



The Beach Boys

The Beach Boys are an American rock band formed in Hawthorne, California, in 1961. The group's original lineup consisted of brothers Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson, their cousin Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine. Distinguished by its vocal harmonies, adolescent-oriented lyrics, and musical ingenuity, the band is one of the most influential acts of the rock era. The group drew on the music of older pop vocal groups, 1950s rock and roll, and black R&B to create its unique sound. Under Brian's direction, it often incorporated classical or jazz elements and unconventional recording techniques in innovative ways.

The Beach Boys formed as a garage band centered on Brian's songwriting and managed by the Wilsons' father, Murry. In 1963, the band enjoyed its first national hit with "Surfin' U.S.A.", beginning a string of top-ten singles that reflected a southern California youth culture of surfing, cars, and romance, dubbed the "California sound". It was one of the few American rock bands to sustain its commercial standing during the British Invasion. Starting with 1965's *The Beach Boys Today!*, the band abandoned beachgoing themes for more personal lyrics and ambitious orchestrations. In 1966, the *Pet Sounds* album and "Good Vibrations" single raised the group's prestige as rock innovators; both are now widely considered to be among the greatest and most influential works in popular music history. After scrapping the *Smile* album in 1967, Brian gradually ceded control of the group to his bandmates.

In the late 1960s, the group's commercial momentum faltered in the U.S., and it was widely dismissed by the early rock music press before undergoing a rebranding in the early 1970s. Carl took over as *de facto* leader until the mid-1970s, when the band responded to the growing success of its live shows and greatest hits compilations by transitioning into an oldies act. Dennis drowned in 1983, and Brian soon became estranged from the group. Following Carl's death from lung

The Beach Boys



The Beach Boys during the band's 2012 reunion tour.

From left: Brian Wilson, David Marks, Mike Love, Bruce Johnston and Al Jardine.

Background information

Origin	<u>Hawthorne, California, U.S.</u>
Genres	<u>Rock</u> · <u>pop</u> · <u>surf</u> · <u>psychedelia</u>
Years active	1961–present
Labels	<u>Candix</u> · <u>Capitol</u> · <u>Brother</u> · <u>Reprise</u> · <u>Caribou</u> · <u>CBS</u>
Spinoffs	<u>California Music</u> · <u>Kenny & the Cadets</u>
Members	<u>Brian Wilson</u> ^[a] <u>Mike Love</u> <u>Al Jardine</u> ^[a] <u>Bruce Johnston</u>
Past members	<u>Carl Wilson</u> <u>Dennis Wilson</u> <u>David Marks</u> <u>Ricky Fataar</u> <u>Blondie Chaplin</u>
Website	<u>thebeachboys.com</u> (<u>http://thebeachboys.com</u>)

cancer in 1998, the band granted Love legal rights to tour under the group's name. In the early 2010s, the original members briefly reunited for the band's 50th anniversary tour. As of 2024, Brian and Jardine do not perform with Love's edition of the Beach Boys, but remain official members of the band.

The Beach Boys are one of the most critically acclaimed and commercially successful bands of all time, selling over 100 million records worldwide. It helped legitimize popular music as a recognized art form, and influenced the development of music genres and movements such as psychedelia, power pop, progressive rock, punk, alternative, and lo-fi. Between the 1960s and 2020s, the group had 37 songs reach the US Top 40 of the Billboard Hot 100 (the most by an American band), with four topping the chart. In 2004, the group was ranked number 12 on Rolling Stone's list of the greatest artists of all time. Many critics' polls have ranked *Today!*, *Pet Sounds*, *Smiley Smile* (1967), *Sunflower* (1970), and *Surf's Up* (1971) among the finest albums in history. The founding members were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988. Other members during the band's history have been David Marks, Bruce Johnston, Blondie Chaplin, and Ricky Fataar.

History

1958–1961: Formation

At the time of his 16th birthday on June 20, 1958, Brian Wilson shared a bedroom with his brothers, Dennis and Carl—aged 13 and 11, respectively—in their family home in Hawthorne. He had watched his father Murry Wilson play piano, and had listened intently to the harmonies of vocal groups such as the Four Freshmen.^[1] After dissecting songs such as "Ivory Tower" and "Good News", Brian would teach family members how to sing the background harmonies.^[2] For his birthday that year, Brian received a reel-to-reel tape recorder. He learned how to overdub, using his vocals and those of Carl and their mother.^[1] Brian played piano, while Carl and David Marks, an eleven-year-old longtime neighbor, played guitars that each had received as Christmas presents.^[3]



Historical landmark in Hawthorne, California, marking where the Wilson family home once stood

Soon Brian and Carl were avidly listening to Johnny Otis' KFOX radio show.^[1] Inspired by the simple structure and vocals of the rhythm and blues songs he heard, Brian changed his piano-playing style and started writing songs. Family gatherings brought the Wilsons in contact with cousin Mike Love. Brian taught Love's sister Maureen and a friend harmonies.^[1] Later, Brian, Love and two friends performed at Hawthorne High School.^[4] Brian also knew Al Jardine, a high school classmate.^[5] Brian suggested to Jardine that they team up with his cousin and brother Carl. Love gave the fledgling band its name: "The Pendletons", a pun on "Pendleton", a brand of woollen shirt popular at the time.^[6] Dennis was the only avid surfer in the group, and he suggested that the group write songs that celebrated the sport and the lifestyle that it had inspired in Southern California.^{[7][8][nb 1]} Brian finished the song, titled "Surfin'", and with Mike Love, wrote "Surfin' Safari".^[8]

Murry Wilson, who was an occasional songwriter, arranged for the Pendletones to meet his publisher Hite Morgan.^[10] He said: "Finally, [Hite] agreed to hear it, and Mrs. Morgan said 'Drop everything, we're going to record your song. I think it's good.' And she's the one responsible."^[11] On September 15, 1961, the band recorded a demo of "Surfin'" with the Morgans. A more professional recording was made on October 3, at World Pacific Studio in Hollywood.^[7] David Marks was not present at the session as he was in school that day.^{[12][nb 2]} Murry brought the demos to Herb Newman, owner of Candix Records and Era Records, and he signed the group on December 8.^[8] When the single was released a few weeks later, the band found that they had been renamed "the Beach Boys".^[7] Candix wanted to name the group the Surfers until Russ Regan, a young promoter with Era Records, noted that there already existed a group by that name. He suggested calling them the Beach Boys.^[14] "Surfin'" was a regional success for the West Coast, and reached number 75 on the national Billboard Hot 100 chart.

1962–1967: Peak years

Surfin' Safari, Surfin' U.S.A., Surfer Girl, and Little Deuce Coupe

By this time the de facto manager of the Beach Boys, Murry landed the group's first paying gig (for which they earned \$300) on New Year's Eve, 1961, at the Ritchie Valens Memorial Dance in Long Beach.^[8] In their early public appearances, the band wore heavy wool jacket-like shirts that local surfers favored^[15] before switching to their trademark striped shirts and white pants (a look that was taken directly from the Kingston Trio).^{[16][17]} All five members sang, with Brian playing bass, Dennis playing drums, Carl playing lead guitar and Al Jardine playing rhythm guitar, while Mike Love was the main singer and occasionally played saxophone. In early 1962, Morgan requested that some of the members add vocals to a couple of instrumental tracks that he had recorded with other musicians. This led to the creation of the short-lived group Kenny & the Cadets, which Brian led under the pseudonym "Kenny". The other members were Carl, Jardine, and the Wilsons' mother Audree.^{[18][nb 3]} In February, Jardine left the Beach Boys and was replaced by David Marks on rhythm guitar.^[19] A common misconception is that Jardine left to focus on dental school. In reality, Jardine did not even apply to dental school until 1964, and the reason he left in February 1962 was due to creative differences and his belief that the newly-formed group would not be a commercial success.^[20]

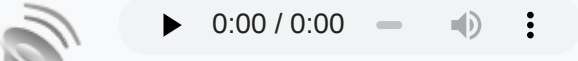


The Beach Boys, in Pendleton outfits, performing at a local high school, late 1962

After being turned down by Dot and Liberty, the Beach Boys signed a seven-year contract with Capitol Records.^[21] This was at the urging of Capitol executive and staff producer Nick Venet who signed the group, seeing them as the "teenage gold" he had been scouting for.^[22] On June 4, 1962, the Beach Boys debuted on Capitol with their second single, "Surfin' Safari" backed with "409". The release prompted national coverage in the June 9 issue of Billboard, which praised Love's lead vocal and said the song had potential.^[23] "Surfin' Safari" rose to number 14 and found airplay in New York and Phoenix, a surprise for the label.^[19]

The Beach Boys' first album, *Surfin' Safari*, was released in October 1962. It was different from other rock albums of the time in that it consisted almost entirely of original songs, primarily written by Brian with Mike Love and friend Gary Usher.^[19] Another unusual feature of the Beach Boys was that, although they were marketed as "surf music", their repertoire bore little resemblance to the music of other surf bands, which was mainly instrumental and incorporated heavy use of spring reverb. For this reason, some of the Beach Boys' early local performances had young audience members throwing vegetables at the band, believing that the group were poseurs.^[24]

"Surfin' U.S.A." (1963)



"Surfin' U.S.A." was a rewrite of Chuck Berry's "Sweet Little Sixteen" with lyrics about surfing, later becoming one of the best known surf rock songs.^[25]

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In January 1963, the Beach Boys recorded their first top-ten single, "Surfin' U.S.A.", which began their long run of highly successful recording efforts. It was during the sessions for this single that Brian made the production decision from that point on to use double tracking on the group's vocals, resulting in a deeper and more resonant sound.^[26] The album of the same name followed in March and reached number 2 on the *Billboard* charts.^[27] Its success propelled the group into a nationwide spotlight, and was vital to launching surf music as a national craze,^[28] albeit the Beach Boys' vocal approach to the genre, not the original instrumental style pioneered by Dick Dale.^[24] Biographer Luis Sanchez highlights the "Surfin' U.S.A." single as a turning point for the band, "creat[ing] a direct passage to California life for a wide teenage audience ... [and] a distinct Southern California sensibility that exceeded its conception as such to advance right to the front of American consciousness."^[29]

Throughout 1963, and for the next few years, Brian produced a variety of singles for outside artists. Among these were the Honeys, a surfer trio that comprised sisters Diane and Marilyn Rovell with cousin Ginger Blake. Brian was convinced that they could be a successful female counterpart to the Beach Boys, and he produced a number of singles for them, although they could not replicate the Beach Boys' popularity.^[30] He also attended some of Phil Spector's sessions at Gold Star Studios.^[31] His creative and songwriting interests were revamped upon hearing the Ronettes' 1963 song "Be My Baby", which was produced by Spector. The first time he heard the song was while driving, and was so overwhelmed that he had to pull over to the side of the road and analyze the chorus.^[32] Later, he reflected: "I was unable to really think as a producer up until the time where I really got familiar with Phil Spector's work. That was when I started to design the experience to be a record rather than just a song."^[33]

Surfer Girl marked the first time the group used outside musicians on a substantial portion of an LP.^[34] Many of them were the musicians Spector used for his Wall of Sound productions.^[35] Only a month after Surfer Girl's release the group's fourth album Little Deuce Coupe was issued. To close 1963, the band released a standalone Christmas-themed single, "Little Saint Nick", backed with an a cappella rendition of the scriptural song "The Lord's Prayer". The A-side peaked at number 3 on the US *Billboard* Christmas chart.^[36] By the end of the year David Marks had left the group and Al Jardine had returned.

British Invasion, *Shut Down Volume 2*, *All Summer Long*, and *Christmas Album*



The Beach Boys in 1963;
top to bottom: [Brian Wilson](#),
[Carl Wilson](#), [Dennis Wilson](#),
[David Marks](#), [Mike Love](#)

The surf music craze, along with the careers of nearly all surf acts, was slowly replaced by the [British Invasion](#).^[37] Following a successful Australasian tour in January and February 1964, the Beach Boys returned home to face their new competition, [the Beatles](#). Both groups shared the same record label in the US, and Capitol's support for the Beach Boys immediately began waning. Although it generated a top-five single in "[Fun Fun Fun](#)", the group's fifth album, [Shut Down Volume 2](#), became their first since [Surfin' Safari](#) not to reach the US top-ten. This caused Murry to fight for the band at the label more than before, often visiting their offices without warning to "twist executive arms".^[38] Carl said that Phil Spector "was Brian's favorite kind of rock; he liked [him] better than the early Beatles stuff. He loved the Beatles' later music when they evolved and started making intelligent, masterful music, but before that Phil was it."^[39] According to Mike Love, Carl followed the Beatles closer than anyone else in the band, while Brian was the most "rattled" by the Beatles and felt tremendous pressure to "keep pace" with them.^[40] For

Brian, the Beatles ultimately "eclipsed a lot [of what] we'd worked for ... [they] eclipsed the whole music world."^{[41][42][nb 4]}

Brian wrote his last surf song for nearly four years, "[Don't Back Down](#)", in April 1964.^[45] That month, during recording of the single "[I Get Around](#)", Murry was relieved of his duties as manager. He remained in close contact with the group and attempted to continue advising on their career decisions.^[46] When "[I Get Around](#)" was released in May, it would climb to number 1 in the US and Canada, their first single to do so (also reaching the top-ten in Sweden and the UK), proving that the Beach Boys could compete with contemporary British pop groups.^[47] "[I Get Around](#)" and "[Don't Back Down](#)" both appeared on the band's sixth album [All Summer Long](#), released in July 1964 and reaching number 4 in the US. [All Summer Long](#) introduced exotic textures to the Beach Boys' sound exemplified by the [piccolos](#) and [xylophones](#) of [its title track](#).^[48] The album was a swan-song to the surf and car music the Beach Boys built their commercial standing upon. Later albums took a different stylistic and lyrical path.^[49] Before this, a live album, [Beach Boys Concert](#), was released in October to a four-week chart stay at number 1, containing a set list of previously recorded songs and covers that they had not yet recorded.^[50]



The band performing "[I Get Around](#)"
on [The Ed Sullivan Show](#) in
September 1964

In June 1964, Brian recorded the bulk of [The Beach Boys' Christmas Album](#) with a forty-one-piece studio orchestra in collaboration with [Four Freshmen](#) arranger [Dick Reynolds](#). The album was a response to Phil Spector's [A Christmas Gift for You](#) (1963). Released in December, the Beach Boys' album was divided between five new, original Christmas-themed songs, and seven reinterpretations of traditional Christmas songs.^[51] It would be regarded as one of the finest [holiday albums](#) of the rock era.^[47] One single from the album, "[The Man with All the Toys](#)", was released, peaking at number 6 on the US [Billboard](#)



The Beach Boys in 1964; clockwise from top left: Mike Love, Brian Wilson, Carl Wilson, Dennis Wilson, Al Jardine

Christmas chart.^[52] On October 29, the Beach Boys performed for *The T.A.M.I. Show*, a concert film intended to bring together a wide range of musicians for a one-off performance. The result was released to movie theaters one month later.^[53]

Today!, Summer Days, and Party!

