



# **Inside the Music of BRIAN WILSON**

**The Songs, Sounds, and Influences of  
the Beach Boys' Founding Genius**



**PHILIP  
LAMBERT**

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the Beach Boys' Founding Genius**

*Philip Lambert*



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*For my heroes—*

*Diane,*

*Alice,*

*and*

*Charlotte*

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## *Contents*

Prologue	vii
1. Awakenings	1
2. Surf Harmony	21
3. First Album	42
4. Surfin' U.S.A.	60
5. Produced by Brian Wilson	75
6. Catching Waves	101
7. Fun, Fun, Fun	126
8. Beach-Boys-Mania	147
9. Please Let Me Wonder	174
10. Beach Boys '65	194
11. Pet Sounds	222
12. American Gospel	253
13. A Cork on the Ocean	288
14. Love and Mercy	319
Appendix 1: Brian Wilson Song Chronology	331
Appendix 2: Four Freshmen Albums, 1955–1961	379
Appendix 3: Favorite Songs and Influences Through 1961	383
Sources	389
Index	395

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## Prologue

Do you remember the first time you heard *Pet Sounds*? It still takes my breath away, forty years later, but I'll never forget that jaw-dropping moment when Brian Wilson's masterpiece first entered my consciousness. It seemed just so far removed from anything that seemed possible in a rock album, so deep and sensitive and finely crafted that it surely came from a world beyond this one. Like other cultural icons, *Pet Sounds* has become a kind of contextual touchstone in my own experience, coming back to console me at moments of psychic necessity, recharging my artistic sensibilities just when they seemed to be depleted, miraculously appearing out of the tinny speakers at a motel pool in the Catskills some recent summer. It never grows old, never loses its youthful spirit or its brazen self-confidence, never stops me from wishing that I could hear it for the first time over and over again.

I've written this book because I had to know more about the remarkable creative spirit behind *Pet Sounds* and the Beach Boys. I wanted to know every detail about Brian Wilson's music before and after his *magnum opus*; I wanted to explore the music he heard as a child, when his prodigious gifts were emerging; I wanted to understand the technical basis of the sound worlds that are so distinctively his. Of course, I knew something about the life he has lived, especially the publicity-grabbing circumstances of his difficult childhood, up-and-down relationships with his brothers and the group that made him famous, battles with substance abuse and depression, and legal squabbles. But I was sure that his music alone told a story that was interesting on its own and that was naturally interwoven with his biography. That's the story I've set out to tell in this book, taking a perspective from within Brian Wilson's music, and looking out to correlative events in his life and the world beyond.

Do we really need another book about Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys? The public arena is already close to a saturation point on this subject, in the wake of Brian's *Smile* premiere in 2004 and important recent publications by Domenic Priore, Jim Fusilli, Charles L. Granata, Keith Badman, and Peter Ames Carlin. (These and all other sources are listed separately at the end of

this book.) Andrew G. Doe and John Tobler updated their “Complete Guide” to Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys not that long ago. And longtime fans, myself included, still revere some of the classic literature on Brian and the Beach Boys, by David Leaf, Timothy White, and Paul Williams. My book complements all these writings perfectly. They are all biographically oriented, and when they are about the “music” they are mostly about the circumstances of creation and/or recording, about the lyrics, or about general musical features. My book is more completely, and more intensely, focused on the music of Brian Wilson, on the musical essence of his songs and the aesthetic value of his artistic achievements. It acknowledges the familiar biographical contexts of his songs, but it tells completely new stories about the birth and evolution of his musical ideas, identifying important musical trends in his work, heretofore undisclosed intersong connections within his music, or between his music and that of others, and the nature and extent of his artistry. It aims not just to identify great songs, but to explain exactly what makes them so. It aspires to construct a firmer foundation for Brian Wilson’s place in rock history.

And yes, this book is about Brian Wilson, not specifically about the Beach Boys, insofar as the group can be separated from its original creative heartbeat. My discussion of the early years isn’t just about Brian’s work with his main group but also about absolutely every other musical endeavor he is known to have pursued, with the likes of Jan & Dean and the Honeybees and numerous other friends and collaborators. My discussion of Beach Boys albums after 1967, when Brian started to become less involved with group operations, centers only on Brian’s contributions and skips over aspects of those albums that Brian apparently had nothing to do with. But by the late 1980s he was emerging as a solo artist, and so in the later chapters my attention simply shifts to the projects he was pursuing on his own and with new collaborators outside his original group. The discussions are mostly chronological and aspire to tell a story of musical development and ambition that a reader who knows the music and who is able to dial up tunes on a disc or mp3 player can easily follow.

I spend much more time on the early years, from Brian’s youth through *Smile*, than I do on the decades since. Some readers will probably take exception to this strategy, wondering why I don’t seem to like *Sunflower* as much as they do. Actually, I do like *Sunflower* quite a bit, and *Friends*, and Brian’s 1988 solo album, and many other things he has done in recent years. But what really interests me is the period of artistic growth and development that led up to his work on *Pet Sounds* and *Smile* in 1966 and 1967. At that time, he reached a pinnacle of musical achievement to which he has never since aspired. He’s written some great songs since 1967, but he’s never worked to redefine an art form or rattle cultural foundations as he did back then. After the *Smile* debacle of 1967, all that was left was to continue to explore ideas and materials with

which he was already familiar; his thirst for something earth-shakingly new was quenched. This reminds me of what Richard Corliss, writing in the online edition of *Time* magazine in 2001, called the “25 game”:

Think of any classic rock-pop star or composer of the '50s or '60s. Divide his career (or hers—but who are we kidding? the form was almost exclusively a guy thing) into two categories: everything he created or performed by the time he was 25 years old, and everything he did afterward. You can take only the early work or the mature music to a desert island that, funnily enough, has a Discman and a lifetime supply of batteries. Now choose which category you prefer.

In almost every case, from Elvis to Jerry Lee Lewis to Phil Spector and the Brill Building songwriters, the Beatles, Stones, Dylan. . . I'd pick the early years. Then, as now, rock was a young man's game, passion, art. In their relative infancy, people accomplished amazing musical feats, stuff that still thrills. It was harder for them to improve on, or even equal, the sounds they heard in their head, and sang when they were too young to vote.

Brian Wilson turned twenty-five in June of 1967, just as *Smile* was disappearing into rock mythology. That he returned to it in 2003, at age sixty-one, just makes the story that much more interesting, and complicated. But it's a great story, and one worth retelling from every possible angle.

