* and Ringo Starr for the Beatles on *Ticket to Ride*.

The song is a prayer for eternal youth lived like a true Beach Boy in all its aspects—happy, sad, everyday:

"Will I dig the same things that turned me on as a kid?

Will I look back and say that I wish I hadn't done what I did?

Will I joke around? And still dig those sounds?...

Now I'm young and free, but how will it be?...

Will I look for the same things in a woman that I dig in a girl?

Will I settle down fast, or will I first wanna travel the world?...

Will I love my wife for the rest of my life?

These lyrics betray a certain innocence of inquiry that would not have gone down well to the mass UK audience, for one, and it is a tribute to its sheer musicianship that it performed a minor miracle in doing as well as it did there (#26 MM)—especially after the band had muffed an impromptu go at it on *Ready, Steady, Go!*, Britain's top pop show, on what was supposed to be purely a promo trip of Europe.

The Beach Boys' three big singles of fall 1964 to spring '65 were undeniably less big, though, to find a common thread among the mediocrity, all scored high at Washington-Baltimore, Montreal, San Francisco, Dallas and Houston, the Twin Cities and Denver stations. For the first up, *When I Grow Up* (see the comedy movie *Look Who's Talking Too*), they scored rousing receptions also in Pittsburgh, Hartford, Salt Lake and Omaha—all scoring it number one; runner-up in Sacramento, San Jose, Providence, Honolulu. They were slipping in New York City again (#10), and their L.A. reception through this period was cool to frosty, with healthy sales starting at #6 in early October '64 for *When I Grow Up* but dipping to #20 by April '65 for *Do You Wanna Dance?*. In the New Year of '65 there was a version of *When I Grow Up* in Swedish—*Ung Och Fri*—by native songbird Britt Lindeborg. The Beach Boys' disc went on in 1967 to score well on its own in Switzerland and moderately in Germany, with *Wendy* also enjoying a delayed reaction there.

*When I Grow Up* was tipped by Billboard as a potential gold US-seller, but it and its follow-up *Dance, Dance, Dance*



showed a tailing off in the three big national charts: the first peaking at 7/8/9, and the second 8/9/10. *When I Grow Up* proved a surprise when it showed up in the top five of Variety (#5), as well as Music Business (#5) and the Gilbert/Associated Press chart (#3); the follow-up in the top five of Variety alone; the third, *Do You Wanna Dance?*, top-fiving in the peripheral ShowTime, top-tenning in AP and the UPI jukebox survey—but outside the ten in the three big trades. Sales across Canada were healthy enough to drive *When I Grow Up* from nowhere to #1 in the RPM national chart on October 19th '64, and keep it there for a second week.

*She Knows Me Too Well*, a smooth, emotional ballad, was chosen as the B-side to *When I Grow Up*. It was in what had become the tradition of Brian's emotional confessions, lyrically—"I treat her so mean I don't deserve what I have, and I think she'll forget just by makin' her laugh—but she knows me...". And vocally it matched his best on lead and background, with some of his most delicious, protracted "oh"s, "ooh"s and "ahh"s, with his tremulous high tenor sliding up to falsetto—what now fiancée Marilyn Rovell described well as his beautiful, aching voice.

In its own right the song was a solid top five co-hit with its A-side around San Francisco Bay, runner-up and one of the hits of the year at San Jose and Sacramento; #4 San Bernardino, and #3 Des Moines and McAllen TX. It was top ten in Vancouver and just below in Toronto. Elsewhere on the Pacific coast it fell just short of the ten in San Diego and Seattle; the twenty in Philadelphia and New Orleans. So it was featured nationwide, but just enough to take it to #93 in Record World/ #101 Billboard. There was a cover hit on the Hit Parade Italia by Gianni Meccia.

Today (2018) the double does much better, rated 23rd of all 1964 singles by RYM popularity measured in the United States.