By the end of 1964, the stress of road travel, writing, and producing became too much for Brian. On December 23, while on a flight from Los Angeles to Houston, he



The band with caricatures in Paris, November 1964

suffered a panic attack.^[54] In January 1965, he announced his withdrawal from touring to concentrate entirely on songwriting and record production. For the last few days of 1964 and into early 1965, session musician and up-and-coming solo artist Glen Campbell agreed to temporarily serve as Brian's replacement in concert.^[55] Carl took over as the band's musical director onstage.^{[56][nb 5]} Now a full-time studio artist,^[35] Brian wanted to move the Beach Boys beyond their surf aesthetic, believing that their image was antiquated and distracting the public from his talents as a producer and songwriter.^[58] Musically, he said he began to "take the things I learned from Phil Spector and use more instruments whenever I could. I doubled up on basses and tripled up on keyboards, which made everything sound bigger and deeper."^[59]

Released in March 1965, *The Beach Boys Today!* marked the first time the group experimented with the "album-as-art" form. The tracks on side one feature an uptempo sound that contrasts side two, which consists mostly of emotional ballads.^[61] Music writer Scott Schinder referenced its "suite-like structure" as an early example of the rock album format being used to make a cohesive

We needed to grow. Up to this point we had milked every idea dry [and did] every possible angle about surfing and [cars]. But we needed to grow artistically.

— Brian Wilson^{[60][39]}

artistic statement.^[35] Brian also established his new lyrical approach toward the autobiographical; journalist Nick Kent wrote that the subjects of Brian's songs "were suddenly no longer simple happy souls harmonizing their sun-kissed innocence and dying devotion to each other over a honey-coated backdrop of surf and sand. Instead, they'd become highly vulnerable, slightly neurotic and riddled with telling insecurities."^[62] In the book *Yeah Yeah Yeah: The Story of Modern Pop*, Bob Stanley remarked that "Brian was aiming for Johnny Mercer but coming up proto-indie."^[63] In 2012, the album was voted 271 on *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time.^[64]

In April 1965, Campbell's own career success pulled him from touring with the group.^[65] Columbia Records staff producer Bruce Johnston was asked to locate a replacement for Campbell; having failed to find one, Johnston himself became a full-time member of the band on May 19, 1965. With Johnston's arrival, Brian now had a sixth voice he could work with in the band's vocal arrangements, with the June 4 vocal sessions for "California Girls" being Johnston's first recording session with the Beach Boys.

"California Girls" was included on the band's next album *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)* and eventually charted at number 3 in the US as the second single from the album, while the album itself went to number 2. The first single from *Summer Days* had been a reworked arrangement of "Help Me, Rhonda", which became the band's second number 1 US single in the spring of 1965.^[66] For contractual reasons, owing to his previous deal with Columbia Records, Johnston was not able to be credited or pictured on Beach Boys records until 1967.^[67]

To appease Capitol's demands for a Beach Boys LP for the 1965 Christmas season, Brian conceived *Beach Boys' Party!*, a live-in-the-studio album consisting mostly of acoustic covers of 1950s rock and R&B songs, in addition to covers of three Beatles songs, Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are a-Changin'", and idiosyncratic rerecordings of the group's earlier songs.^[28] The album was an early precursor of the "unplugged" trend. It also included a cover of the Regents' song "Barbara Ann", which unexpectedly reached number 2 when released as a single several weeks later.^[68] In November, the group released another top-twenty single, "The Little Girl I Once Knew". It was considered the band's most experimental statement thus far.^[50] The single continued Brian's ambitions for daring arrangements, featuring unexpected tempo changes and numerous false endings.^[69] With the exception of their 1963 and 1964 Christmas singles ("Little Saint Nick" and "The Man with All the Toys") it was the group's lowest charting single on the *Billboard* Hot 100 since "Ten Little Indians" in 1962, peaking at number 20.^[70] According to Luis Sanchez, in 1965, Bob Dylan was "rewriting the rules for pop success" with his music and image, and it was at this juncture that Wilson "led The Beach Boys into a transitional phase in an effort to win the pop terrain that had been thrown up for grabs."^[71]

Pet Sounds

Wilson collaborated with jingle writer Tony Asher for several of the songs on the album *Pet Sounds*, a refinement of the themes and ideas that were introduced in *Today!*.^[61] In some ways, the music was a jarring departure from their earlier style.^{[72][73]} Jardine explained that "it took us quite a while to adjust to [the new material] because it wasn't music you could necessarily dance to—it was more like music you could make love to."^[74] In *The Journal on the Art of Record Production*, Marshall Heiser writes that *Pet Sounds* "diverges from previous Beach Boys' efforts in several ways: its sound field has a greater sense of depth and 'warmth;' the songs employ even more inventive use of harmony and chord voicings; the prominent use of percussion is a key feature (as opposed to driving drum backbeats); whilst the orchestrations, at times, echo the quirkiness of 'exotica' bandleader Les Baxter, or the 'cool' of Burt Bacharach, more so than Spector's teen fanfares."^[75]



Brian Wilson in 1966

For *Pet Sounds*, Brian desired to make "a complete statement", similar to what he believed the Beatles had done with their newest album *Rubber Soul*, released in December 1965.^[76] Brian was immediately enamored with the album, given the impression that it had no filler tracks, a feature that was mostly unheard of at a time when 45 rpm singles were considered more noteworthy than full-length LPs.^{[77][78]} He later said: "It didn't make me want to copy them but to be as good as them. I didn't want to do the same kind of music, but on the same level."^[39] Thanks to mutual connections, Brian was introduced to the Beatles' former press officer Derek Taylor, who was subsequently employed as the Beach Boys' publicist. Responding to Brian's request to reinvent the band's image, Taylor devised a promotion



The Beach Boys (Brian, Dennis, and Carl Wilson, Mike Love, Al Jardine, and Bruce Johnston), with Terry Melcher and engineer Chuck Britz, during the *Pet Sounds* sessions, 1966

campaign with the tagline "Brian Wilson is a genius", a belief Taylor sincerely held.^[79] Taylor's prestige was crucial in offering a credible perspective to those on the outside, and his efforts are widely recognized as instrumental in the album's success in Britain.^[80]

"God Only Knows" (1966)



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"God Only Knows" conditions its tonality between the keys of E and A major, which according to musicologist Stephen Downes, was innovative even in the context of the song's Baroque antecedents. It is often praised as one of the greatest songs ever written.^[81]

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Released on May 16, 1966, *Pet Sounds* was widely influential and raised the band's prestige as an innovative rock group.^[50] Early reviews for the album in the US ranged from negative to tentatively positive, and its sales numbered approximately 500,000 units, a drop-off from the run of albums that immediately preceded it.^[82] It was assumed that Capitol considered *Pet Sounds* a risk, appealing more to an older demographic than the younger, female audience upon which the Beach Boys had built their commercial standing.^[83] Within two months, the label capitulated by releasing the group's first greatest hits compilation album, *Best of the Beach Boys*, which was quickly certified gold by the RIAA.^[84] By contrast, *Pet Sounds* met a highly favorable critical response in Britain, where it reached number 2 and remained among the top-ten positions for six months.^[85] Responding to the hype, *Melody Maker* ran a feature in which many pop musicians were asked whether they believed that the album was truly revolutionary and progressive, or "as sickly as peanut butter". The author concluded that "the record's impact on artists and the men behind the artists has been considerable."^[86]

"Good Vibrations" and *Smile*

Throughout the summer of 1966, Brian concentrated on finishing the group's next single, "Good Vibrations".^[87] Instead of working on whole songs with clear large-scale syntactical structures, he limited himself to recording short interchangeable fragments (or "modules"). Through the method of tape splicing, each fragment could then be assembled into a linear sequence, allowing any number of larger structures and divergent moods to be produced at a later time.^[75] Coming at a time when pop singles were usually recorded in under two hours, it was one of the most complex pop productions ever undertaken, with sessions for the song stretching over several months in four major Hollywood studios. It was also the most expensive single ever recorded to that point, with production costs estimated to be in the tens of thousands.^[88]

In the midst of "Good Vibrations" sessions, Wilson invited session musician and songwriter Van Dyke Parks to collaborate as lyricist for the Beach Boys' next album project, soon titled *Smile*. Parks agreed.^{[89][90]} Wilson and Parks intended *Smile* to be a continuous suite of songs linked both thematically and musically, with the main songs linked together by small vocal pieces and instrumental segments that elaborated on the major songs' musical themes.^[91] It was explicitly American in style and subject, a conscious reaction to the overwhelming British dominance of popular music at the time.^{[92][93]} Some of the music incorporated chanting, cowboy songs, explorations in Indian and Hawaiian music, jazz, classical tone poems, cartoon sound effects, *musique concrète*, and yodeling.^[94] *Saturday Evening Post* writer Jules Siegel recalled that, on one October evening, Brian announced to his wife and friends that he was "writing a teenage symphony to God".^[95]



The Beach Boys accepting a gold record sales certification for "Good Vibrations" at the Capitol Tower, late 1966

Recording for *Smile* lasted about a year, from mid-1966 to mid-1967, and followed the same modular production approach as "Good Vibrations".^[96] Concurrently, Wilson planned many different multimedia side projects, such as a sound effects collage, a comedy album, and a "health food" album.^[97] Capitol did not support all these ideas, which led to the Beach Boys' desire to form their own label, Brother Records. According to biographer Steven Gaines, Wilson employed his newfound "best friend" David Anderle as head of the label.^[98]



Van Dyke Parks, Brian's lyricist and collaborator for the unfinished album *Smile*

Throughout 1966, EMI flooded the UK market with Beach Boys albums not yet released there, including *Beach Boys' Party!*, *The Beach Boys Today!* and *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!!)*,^[99] while *Best of the Beach Boys* was number 2 there for several weeks at the end of the year.^[100] Over the final quarter of 1966, the Beach Boys were the highest-selling album act in the UK, where for the first time in three years American artists broke the chart dominance of British acts.^[101] In 1971, Cue magazine wrote that, from mid-1966 to late-1967, the Beach Boys "were among the vanguard in practically every aspect of the counter culture".^[102]

"Good Vibrations" (1966)



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"Good Vibrations" was the Beach Boys' third single to top the *Billboard* Hot 100. It proliferated a wave of pop experimentation with its rush of riff changes, echo-chamber effects, and intricate harmonies.^[103]

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Released on October 10, 1966, "Good Vibrations" was the Beach Boys' third US number 1 single, reaching the top of the *Billboard* Hot 100 in December, and became their first number 1 in Britain.^[104] That month, the record was their first single certified gold by the RIAA.^[105] It came to be widely acclaimed as one of the greatest masterpieces of rock music.^[106] In December 1966, the Beach Boys were voted the top band in the world in the *NME*'s annual readers' poll, ahead of the Beatles, the Walker Brothers, the Rolling Stones, and the Four Tops.^[107]

Throughout the first half of 1967, the album's release date was repeatedly postponed as Brian tinkered with the recordings, experimenting with different takes and mixes, unable or unwilling to supply a final version. Meanwhile, he suffered from delusions and paranoia, believing on one occasion that the would-be album track "Fire" caused a building to burn down.^[108] On January 3, 1967, Carl Wilson refused to be drafted for military service, leading to indictment and criminal prosecution, which he challenged as a conscientious objector.^[109] The FBI arrested him in April,^[110] and it took several years for courts to resolve the matter.^[111]

After months of recording and media hype, *Smile* was shelved for personal, technical, and legal reasons.^[112] A February 1967 lawsuit seeking \$255,000 (equivalent to \$2.33 million in 2023) was launched against Capitol Records over neglected royalty payments. Within the lawsuit was an attempt to terminate the band's contract with Capitol before its November 1969 expiry.^[113] Many of Wilson's associates, including Parks and Anderle, disassociated themselves from the group by April 1967.^[114] Brian later said: "Time can be spent in the studio to the point where you get so next to it, you don't know where you are with it—you decide to just chuck it for a while."^[115]

In the decades following *Smile*'s non-release, it became the subject of intense speculation and mystique^{[108][116]} and the most legendary unreleased album in pop music history.^{[50][117]} Many of the album's advocates believe that had it been released, it would have altered the group's direction and cemented them at the vanguard of rock innovators.^[118] In 2011, *Uncut* magazine staff voted *Smile* the "greatest bootleg recording of all time".^[119]

1967–1969: Faltered popularity and Brian's reduced involvement

Smiley Smile and *Wild Honey*

From 1965 to 1967, the Beach Boys had developed a musical and lyrical sophistication that contrasted their work from before and after. This divide was further solidified by the difference in sound between their albums and their stage performances.^[120] This resulted in a split fanbase corresponding to two distinct musical markets. One group enjoys the band's early work as a wholesome representation of American popular culture from before the political and social movements brought on in the mid-1960s. The other group also appreciates the early songs for their energy and complexity, but not as much as the band's ambitious work that was created during the formative psychedelic era.^[120] At the time, rock music journalists typically valued the Beach Boys' early records over their experimental work.^{[121][nb 6]}

In May 1967, the Beach Boys attempted to tour Europe with four extra musicians brought from the US, but were stopped by the British musicians' union. The tour went on without the extra support, and critics described their performances as "amateurish" and "floundering".^[122] At the last minute, the Beach Boys declined to headline the Monterey Pop Festival, an event held in June. According to David Leaf, "Monterey was a gathering place for the 'far out' sounds of the 'new' rock ... and it is thought that [their] non-appearance was what really turned the 'underground' tide against them."^[123] Fan magazines speculated that the group was on the verge of breaking up.^[124] Detractors called the band the "Bleach Boys" and "the California Hypes" as media focus shifted from Los Angeles to the happenings in San Francisco.^[125] As authenticity became a higher concern among critics, the group's legitimacy in rock music became an oft-repeated criticism, especially since their early songs appeared to celebrate a politically unconscious youth culture.^{[126][nb 7]}