Appendix 1 at the end of the book contains a comprehensive list of Brian's songwriting and/or production projects, ordered chronologically by first recording date to approximate a broad historical overview of his life in music. It's intended not only as a reference point for readers of this book but also as a resource listing of the current state of knowledge of Brian's career. By consulting the chronology along with listening to the music being discussed in the main text, readers should be able to enrich their understanding of Brian's music and activities even further. The chronology includes every known project that seems likely to have existed, and therefore includes recordings that may be lost, destroyed, or officially unreleased. In the main chapters of the book, however, I focus mostly on recordings that are officially available, and hope that readers who aren't able to listen to everything under discussion can at least appreciate the significance of each recording or project within the unfolding narrative.

A view “inside” Brian's music, or anyone's music, naturally centers on the tools and materials of a songwriter's craft. My approach to a song recognizes its emotional and lyrical resonance with the listener, and its relevance to Brian's life outside the studio, but it also asks questions about the combinations of sounds and rhythms that are woven together to create the musical fabric. I consider fundamental musical features that creative artists have always explored: the subtleties of thematic interrelations, the structure of chord progressions, the drama of musical form. Sometimes I ask the reader to

join me in a careful, focused listening, searching for elements of sound and construction that might lurk beneath the musical surface of a song. In Chapter 8, for example, I focus attention on the xylophone lead-in at the beginning of "All Summer Long" (from the Beach Boys' 1964 *All Summer Long* album) and ask the reader to hear echoes of this figure in the vocal lines when the verse begins. Throughout the book I make similar requests when discussing many other songs in the vast Brian Wilson catalogue. These observations will reflect my belief that connections between different elements of a song, even those that may not strike the listener right away, upon casual listening, help give the music extra artistic substance to go along with the more direct appeal of its sound and style.

I adopt a similar perspective to reveal connections between songs, either different Brian Wilson songs or songs by Brian and songs by others. I contend in Chapter 4, for example, that Brian's early song "Lana" (on the Beach Boys' 1963 *Surfin' U.S.A.* album) shares musical ideas with the Jerry Lee Lewis song "Great Balls of Fire" (1957), Eddie Cochran's "C'mon Everybody" (1958), the Coasters' "Run, Red, Run" (1960), and the Pomus/Shuman classic "Sweets for My Sweet" (best known in the 1961 recording by the Drifters). I make this assertion even though the melodies of these songs are not at all alike; the "Lana" tune features long notes and triad tones, whereas the four predecessor melodies move quickly and mostly stepwise around different parts of the scale. The connection isn't in the melodies, however, but in the chord changes: all four songs feature exactly the same progression, consisting of major triads projected upward by the distance of a fourth followed by a further step up, a step back to repeat the second chord, and then a return to the starting chord. In the key of C, this progression would present major triads on C, then F, followed by G, F again, and C again. I don't mean to minimize the importance of melody, but I do want to recognize the crucial role played by harmony and other musical elements in the craft of songwriting.

When identical chord progressions are set with the same rhythmic profile, again without a melodic similarity, the relationship can be even stronger and more worthy of attention. "Lana" presents its chords in proportions of 2+2+1+1+2: two bars of the first chord, two of the second, one each of the third and fourth, and finally two bars of the initial chord again. This is exactly the way the presentation of the same chord progression is proportioned in "Great Balls Of Fire" and "Run, Red, Run," while "C'mon Everybody" uses the same proportions but does it twice as fast. This doesn't necessarily mean that "Lana" is "based on" these songs, or "derived from" them, but it does mean they are close musical cousins and present a songwriter with similar musical issues and challenges, aspects that a sensitive musician such as Brian Wilson certainly had in his mind as he heard the earlier songs on the radio in the years before he wrote "Lana."

In other instances, related songs will have similar melodies, or similar rhythms, or similar basic grooves, and their chord changes may be different. Their connections still may not be immediately obvious, but I'm interested in knowing exactly how they are related, and what steps a songwriter might have gone through to create a new song by bringing together elements of existing songs. I'll argue that the process of producing a new song by modeling aspects of an existing song or songs is central to a songwriter's craft, especially in the early stages of a career. In Brian's case, which I believe is typical, exercises in derivation and modeling are always key elements of his basic methods. Fortunately, he is often very specific about his artistic debts and influences, and I will mention these as they become relevant.

Finally, a word about a source. The book *Wouldn't It Be Nice: My Own Story*, credited to "Brian Wilson with Todd Gold," has been described as an "autobiography" and a "memoir," but its authorship and authority have been seriously challenged. In separate articles published in *Billboard* magazine just after the book came out in 1991, David Leaf, Timothy White, and Neal McCabe raised important questions about the book's credibility in light of its relationship to earlier writings on Brian and the Beach Boys. McCabe finds that Gold borrowed extensively from Jules Siegel, Paul Williams, Tom Nolan, and White, and he cites specific correspondences with passages from books by Steven Gaines and Leaf. Testifying in court a few years later, Brian admitted to only minimal involvement in the project, saying that he sat for just "thirty to forty hours of interviews" with Gold and that he only "skimmed through a draft of the book prior to publication." The last part of the book reads like a defense of the methods of Brian's controversial therapist, Dr. Eugene Landy, and could easily have been essentially written by Landy; at the very least, Landy was a close partner in the writing and production process, as court documents have confirmed. The book is plagued by factual misstatements, language and opinions that are implausibly Brian's, and text that defies credulity, such as purportedly firsthand accounts of meetings or events that took place outside of Brian's presence.

Nonetheless, I don't believe it's advisable to dismiss *Wouldn't It Be Nice* entirely. Material lifted from other publications without attribution may be evidence of dubious ethical practices at best—plagiarism at worst—and may not represent the literal recollections of the putative memoirist, but that doesn't make it necessarily inaccurate. Information provided by Landy may be flagrantly motivated by self-interest and legal maneuverings—White writes that the book reads like a "legal brief" in support of Brian's litigation to reclaim publishing rights to his songs—but it may still provide some nuggets of truth about Brian's day-to-day existence while under Landy's care. In defense of his work and methods, Todd Gold told Richard Harrington of the *Washington Post* in 1991 that "any celebrity book relies on extensive culling of magazine articles and past interviews and recycling," but that

“everything was paraphrased to the best of our ability as told through Brian’s eyes.” Harrington also reveals that Gold relied upon notes made by Henry Edwards during interviews for a similar, ultimately aborted, book project in 1987.