## **BUSINESS BLUES**

Brian Wilson, under pressure to be "Mr Everything" for the band, would in December 1964 suffer his first panic attack airborne on tour—telling him to step back from public appearances to focus on composing, arranging, teaching, producing *at home*... It was a move approved of by John Lennon and Paul McCartney of the Beatles when they heard about it, such was their regard for the work he was best at. But it was still up to Brian and Murry to field routine enquiries from the media. The Beach Boys sound was everywhere, album cuts more than ever playing on the airwaves, and Brian Wilson songs and covers by: Jan & Dean (*Ride the Wild Surf* and *Sidewalk Surfin'* following up *Dead Man's Curve*), the Hondells (*Little Honda, My Buddy Seat*), and the Surfari's' cover of *Karen*, which the Beach Boys had performed as the theme for the tv series, and which scored big in Japan. They were an industry now, their sound mercilessly cribbed on by hangers-on. The business impetus for "surf music" cliches used by multiple labels and radio across the nation and around the world was crassly exploitative, and Brian Wilson's personal B-sides got less and less coverage.

Encouraged by the runaway success of their first tour Back East, including scoring their first appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, then the holy grail of showbiz, on November 1st the Beach Boys landed in swinging London to start a month-long tour of Europe, then visited continental biggies Germany, France and Italy, as well as Sweden and Denmark—

virtually every country where they had scored hits; a stop in Holland was cancelled. They had a tv spot in Munich, and elsewhere in (democratic West) Germany appeared at a special show put on by Radio Luxembourg, the hugely popular station that broadcast pop music across Europe and the UK. And another towards mid November in Milan, where they presented five of their hits—so they were putting in rehearsal time after all. And there was that live shoot in London—unusual for television at the time—of *When I Grow Up*, complete with a huge gaffe of a false start that was heartily appreciated by the young studio audience but rated them only their standard entry in the national chart and now at the new Radio Caroline.

At a London photo opp the boys are seen clustered around avuncular EMI managing director L. G. Wood with his deputies; all dark-suited men in upper middle age. It is a friendly, almost a family scene, but not a good omen for UK sales in the depths of autumn to follow up their one big hit there so far. In fact, there are no visible signs of life for this single in Europe apart from a showing low in Britain's top 30, early December, driven by their presence there a month earlier, in and out of the RR chart and racking up 10 weeks in the top 50. Pop Weekly insisted in its December 12th issue that it was "just starting to sell really heavily over here" and claimed that the upcoming *Dance, Dance, Dance* was even better. In Australia and New Zealand, their latest single is #20 in both Sydney and Brisbane, #11 in Canberra, and #16 across the Tasman Sea in the Playdate magazine. A highlight of the Beach Boys' few shows on this promo trip through Europe is a one-night stand at Paris's rock mecca, The Olympia, where they meet premier French chanteuse Sylvie Vartan.

The "British Invasion" groups had made the impact in Europe through 1964, and not much would be changed by the current Beach Boys visit. In America, the raunchy Animals

(*The House Of the Rising Sun*) from Newcastle, and r&b-edged London groups the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, and (less insistently) Manfred Mann, were a top ten threat from fall '64 onwards, soon followed by the Yardbirds. The poppy r&b-become-musical hall of the Dave Clark Five, also from London, and Liverpool's Gerry & the Pacemakers, would see the line blanded out further when diluted by a Manchester contingent represented by Herman's Hermits and Freddie & the Dreamers. The Boys would wait another year for their reciprocal European breakthrough, in Germany.