The band at Zuma Beach, July 1967

Although *Smile* had been cancelled, the Beach Boys were still under pressure and a contractual obligation to record and present an album to Capitol.^[128] Carl remembered: "Brian just said, 'I can't do this. We're going to make a homespun version of [*Smile*] instead. We're just going to take it easy. I'll get in the pool and sing. Or let's go in the gym and do our parts.' That was *Smiley Smile*."^[129] Sessions for the new album lasted from June to July 1967 at Brian's new makeshift home studio. Most of the album featured the Beach Boys playing their own instruments, rather than the session musicians employed in much of their previous work.^[130] It was the first album for which production was credited to the entire group instead of Brian alone.^[118]

In July 1967, lead single "Heroes and Villains" was issued, arriving after months of public anticipation, and reached number 12 in US. It was met with general confusion and underwhelming reviews, and in the *NME*, Jimi Hendrix famously dismissed it as a "psychedelic barbershop quartet". By then, the group's lawsuit with Capitol was resolved, and it was agreed that *Smile* would not be the band's next album.^[131] In August, the group embarked on a two-date tour of Hawaii.^[132] The shows saw Brian make a brief return to live performance, as Bruce Johnston chose to take a temporary break from the band during the summer of 1967, feeling that the atmosphere within the band "had all got too weird".^{[133][134]} The performances were filmed and recorded with the intention of releasing a live album, *Lei'd in Hawaii*, which was also left unfinished and unreleased.^[135] The general record-buying public came to view the music made after this time as the point marking the band's artistic decline.^[120]

Smiley Smile was released on September 18, 1967,^[136] and peaked at number 41 in the US,^[118] making it their worst-selling album to that date.^[137] Critics and fans were generally underwhelmed by the album.^[138] According to Scott Schinder, the album was released to "general incomprehension. While *Smile* may have divided the Beach Boys' fans had it been released, *Smiley Smile* merely baffled them."^[118] The group was virtually blacklisted by the music press, to the extent that reviews of the group's records were either withheld from publication or published long after the release dates.^[136] When released in the UK in November, it performed better, reaching number 9.^[139] Over the years, the album gathered a reputation as one of the best "chill-out" albums to listen to during an LSD comedown.^[140] In 1974, *NME* voted it the 64th-greatest album of all time.^[141]

The Beach Boys immediately recorded a new album, *Wild Honey*, an excursion into soul music, and a self-conscious attempt to "regroup" themselves as a rock band in opposition to their more orchestral affairs of the past.^[142] Its music differs in many ways from previous Beach Boys records: it contains very little group singing compared to previous albums, and mainly features Brian singing at his piano. Again, the Beach Boys recorded mostly at his home studio.^[123] Love reflected that *Wild Honey* was "completely out of the mainstream for what was going on at that time ... and that was the idea."^[143]

When we did *Wild Honey*, Brian asked me to get more involved in the recording end. He wanted a break [because he] had been doing it all too long.

—Carl Wilson^[111]

Again, the Beach Boys recorded mostly at his home studio.^[123] Love reflected that *Wild Honey* was "completely out of the mainstream for what was going on at that time ... and that was the idea."^[143]

Wild Honey was released on December 18, 1967, in competition with the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* and the Rolling Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request*.^[144] It had a higher chart placing than *Smiley Smile*, but still failed to make the top-twenty and remained on the charts for only 15 weeks.^[123] As with *Smiley Smile*, contemporary critics viewed it as inconsequential,^[145] and it alienated fans whose expectations had been raised by *Smile*.^[123] That month, Mike Love told a British journalist: "Brian has been rethinking our recording program and in any case we all have a much greater say nowadays in what we turn out in the studio."^[146]

Friends, 20/20, and Manson affair

The Beach Boys were at their lowest popularity in the late 1960s, and their cultural standing was especially worsened by their public image, which remained incongruous with their peers' "heavier" music.^[147] At the end of 1967, *Rolling Stone* co-founder and editor Jann Wenner printed an influential article that denounced the Beach Boys as "just one prominent example of a group that has gotten hung up on trying to catch The Beatles. It's a pointless pursuit."^[148] The article had the effect of excluding the group among serious rock fans^{[148][149]} and such controversy followed them into the next year.^[150] Capitol continued to bill them as "America's Top Surfin' Group!" and expected Brian to write more beachgoing songs for the yearly summer markets.^[151] From 1968 onward, his songwriting output declined substantially, but the public narrative of "Brian as leader" continued.^[152] The group also stopped wearing their longtime striped-shirt stage uniforms in favor of matching white, polyester suits that resembled a Las Vegas show band's.^[153]



The Beach Boys in 1968, left to right: Dennis Wilson, Mike Love, Carl Wilson (top), Al Jardine, Bruce Johnston

After meeting Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at a UNICEF Variety Gala in Paris, Love and other high-profile celebrities such as the Beatles and Donovan traveled to Rishikesh, India, in February–March 1968. The following Beach Boys album, *Friends*, had songs influenced by the Transcendental Meditation the Maharishi taught. In support of *Friends*, Love arranged for the Beach Boys to tour with the Maharishi in the US. Starting on May 3, 1968, the tour lasted five shows and was canceled when the Maharishi withdrew to fulfill film contracts. Because of disappointing audience numbers and the Maharishi's withdrawal, 24 tour dates were canceled at a cost estimated at \$250,000.^[154] *Friends*, released on June 24, peaked at number 126 in the US.^[155] In August, Capitol issued an album of Beach Boys backing tracks,

Stack-o-Tracks. It was the first Beach Boys LP that failed to chart in the US and UK.^[156]

In June 1968, Dennis befriended Charles Manson, an aspiring singer-songwriter, and their relationship lasted for several months. Dennis bought him time at Brian's home studio, where recording sessions were attempted while Brian stayed in his room.^{[157][158]} Dennis then proposed that Manson be signed to Brother Records. Brian reportedly disliked Manson, and a deal was never made.^[159] In July 1968, the group released the single "Do It Again", which lyrically harkened back to their earlier surf songs. Around this time, Brian admitted himself to a psychiatric hospital; his bandmates wrote and produced material in his absence.^[160] Released in January 1969, the album 20/20 mixed new material with outtakes and leftovers from recent albums; Brian produced virtually none of the newer recordings.^[161]

The Beach Boys recorded one song by Manson without his involvement: "Cease to Exist", rewritten as "Never Learn Not to Love", which was included on *20/20*. As his cult of followers took over Dennis's home, Dennis gradually distanced himself from Manson.^[162] According to Leaf, "The entire Wilson family reportedly feared for their lives."^[163]

In August, the Manson Family committed the Tate–LaBianca murders. According to Jon Parks, the band's tour manager, it was widely suspected in the Hollywood community that Manson was responsible for the murders, and it had been known that Manson had been involved with the Beach Boys, causing the band to be viewed as pariahs for a time.^[164] In November, police apprehended Manson, and his connection with the Beach Boys received media attention. He was later convicted for several counts of murder and conspiracy to murder.^[165]



Selling of the band's publishing

In April 1969, the band revisited its 1967 lawsuit against Capitol after it alleged an audit revealed the band was owed over \$2 million for unpaid royalties and production duties.^[166] In May, Brian told the music press that the group's funds were depleted to the point that it was considering filing for bankruptcy at the end of the year, which *Disc & Music Echo* called "stunning news" and a "tremendous shock on the American pop scene". Brian hoped that the success of a forthcoming single, "Break Away", would mend the financial issues. The song, written and produced by Brian and Murry, reached number 63 in the US and number 6 in the UK,^[167] and Brian's remarks to the press ultimately thwarted long-simmering contract negotiations with Deutsche Grammophon.^[168] The group's Capitol contract expired two weeks later with one more album still due. *Live in London*, a live album recorded in December 1968, was released in several countries in 1970 to fulfil the contract, although it would not see US release until 1976.^[169] After the contract was completed Capitol deleted the Beach Boys' catalog from print, effectively cutting off their royalty flow.^[166] The lawsuit was later settled in their favor and they acquired the rights to their post-1965 catalog.^[170]

In August, Sea of Tunes, the Beach Boys' catalog, was sold to Irving Almo Music for \$700,000 (equivalent to \$5.82 million in 2023).^[171] According to his wife, Marilyn Wilson, Brian was devastated by the sale.^[172] Over the years, the catalog generated more than \$100 million in publishing royalties, none of which Murry or the band members ever received.^[173] That same month, Carl, Dennis, Love, and Jardine sought a permanent replacement for Johnston, with Johnston unaware of this search. They approached Carl's brother-in-law Billy Hinsche, who declined the offer to focus on his college studies.^[174]

1970–1978: Reprise era

Sunflower, Surf's Up, Carl and the Passions, and Holland

The group was signed to Reprise Records in 1970.^[175] Scott Schinder described the label as "probably the hippest and most artist-friendly major label of the time."^[176] The deal was brokered by Van Dyke Parks, who was then employed as a multimedia executive at Warner Music Group. Reprise's contract

stipulated Brian's proactive involvement with the band in all albums.^[177] By the time the Beach Boys' tenure ended with Capitol in 1969, they had sold 65 million records worldwide, closing the decade as the most commercially successful American group in popular music.^[178]

After recording over 30 different songs and going through several album titles, their first LP for Reprise, *Sunflower*, was released on August 31, 1970.^[179] *Sunflower* featured a strong group presence with significant writing contributions from all six band members.^[180] Brian was active during this period, writing or co-writing seven of *Sunflower's* 12 songs and performing at half of the band's domestic concerts in 1970.^[181] The album received critical acclaim in both the US and the UK.^[182] This was offset by the album reaching only number 151 on US record charts during a four-week stay,^[179] becoming one of the worst-selling of the Beach Boys' albums at that point.^[183] Fans generally regard the LP as the Beach Boys' finest post-*Pet Sounds* album.^[184] In 2003, it placed at number 380 on *Rolling Stone's* "Greatest Albums of All Time" list.^[185]



The Beach Boys in 1971; top left to right: Mike Love, Brian Wilson; middle left to right: Carl Wilson, Al Jardine, Dennis Wilson; bottom: Bruce Johnston



The Beach Boys performing in Central Park, July 1971^[186]

In mid-1970, the Beach Boys hired radio presenter Jack Rieley as their manager. One of his initiatives was to encourage the band to record songs featuring more socially conscious lyrics.^[187] He also requested the completion of *Smile* track "Surf's Up" and arranged a guest appearance at a Grateful Dead concert at Bill Graham's Fillmore East in April 1971 to foreground the Beach Boys' transition into the counterculture.^[188] During this time, the group ceased wearing matching uniforms on stage,^[189] while Dennis took time to star alongside James Taylor, Laurie Bird, and Warren Oates in the cult film *Two-Lane Blacktop*, released in 1971. Later in 1971, Dennis injured his hand, leaving him temporarily unable to play the drums.^[184] He continued in the band, singing and occasionally

playing keyboards, while Ricky Fataar, formally of the Flames, took over on drums.^[190] In July, the American music press rated the Beach Boys "the hottest grossing act" in the country, alongside Grand Funk Railroad.^[186] The band filmed a concert for ABC-TV in Central Park, which aired as *Good Vibrations from Central Park* on August 19.^[191]

On August 30, the band released *Surf's Up*, which was moderately successful, reaching the US top-thirty, a marked improvement over their recent releases.^[192] While the record charted, the Beach Boys added to their renewed fame by performing a near-sellout set at Carnegie Hall; their live shows during this era included reworked arrangements of many of their previous songs,^[193] with their set lists culling from *Pet Sounds* and *Smile*.^[194] On October 28, the Beach Boys were the featured cover story on that date's issue of *Rolling Stone*. It included the first part of a lengthy two-part interview, titled "The Beach Boys: A California Saga", conducted by Tom Nolan and David Felton.^[195]

Bruce Johnston left the Beach Boys in early 1972, with Fataar and another ex-Flames member, singer and guitarist Blondie Chaplin, becoming official members of the band. The new line-up released the comparatively unsuccessful *Carl and the Passions – "So Tough"* in May 1972, followed by *Holland* in

January 1973. Reprise felt *Holland* needed a strong single. Following the intervention of Van Dyke Parks, this resulted in the inclusion of "Sail On, Sailor".^[196] Reprise approved, and the resulting album peaked at number 37. Brian's musical children's story, *Mount Vernon and Fairway*, was included as a bonus EP.^[197]

Greatest hits LPs, touring resurgence, and Caribou sessions

After *Holland*, the group maintained a touring regimen, captured on the double live album *The Beach Boys in Concert* released in November 1973, but recorded very little in the studio through 1975.^[198] Several months earlier, they had announced that they would complete *Smile*, but this never came to fruition, and plans for its release were once again abandoned.^{[199][nb 8]} Following Murry's death in June 1973, Brian retreated into his bedroom and withdrew further into drug abuse, alcoholism, chain smoking, and overeating.^[201] In October, the band fired Rieley.^[202] Rieley's position was succeeded by Mike Love's brother, Stephen, and Chicago manager James William Guercio.^[203] Chaplin and Fataar left the band in December 1973 and November 1974, respectively, with Dennis returning to drums following Fataar's departure.^[204]

The Beach Boys' greatest hits compilation album *Endless Summer* was released in June 1974 to unexpected success, becoming the band's second number 1 US album in October.^{[205][206]} The LP had a 155-week chart run, selling over 3 million copies.^[207] The Beach Boys became the number-one act in the US,^[206] propelling themselves from opening for Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young in the summer of 1974 to headliners selling out basketball arenas in a matter of weeks.^[208] Guercio prevailed upon the group to swap out newer songs with older material in their concert setlists,^[209] partly to accommodate their growing audience and the demand for their early hits.^[210] Later in the year, members of the band appeared as guests on Chicago's hit "Wishing You Were Here".^[211] At the end of 1974, *Rolling Stone* proclaimed the Beach Boys "Band of the Year" based on the strength of their live performances.^{[208][212]}

To capitalize on their sudden resurgence in popularity, the Beach Boys accepted Guercio's invitation to record their next Reprise album at his Caribou Ranch studio, located around the mountains of Nederland, Colorado.^{[213][205][214]} These October 1974 sessions marked the group's return to the studio after a 21-month period of virtual inactivity, but the proceedings were cut short after Brian had insisted on returning to his home in Los Angeles.^[213] With the project put on hold, the Beach Boys spent most of the next year on the road playing college football stadiums and basketball arenas.^{[215][212]} The only Beach Boys recording of 1974 to see release at the time was the Christmas single "Child of Winter", recorded upon the group's return to Los Angeles in November and released the following month.