*Wouldn’t It Be Nice: My Own Story* can be useful, I think, if accessed through the proper filters. I don’t accept the book’s text at face value, but if it’s consistent with other sources and rings true, I’m willing to consider it a qualified authority. The Landy material has to be read in light of the therapist’s personal and legal agendas, and yet the accounts of Brian’s therapeutic experiences seem unlikely to be wholesale fabrications, especially in light of the patient’s physical and mental states before and after therapy. When I draw from the book in the pages that follow, I always do so after careful and studious application of all required filters, when I believe that reasonable tests of authority and accuracy have been satisfied.

The real story, after all, is in the music.

## Chapter 1

# Awakenings

Our journey through the music of Brian Wilson begins with a close look at his early musical experiences and the original blossoming of his creative gifts. Biographical sources have much to say about the musical environment of his childhood in Hawthorne, California, from his birth in 1942 through his formative years, including experiences shared with his younger brothers Dennis (1944–1983) and Carl (1946–1998) and their slightly older cousin Mike Love (born in 1941). As we move through Brian’s teen years in the late 1950s, we find a wealth of information about the songs that the brothers and friends were listening to and absorbing, at home, at school, and floating through the night air from one car to the next on the main drag. All this together amounts to a rich account of Brian Wilson’s musical roots.

### A PASSION FOR MUSIC

The Wilsons were a musical family. “There was always music filtering through our house,” says Brian in his book *Wouldn’t It Be Nice*. Brian’s parents Murry and Audree Wilson, would play duets on the piano and organ, their repertoire no doubt including songs written by Murry himself as well as patriotic songs and popular hymns. “Brian and Audree used to listen to records together, everything from Henry Mancini to Rosemary Clooney to the Hi-Lo’s and, of course, the Four Freshmen,” writes biographer David Leaf. Family gatherings, which often included Murry’s sister’s family, including cousin Mike, were musical events, centered on group sing-alongs and impromptu talent shows. Music became the glue that held the family together even while other aspects of their personal dynamics, mostly traceable to Murry’s volatile temper and stern manner, threatened to break them apart.

Murry noticed musical talent in his eldest son right away. "When he was eleven and a half months," Murry recalls in Byron Preiss's "authorized biography" of the Beach Boys, "I would carry Brian on my shoulders with his little hands up above and I would sing, 'Caissons Go Rolling Along' and he could hum the whole song. He was very clever and quick." Well, David Leaf and other sources have Brian humming not the official song of the U.S. Army but the "Marine Corps Hymn" ("From the halls of Montezuma . . .") in these little displays. In any case, it's clear that Brian revealed his talent at an early age and was in an environment that would nourish and nurture it. When Brian was two, according to Audree, he was singing nursery rhymes, and when he was three "he'd sing right on key. He loved to hear me play the piano, he loved the chords and he'd say, 'Play that chord again.'" In *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, Brian also traces his interest in songwriting to these tender years: "I was five years old when I showed an initial interest in songwriting. I asked my dad who wrote a particular song he was playing. 'Brian,' he smiled proudly, 'that's a Murry Wilson song.' I was impressed."

By the age of seven, Brian's vocal gifts were already becoming legendary and he began to sing in public. His mother recalls, "When Brian was seven, he had a beautiful voice, and would often sing with the church choir. He was a soloist. One time, a lady heard him sing and asked if he could sing with the choir at her church for Christmas . . . he was just a little guy, and it was really a thrill to see Brian with this chorus behind him. They did 'We Three Kings of Orient Are,' and he did a solo . . . an incredibly talented guy." He also sang at school functions and developed an early confidence in an ability to shape and personalize a tune. His mentors began to recognize a prodigious musical ear as well—and in this case, literally a single "ear," for he had permanently lost his sense of hearing on the right side. "Brian also sang in the choir at Inglewood Covenant Church," writes Charles Granata, "where the director discovered that, even with his hearing loss, the boy had perfect pitch."

Meanwhile, Brian also began to teach himself to play the piano. At first he learned the keyboard on the accordion as well, but as Audree recalled, this experience was short-lived: "Brian took accordion lessons on one of those little, baby accordions for six weeks. And the teacher said, 'I don't think he's reading. He hears it just once and plays the whole thing perfectly.'" Soon he became enamored of the piano in the "music room" that Murry had created by converting the garage. Carl remembered, "We always had a couple of pianos and a jukebox in the house. We had a garage that my dad fixed up into a den. We'd all get around the piano; my mom would play, and later Brian started to play. By age 10, he was already playing a great boogie-woogie!" And, "There were many years of Brian's life where he did nothing but play the piano. Months at a time. Days on end. Four Freshmen records. Just all music."

The soundtrack of Brian's early years was first dominated by George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Brian has said that he considers Gershwin's mas-

terpiece to be “the very first song I was exposed to.” “There’s no better way to come into this world,” he said, “than to hear a song like that being played. . . . I’m certain every time I hear it that I’m going back to age two. Actually, when I was two weeks old, they used to play *Rhapsody in Blue* at my grandmother’s house, where my mother used to go visit a lot.” At home, Audree would play Brian the Glenn Miller big-band rendition over and over. It’s easy to see what was so compelling about Gershwin’s music, from the lush orchestration to the skillfully crafted melodies to the colors and subtleties of the score’s robust harmonic palette. “The Gershwin masterpiece left an indelible imprint on my soul,” gushes Brian in his book. “I still hear every emotion I’ve ever experienced in that piece, which became seminal to my life.”

As Brian made his way through adolescence he began to involve his family more and more in his musical passions. Dennis remembers singing three-part harmony with his brothers “every Friday night in the back seat” of the family car. The whole family, usually excepting Dennis, would gather around the piano and learn parts to Four Freshmen arrangements: Brian would “teach Murry the bass line,” recalled Audree, “and I could read well enough to read my line, and then he would teach Carl.” After Brian received a tape recorder for his sixteenth birthday in 1958, he began to experiment with different vocal combinations and tape-enhanced sing-alongs. Eventually he arranged music for performance at school and even explored his father’s songwriting efforts, at one point spending “an entire week working on an instrumental he wrote.”