The Beach Boys parted with their British publisher, maybe spurred by the firing of manager Murry Wilson and the accompanying damage to the back-slapping business relationships he had built up. The successful Burlington-Palace group of companies had given them their one big UK hit (and lifted Jim Reeves' single *I Won't Forget You* to biggest-selling American number locally in years, since Elvis at his peak). This was not a good move judging by results over the next year and a half—apparently having a chilling effect on their UK sales until another change of publisher: To come were six singles hardly penetrating the consciousness of UK pop fans—four more top 30 entries at the very shallow end and two misses absent the top 50. After yet another change would come a complete turnaround, six consecutive airplay number ones registering at the new pirate radio stations; and finally after the demise of private radio, from late 1967, alternate flops and mediocre successes peppered by two smashes two years apart, *Do It Again* and *Cottonfields*. After that they relied worldwide on hitting new heights as touring performers, and switched their studio strategy from the second half of 1970 from hit singles to landmark albums, one a year: *Sunflower*, *Surf's Up*, *Carl & the Passions*, *Holland*.

The top three peak of 4 *By the Beach Boys* in the UK e.p. list was achieved by just a dozen acts through 1964 (equalled only by Roy Orbison and Jim Reeves of Americans). The Beach Boys were voted high in popularity polls, something of a coup at a time when the Brits reserved real affection for their own. In Britain they were rated below the Supremes, who with breathlessly cooing *Where Did Our Love Go?* and *Baby Love* had two massive music hall hits made-to-order for Brits leading into poll voting season, October-December. Talent also shone through in the person of homegrown Shirley Bassey, having begun as a sort of a female Harry Belafonte, now more of a cabaret attraction but still big on the charts, a veteran at 27. Otherwise, culturally or politically, the UK was still not accepting of black power. From Stateside the suave but compelling stances of the Temptations, Marvin Gaye, the Miracles, and Four Tops made no dent, as shown in a month-long tour of Blighty by the Motown Revue to come next March (1965); much less the unrestrained buck drive of James Brown, Wilson Pickett, Joe Tex...

By October '64, judging from a contemporary report by Record World on a Radio Free Europe survey of popularity, Elvis Presley, Paul Anka (huge in Italy), the Trashmen (*Surfin' Bird*), the Beach Boys, Beatles, and Rick Nelson are the top foreign artists. The problem is that the survey was done in Hungary—behind the Iron Curtain dominated by the Soviet Union, where sales of foreign discs were negligible. It would be summer of '65 that *Help Me Rhonda* broke the ice for the Beach Boys in the important German market, and climbed towards top in the UK's Radio London; and March '66 that they would follow up in the UK—with the similarly funloving beat of *Barbara Ann*, close to a sequel to *I Get Around*.

The Beach Boys' Italian experience was symptomatic—hosted in great style by their local business reps and partners,

who were powerless if the band couldn't afford to launch a real tour, admission prices being as low as they were. And anyway, repeated shows in Paris through the Sixties would prove fruitless for them in the French market. Of five hits recorded for an Italian tv show (which would anyway not be screened until next April, '65), the outdated *Shut Down* was selling best locally. There were numerous tv appearances in the UK, Germany and France too. A motion picture short broadcast in Holland in the upcoming May via Avro-tv's *Rooster* series would feature the group's two "Dance" hits. But there was still that yawning absence from *The TAMI Show* movie.

## **DANCE DANCE DANCE/THE WARMTH OF THE SUN**

The Beach Boys' next single was ear-catching to critics for its instrumental innovations, and the signs looked good for an exceptionally big hit. Its debut in the charts (#57 CB), November 14th 1964, was higher than *any* hit song in the past three months. Cash Box had it tops in its "Radio Active" chart too—added by 60% of Top 40 stations in one week, ahead of the Supremes, Four Seasons; and Manfred Mann, the sophisticates from London—jazz players in their time off, in clubs—following up *Do Wah Diddy Diddy*. But with so much Beachboy product current it stomped on the heels of *When I Grow Up*, still peaking in markets in the Midwest, South and Canada (and urban spots Back East) a week or two before. Capitol reported that it hoped for a number one contender, and it was said to be outselling *When I Grow Up* by early December due to the Xmas rush. But it stuck fast among a welter of Brit tunes and an unprecedented flood of deserving classics including the Righteous Brothers' *You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'*, the Zombies' *She's Not There*, the Beatles' *She's a*

*Woman*, Supremes' *Come See About Me*, the Stones' *Time Is On My Side* and the Shangri-Las' *Leader Of the Pack*. It was small consolation that other prime Americans with great tracks, the Four Seasons (*Big Man in Town*) and the Ronettes (*Walking in the Rain*)—now *supporting* the Rolling Stones on a tour of Britain, were struggling to even reach national top 20s. The Beach Boys' latest might have settled around the 800,000 mark boosted by winter sales—a little better than Elvis Presley's current series, but nowhere near Beatle range.