Over the summer of 1975, the touring group played a co-headlining series of concert dates with Chicago, a pairing that was nicknamed "Beachago".^{[216][217]} The tour was massively successful and restored the Beach Boys' profitability to what it had been in the mid-1960s.^[218] Although another joint tour with Chicago had been planned for the summer of 1976,^[217] the Beach Boys' association with Guercio and his Caribou Management company ended in early 1976.^{[219][nb 9]} Stephen Love subsequently took over as the band's *de facto* business manager.^[220]

15 Big Ones, Love You, and Adult/Child

Early in 1975, Brian signed a production deal with California Music, a Los Angeles collective that included Bruce Johnston and Gary Usher, but was drawn away by the Beach Boys' pressing demands for a new album.^[221] In October, Marilyn persuaded Brian to admit himself to the care of psychologist

Eugene Landy, who kept him from indulging in substance abuse with constant supervision.^{[222][223]} Brian was kept in the program until December 1976.^[224]



Brian Wilson behind Brother Studios' mixing console in early 1976

At the end of January 1976, the Beach Boys returned to the studio with Brian producing once again.^[225] Brian decided the band should do an album of rock and roll and doo wop standards. Carl and Dennis disagreed, feeling that an album of originals was far more ideal, while Love and Jardine wanted the album out as quickly as possible.^[225] To highlight Brian's recovery and his return to writing and producing, Stephen devised a promotional campaign with the tagline "Brian Is Back!", and paid the Rogers & Cowan publicity agency \$3,500 per month to implement it.^[226] The band also commissioned an NBC-TV special, later known as *The Beach Boys: It's OK!*, that was produced by Saturday Night Live creator Lorne Michaels.^[224]

Released on July 5, 1976, *15 Big Ones* was generally disliked by fans and critics, as well as Carl and Dennis, who disparaged the album to the press.^[227] The album peaked at number 8 in the US, becoming their first top-ten album of new material since *Pet Sounds*, and their highest-charting studio album since *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)*.^[228] Lead single "Rock and Roll Music" peaked at number 5 – their highest chart ranking since "Good Vibrations".^[219]

From late-1976 to early-1977, Brian made sporadic public appearances and produced the band's next album, *The Beach Boys Love You*.^[229] He regarded it as a spiritual successor to *Pet Sounds*, namely because of the autobiographical lyrics.^[230] Released on April 11, 1977, *Love You* peaked at number 53 in the US and number 28 in the UK.^[231] Critically, it was met with polarized reactions from the public.^[232] Numerous esteemed critics penned favorable reviews, but casual listeners generally found the album's idiosyncratic sound to be a detriment.^[233]

Adult/Child, the intended follow-up to *Love You*, was completed, but the release was vetoed by Love and Jardine.^[234] According to Stan Love, when his brother Mike heard the album, Mike turned to Brian and asked: "What the fuck are you doing?"^[235] Some of the unreleased songs on *Adult/Child* later saw individual release on subsequent Beach Boys albums and compilations.^[236] Following this period, his concert appearances with the band gradually diminished and their performances were occasionally erratic.^[237]

CBS signing and *M.I.U.* Album

At the beginning of 1977, the Beach Boys had enjoyed their most lucrative concert tours ever, with the band playing in packed stadiums and earning up to \$150,000 per show.^[238] Concurrently, the band was the subject of a record company bidding war, as their contract with Warner Bros. had been set to expire soon.^{[239][240]} Stephen Love arranged for the Beach Boys to sign an \$8 million deal with CBS Records on March 1.^[241] Numerous stipulations were given in the CBS contract, including that Brian was required to write at least four songs per album, co-write at least 70% of all the tracks, and produce or co-produce alongside his brothers.^{[242][nb 10]} Another part of the deal required the group to play thirty concerts a year in the U.S., in addition to one tour in Australia and Japan, and two tours in Europe.^[242]

Within weeks of the CBS contract, Stephen was effectively fired by the band, with one of the alleged reasons being that Mike had not permitted Stephen to sign on his behalf while at a TM retreat in Switzerland.^[243] For Stephen's replacement, the group hired Carl's friend Henry Lazarus, an entertainment business owner that had no prior experience in the music industry.^[244] Lazarus arranged a major European tour for the Beach Boys, starting in late July, with stops in Germany, Switzerland, and France.^[244] Due to poor planning, the tour was cancelled shortly before it began, as Lazarus had failed to complete the necessary paperwork.^[245] The group subsequently fired Lazarus and were sued by many of the concert promoters, with losses of \$200,000 in preliminary expenses and \$550,000 in potential revenue.^[246]

In July, the Beach Boys played a concert at Wembley Stadium that was notable for the fact that, during the show, Mike attacked Brian with a piano bench onstage in front of over 15,000 attendees.^{[247][nb 11]} In August, Mike and Jardine persuaded Stephen to return as the group's manager,^[249] a decision that Carl and Dennis had strongly opposed.^{[250][249]} By this point, the band had effectively split into two camps; Dennis and Carl on one side, Mike and Jardine on the other, with Brian remaining neutral.^{[251][231]} These two opposing contingents within the group – known among their associates as the "free-livers" and the "meditators" – were traveling in different planes, using different hotels, and rarely speaking to each other.^[249] According to Love, "[T]he terms 'smokers' and 'nonsmokers' were also used."^[252]

On September 3, after completing the final date of a northeastern US tour, the internal wrangling came to a head. Following a confrontation on an airport apron – a spectacle that a bystanding *Rolling Stone* journalist compared to the ending of *Casablanca* – Dennis declared that he had left the band.^[253] The group was broken up until a meeting at Brian's house on September 17.^[231] In light of the lucrative CBS contract, the parties negotiated a settlement resulting in Love gaining control of Brian's vote in the group, allowing Love and Jardine to outvote Carl and Dennis on any matter.^[231]

The group had still owed one more album for Reprise. Released in September 1978, *M.I.U. Album* was recorded at Maharishi International University in Iowa at the suggestion of Love.^[254] The band originally attempted to record a Christmas album, to be titled *Merry Christmas from the Beach Boys*, but this idea was rejected by Reprise. These Christmas recordings would eventually be released in 1998 as part of the *Ultimate Christmas* compilation album. Dennis and Carl made limited contributions to *M.I.U. Album*; the album was produced by Jardine and Ron Altbach, with Brian credited as "executive producer".^[255] Dennis started to withdraw from the group to focus on his second solo album, *Bambu*, which was shelved just as alcoholism and marital problems overcame all three Wilson brothers.^[232] Carl appeared intoxicated during concerts (especially at appearances for their 1978 Australia tour) and Brian gradually slid back into addiction and an unhealthy lifestyle.^{[256][nb 12]} Stephen was fired shortly after the Australia tour partly due to an incident in which Brian's bodyguards, Rocky Pamplin and Stan Love, physically assaulted Dennis.^[258]



The Beach Boys performing a concert in Michigan, August 1978

1978–1998: Continued recording and Brian's estrangement

L.A. (Light Album) and *Keepin' the Summer Alive*

The group's first two albums for CBS, 1979's *L.A. (Light Album)* and 1980's *Keepin' the Summer Alive*, struggled in the US, charting at 100 and 75 respectively, though the band did manage a top-forty single from *L.A.* with "Good Timin'". The recording of these albums saw Bruce Johnston return to the band, initially solely as a producer and eventually as a full-time band member. In-between the two albums the group contributed the song "It's a Beautiful Day" to the soundtrack of the film *Americathon*. In an April 1980 interview, Carl reflected that "the last two years have been the most important and difficult time of our career. We were at the ultimate crossroads. We had to decide whether what we had been involved in since we were teenagers had lost its meaning. We asked ourselves and each other the difficult questions we'd often avoided in the past."^[259] By the next year, he left the touring group because of unhappiness with the band's nostalgia format and lackluster live performances, subsequently pursuing a solo career.^[232] He stated: "I haven't quit the Beach Boys but I do not plan on touring with them until they decide that 1981 means as much to them as 1961."^[56] Carl returned in May 1982, after approximately 14 months of being away, on the condition that the group reconsider their rehearsal and touring policies and refrain from "Las Vegas-type" engagements.^[260]



The Beach Boys in 1979

I think a lot of critics punish the band for not going beyond "Good Vibrations" ... they love the band so much that they get crazy because we don't top ourselves. ... [but] growth in this business is tough.

— Bruce Johnston, 1982^[261]

On June 21, 1980, the Beach Boys performed a concert at Knebworth, England, which featured a slightly intoxicated Dennis. The concert would later be released as a live album titled *Good Timin': Live at Knebworth England 1980* in 2002. In 1981, the band scored a surprise US top-twenty hit when their cover of the Del-Vikings' "Come Go with Me" from the three year old *M.I.U. Album* was released as a

single.^[262]

In late 1982, Eugene Landy was once more employed as Brian's therapist, and a more radical program was undertaken to try to restore Brian to health.^[263] This involved removing him from the group on November 5, 1982, at the behest of Carl, Love, and Jardine,^[264] in addition to putting him on a rigorous diet and health regimen.^[265] Coupled with long, extreme counseling sessions, this therapy was successful in bringing Brian back to physical health, slimming down from 311 pounds (141 kg) to 185 pounds (84 kg).^[266]

Death of Dennis, *The Beach Boys*, and *Still Cruisin'*

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dennis had been embroiled in successive failed romantic relationships, including a tense and short-lived relationship with Fleetwood Mac's Christine McVie, and found himself in severe economic trouble resulting in the sale of Brother Studios, established by the Wilson brothers in 1974 and where *Pacific Ocean Blue* was produced, and the forfeiture of his beloved yacht. To cope with the combination of devastating losses, Dennis heavily abused alcohol, cocaine, and

heroin and was, by 1983, homeless and lived a nomadic lifestyle. He was often seen spending much of his time wandering the Los Angeles coast and often missed Beach Boys performances. By this point, he had lost his voice and much of his ability to play drums.^[267]

In 1983, tensions between Dennis and Love escalated to the point that each obtained a restraining order against the other.^[268]

Following Brian's readmission for Landy's treatment, Dennis was given an ultimatum after his last performance in November 1983 to check into rehab for his alcohol problems or be banned from performing live with the band again. Dennis checked into rehab for his chance to get sober, but on December 28, he drowned at the age of 39 in Marina del Rey while diving from a friend's boat trying to recover items that he had previously thrown overboard in a fit of rage.^[269]

The Beach Boys spent the next several years touring, often playing in front of large audiences, and recording songs for film soundtracks and various artists compilations.^[270] One new studio album, the self-titled *The Beach Boys*, appeared in 1985 and proved a modest success, becoming their highest-charting album in the US since *15 Big Ones*. *The Beach Boys* was the group's final album for CBS. The following year they returned to Capitol with a 25th anniversary greatest hits album *Made in U.S.A.*, which featured two new tracks, "Rock 'n' Roll to the Rescue" and a cover of the Mamas and the Papas' "California Dreamin'", with the latter featuring Roger McGuinn of the Byrds on lead guitar. *Made in U.S.A.* eventually went double platinum.

Commenting on his relationship to the band in 1988, Brian said that he avoided his family at Landy's suggestion, adding that "Although we stay together as a group, as people we're a far cry from friends."^[271] Mike denied the accusation that he and the band were keeping Brian from participating with the group.^[272] In 1987 the band scored a top-twenty single in collaboration with rap group the Fat Boys, on their cover of the Surfari's "Wipeout!". The following year, the Beach Boys unexpectedly claimed their first US number 1 single in 22 years with "Kokomo", which topped the chart for one week.^[273] The track was featured in the film *Cocktail*. Both "Wipeout!" and "Kokomo" were included on the band's next album, 1989's *Still Cruisin'*, which went platinum in the US.^[274] In 1991 the band contributed a cover of "Crocodile Rock" to the Elton John and Bernie Taupin tribute album *Two Rooms*.