Brian’s friendship with Mike Love began to awaken an interest in rock and roll. Mike recalls, “Brian had an old Rambler, and he used to come over to my house a lot and hang out and sing. . . . We used to sleep in the bunks and I’d have a transistor radio on under the covers so we could listen to the late-night Rhythm and Blues on KGFJ and KDAY.” When Mike’s dad threw them out of the house they would just relocate to the car, sometimes staying there all night. In the summer of 1961, Brian and Mike began to sing as much as listen: “nearly every weekend,” Brian recalls, they would get together with Mike’s sister Maureen and “bang out every hit” over the course of an entire weekend day, with Brian “playing piano and doing background harmonies and Maureen and Mike singing lead.” Brian has said that he considers these experiences to be essential aspects of his musical education: “Every record had something you’d listen to—every record had some kind of twist in it that gave you the feeling that says, ‘Oh man!’ You’d go to the piano, you’d say, ‘How’d they do that?’ Start learning about it. It’s an education! Anybody with a good ear is gonna pick up on those songs and go to the piano.” His brother Carl had the same passions and also helped cultivate Brian’s interest in rock and roll. Recalls Brian, “Johnny Otis, an R&B mainstay and L.A. club fixture, had a popular radio show on station KFOX. Carl and I stayed up countless nights listening to Otis’s nine-to-midnight show, talking about what we were hearing and adding the new songs to our musical vocabulary. What got me were the

vocals. Instrumentally, the records were simple, nothing sophisticated in terms of music or production. But the singing was a groove. There was a flair to the leads.”

Ultimately what Brian learned and absorbed in his youth inspired him not only to reproduce what he heard, vocally and instrumentally, but to create something of his own. In *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, one of his earliest recollections of a creative streak reaches all the way back to elementary school:

One day my fourth grade teacher . . . told the class a story about lumberjacking and Paul Bunyan. At the end of the day, the teacher asked us to create a project at home related to what we had learned. Something creative, she said, like a collage, a poem, a painting, or a song. I spent hours looking around the house for anything to do with lumberjacking. Then inspiration struck. I raced to my bedroom closet and pulled out a toy ukulele my dad had given me. I knew four chords and gave the uke a couple of strums. It was an epiphany. My dad wrote songs; I told myself that I could write songs too. I started to write my first one that afternoon.

Timothy White describes a similar event, perhaps the same one refracted through the imperfections of long-term memory: “One of Brian’s first attempts at songwriting was a gold-rush-inspired rewrite of Stephen Foster’s ‘Oh! Susannah,’ which nine-year-old Brian wrote in longhand on two pieces of plain school paper, carefully dating the effort May 3, 1952. He titled it ‘Song of the Gold Diggers.’” By the time he reached high school Brian was writing and arranging music for friends and finding ways to mix music with sports and parties and other aspects of teenage life. He took music classes in his junior and senior years, although he somehow lost interest in the piano sonata he was assigned to compose for his twelfth-grade music teacher Fred Morgan and instead submitted a tune that may have eventually become “Surfin’”

## THE FOUR FRESHMEN

Let’s explore the most profound influence on Brian Wilson’s early musical development, the music of the Four Freshmen. Brian’s passion for the Freshmen started one afternoon in the car, according to the account in *Wouldn't It Be Nice*. He heard the opening of “Day by Day” and “bolted forward,” demanding to know the name of the group and, ultimately, pleading for his mother to buy him an album. She relented, and Brian acquired a treasured possession for a young enthusiast of the vocal arts, *Four Freshmen and Five Trombones*, the group’s second album (released 2/8/56). It didn’t contain “Day by Day”—which was released as a single in June of 1955 but didn’t appear on an album until the group’s third LP, *Freshmen Favorites*, came out in July of 1956—but it did feature some of their classic numbers, including “Angel Eyes,” which had been released as a single in February 1956 (b/w “Love Is Just

Around the Corner”), and “Love Is Here to Stay.” Something in the Freshmen sound struck a nerve with Brian: it “triggered something in my brain” and “started a year-long obsession.” “Some people have religious experiences,” Brian says in his book. “Others experience births or deaths. For me, that record was life-changing.”

Of course this was no ordinary fascination. Brian didn’t just listen but he absorbed, digested, and, ultimately, deconstructed. As he acquired as many Freshmen records as he could and then played them “till the grooves wore out,” he began to gain an understanding of jazz harmony that no school could teach him. Here’s how Brian has described his processes of discovery: “I used to sit by my mom and dad’s hi-fi and I would play a little bit of the Four Freshmen’s music, take the needle off the record and go to the piano and try and figure out the music.” And, “I absorbed every note of every song, figuring out how the lush, intricate harmonies were woven together, discovering on my own how to do it myself.” Ultimately he began to make his own arrangements in Four Freshmen style: the 2001 *Hawthorne* CD compilation includes a primitive recording from around 1960 of his arrangement of “Happy Birthday” in Freshmen-style harmony, complete with chromatic moving lines and jazz chord shadings.

Just as important, in singing along with the Freshmen records, he also began to develop his distinctive singing style. David Leaf writes, “By the hour, he would sing along with the Four Freshmen records, stretching his vocal range so that he developed a unique voice—he could sing high without resorting to falsetto. At the same time, he developed a beautiful effortless falsetto that would eventually be the soaring sound of the Beach Boy records.” In Brian’s words, the Four Freshmen’s top tenor, Bob Flanigan, “taught me how to sing high.”

Eventually he was singing Four Freshmen songs with anyone who would join him—his brothers, parents, cousins, and a network of musical acquaintances that included Alan Jardine, a friend from high school. What exactly were they singing? In addition to the *Five Trombones* album, he has specifically recalled owning *Freshmen Favorites* (rel. 7/30/56) and *Voices in Love* (10/6/58); he told Paul Williams in 1995 that *Voices in Love* “is probably the greatest single vocal album I’ve ever heard in my whole life.” Among his favorite individual cuts from Freshmen albums was apparently one of the group’s earliest recordings, “It’s a Blue World,” which was released as a single in 1952 and appeared on their first album, *Voices in Modern*, in 1955. Brian is said to have adapted this song for the entire family to sing, and in high school he used it for a class music lesson in which he had to plot a song’s “lyric structure according to singing breaths and pauses.” He also performed it with a group of friends at several local events in the summer of 1960, according to Peter Ames Carlin. In the 1996 film *I Just Wasn’t Made for These Times*, Brian uses the initial chord progression from “I Remember April,” a cut on *Voices in Love*, to

demonstrate Freshmen-style harmony, suggesting that he had also studied this arrangement closely (although he doesn't specifically identify it in the film). And let's not forget the two Freshmen songs ultimately performed by the Beach Boys, "Graduation Day," which had been a successful single for the Freshmen in May of '56—and was another well-worn cut on the *Freshmen Favorites* album—and "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring," a January '61 release on *The Freshman Year*. But it's safe enough to assume that Brian had learned essentially every Four Freshmen song that was out during his formative years. The Freshmen manager, Bill Wagner, has recalled a day when a sixteen-year-old Brian visited him at his Los Angeles office just to "sit here and absorb"; Brian finally convinced Wagner that he knew "every note of every Freshmen record that you've got" by singing each part in turn along with a recording of "The Day Isn't Long Enough," a 1952 single that appeared on the 1956 *Freshmen Favorites* album.