Legend has it that the famous B-side, *The Warmth Of the Sun*, was inspired a year before by a melancholy premonition of eery foreboding—by Brian and Mike the night *before* the assassination of President Jack Kennedy, though later versions corrected the story to make the song a resonance to the tragedy. In the UK the Record Mirror reviewer was more impressed with it than its "A", as "a gentle ballad with a poignant flavour and plenty of appeal." Though an airplay favorite with some deejays on both sides of the Atlantic, this was the second stirring ballad in a row to miss the national charts. Cash Box called it "an ultra-lovely, lazy paced ballad that the boys deliver in oh-so-smooth, ear-arresting fashion" and predicted a "big double-header" for the band.

Consolation nods for the "B" side were number one in San Jose, high too in Miami, Vancouver, Hartford; isolated smaller stations from Washington DC to Port Huron, Michigan; and selling top twenty in LA and San Diego. The classic ballad had to wait 35 years and inclusion on the soundtrack of Robin Williams starrer *Good Morning Vietnam* for muted fame. For the meantime the group was recognised for a sublimely confessional masterpiece of lush presentation, with the unique chord progression of C — A minor — E flat (Wikipedia).

The A-side was dynamic and new, featuring the distinctive ringtone of Carl's new Rickenbacker 12-string, the choice of

Beatle George Harrison and Roger McGuinn that would make the Byrds' biggest hits. The sound was great, though the song was rather ordinary when boiled down, too reliant on the excitement engendered by the customary Brian Wilson "hooks". Glen Campbell's frenetic performance of the guitar solo in the studio led to a mistake in execution—It was left in by Brian as an improvement.

*Dance Dance Dance* was missing in action on the radios of New York City (WABC #21, WMCA #22) though Newark-WACK, independent, had the band high (#4) as always. It was well below par too at L.A. stations KFWB #10, and KRLA #19—beaten even by B-side *The Warmth Of The Sun* by two spots; but for the outliers who had nothing to lose by telling the real story: Bakersfield-KAFY #4, and San Bernardino-KFXM #6. The shortfall in sales could not be redeemed north of the border no matter how popular—with wild receptions in Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver, Winnipeg, Halifax, St John, all top four. But it stiffed, #21, at Toronto-CHUM following New York City. It did top or near it at spots along the Eastern Seaboard—Washington metro stations, Virginia Beach, in Providence; touched number one on the West Coast at San Jose, high too across the bay in San Francisco, at San Diego, Portland; firm runner-up inland in Denver; top five also in the diverse markets of Dallas, Hartford, Upstate New York, Honolulu. But the middling vote across too many of the big media centers—Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Boston, Miami, Milwaukee, Cleveland—where it barely entered or just nudged top 10, was crippling. Facing such concerted resistance there was no way this single was going to fulfill Capitol's prediction of another million-seller.

Internationally, they improved on the impact of *When I Grow Up*, which had been almost invisible. *Dance, Dance, Dance* just made the Japanese "foreign" chart published by



Cash Box at #10 (the following May), indicating sales of maybe 300,000. It was #7 in Canada, with a durable seven weeks in the top ten. In Australia it was barely top 40 in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane; Hobart, Tasmania, #7; one spot lower in New Zealand's Playdate magazine. In Europe it took #6 spot in Sweden, and made just a dent in France—#44 on the jukebox chart, and in Switzerland. It took four years to hit in Turkey (#14). In Britain the boys did best in NME (#21) and at Radio London (#19). By 1964 singles in the British Isles were selling so heavily that Beatles producer George Martin (perhaps over-)stated that number ones were moving 800,000 *on average*. Not a great surprise then that *Dance, Dance, Dance* followed *I Get Around* and was eventually accredited with a UK Music Award for Platinum sales of 600,000. B-side *The Warmth Of The Sun* became so well known there that star deejay Tony Blackburn named it at the end of the decade on his list of twenty all-time favorite songs (fifteenth, seven spots below *California Girls*).