Lawsuits, *Summer in Paradise*, and *Stars and Stripes, Vol. 1*

Carlin summarized, "Once surfin' pin-ups, they remade themselves as avant-garde pop artists, then psychedelic oracles. After that they were down-home hippies, then retro-hip icons. Eventually they devolved into none of the above: a kind of perpetual-motion nostalgia machine."^[275] Music journalist Erik Davis wrote in 1990, "the Beach Boys are either dead, deranged, or dinosaurs; their records are Eurocentric, square, unsampled; they've made too much money to merit hip revisionism."^[276] In 1992, critic Jim Miller wrote, "They have become a figment of their own past, prisoners of their unflinching popularity—incongruous emblems of a sunny myth of eternal youth belied by much of their own best music. ... The group is still largely identified with its hits from the early Sixties."^[277]



The Beach Boys with President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan at the White House, June 1983

Love filed a defamation lawsuit against Brian due to how he was presented in Brian's 1992 memoir *Wouldn't It Be Nice: My Own Story*. Its publisher HarperCollins settled the suit for \$1.5 million. He said that the suit allowed his lawyer "to gain access to the transcripts of Brian's interviews with his [book] collaborator, Todd Gold. Those interviews affirmed—according to Brian—that I had been the inspiration of the group and that I had written many of the songs that [would soon be] in dispute."^[278] Other defamation lawsuits were filed by Carl, Brother Records, and the Wilsons' mother Audree.^[279] With Love and Brian unable to determine exactly what Love was properly owed in royalties, Love sued Brian in 1992, winning \$13 million in 1994 for lost royalties.^[280] 35 of the group's songs were then amended to credit Love.^[281] He later called it "almost certainly the largest case of fraud in music history".^[282]

The day after California courts issued a restraining order between Brian and Landy, Brian phoned Sire Records staff producer Andy Paley to collaborate on new material tentatively for the Beach Boys.^[283] After losing the songwriting credits lawsuit with Love, Brian told MOJO in February 1995: "Mike and I are just cool. There's a lot of shit Andy and I got written for him. I just had to get through that goddamn trial!"^[284] In April, it was unclear whether the project would turn into a Wilson solo album, a Beach Boys album, or a combination of the two.^[285] The project ultimately disintegrated.^[286] Instead, Brian and his bandmates recorded *Stars and Stripes Vol. 1*, an album of country music stars covering Beach Boys songs, with co-production helmed by River North Records owner Joe Thomas.^[287] Afterward, the group discussed finishing the album *Smile*, but Carl rejected the idea, fearing that it would cause Brian another nervous breakdown.^[288]

1998–present: Love-led tours

Death of Carl and band name litigation

Early in 1997, Carl was diagnosed with lung and brain cancer after years of heavy smoking. Despite his terminal condition, Carl continued to perform with the band on its 1997 summer tour (a double-bill with the band Chicago) while undergoing chemotherapy. During performances, he sat on a stool and needed oxygen after every song.^[289] Carl died on February 6, 1998, at the age of 51, two months after the death of the Wilsons' mother, Audree.^[290]

After Carl's death, Jardine left the touring line-up and began to perform regularly with his band "Beach Boys: Family & Friends" until he ran into legal issues for using the name without license. Meanwhile, Jardine sued Love, claiming that he had been excluded from their concerts,^[291] BRI, through its longtime attorney, Ed McPherson, sued Jardine in Federal Court. Jardine, in turn, counter-claimed against BRI for wrongful termination.^[292] Courts ruled in Love's favor, denying Jardine the use of the Beach Boys name in any fashion. However, Jardine proceeded to appeal this decision in addition to seeking \$4 million in damages. The California Court of Appeal proceeded to rule that, "Love acted wrongfully in freezing Jardine out of touring under the Beach Boys name", allowing Jardine to continue with his lawsuit.^[293] The case ended up being settled outside of court with the terms not disclosed.^[294] BRI ultimately prevailed.^[295]



The touring lineup of Mike Love and Bruce Johnston's "The Beach Boys Band", with David Marks, in 2008

Jardine's final appearance with the band for more than a decade occurred on May 9, 1998, which was the final official Beach Boys show performed before the license dispute.^{[296][293]} During the license dispute, Love (with Marks) toured as "The California Beach Band"; it was previously believed he did so "America's Band", but this has since been disproven.^[296] Love then continued touring with Johnston (and David Marks, until he left the band again in 1999, due to health issues when he was diagnosed with hepatitis C^{[297][298]}), after securing a license from BRI, with the first performance of the 'reorganized' Love and Johnston-led touring band on July 4, 1998.^{[296][293]}

In 2000, ABC-TV premiered a two-part television miniseries, *The Beach Boys: An American Family*, that dramatized the Beach Boys' story. It was produced by *Full House* actor John Stamos, and was criticized by numerous parties, including Brian Wilson, for historical inaccuracies.^[299]

In 2004, Wilson recorded and released his solo album *Brian Wilson Presents Smile*, a reinterpretation of the unfinished *Smile* project. That September, Wilson issued a free CD through the *Mail On Sunday* that included Beach Boys songs he had recently rerecorded, five of which he co-authored with Love. The 10 track compilation had 2.6 million copies distributed and prompted Love to file a lawsuit in November 2005; he claimed the promotion hurt the sales of the original recordings and that his image was used for the CD.^[300] Wilson's wife Melinda alleged that, during the deposition, Love turned to Wilson and remarked, "you better start writing a real big hit because you're going to have to write me a real big check."^[301] Love's suit was dismissed in 2007 when a judge determined that there were no triable issues and that the case was without merit.^{[302][303]}

In 2006, Brian Wilson, Love, Jardine, Marks, and Johnston participated in a non-performing reunion on the rooftop of the Capitol Records building in Los Angeles to celebrate that the compilation album *Sounds of Summer: The Very Best of The Beach Boys* had been certified double-platinum.^[304] Later that year, Jardine joined Brian Wilson and his band for a short tour celebrating the 40th anniversary of *Pet Sounds*.^[305]

In 2008, Marks briefly reunited with Love and Johnston's touring band for a tour of Europe.^[306]

In 2010, Jardine released *A Postcard from California*, his solo debut, in June 2010 (re-released with two extra tracks on April 3, 2012). The album features contributions from Beach Boys Brian Wilson, Carl Wilson (posthumously), Bruce Johnston, David Marks, and Mike Love. Other guests with Beach Boys connections included Glen Campbell, Scott Mathews, Stephen Kalinich, and Gerry Beckley and Dewey Bunnell of America.^[307] Also in 2010, Brian Wilson and Jardine sang on "We Are the World 25: for Haiti", a new recording of "We Are the World" (with partially revised lyrics), which was released as a charity single to benefit the population of Haiti.^[308]

Jardine made his first appearance with the Beach Boys touring band in more than 10 years in 2011 at a tribute concert for Ronald Reagan's 100th birthday;^[309] at this concert, he sang lead on "Help Me, Rhonda" and "Sloop John B". He made a handful of other appearances with Love and Johnston's touring band in preparation for a reunion.

The Smile Sessions, That's Why God Made the Radio, and 50th anniversary reunion tour

On October 31, 2011, Capitol released a double album and box set dedicated to the *Smile* recordings in the form of *The Smile Sessions*. The album garnered universal critical acclaim and charted in both the US *Billboard* and UK top-thirty. It went on to win Best Historical Album at the 2013 Grammy

Awards.^{[310][311]}

On December 16, 2011, it was announced that Wilson, Love, Jardine, Johnston, and David Marks would reunite for a new album and 50th anniversary tour.^[312] On February 12, 2012, the Beach Boys performed at the 2012 Grammy Awards, in what was billed as a "special performance" by organizers. It marked the group's first live performance to include Wilson since 1996, Jardine since 1998, and Marks since 1999.^[313] Released on June 5, *That's Why God Made the Radio* debuted at number 3 on the US charts, expanding the group's span of *Billboard* 200 top-ten albums across 49 years and one week, passing the Beatles with 47 years of top-ten albums.^[314] Critics generally regarded the album as an "uneven" collection, with most of the praise centered on its closing musical suite.^[61]



The reunited Beach Boys performing "Heroes and Villains" in tribute to *Smile*

During the tour, in May 2012, when asked about the future held for the band and its reunion after the scheduled end of the tour in September, Love stated that "We're looking at our present and future. I think we're going to be doing this again with Brian for a long time." Wilson said that he had begun planning for another Beach Boys album for the band would record after the tour.^[315] On June 1, 2012, Love received an e-mail from Ledbetter stating "no more shows for Wilson". Love then began accepting invitations for when the reunion was over.^[316] Johnston told reporter Mark Dillon in mid-June that the current tour was "a one-time event. You're not going to see this next year. I'm busy next year doing my thing with Mike."^[317] On June 25, Ledbetter sent another e-mail asking to disregard her last message, but by then, Love claimed that "it was too late. We had booked other concerts, and promoters had begun selling tickets."

Despite this, in July, Love stated, "There's talk of us going and doing a return to the Grammys next year, and there's talk about doing another album together. There's nothing in stone, but there's a lot of ideas being floated around. So after this year, after completing the 50th anniversary reunion, we'll entertain doing some more studio work and see what we can come up with and can do in the future." Love said that Wilson and producer Joe Thomas had over 80 hours of material recorded, much of it culled from material they were working on around the time of Wilson's 1998 *Imagination* album that "were always songs he had earmarked for the Beach Boys" and that their label Capitol Records was excited by the band's reunion and was encouraging the band for more new music and more tour dates.^[318]

Ultimately, the reunion tour ended in September 2012 as planned, after a final show on September 28, but amid erroneous rumors that Love had dismissed Wilson from the Beach Boys.^{[319][320]} At this time, Love and Johnston had announced via a press release that following the end of the reunion tour the Beach Boys would revert to the pre-reunion tour Love/Johnston lineup, without Brian, Jardine, or Marks, all of whom expressed surprise. Although such dates were noted in a late June issue of *Rolling Stone*, it was widely reported that the three had been "fired".^[320] Love later wrote that the end of the reunion came partly as a result of 'interference' from Brian's wife and manager Melinda Ledbetter-Wilson and that he (Love) "had wanted to send out a joint press release, between Brian and me, formally announcing the end of the reunion tour on September 28. But I couldn't get Brian's management team on board..."^{[321][322][323][316]}

On October 5, Love responded in a self-written press release to the *Los Angeles Times* stating he "did not fire Brian Wilson from the Beach Boys. I cannot fire Brian Wilson from the Beach Boys ... I do not have such authority. And even if I did, I would never fire Brian Wilson from the Beach Boys." He claimed that

nobody in the band "wanted to do a 50th anniversary tour that lasted 10 years" and that its limited run "was long agreed upon".^[322] On October 9, Wilson and Jardine submitted a written response to the rumors stating: "I was completely blindsided by his press release ... We hadn't even discussed as a band what we were going to do with all the offers that were coming in for more 50th shows."^[324]

From late September, Love and Johnston continued to perform under the Beach Boys name, while Wilson, Jardine, and Marks toured as a trio in 2013,^[325] and a subsequent tour with guitarist Jeff Beck also included Blondie Chaplin at select dates.^[326] Wilson and Jardine continued to tour together in 2014 and following years, often joined by Chaplin; Marks declined to join them after 2013.

Copyright extension releases and occasional partial reunions

Responding to a new European Union copyright law that extended copyright to 70 years for recordings that were published within 50 years after they were made, Capitol began issuing annual 50-year anniversary "copyright extension" releases of Beach Boys recordings, starting with *The Big Beat 1963* (2013).^[327]

In June 2013, Wilson's website announced that he was recording and self-producing new material with Jardine, Marks, Chaplin, Don Was, and Jeff Beck.^[328] It stated that the material might be split into three albums: one of new pop songs, another of mostly instrumental tracks with Beck, and another of interwoven tracks dubbed "the suite" which initially began form as the closing four tracks of *That's Why God Made the Radio*.^[329] In January 2014, Wilson declared in an interview that the Beck collaborations would not be released.^{[330][331]} Released in April 2015, *No Pier Pressure* marked another collaboration between Wilson and Joe Thomas, featuring guest appearances from Jardine, Marks, Chaplin, and others.^[332]

Jardine, Marks, Johnston and Love appeared together at the 2014 Ella Awards Ceremony, where Love was honored for his work as a singer.^{[333][334]} In 2015, *Soundstage* aired an episode featuring Wilson performing with Jardine, Chaplin, and Ricky Fataar at *The Venetian in Las Vegas*.^[335] In April, when asked if he was interested in making music with Love again, Wilson replied: "I don't think so, no,"^[336] adding in July that he "doesn't talk to the Beach Boys [or] Mike Love."^[337]

In 2016, Wilson and Jardine embarked on the *Pet Sounds 50th Anniversary World Tour*, promoted as Wilson's final performances of the album,^[338] with Chaplin appearing as a special guest at all dates on select songs. That same year, Love and Wilson each published memoirs, *Good Vibrations: My Life as a Beach Boy* and *I Am Brian Wilson*, respectively. Asked about negative comments that Wilson made about him in the book, Love challenged the legitimacy of statements attributed to Wilson in the book and in the press.^[339] In an interview with *Rolling Stone* conducted in June 2016, Wilson said he would like to try to repair his relationship with Love and collaborate with him again.^[340] In January 2017, Love said, "If it were possible to make it just Brian and I, and have it under control and done better than what happened in 2012, then yeah, I'd be open to something."^[341]

In July 2018, Wilson, Jardine, Love, Johnston, and Marks reunited for a one-off Q&A session moderated by director Rob Reiner at the Capitol Records Tower in Los Angeles. It was the first time the band had appeared together in public since their 2012 tour.^[342] That December, Love described his new holiday album, *Reason for the Season*, as a "message to Brian" and said that he "would love nothing more than to get together with Brian and do some music."^[343]

In 2019, Wilson and Jardine (with Chaplin) embarked on a co-headlining tour with the Zombies, performing selections from *Friends and Surf's Up*.^[344]



Johnston and Love performing as the Beach Boys in 2019

In February 2020, Wilson and Jardine's official social media pages encouraged fans to boycott the band's music after it was announced that Love's Beach Boys would perform at the Safari Club International Convention in Reno, Nevada on animal rights grounds. The concert proceeded despite online protests, as Love issued a statement that said his group has always supported "freedom of thought and expression as a fundamental tenet of our rights as Americans."^[345] In October, Love and Johnston's Beach Boys performed at a fundraiser for Donald Trump's presidential re-election campaign; Wilson and Jardine again issued a statement that they had not been informed about this performance and did not support it.^[346]

Selling of the band's intellectual property and 60th anniversary

In March 2020, Jardine was asked about a possible reunion and responded that the band would reunite for a string of live performances in 2021, although he believed a new album was unlikely.^[347] In response to reunion rumors, Love said in May that he was open to a 60th anniversary tour, although Wilson has "some serious health issues", while Wilson's manager Jean Sievers commented that no one had spoken to Wilson about such a tour.^[348] In February 2021, it was announced that Brian Wilson, Love, Jardine, and the estate of Carl Wilson had sold a majority stake in the band's intellectual property to Irving Azoff and his new company Iconic Artists Group; rumors of a 60th anniversary reunion were again discussed.^[349]

In April 2021, Omnivore Recordings released *California Music Presents Add Some Music*, an album featuring Love, Jardine, Marks, Johnston, and several children of the original Beach Boys (most notably on a re-recording of The Beach Boys' "Add Some Music to Your Day" from 1970's *Sunflower*).^[350] In August, Capitol released the box set *Feel Flows: The Sunflower & Surf's Up Sessions 1969–1971*.^[351] In 2022, the group was expected to participate in a "60th anniversary celebration". Azoff stated in an interview from May 2021, "We're going to announce a major deal with a streamer for the definitive documentary on The Beach Boys and a 60th anniversary celebration. We're planning a tribute concert affiliated with the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and SiriusXM, with amazing acts. That's adding value, and that's why I invested in The Beach Boys."^[352]

On Mike Love's 81st birthday, Jardine once again hinted at a possible reunion on his Facebook page by stating that he was "looking forward" to seeing Love at the "reunion".^[353] However, while a reunion ultimately did not occur in 2022, Capitol released the *Sail On Sailor – 1972* box set in December; following on from the *Feel Flows* box set, which focused on *Sunflower* and *Surf's Up*, *Sail On Sailor* focused on *Carl and the Passions* and *Holland*.