So, to get a sense of some of the sounds swirling inside a teenaged Brian Wilson's brain, we need only take a look at the music released by the Four Freshmen during that time period. In Appendix 2, I've listed the contents of all of the Four Freshmen studio albums up through 1961 and their songwriting credits. One could argue that this listing extends too far: Brian has mentioned that by 1960 or thereabouts "I was finished with the Four Freshmen," and it's clear that his interest and intensity peaked around 1958. On the other hand, he was still involved enough with the Freshmen sound to pluck "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring" from the 1961 *Freshman Year* LP for performances by his own fledgling group, including an early demo dated April 1962 (included on the 1993 *Good Vibrations* boxed set), and a version of this song from 1963 with new lyrics by Mike Love, in tribute to James Dean ("A Young Man Is Gone" on the Beach Boys' *Little Deuce Coupe* album). So I'm using 1961 as a terminus for Brian's Four Freshmen awareness, keeping in mind that he probably knew the albums up through 1959 best. Within the 168 cuts on the fourteen albums listed in Appendix 2 are classic songs of America's golden era of popular song, from "After You've Gone" (1918) to "Again" (1948). Among the great songwriters represented are Irving Berlin ("Be Careful It's My Heart"), Jerome Kern ("The Last Time I Saw Paris," "Yesterdays," "Long Ago [And Far Away]"), Cole Porter ("Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye," "In the Still of the Night"), Hoagy Carmichael ("The Nearness of You," "I Get Along Without You Very Well," and two others), Richard Rodgers ("My Heart Stood Still," "Spring Is Here," "My Funny Valentine," and three others), Harold Arlen ("Over the Rainbow," "Stormy Weather," "It's Only a Paper Moon," and five others), Jimmy Van Heusen ("It Could Happen to You," "I Could Have Told You," "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," and four others), and of course Brian's revered hero George Gershwin ("Somebody Loves Me," "Love Is Here to Stay," "Liza," "Mine"). If Bob Flanagan 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.

A close listening to these fourteen Four Freshmen albums amounts to a rich education in the art of songwriting. There are relatively simple ditties, like “You Made Me Love You,” but many more elegant, sophisticated melodies, like “Love Is Here to Stay” and “Angel Eyes.” Most of them follow some variation of the four-part song forms typical of Tin Pan Alley. One possibility is to present an initial part twice, possibly with variation the second time, followed by a bridge and then a return to the original part, or AABA. “Graduation Day” is a good example:

A     It's a time a for joy  
       A time for tears  
       A time we'll treasure through the years  
       We'll remember always  
       Graduation day

A     At the senior prom  
       We danced 'til three  
       And then you gave your heart to me  
       We'll remember always  
       Graduation day

B     Though we leave in sorrow  
       All the joys we've known  
       We can face tomorrow  
       Knowing we'll never walk alone

A     When the ivy walls  
       Are far behind  
       No matter where our paths may wind  
       We'll remember always  
       Graduation day

A second possibility also has four main parts but repeats the first part as the third part and then does something different in the second and fourth parts, ABAC. The *C* part may or may not resemble the *B* part; in “It’s a Blue World,” *C* sounds like *B* at first but then takes off in a different direction:

A     It's a blue world  
       Without you  
       It's a blue world  
       Alone

B     My days and nights  
       That once were filled with heaven  
       With you away  
       How empty they have grown

- A     It's a blue world  
       From now on  
       It's a through world  
       For me
- C     The sea, the sky,  
       My heart and I  
       We're all an indigo hue  
       Without you, it's a blue world

Often there is a refrain of some sort (as in "It's a Blue World," in the last line of part C), but rarely do we find a straightforward alternation of verse and chorus more typical of folk and other popular music. The key of the music often becomes unstable and may change briefly somewhere in the middle, especially in the bridge of AABA ("The Last Time I Saw Paris," "Graduation Day"), or may move up a half step for good somewhere near the end ("Day by Day," "The Night We Called It a Day"), as happens in one of Brian's earliest songs, "Surfer Girl," and in many varieties of popular music. Chord progressions are always colorful, even when based on a fairly simple bass line ("The Very Thought of You," "That's the Way I Feel"), but often they are richly chromatic and flavored with chords from outside the key ("You Stepped Out of a Dream," "While You Are Gone").

Further, Brian's self-directed musical education involved more than just the song itself; it also included the arrangement, especially the vocal writing, largely the work of renowned arrangers Pete Rugolo or Dick Reynolds along with members of the group. Although the first Freshmen album, *Voices in Modern*, includes a fair amount of solo work, most of the cuts on the other albums feature their distinctive four-part vocal sound, with the top line presenting the melody, alternating with solos or unisons. In general, a texted melody with non-texted background (common in doo-wop) is comparatively rare. In his book about the Four Freshmen, founding member Ross Barbour explains that the alternations between thick choral textures and thinner solo or unison passages were originally conceived "to give Bob [Flanigan] a break from his high register work," and to provide "a pensive and restful contrast to the aggressive full sound of our four-part blend." Other key elements of the Freshmen sound, as highlighted by Barbour, are the wide distances between parts, creating a sense of openness not usually found in other vocal groups of the time, and the movement of lower voices while the upper melody holds a note. These aspects, combined with their sophisticated jazz chord shadings, surely presented a formidable challenge to a young Brian Wilson working to understand the Freshmen sound from the inside out. That he was able to do so with such success is testament to the strength of his passion for this music and the acuity of his musical ear.