At home, in early December, the Beach Boys were cheered against the static on their singles, and distinguished themselves from their copyists by scoring a number one album—the first live l.p. ever to top Billboard. It stayed top for a month over Xmas-New Year. Capitol was happy with the returns considering its retail price was \$4.98, a dollar above usual for its handy hand-out of photos and info contained within—a \$5 million gross for the company. BEACH BOYS CONCERT had sales of over 500,000 in the two months to Xmas for its Gold award, said Capitol, and settled on 900,000 through its chart run in the US—eventually passing two million, and accumulated a million overseas. Through those same weeks they scored too with BEACH BOYS CHRISTMAS, to match the live l.p. in racking up sales but spread over the next few Xmas.

A concerning trend was waning airplay at home. At the end of the year the Beach Boys were hailed by Cash Box as top vocal group in singles chart points through 1964 for the second year—only because the Beatles were consigned to a "newcomers" category. But the Cash Box chart did reflect the Boys' sales, not the airplay they received on radio. In the updated CB survey of 4,000 deejays across the US in the year to 1st July 1965, Beach Boys songs did not have an entry in the thirty *most-played* singles. Journalists in the music trade papers expressed surprise at the lack of exposure (read *neglect*) dealt out to American music's most influential band.

The Beach Boys' hit singles, from *Surfin'* on, had attracted cover versions on the European Continent where French remakes by local stars went down better. Now they were emulated by English stars the Ivy League (*Don't Worry Baby*). **Andrew Oldham**, the radical, hustling manager of the Rolling Stones, headed his own session orchestra on an instrumental of *I Get Around*—issued in a new USA that the Stones had made home. Taken as he was by the American band, his compliments were ulterior as Oldham's new company Immediate (sister organisation to his Immediate label) would come to handle the UK publishing of a series of Beach Boys singles. Other Oldham clients that included a Who's Who of British rock talent had greater cause to complain. And the Beach Boys did themselves no favors. On the last day of October 1964 a Cash Box item pointed out that, while Vogue would now distribute all of the band's product in France, they were handled by Gehrmans in Sweden; and Capitol in Japan, sub-published by Taiyo; and in Mexico, publisher Musart Records releasing through Capitol. In the UK, while the Campbell Connelly group would work to promote *When I Grow Up*, the self-described "hustler" Andrew Oldham would be their on-and-off publicist, and such young persons around town as

Andy & Vicki Wickham, and Keith Moon (of The Who) did much to boost the Boys through casual contacts. On the inexplicable non-release of PET SOUNDS for several months in Britain, summer '66, Oldham himself took out a one-page ad to publicise the landmark album—and its landmark absence from UK shelves.