In January 2023, the tribute concert mentioned by Azoff in 2021 was announced as being part of the "Grammys Salute" series of televised tribute concerts.^[354] On February 8—three days after the 2023 Grammy award ceremonies, *A Grammy Salute to the Beach Boys* was recorded at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California and subsequently aired as a two-hour special on CBS on April 9. Present for the taping were Wilson, Jardine, Marks, Johnston, and Love—this time not as performers but as featured

guests, seated in a luxury box at the theatre, overlooking tribute performances covering the gamut of their catalog by mostly contemporary artists. According to *Billboard*, the program had 5.18 million viewers.^[355]

In July 2023, the Beach Boys announced a limited edition to their book, *The Beach Boys by The Beach Boys*, set to be released in 2024. It will feature exclusive interviews, archived photos, live shots, as well as archived texts from late members Carl and Dennis Wilson.^[356]

In March 2024, the band announced the release of a self-titled documentary which would be released by streaming service Disney+, which includes new and archived interviews from various members of the band and their inner circle, including Brian Wilson, Love, Jardine, Marks, Johnston, Carl Wilson, Dennis Wilson, Chaplin, Fataar, Brian Wilson's ex-wife Marilyn, and Don Was, among others. The documentary was directed by Frank Marshall and Thom Zimny and was released on May 24, 2024.^[357] The documentary included some footage from a private reunion of Brian Wilson, Love, Jardine, Marks, and Johnston at Paradise Cove, where the *Surfin' Safari* album cover photo was taken in 1962.^{[358][359][360]} Brian Wilson, Love, Jardine, Marks, Johnston, and Blondie Chaplin also participated in a non-performing reunion at the documentary's premiere on May 24, 2024.^[361]

Musical style and development

In *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, musicologist Daniel Harrison writes:

Even from their inception, the Beach Boys were an experimental group. They combined, as Jim Miller has put it, "the instrumental sleekness of the Ventures, the lyric sophistication of Chuck Berry, and the vocal expertise of some weird cross between the Lettermen and Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers" with lyrics whose images, idioms, and concerns were drawn from the rarefied world of the middle-class white male southern California teenager. ... [But] it was the profound vocal virtuosity of the group, coupled with the obsessional drive and compositional ambitions of their leader, Brian Wilson, that promised their survival after the eventual breaking of fad fever. ... Comparison to other vocally oriented rock groups, such as the Association, shows the Beach Boys' technique to be far superior, almost embarrassingly so. They were so confident of their ability, and of Brian's skill as a producer to enhance it, that they were unafraid of doing sophisticated, a cappella glee-club arrangements containing multiple suspensions, passing formations, complex chords, and both chromatic and enharmonic modulations.^[106]

The Beach Boys began as a garage band playing 1950s style rock and roll,^[362] reassembling styles of music such as surf to include vocal jazz harmony, which created their unique sound.^[363] In addition, they introduced their signature approach to common genres such as the pop ballad by applying harmonic or formal twists not native to rock and roll.^[364] Among the distinct elements of the Beach Boys' style were the nasal quality of their singing voices, their use of a falsetto harmony over a driving, locomotive-like melody, and the sudden chiming in of the whole group on a key line.^[365] Brian Wilson handled most stages of the group's recording process from the beginning, even though he was not properly credited on most of the early recordings.^{[19][366]}

Early on, Mike Love sang lead vocals in the rock-oriented songs, while Carl contributed guitar lines on the group's ballads.^[367] Jim Miller commented: "On straight rockers they sang tight harmonies behind Love's lead ... on ballads, Brian played his false off against lush, jaz-tinged voicings, often using (for rock) unorthodox harmonic structures."^[367] Harrison adds that "even the least distinguished of the Beach Boys' early uptempo rock 'n' roll songs show traces of structural complexity at some level; Brian was simply too curious and experimental to leave convention alone."^[106] Although Brian was often dubbed a perfectionist, he was an inexperienced musician, and his understanding of music was mostly self-taught.^[368] At the lyric stage, he usually worked with Love,^[369] whose assertive persona provided youthful swagger that contrasted Brian's explorations in romanticism and sensitivity.^[370] Luis Sanchez noted a pattern where Brian would spare surfing imagery when working with collaborators outside of his band's circle, in the examples "Lonely Sea" and "In My Room".^[371]



A Rickenbacker 360/12 identical to the 12-string guitar used by Carl Wilson in the early to mid-1960s

Brian's bandmates resented the notion that he was the sole creative force in the group.^[372] In a 1966 article that asked if "the Beach Boys rely too much on sound genius Brian", Carl said that although Brian was the most responsible for their music, every member of the group contributed ideas.^[373] Mike Love wrote, "As far as I was concerned, Brian was a genius, deserving of that recognition. But the rest of us were seen as nameless components in Brian's music machine ... It didn't feel to us as if we were just riding on Brian's coattails."^[374] Conversely, Dennis defended Brian's stature in the band, stating: "Brian Wilson is the Beach Boys. He is the band. We're his fucking messengers. He is all of it. Period. We're nothing. He's everything."^[375]

Influences

The band's earliest influences came primarily from the work of Chuck Berry and the Four Freshmen.^[376] Performed by the Four Freshmen, "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring" (1961) was a particular favorite of the group.^[377] By analyzing their arrangements of pop standards, Brian educated himself on jazz harmony.^[4] Bearing this in mind, Philip Lambert noted, "If Bob Flanigan helped teach Brian how to sing, then Gershwin, Kern, Porter, and the other members of this pantheon helped him learn how to craft a song."^[378] Other general influences on the group included the Hi-Los,^[376] the Penguins, the Robins, Bill Haley & His Comets, Otis Williams, the Cadets, the Everly Brothers, the Shirelles, the Regents, and the Crystals.^[379]

The eclectic mix of white and black vocal group influences – ranging from the rock and roll of Berry, the jazz harmonies of the Four Freshmen, the pop of the Four Preps, the folk of the Kingston Trio, the R&B of groups like the Coasters and the Five Satins, and the doo wop of Dion and the Belmonts – helped contribute to the Beach Boys' uniqueness in

Though the Beach Boys are often caricatured as the ultimate white, suburban act, black R&B was crucial to their sound.

— Geoffrey Himes^[39]

American popular music.^[380] Carl remembered that Love was "really immersed in doo-wop" and likely "influenced Brian to listen to it", adding that the "black artists were so much better in terms of rock records in those days that the white records almost sounded like put-ons."^[39]

Another significant influence on Brian's work was Burt Bacharach.^[381] He said in the 1960s: "Burt Bacharach and Hal David are more like me. They're also the best pop team – per se – today. As a producer, Bacharach has a very fresh, new approach."^[382] Regarding surf rock pioneer Dick Dale, Brian said that his influence on the group was limited to Carl and his style of guitar playing.^[383] Carl credited Chuck Berry, the Ventures, and John Walker with shaping his guitar style, and that the Beach Boys had learned to play all of the Ventures' songs by ear early in their career.^[384]

In 1967, Lou Reed wrote in *Aspen* that the Beach Boys created a "hybrid sound" out of old rock and the Four Freshmen, explaining that such songs as "Let Him Run Wild", "Don't Worry Baby", "I Get Around", and "Fun, Fun, Fun" were not unlike "Peppermint Stick" by the Elchords.^[385] Similarly, John Sebastian of the Lovin' Spoonful noted, "Brian had control of this vocal palette of which we had no idea. We had never paid attention to the Four Freshmen or doo-wop combos like the Crew Cuts. Look what gold he mined out of that."^[386]

Vocals

Brian identified each member individually for their vocal range, once detailing the ranges for Carl, Dennis, Jardine ("[they] progress upwards through G, A, and B"), Love ("can go from bass to the E above middle C"), and himself ("I can take the second D in the treble clef").^{[387][nb 13]} He declared in 1966 that his greatest interest was to expand modern vocal harmony, owing to his fascination with a voice to the Four Freshmen, which he considered a "groovy sectional sound."^[387] He added, "The harmonies that we are able to produce give us a uniqueness which is really the only important thing you can put into records – some quality that no one else has got. I love peaks in a song – and enhancing them on the control panel. Most of all, I love the human voice for its own sake."^{[389][387]} For a period, Brian avoided singing falsetto for the group, saying, "I thought people thought I was a fairy...the band told me, 'If that's the way you sing, don't worry about it.'"^[390]

In the group's early recordings, from lowest intervals to highest, the group's vocal harmony stack usually began with Love or Dennis, followed by Jardine or Carl, and finally Brian on top, according to Jardine,^[391] while Carl said that the blend was Love on bottom, Carl above, followed by Dennis or Jardine, and then Brian on top.^[39] Jardine explains, "We always sang the same vocal intervals. ... As soon as we heard the chords on the piano we'd figure it out pretty easily. If there was a vocal move [Brian] envisioned, he'd show that particular singer that move. We had somewhat photographic memory as far as the vocal parts were concerned so that [was] never a problem for us."^[391] Striving for perfection, Brian insured that his intricate vocal arrangements exercised the group's calculated blend of intonation, attack, phrasing, and expression.^[392] Sometimes, he would sing each vocal harmony part alone through multi-track tape.^[393]

On the group's blend, Carl said: "[Love] has a beautifully rich, very full-sounding bass voice. Yet his lead singing is real nasal, real punk. [Jardine]'s voice has a bright timbre to it; it really cuts. My voice has a kind of calm sound.

[Love] had a hand in a lot of the arrangements. He would bring out the funkier approaches, whether to go *shoo-boo-bop* or *bom-bom-did-di-did-did*. It makes a big difference, because it can change the whole rhythm, the whole color and tone of it.

We're big oooh-ers; we love to oooh. It's a big, full sound, that's very pleasing to us; it opens up the heart."^[39] Rock critic Erik Davis wrote,

— Carl Wilson^[394]

"The 'purity' of tone and genetic proximity that smoothed their voices was almost creepy, pseudo-castrato, [and] a 'barbershop' sound."^[276] Jimmy Webb said, "They used very little vibrato and sing in very straight tones. The voices all lie down beside each other very easily – there's no bumping between them because the pitch is very precise."^[395] According to Brian: "Jack Good once told us, 'You sing like eunuchs in a Sistine Chapel,' which was a pretty good quote."^[387] Writer Richard Goldstein reported that, according to a fellow journalist who asked Brian about the black roots of his music, Brian's response was: "We're white and we sing white." Goldstein added that when he asked where his approach to vocal harmonies had derived from, Wilson answered: 'Barbershop'. "^[396]

Use of studio musicians

Biographer James Murphy said, "By most contemporary accounts, they were not a very good live band when they started. ... The Beach Boys learned to play as a band in front of live audiences", eventually to become "one of the best and enduring live bands".^[397] With only a few exceptions, the Beach Boys played every instrument heard on their first four albums and first five singles.^[13] It is the belief of Richie Unterberger that, "Before session musicians took over most of the parts, the Beach Boys could play respectably gutsy surf rock as a self-contained unit."^[28]

As Wilson's arrangements increased in complexity, he began employing a group of professional studio musicians, later known as "the Wrecking Crew", to assist with recording the instrumentation on select tracks.^[398] According to some reports, these musicians then completely replaced the Beach Boys on the backing tracks to their records.^{[13][399]} Much of the relevant documentation, while accounting for the attendance of unionized session players, had failed to record the presence of the Beach Boys themselves.^{[399][400]} These documents, along with the full unedited studio session tapes, were not available for public scrutiny until the 1990s.^[400]

Wilson started occasionally employing members of the Wrecking Crew for certain Beach Boys tracks during the 1963 *Surfer Girl* sessions – specifically, on two songs, "Hawaii" and "Our Car Club".^{[401][13]} The 1964 albums *Shut Down Volume 2* and *All Summer Long* featured the Beach Boys themselves playing the vast majority of the instruments while occasionally being augmented by outside musicians.^[13] It is commonly misreported that Dennis in particular was replaced by Hal Blaine on drums.^{[400][402]} Dennis's drumming is documented on a number of the group's singles, including 1964's "I Get Around", "Fun, Fun, Fun", and "Don't Worry Baby".^[403] Starting with the 1965 albums *Today!* and *Summer Days*, Brian used the Wrecking Crew with greater frequency, "but still", Stebbins writes, "the Beach Boys continued to play the instruments on many of the key tracks and single releases."^[13]

Overall, the Beach Boys played the instruments on the majority of their recordings from the decade,^[400] with 1966 and 1967 being the only years when Wilson used the Wrecking Crew almost exclusively.^{[13][400]} *Pet Sounds* and *Smile* are their only albums in which the backing tracks were largely played by studio musicians.^{[13][404]} After 1967, the band's use of studio musicians was considerably



The Beach Boys performing in 1964

reduced.^[13] Wrecking Crew biographer Kent Hartman supported in his 2012 book about the musicians, "Though [Brian Wilson] had for several months brought in various session players on a sporadic, potluck basis to supplement things, the other Beach Boys generally played on the earliest songs, too."^[405]

The source of the longstanding controversy regarding the Beach Boys' use of studio musicians largely derives from a misinterpreted statement in David Leaf's 1978 biography *The Beach Boys and the California Myth*, later bolstered by erroneous recollections from participants of the recording sessions.^{[400][nb 14]} Starting in the 1990s, unedited studio session tapes, along with American Federation of Musicians (AFM) sheets and tape logs, were leaked to the public. Music historian Craig Slowinski, who contributes musician credits to the liner notes of the band's reissues and compilations, wrote in 2006: "[O]nce the vaults were opened up and the tapes were studied, the true situation became clear: the Boys themselves played *most* of the instruments on their records until the *Beach Boys Today!* album in early 1965."^[400] Slowinski goes on to note, "when painting a picture of a Beach Boys recording session, it's important to examine *both* the AFM contracts and the session tapes, either of which may be incomplete on their own."^[400]