The Freshmen arrangements in general carry a pervasive allure and series of lessons in record production. Indeed, the overall conception of many Four Freshmen tracks demonstrates how an arranger's effort can be an art unto itself. A passionate student could absorb an endless variety of tempo variations, harmonic tricks, and sudden breaks in mood that take the listener down unforeseen musical pathways. In "The Nearness of You," from the group's first album and mostly featuring a single soloist with occasional (and uncharacteristic) background "oohs," the second time through the bridge ("When you're in my arms. . .") surprisingly features a brief moment of four-part harmony ("All my wildest dreams come true"), sounding like an angelic choir appearing from the heavens and then disappearing as quickly as it arrived. Something similar happens near the end of "Now You Know," a single release from 1951 that later appeared on *Freshmen Favorites*, with the brief interjection of an *a cappella* chorale, in a formal, "churchy" style ("If I haven't told you know you know"). The *a cappella* chorale, in or out of rhythm, became a signature of the group's style, especially as an introduction or epilogue. The resulting juxtapositions of an overall jazzy style with the invocation of a sacred, "learned" style has many parallels in the instrumental writing, such as the "Baroque" introduction to "Long Ago (and Far Away)" and the use of the harpsichord in most of the arrangements on the *First Affair* album.

Also influential on a young, developing songwriter/producer would be the thematic aspects of many Four Freshmen albums. Virtually from the beginning, the group tried to view each album as a totality, as something more than a collection of disparate songs. In some cases the theme is fairly superficial: there are two albums of "favorites"—collections of earlier single releases and miscellaneous material—and there are albums with themes of instruments ("5 Trombones," "5 Trumpets," "5 Saxes," "5 Guitars," "Brass"), ethnic identity ("Voices in Latin"), and lyric subject matter ("Voices in Fun"). But the albums about "love" are more than just thematic; they display song orderings and intertrack connections that make them seem more like precursors to the "concept album."

Let's take a closer look at one example of this, *Voices in Love* of 1958. Here's the album's track listing:

1. I'm Always Chasing Rainbows
2. There Is No Greater Love
3. Moonlight
4. It Could Happen to You
5. Out of Nowhere
6. In the Still of the Night
7. I'll Remember April
8. While You Are Gone
9. Warm

10. Time Was (Duerme)
11. You're All I See
12. I Heard You Cried Last Night (and So Did I)

The album begins with a search for love, but it's no more than "chasing rainbows" and is all "in vain," as we hear at the end of song one. With the second song, however, the protagonist has found his love and pronounces it gladly, even with no signs that his affections are returned. The "moonlight" of song three illuminates the depths of his feelings, although he still can't be sure if the woman feels the same way. He then takes the bold step of telling her plainly how he feels in song four: "it could happen," and it did. It came "out of nowhere," says song five, in all its mystery, and with all its blind hope of mutual affection, still unconfirmed. In song six, "in the still of the night," he has to ask her: "Do you love me as I love you?" But he still has no answer, only the memories of the spring when his love blossomed in song seven, shadowed by the grays of autumn, when the world is losing its beauty. Now he is getting desperate and fearful: in song eight he asks, "how can I repair this broken heart?" He finally gets his answer in song nine:

### **Warm**

Warm, my lips against your lips  
And warm my fingertips  
By giving me your hand

So warm, to have you close to me,  
And hold you tenderly  
I never felt so grand

All of my life  
I walked in the cold  
Till I found your warm arms  
Were heaven to hold

So please don't ever let me go  
For I could never know  
A love that is so warm

While again professing his love—saying that only the warmth of her arms can protect him from the cold, cruel world—he can now rejoice because she has given him her hand; the warmth soothes in both directions. Song ten looks back on the memories they've shared, with great hopes for the future, and song eleven simply revels in the love he feels, now fully satisfying because it is shared. The album's final song also reflects on the whole experience ("last night"), recalling the good and the bad but finally affirming that she need "cry no more."

The album *Love Lost*, of the following year, takes the artistry a step further. While presenting a similar narrative about love lost and found, the songs in this album are linked by newly composed vocal interludes that modulate the key from one song to the next while giving the whole experience a strong sense of unity and direction. Although the Freshmen didn't utilize linking interludes again in later albums, they did continue to produce lyrically organized albums in subsequent years, including *First Affair* and *Freshman Year*. Some Hi-Lo's albums, especially *Love Nest* (1958), are similarly unified by theme and narrative. These ideas would remain with Brian in the coming years, when he would be planning Beach Boys albums based on themes of surfing and hot rods, and when he was conceiving album-length song cycles of his own, *Pet Sounds* and *Smile*.

## MUSIC IN THE AIR

It's safe to assume that Brian didn't study all of the music of his youth with the same intensity he brought to his exploration of Four Freshmen albums. Nevertheless, the music he heard on the radio, at home or in the car or in one of his late-night marathons over at the Love house, exerted an influence on his artistic development that was equally resonant. Now let's take a closer look at pop and rock-and-roll music of the late 1950s and early 1960s that evidently made a lasting impression on him. While a general survey of top-40 radio during this time would probably portray an accurate sense of Brian's musical awareness—asked in 1961 about his musical tastes, he replied “top 10”—I'm going to focus on specific groups and recordings for which there is evidence of some personal involvement or connection. I'm going to start with the assumption that the songs holding prominent positions in Brian's own personal hit parade were the ones singled out in various recollections from books and interviews, as well as those that he subsequently performed and/or recorded.

*Chuck Berry.* When Brian used Chuck Berry's “Sweet Little Sixteen,” a #2 hit from early 1958, as the music for one of the Beach Boys' most popular and enduring hits, “Surfin' U.S.A.” in 1963, he was paying homage to one of his most important early influences. (Well, he didn't exactly give proper writing credit, but I'll get to that later.) Brian apparently became especially interested in Berry's music through his brother Carl, who had been learning rock-and-roll guitar since age twelve. Brian's book *Wouldn't It Be Nice* has him making a “half-baked” rendition of “Rock and Roll Music” (a #8 hit for Chuck Berry in late 1957) on a tape recorder he had received as a birthday gift. As Carl said, “We were total Chuck Berry freaks.” It was only natural, then, that Brian and friends would include Berry hits in their early jam sessions, and that Berry's music would continue to play an important role in the evolving Beach Boys' style. Later they would feature another Berry hit, “Johnny B. Goode” (#8 in

1958) in concerts from the mid-1960s and beyond, fuelled by Carl's adept performance of the distinctive guitar licks.