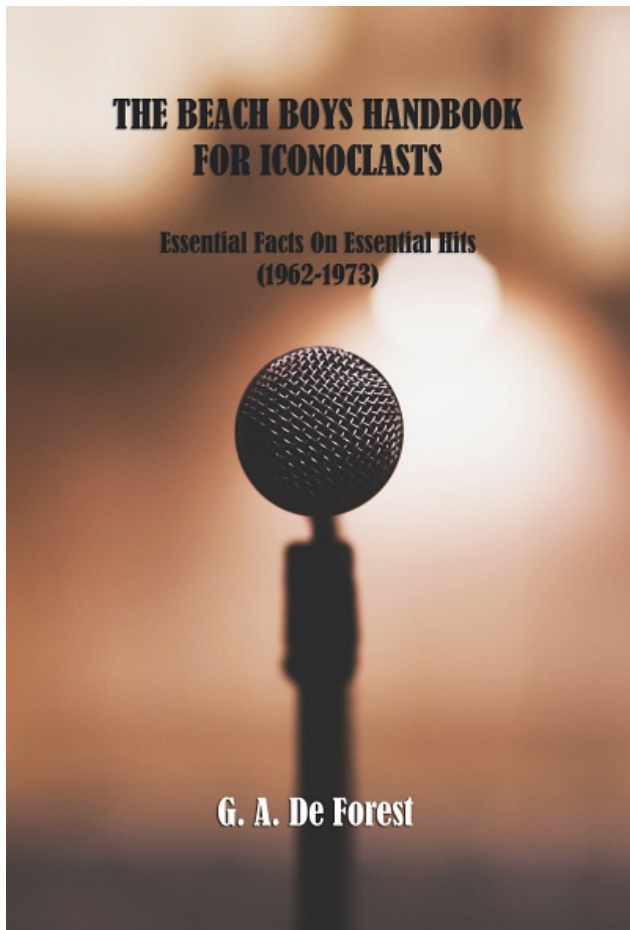
Pummelled by the mass media's infatuation with the British Invasion, at the end of 1964 it was seen that the four Beach Boys singles were rated 5th (*I Get Around*), then with decreasing potency an underwhelming 69th, 80th and 87th that year. But the *Dance, Dance, Dance/Warmth Of The Sun* double, forever released from from the thrall for all-things-Brit, now holds up better than ever, both sides 38th of all 1964 singles on the RYM measure of popularity for the United States. The "B" was chosen by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to be on their Beach Boys l.p. (2018).

*The Man With All the Toys* is a bright composition and arrangement that, despite its lightness in a rock atmosphere of increasing grunt, deserved its issue as a single. US radio stations thought the same, with a remarkable 93% of them taking it as an add-on in two weeks. Its reward was that it went to #1 in the Cash Box special Xmas chart (two weeks); #3 in the Billboard seasonal chart like *Little St Nick* the previous year. And like its forerunner it only entered one top 100 nationally, this time Music Business, topping out at #78; Cash Box, #116; Record World #143—indicating quick Xmas-New Year sales, a ballpark figure of around 200,000 this season, added to next year and the next. The album it was from, BEACH BOYS CHRISTMAS, also spent two weeks at number one in Cash Box's special chart as the biggest seasonal-themed l.p. seller of 1964-65.

Five weeks before Christmas *The Man With All The Toys* crashed top 40 at San Francisco-KYA (#31). At Denver-KBTR it rose to #2, and it found spots in the general top twenties too—regardless of Xmas appeal—on the West Coast in Seattle, Portland and San Jose; and cross country in Phoenix, the Scranton PA Tri-Cities and on the Great Lakes at Buffalo and Erie; and Boston. Cash Box's Canada correspondent acclaimed the Xmas hit as the best one on offer this year—"The kids just eat it up"—especially in Montreal where it made top 10; likewise Halifax, Nova Scotia; and scored #11 in Vancouver's Xmas list. In Mexico, *Dance, Dance, Dance/The Man With All The Toys* is released as a double.

Fans appreciate Brian's emoting on *Blue Christmas*, the B-side, though it's sure rock'n'rollers would go for Elvis Presley's version. Still, the Beach Boys made fans with it in San Jose and Medford, Oregon—its two documented playlists of entry. Al's *Christmas Day* from the same album gets more plays at shopping centers. And *Merry Christmas, Baby* the same, hitting in Australasia, Xmas 1967.

In a "100 All-Time Top" survey in the new millennium of recorded Xmas song popularity, *The Man With All the Toys* was placed just in the top 70, about 40 places below *Little St Nick*.



This book covers the main events of the Beach Boys pop-rock band through their heyday of the 1960s and into the early 1970s -- the period of their creative thrust when they were world famous.

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