During the period when Brian relied heavily on studio musicians, Carl was an exception among the Beach Boys in that he played alongside the studio musicians whenever he was available to attend sessions.^[407] In Slowinski's view, "One should not sell short Carl's own contributions; the youngest Wilson had developed as a musician sufficiently to play alongside the horde of high-dollar session pros that big brother was now bringing into the studio. Carl's guitar playing [was] a key ingredient."^{[408][nb 15]}

Spirituality

The band members often reflected on the spiritual nature of their music (and music in general), particularly for the recording of *Pet Sounds* and *Smile*.^[410] Even though the Wilsons did not grow up in a particularly religious household,^[411] Carl was described as "the most truly religious person I know" by Brian, and Carl was forthcoming about the group's spiritual beliefs stating: "We believe in God as a kind of universal consciousness. God is love. God is you. God is me. God is everything right here in this room. It's a spiritual concept which inspires a great deal of our music."^[412] Carl told *Rave* magazine in 1967 that the group's influences are of a "religious nature", but not any religion in specific, only "an idea based upon that of Universal Consciousness. ... The spiritual concept of happiness and doing good to others is extremely important to the lyric of our songs, and the religious element of some of the better church music is also contained within some of our new work."^[413]

Brian is quoted during the *Smile* era: "I'm very religious. Not in the sense of churches, going to church; but like the essence of *all* religion."^[411] During the recording of *Pet Sounds*, Brian held prayer meetings, later reflecting that "God was with us the whole time we were doing this record ... I could feel that feeling in my brain."^[414] In 1966, he explained that he wanted to move into a white spiritual sound, and predicted that the rest of the music industry would follow suit.^[415] In 2011, Brian maintained the spirituality was important to his music, and that he did not follow any particular religion.^[416]

Carl said that *Smile* was chosen as an album title because of its connection to the group's spiritual beliefs.^[413] Brian referred to *Smile* as his "teenage symphony to God",^[417] composing a hymn, "Our Prayer", as the album's opening spiritual invocation.^[418] Experimentation with psychotropic substances also proved pivotal to the group's development as artists.^{[419][420]} He spoke of his LSD trips as a

"religious experience", and during a session for "Our Prayer", Brian can be heard asking the other Beach Boys: "Do you guys feel any acid yet?".^[421] In 1968, the group's interest in transcendental meditation led them to record the original song, "Transcendental Meditation".^[422]

Legacy

Achievements

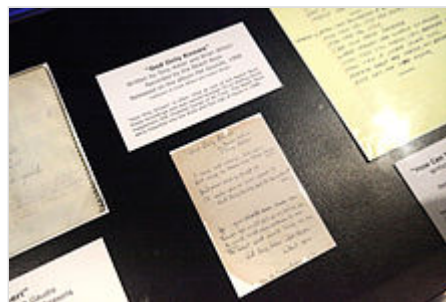
The Beach Boys are one of the most critically acclaimed, commercially successful,^{[10][423]} and influential bands of all time.^[424] They have sold over 100 million records worldwide.^[425] The group's early songs made them major pop stars in the US, the UK, Australia and other countries, having seven top 10 singles between April 1963 and November 1964.^[426] They were one of the first American groups to exhibit the definitive traits of a self-contained rock band, playing their own instruments and writing their own songs,^[427] and they were one of the few American bands formed prior to the 1964 British Invasion to continue their success.^[426] Among artists of the 1960s, they are one of the central figures in the histories of rock.^[428] Between the 1960s and 2020s, they had 37 songs reach the US Top 40 (the most by an American group) with four topping the *Billboard* Hot 100; they also hold Nielsen SoundScan's record as the top-selling American band for albums and singles.^[429]

Brian Wilson's artistic control over the Beach Boys' records was unprecedented for the time.^[430] Carl Wilson elaborated: "Record companies were used to having absolute control over their artists. It was especially nervy, because Brian was a 21-year-old kid with just two albums. It was unheard of. But what could they say? Brian made good records."^[129] This made the Beach Boys one of the first rock groups to exert studio control.^[431] Music producers after the mid-1960s would draw on Brian's influence, setting a precedent that allowed bands and artists to enter a recording studio and act as producers, either autonomously, or in conjunction with other like minds.^[432]

In 1988, the original five members (the Wilson brothers, Love, and Jardine) were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.^[10] Ten years later, they were selected for the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.^[433] In 2004, *Pet Sounds* was preserved in the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."^[434] Their recordings of "In My Room", "Good Vibrations", "California Girls" and the entire *Pet Sounds* album have been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.^[435]

The Beach Boys are one of the most influential acts of the rock era.^[175] In 2017, a study of AllMusic's catalog indicated the Beach Boys as the 6th most frequently cited artist influence in its database.^[436] In 2021, the staff of Ultimate Classic Rock ranked the Beach Boys as the top American band of all time; the publication's editor wrote in the group's entry that "few bands ... have had a greater impact on popular music."^[437]

California sound



A manuscript of "God Only Knows" displayed in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland



The Beach Boys appearing in a 1963 *Billboard* advertisement

Professor of cultural studies James M. Curtis wrote in 1987, "We can say that the Beach Boys represent the outlook and values of white Protestant Anglo-Saxon teenagers in the early sixties. Having said that, we immediately realize that they must mean much more than this. Their stability, their staying power, and their ability to attract new fans prove as much."^[426] Cultural historian Kevin Starr explains that the group first connected with young Americans specifically for their lyrical interpretation of a mythologized landscape: "Cars and the beach, surfing, the

California Girl, all this fused in the alembic of youth: Here was a way of life, an iconography, already half-released into the chords and multiple tracks of a new sound."^[438] In music critic Robert Christgau's opinion, "the Beach Boys were a touchstone for real rock and rollers, all of whom understood that the music had its most essential roots in an innocently hedonistic materialism."^[147]

The group's "California sound" grew to national prominence through the success of their 1963 album *Surfin' U.S.A.*,^[439] which helped turn the surfing subculture into a mainstream youth-targeted advertising image widely exploited by the film, television, and food industry.^[440] The group's surf music was not entirely of their own invention, being preceded by artists such as Dick Dale.^[441] However, previous surf musicians did not project a world view as the Beach Boys did.^[431] The band's earlier surf music helped raise the profile of the state of California, creating its first major regional style with national significance, and establishing a musical identity for Southern California, as opposed to Hollywood.^[442] California ultimately supplanted New York as the center of popular music thanks to the success of Brian's productions.^[430]

A 1966 article discussing new trends in rock music writes that the Beach Boys popularized a type of drum beat heard in Jan and Dean's "Surf City", which sounds like "a locomotive getting up speed", in addition to the method of "suddenly stopping in between the chorus and verse".^[365] Pete Townshend of the Who is credited with coining the term "power pop", which he defined as "what we play—what the Small Faces used to play, and the kind of pop the Beach Boys played in the days of 'Fun, Fun, Fun' which I preferred."^[443]

The California sound gradually evolved to reflect a more musically ambitious and mature worldview, becoming less to do with surfing and cars and more about social consciousness and political awareness.^[444] Between 1964 and 1969, it fueled innovation and transition, inspiring artists to tackle largely unmentioned themes such as sexual freedom, black pride, drugs, oppositional politics, other countercultural motifs, and war.^[445] Soft pop (later known as "sunshine pop") derived in part from this movement.^[446] Sunshine pop producers widely imitated the orchestral style of *Pet Sounds*; however, the Beach Boys themselves were rarely representative of the genre, which was rooted in easy-listening and advertising jingles.^[447]



The titular 1932 Ford that appeared on the cover to the platinum certified album *Little Deuce Coupe*

By the end of the 1960s, the California sound declined due to a combination of the West Coast's cultural shifts, Wilson's professional and psychological downturn, and the Manson murders, with David Howard calling it the "sunset of the original California Sunshine Sound ... [the] sweetness advocated by the

California Myth had led to chilling darkness and unsightly rot".^[448] Drawing from the Beach Boys' associations with Manson and former California governor Ronald Reagan, Erik Davis remarked, "The Beach Boys may be the only bridge between those deranged poles. There is a wider range of political and aesthetic sentiments in their records than in any other band in those heady times—like the state [of California], they expand and bloat and contradict themselves."^[276]

During the 1970s, advertising jingles and imagery were predominately based on the Beach Boys' early music and image.^[449] The group also inspired the development of the West Coast style later dubbed "yacht rock". According to Jacobin's Dan O'Sullivan, the band's aesthetic was the first to be "scavenged" by yacht rock acts like Rupert Holmes. O'Sullivan also cites the Beach Boys' recording of "Sloop John B" as the origin of yacht rock's preoccupation with the "sailors and beachgoers" aesthetic that was "lifted by everyone, from Christopher Cross to Eric Carmen, from 'Buffalo Springfield' folksters like Jim Messina to 'Philly Sound' rockers like Hall & Oates."^[450]

Innovations

Pet Sounds came to inform the developments of genres such as pop, rock, jazz, electronic, experimental, punk, and hip hop.^[451] Similar to subsequent experimental rock LPs by Frank Zappa, the Beatles, and the Who, *Pet Sounds* featured countertextual aspects that called attention to the very recordedness of the album.^[452] Professor of American history John Robert Greene stated that the album broke new ground and took rock music away from its casual lyrics and melodic structures into what was then uncharted territory. He furthermore called it one factor which spawned the majority of trends in post-1965 rock music, the only others being *Rubber Soul*, the Beatles' *Revolver*, and the contemporary folk movement.^[453] The album was the first piece in popular music to incorporate the Electro-Theremin, an easier-to-play version of the theremin, as well as the first in rock music to feature a theremin-like instrument.^[454] With *Pet Sounds*, they were also the first group to make an entire album that departed from the usual small-ensemble electric rock band format.^[455]

According to David Leaf in 1978, *Pet Sounds* and "Good Vibrations" "established the group as the leaders of a new type of pop music, Art Rock."^[456] Academic Bill Martin states that the band opened a path in rock music "that went from *Sgt. Pepper's* to *Close to the Edge* and beyond". He argues that the advancing technology of multitrack recording and mixing boards were more influential to experimental rock than electronic instruments such as the synthesizer, allowing the Beatles and the Beach Boys to become the first crop of non-classically trained musicians to create extended and complex compositions.^[457] In *Strange Sounds: Offbeat Instruments and Sonic Experiments in Pop*, Mark Brend writes:

Other artists and producers, notably the Beatles and Phil Spector, had used varied instrumentation and multi-tracking to create complex studio productions before. And others, like Roy Orbison, had written complicated pop songs before. But "Good Vibrations" eclipsed all that came before it, in both its complexity as a production and the liberties it took with conventional notions of how to structure a pop song.^[458]

The making of "Good Vibrations", according to Domenic Priore, was "unlike anything previous in the realms of classical, jazz, international, soundtrack, or any other kind of recording",^[459] while biographer Peter Ames Carlin wrote that it "sounded like nothing that had ever been played on the radio before."^[460]

It contained previously untried mixes of instruments, and was the first successful pop song to have cellos in a juddering rhythm.^[461] Musicologist Charlie Gillett called it "one of the first records to flaunt studio production as a quality in its own right, rather than as a means of presenting a performance".^[85] Again, Brian employed the use of Electro-Theremin for the track. Upon release, the single prompted an unexpected revival in theremins while increasing awareness of analog synthesizers, leading Moog Music to produce their own brand of ribbon-controlled instruments.^{[462][nb 16]} In a 1968 editorial for *Jazz & Pop*, Gene Sculatti predicted that the song "may yet prove to be the most significantly revolutionary piece of the current rock renaissance ... In no minor way, 'Good Vibrations' is a primary influential piece for all producing rock artists; everyone has felt its import to some degree".^[150]

Discussing *Smiley Smile*, Daniel Harrison argues that the album could "almost" be considered art music in the Western classical tradition, and that the group's innovations in the musical language of rock can be compared to those that introduced atonal and other nontraditional techniques into that classical tradition. He explains, "The spirit of experimentation is just as palpable ... as it is in, say, Schoenberg's op. 11 piano pieces."^[464] However, such notions were not widely acknowledged by rock audiences nor by the classically minded at the time.^[465] Harrison concludes: "What influences could these innovations then have? The short answer is, not much. *Smiley Smile*, *Wild Honey*, *Friends*, and *20/20* sound like few other rock albums; they are *sui generis*. ... It must be remembered that the commercial failure of the Beach Boys' experiments was hardly motivation for imitation."^[465] Musicologist David Toop, who included the *Smiley Smile* track "Fall Breaks and Back to Winter" on a companion CD for his book *Ocean of Sound*, placed the Beach Boys' effect on sound pioneering in league with Les Baxter, Aphex Twin, Herbie Hancock, King Tubby, and My Bloody Valentine.^[466]

Sunflower marked an end to the experimental songwriting and production phase initiated by *Smiley Smile*.^[467] After *Surf's Up*, Harrison wrote, their albums "contain a mixture of middle-of-the-road music entirely consonant with pop style during the early 1970s with a few oddities that proved that the desire to push beyond conventional boundaries was not dead," until 1974, "the year in which the Beach Boys ceased to be a rock 'n' roll act and became an oldies act."^[467]

Punk, alternative, and indie

In the 1970s, the Beach Boys served a "totemic influence" on punk rock that later gave way to indie rock. Brad Shoup of Stereogum surmised that, thanks to the Ramones' praise for the group, many punk, pop punk, or "punk-adjacent" artists showed influence from the Beach Boys, noting cover versions of the band's songs recorded by Slickee Boys, Agent Orange, Bad Religion, Shonen Knife, the Queers, Hi-Standard, the Descendents, the Donnas, M.O.D., and the Vandals. *The Beach Boys Love You* is sometimes considered the group's "punk album",^{[469][nb 17]} and *Pet Sounds* is sometimes advanced as the first emo album.^[471]

For the artier branches of post-punk, Wilson's pained vulnerability, his uses of offbeat instruments and his intricate harmonies, not to mention the *Smile* saga itself, became a touchstone, from Pere Ubu and XTC to REM [*sic*] and the Pixies to U2 and My Bloody Valentine.