Starting in 1955, Chuck Berry released a string of chart successes that crested in 1958, just as Brian was getting more and more interested in rock and roll. The early hits "Maybellene" (#5 in on the U.S. pop charts in 1955) and "Roll over Beethoven" (#29 in 1956) were followed in 1957 by "School Day" (#3) and "Rock and Roll Music" (#8), in 1958 by "Sweet Little Sixteen" (#2), "Johnny B. Goode" (#8), and "Carol" (#18), and in 1959, "Almost Grown" (#32) and "Back in the U.S.A." (#37). Brian was certainly aware of many other Berry tracks, including "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man" (1956) and "Memphis" (1959). Many of these feature Berry's hallmark guitar introductions, the likes of which echo through later Beach Boys recordings such as "Surfin U.S.A." (1963) and "Fun, Fun, Fun" (1964). Carl eventually mastered the Berry guitar style, not just by duplicating or mimicking the introductory licks but also in his solo work and background riffs. Brian shared his brother's affection for Berry's style and absorbed it into the evolving Beach Boys sound from the very beginning. John Milward reminds us further that the Berry influence "went beyond supplying a couple of guitar figures and one key melody—his best songs had shown how terse bursts of Americana could be strung onto a driving beat."

*The Coasters.* Near the end of *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, Brian describes the legendary songwriting team of Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller as "heroes of mine," noting that they wrote several of the Coasters' hits, among other great songs. Indeed, Brian's affection for the music of the Coasters also has a history: Carl once recalled singing "Coasters songs" along with "Freshmen arrangements" with Brian in the pre-Beach Boys period, presumably 1960 and 1961, because "Brian was high on their style of vocalizing." The Coasters had been around since 1956, when they were formed by Lieber and Stoller after the forced breakup of the Robins, and can be taken to represent the doo-wop influence that would become such an important component of the Beach Boys sound. Although the Beach Boys never covered a Coasters song in concert or in the studio ("Riot in Cell Block #9" is better known as a Robins song and was introduced into the Beach Boys' road-band repertoire in later years by Mike Love), they did jam briefly on "One Kiss Led to Another" during their sessions for the *Party!* album in 1965.

"One Kiss," in fact, was the Coasters' earliest single to make the pop charts, breaking in at #73 in 1956; it was a re-make of a Robins release from the previous year. The group scored greater success in short order, with "Searchin'" and "Young Blood" in 1957 (#3 and #8, respectively) and "Yakety Yak," their only #1 hit, in 1958. Their best year, in terms of success on the U.S. pop charts, was 1959, when they released "Charlie Brown" (#2), "Poison Ivy" (#7), and "Along Came Jones" (#9). Also playing on the radio around this

time were Coasters tunes “Three Cool Cats” (1959), “Besame Mucho” (#70 in 1960), “Run, Red, Run” (#36 in 1960), “Wait a Minute” (#37 in 1961), and “Little Egypt (Ying-Yang)” (#23 in 1961). Of course Brian was interested in many vocal groups in the late 1950s, for some of the same reasons he became immersed in Four Freshmen albums, but the Coasters may have held a particular appeal because of the strength of their material—thanks to Lieber and Stoller—and because of the creativity of their vocal arrangements, often more than just background “ooh-ahs” or “doo-wops.” Further, the Coasters were *funny*: Jay Warner describes them as “the clown princes of late-1950s rock and roll.” Songs such as “Yakety Yak” or “Charlie Brown” held an obvious appeal to a teenager whose well-known sense of humor was developing as rapidly as his musical abilities.

*The Everly Brothers.* An interest in the music of the Everly Brothers extends back to Brian’s earliest singing get-togethers with Mike Love. It makes perfect sense: whereas reproducing the Four Freshmen sound would require the cooperation of a whole quartet, or perhaps a duet and a tape recorder, singing Everly Brothers tunes could easily be accomplished by just Brian and Mike, wherever they happened to be. In addition, the tunes themselves were of course justifiably popular and perfectly suited to their voices. Mike has recalled singing versions of Everly hits with Brian at “Wednesday Youth Night at the Angeles Mesa Presbyterian Church” in the late 1950s. He remembers doing “all of the Everly brothers songs,” but singles out “All I Have to Do Is Dream,” “Bird Dog,” and “Devoted to You.” Indeed, if their performance of “Devoted to You” on the Beach Boys’ *Party!* album is any indication, these early singing sessions were quite polished and faithful to the original, an ideal training ground for the lead singers in a fledgling vocal group.

The Everly Brothers achieved success immediately after bursting on to the scene in 1957, with “Bye Bye Love” (#2 on the U.S. pop charts) and “Wake Up, Little Susie” (#1). They continued to flourish in 1958, with “This Little Girl of Mine” (#26), “All I Have to Do Is Dream” (#1), “Claudette” (#30), “Bird Dog” (#1), “Devoted to You” (#10), “Problems” (#2), and “Love of My Life” (#40); in 1959, with “Poor Jenny” (#22), “Take a Message to Mary” (#16), and “(‘Til I Kissed You” (#4); and in 1960, with “Let It Be Me” (#7), “Cathy’s Clown” (#1), “When Will I Be Loved” (#8), “Lucille” (#21), “So Sad (to Watch Good Love Go Bad)” (#7) and “Like Strangers” (#22). Along with the prodigious purity of their brotherly vocal blend, it’s easy to identify aspects of Everly Brothers records that must have made an impact on Brian. Just as the Beach Boys would one day merge vocal jazz and doo-wop style with a rock-and-roll beat, the Everly Brothers progressed beyond their roots in country music to do rock and roll with a country flavor. And the single-minded themes of their love songs contain the same purity and innocence found in love songs by the Four Freshmen and early Beach Boys.

*Other Favorites and Influences.* We now move on to individual songs from a variety of artists of the 1950s and early 1960s that have some specific connection to Brian's musical development and later work. In the list below, I've named all the popular songs through 1961 that can be regarded as traceable influences on Brian and the Beach Boys (including some Chuck Berry, Coasters, and Everly Brothers songs already mentioned, but excluding cuts from Four Freshmen albums). The list is coded to show whether each song was:

1. Mentioned in a biographical source as an important influence or favorite (these titles are shown in **bold**); and/or
2. Recorded by Brian at some point down the road, with the Beach Boys or with someone else (titles in CAPS); and/or
3. Played by the Beach Boys in concert (*italics*).

The expanded version of the list given in Appendix 3 includes full explanations of the reason(s) for each song's inclusion. I'm going to consider this list to be a reasonable representation of the music Brian heard on the radio during his formative years, and I'll use it as a starting point for discussing some of the songwriting and production skills he surely learned from the popular music of his youth.