— Music critic Carl Wilson (no relation to Beach Boys member Carl Wilson)^[468]

In the 1990s, the Beach Boys experienced a resurgence of popularity with the alternative rock generation.^[472] According to Sean O'Hagan, leader of the High Llamas and former member of Stereolab, a younger generation of record-buyers "stopped listening to indie records" in favor of the Beach Boys.^{[473][nb 18]} Bands who advocated for the Beach Boys included founding members of the Elephant 6 Collective (Neutral Milk Hotel, the Olivia Tremor Control, the Apples in Stereo, and of Montreal). United by a shared love of the group's music, they named Pet Sounds Studio in honor of the band.^{[475][476]} *Rolling Stone* writer Barry Walters wrote in 2000 that albums such as *Surf's Up* and *Love You* "are becoming sonic blueprints, akin to what early Velvet Underground LPs meant to the previous indie peer group."^[477] The High Llamas, Eric Matthews and Saint Etienne are among the "alt heroes" who contributed cover versions of "unreleased, overlooked or underappreciated Wilson/Beach Boys obscurities" on the tribute album *Caroline Now!* (2000).^[477]

The Beach Boys remained among the most significant influences on indie rock into the late 2000s.^[478] *Smile* became a touchstone for many bands who were labelled "chamber pop",^[468] a term used for artists influenced by the lush orchestrations of Brian Wilson, Lee Hazlewood, and Burt Bacharach.^[479] *Pitchfork* writer Mark Richardson cited *Smiley Smile* as the origin point of "the kind of lo-fi bedroom pop that would later propel Sebadoh, Animal Collective, and other characters."^[480] The *Sunflower* track "All I Wanna Do" is also cited as one of the earliest precursors to chillwave, a microgenre that emerged in 2009.^{[481][482]}

Landmarks

- The Wilsons' California house, where the Wilson brothers grew up and the group began, was demolished in 1986 to make way for Interstate 105, the Century Freeway. A Beach Boys Historic Landmark (California Landmark No. 1041 at 3701 West 119th Street), dedicated on May 20, 2005, marks the location.^[484]
- On December 30, 1980, the Beach Boys were awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located at 1500 Vine Street.^[485]
- On September 2, 1977, The Beach Boys performed before an audience of 40,000 at Narragansett Park in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which remains the largest concert audience in Rhode Island history. On August 9, 2017, a commemoration ceremony produced by Big Noise took place in Rhode Island with The Beach Boys, and the street where the concert stage formerly stood (at 510 Narragansett Park Drive) was officially renamed to "Beach Boys Way".^{[486][487][488][489]}
- On September 21, 2017, The Beach Boys were honored by Roger Williams University, along with Al Gomes and Connie Watrous of Big Noise, and plaques were unveiled to commemorate the band's concert on September 22, 1971, at the Baypoint Inn & Conference Center in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. The concert was the first-ever appearance of South African Ricky Fataar as an official member of the band and Filipino Billy Hinsche as a touring member, essentially changing the Beach Boys' live and recording act's line-up into a



The Beach Boys' star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located at 1500 Vine Street.^[483]

multi-cultural group. Diversity is a credo of Roger Williams University, which is why they chose to celebrate this moment in the band's history.^{[490][491]}

Members

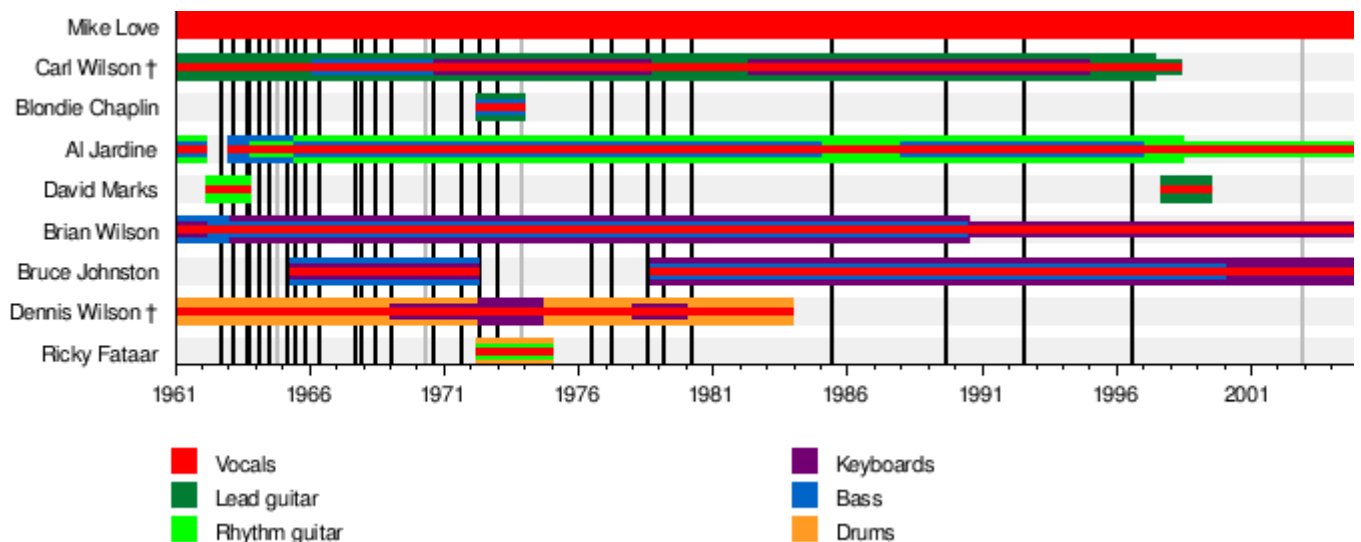
Current members

- Brian Wilson – lead vocals, harmony and backing vocals, keyboards, bass (1961–present)^[b]
- Mike Love – lead vocals, harmony and backing vocals, percussion, saxophone, electro-Theremin (1961–present)
- Al Jardine – harmony and backing vocals, lead vocals, rhythm guitar, bass (1961–1962, 1963–present)^[c]
- Bruce Johnston – harmony and backing vocals, occasional lead vocals, keyboards, bass (1965–1972, 1978–present)

Former members

- Carl Wilson – lead vocals, harmony and backing vocals, lead and rhythm guitars, bass, keyboards (1961–1998; died 1998)^[d]
- Dennis Wilson – harmony and backing vocals, lead vocals, drums, percussion, keyboards (1961–1983; died 1983)^[e]
- David Marks – harmony and backing vocals, occasional lead vocals, lead and rhythm guitars (1962–1963, 1997–1999, 2011–2012)
- Blondie Chaplin – harmony and backing vocals, occasional lead vocals, lead and rhythm guitars, slide guitar, bass (1972–1973)
- Ricky Fataar – harmony and backing vocals, occasional lead vocals, drums, percussion, rhythm guitar, pedal steel guitar, flute (1972–1974; touring 1971–1972^[492])

Timeline



Notable supporting musicians for both the Beach Boys' live performances and studio recordings included guitarist and session musician Glen Campbell, keyboardists Daryl Dragon and Toni Tennille (Captain & Tennille), keyboardist Billy Hinsche, bass guitarist Carol Kaye, guitarist Jeffrey Foskett, drummers John Cowsill and Hal Blaine, drummer and guitarist (and actor) John Stamos, and saxophonist Charles Lloyd.

Discography

Studio albums

- Surfin' Safari (1962)
- Surfin' U.S.A. (1963)
- Surfer Girl (1963)
- Little Deuce Coupe (1963)
- Shut Down Volume 2 (1964)
- All Summer Long (1964)
- The Beach Boys' Christmas Album (1964)
- The Beach Boys Today! (1965)
- Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!) (1965)
- Beach Boys' Party! (1965)
- Pet Sounds (1966)
- Smiley Smile (1967)
- Wild Honey (1967)
- Friends (1968)
- 20/20 (1969)
- Sunflower (1970)
- Surf's Up (1971)
- Carl and the Passions – "So Tough" (1972)
- Holland (1973)
- 15 Big Ones (1976)
- The Beach Boys Love You (1977)
- M.I.U. Album (1978)
- L.A. (Light Album) (1979)
- Keepin' the Summer Alive (1980)
- The Beach Boys (1985)
- Still Cruisin' (1989)
- Summer in Paradise (1992)
- Stars and Stripes Vol. 1 (1996)
- That's Why God Made the Radio (2012)

Selected archival releases

- The Pet Sounds Sessions (1997)
- Endless Harmony Soundtrack (1998)
- Ultimate Christmas (1998)

- *Hawthorne, CA* (2001)
- *The Smile Sessions* (2011)
- *The Big Beat 1963* (2013)
- *Keep an Eye on Summer 1964* (2014)
- *Becoming the Beach Boys: The Complete Hite & Dorinda Morgan Sessions* (2015)
- *Beach Boys' Party! Uncovered and Unplugged* (2015)
- *1967 – Sunshine Tomorrow* (2017)
- *Wake the World: The Friends Sessions* (2018)
- *I Can Hear Music: The 20/20 Sessions* (2018)
- *Feel Flows: The Sunflower & Surf's Up Sessions 1969–1971* (2021)
- *Sail On Sailor – 1972* (2022)

Filmography

- 1962: *One Man's Challenge*
- 1964: *T.A.M.I. Show*
- 1965: *The Girls on the Beach*
- 1965: *The Monkey's Uncle*
- 1971: *Good Vibrations from Central Park*
- 1976: *The Beach Boys: Good Vibrations Tour*
- 1979: *The Midnight Special*
- 1980: *Beach Boys 4th of July Celebration: Live from Queen Mary*
- 1980: *The Beach Boys: A Celebration Concert*
- 1981: *The Beach Boys: 20th Anniversary Special*
- 1985: *The Beach Boys: An American Band*
- 1987: *The Beach Boys: 25 Years Together*
- 1991: *The Beach Boys Live in Japan '91*
- 1993: *The Beach Boys Today*
- 1996: *The Beach Boys: Nashville Sounds*
- 1998: *Endless Harmony: The Beach Boys Story*
- 1998: *The Beach Boys: The Lost Concert 1964*
- 2002: *Good Timin': Live at Knebworth England 1980*
- 2004: *Sights + Sounds of Summer: The Very Best of The Beach Boys*
- 2006: *The Beach Boys: In London 1966*
- 2012: *The Beach Boys 50: Doin' It Again*
- 2012: *The 50th Reunion Tour*
- 2014: *The Beach Boys: Live at the Hollywood Bowl*
- 2016: *Classic Albums: Pet Sounds*
- 2023: *A Grammy Salute to The Beach Boys*
- 2024: *The Beach Boys* documentary on Disney+^[357]

Notes

1. Nick Venet said that none of the members, including Dennis, surfed until after the fact.^[9]

2. Since he did not appear on the first performance by the band that would become "the Beach Boys", most historians discount him as a true founding member of the group.^[13]
3. The only songs the group recorded were two Morgan compositions, "Barbie" and "What Is a Young Girl Made Of?"^[18]
4. He remembered "flipping out [over the Beatles]. I couldn't understand how a group could be just yelled and screamed at. The music they made, 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' for example, wasn't even that great a record, but the[ir fans] just screamed at it. ... It got us off our asses in the studio. [We] said 'look, don't worry about the Beatles, we'll cut our own stuff.'^[43] He recalled that he and Love immediately felt threatened by the Beatles, believing that the Beach Boys could never match the excitement created by the Beatles as performers, and that this realization led him to concentrate his efforts on trying to outdo them in the recording studio.^[44]
5. Contracts at that time stipulated that promoters hire "Carl Wilson plus four other musicians".^[56] Additionally, in February, July, and October, Brian rejoined the live group for one-off occasions.^[57]
6. For example, critics from *Rolling Stone* were wary of the group's changing music, with Ralph J. Gleason writing in January 1968: "The Beach Boys, when they were a reflection of an actuality of American society (i.e., Southern California hot rod, surfing and beer-bust fraternity culture), made music that had vitality and interest. When they went past that, they were forced inexorably to go into electronics and this excursion, for them, is of limited scope, good as the vibrations were."^[121]
7. Music critic Kenneth Partridge blamed the lack of "edginess" on the group's early records for why they are "rarely talked about in the same breath as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, and when they are, it's really only because of two albums".^[127]
8. Pursuant to the terms of their record contract, when the group missed their May 1973 deadline to deliver the *Smile* album, Warner Bros. deducted \$50,000 from the band's next advance.^[200]
9. According to Gaines, Guercio may have been fired because members of the group "felt Caribou was being overpaid", although "many observers suggest the Beach Boys followed an old pattern of jettisoning personnel when their financial situation improved."^[220] Biographer Mark Dillon states that the tour evaporated due to Dennis' budding romance with Karen Lamm, the ex-wife of Chicago keyboardist Robert Lamm.^[217]
10. According to Gaines, "When Brian signed the contract, he cried, knowing he would now have to go back to the studio full-time."^[242]
11. Love later explained that he had been "in a state of extreme sensitivity" after learning that his girlfriend was in a vegetative state following "a horrific car accident".^[248]
12. At a concert in Perth, Carl was so inebriated that he fell over mid-performance. The next day, he apologized for his poor performance on national television.^[257]
13. Starting with the 1970 sessions for the *Surf's Up* album, Stephen Desper remembers the emerging corrosive effects of Brian's incessant chain smoking and cocaine use: "He could still do falsettos and stuff, but he'd need Carl to help him. Either that or I'd modify the tape speed-wise to make it artificially higher, so it sounded like the old days."^[388]
14. The statement in question was, "from 1963 through 1966 Brian used studio musicians on the instrumental tracks."^{[406][400]}
15. Carl's lead and rhythm guitar playing is featured on several of the band's singles, including "I Get Around", "Fun, Fun, Fun", "Don't Worry Baby",^[409] "When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)", "Do You Wanna Dance?", and "Dance, Dance, Dance".^[408]
16. Even though the Electro-Theremin was not technically a theremin, the song became the most frequently cited example of the theremin in pop music.^[463]

17. In 2015, Wilson was asked about punk rock and responded: "I don't know what that is. Punk rock? Punk? What is that? ... Oh yeah. I never went for that. I never went for the fast kind of music. I go for the more medium tempo. Spencer Davis, I liked that."^[470]
18. When asked how he felt about "reintroducing Brian Wilson as an alternative music hero and getting people back into *Pet Sounds* and *SMiLE*," O'Hagan mentioned that a "few of the touring American bands have told me that we did have such an impact, especially in LA."^[474]

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External links

- [Official website \(<http://thebeachboys.com>\)](http://thebeachboys.com)
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