1952	PATTI PAGE	THE TENNESSEE WALTZ
1954	THE CROWS	GEE
	<b>The Penguins</b>	<b>Earth Angel</b>
1955	BILL HALEY & HIS COMETS	SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL
	<b>THE ROBINS</b>	<b>SMOKEY JOE'S CAFE</b>
	<b>Bill Haley &amp; His Comets</b>	<b>Rock Around the Clock</b>
1956	<b>The Cadillacs</b>	<b>Speedoo</b>
	FRANKIE LYMON/TEENAGERS	WHY DO FOOLS FALL IN LOVE
	<b>Otis Williams &amp; His Charms</b>	<b>Ivory Tower</b>
	<b>The Jaguars</b>	<b>The Way You Look Tonight</b>
	<b>The Cadets</b>	<b>Stranded in the Jungle</b>
	ELVIS PRESLEY	DON'T BE CRUEL
	PATIENCE & PRUDENCE	TONIGHT YOU BELONG TO ME
	BILL DOGGETT	HONKY TONK
	THE SIX TEENS	A CASUAL LOOK
	THE FIVE SATINS	IN THE STILL OF THE NITE
	FATS DOMINO	BLUEBERRY HILL
	THE COASTERS	ONE KISS LED TO ANOTHER
	THE MCGUIRE SISTERS	GOODNIGHT, MY LOVE
1957	CHUCK BERRY	ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC
	THE DELL VIKINGS	COME GO WITH ME
	BUDDY HOLLY	PEGGY SUE
	RICHARD BERRY/PHAROAHs	LOUIE, LOUIE
	<b>Johnnie &amp; Joe</b>	<b>Over the Mountain, Across the Sea</b>
	<b>The Delroys</b>	<b>Bermuda Shorts</b>
	<b>The Tune Weavers</b>	<b>Happy Happy Birthday, Baby</b>

1958	CHUCK BERRY <i>CHUCK BERRY</i> <b>Everly Brothers</b> <b>Everly Brothers</b> <b>EVERLY BROTHERS</b> JODY REYNOLDS <i>BOBBY FREEMAN</i> LITTLE WILLIE JOHN THE STUDENTS <i>THE KINGSTON TRIO</i> EDDIE COCHRAN <b>Louis Prima &amp; Keely Smith</b> NEIL SEDAKA	SWEET LITTLE SIXTEEN <i>JOHNNY B. GOODE</i> <b>All I Have to Do Is Dream</b> <b>Bird Dog</b> <b>DEVOTED TO YOU</b> ENDLESS SLEEP <i>DO YOU WANT TO DANCE?</i> TALK TO ME, TALK TO ME I'M SO YOUNG <i>(THE WRECK OF THE) JOHN B.</i> SUMMERTIME BLUES <b>That Old Black Magic</b> THE DIARY
1959	FRANKIE FORD <b>The Belmonts</b> FREDDY BOOM-BOOM CANNON JOHNNY PRESTON THE MYSTICS	SEA CRUISE <b>That's My Desire</b> TALLAHASSEE LASSIE RUNNING BEAR HUSHABYE
1960	HAROLD DORMAN THE HOLLYWOOD ARGYLES JIMMY REED <b>THE OLYMPICS</b>	MOUNTAIN OF LOVE ALLEY-OOP BABY WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO <b>HULLY GULLY</b>
1961	<b>Ricky Nelson</b> <b>THE SHIRELLES</b> <b>Gary U.S. Bonds</b> <b>THE REGENTS</b> THE GAMBLERS THE DRIFTERS <i>DICK DALE &amp; HIS DEL-TONES</i> THE CRYSTALS <i>Dion</i> <i>The Belairs</i>	<b>Travelin' Man</b> <b>MAMA SAID</b> <b>Quarter to Three</b> <b>BARBARA ANN</b> MOON DAWG SWEETS FOR MY SWEET <i>LET'S GO TRIPPIN'</i> THERE'S NO OTHER (LIKE MY BABY) <i>The Wanderer</i> <i>Mr. Moto</i>

The diversity of the list is an apt reflection of Brian's range of interests and influences as he began cultivating lifelong passions. Of course it's top-heavy with groups specializing in vocal harmony, from the Crows to the Regents, but there's also plenty of straight-ahead rock and roll ("Rock Around the Clock," "Don't Be Cruel," "Summertime Blues"), and R&B ("Honky Tonk," "Baby What You Want Me to Do"). The songwriters represented range from classic figures familiar from Four Freshmen records, such as Jerome Kern ("The Way You Look Tonight") and Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer ("That Old Black Magic"), to giants of the rock-and-roll era, such as Lieber and Stoller ("Smokey Joe's Cafe," "One Kiss Led to Another") and Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman ("Hushabye," "Sweets for My Sweet"), to acclaimed singer-songwriters (Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran). Classic rock and roll is balanced by music with a gentler tone, including "Tonight You Belong to Me," "Goodnight My Love," "The Diary," and "Travelin' Man." Near the end of the list we start to

see new forces that are just breaking into the public consciousness and that will have deep resonance with the emerging Beach Boys in the coming years: the phenomenon of “surf music” (“Moon Dawg,” “Let’s Go Trippin,” “Mr. Moto”) and the brilliance of Phil Spector (“There’s No Other [Like My Baby]”).

If Brian’s education in Four Freshmen style taught him classic song structures, jazz harmony, vocal arranging, and vocal skills, what did he learn from the songs on the favorites list and many others like them? For one thing, a much greater variety of musical forms. While there are several representatives of the AABA type found throughout Four Freshmen records, the ABAC type is more likely to appear in rock and pop music, in compact form as the verse of a verse-chorus form; the verse of “Mama Said” is a good example. But some songs that start with ABA just repeat B rather than moving on to C, resulting in an overall ABAB, as in the verses of “One Kiss Led to Another” and “Endless Sleep.” Also common are bridge sections inserted into verse-chorus plans, as when the Shirelles sing “My eyes were wide open / But all that I can see is / Chapel bells are callin’ / For everyone but me” after the second chorus in “Mama Said.”

And of course the blues influence is apparent in many instances where verse and/or chorus are based on 12-bar blues progressions. In “Rock and Roll Music,” only the chorus is 12-bar blues; in “Bermuda Shorts” and “Johnny B. Goode,” both verse and chorus are blues-based. These three songs also illustrate the typical use of a final hook or refrain at the end of the 12-bar chord pattern, as when the phrase “if you wanna dance with me” recurs at the end of the blues choruses in “Rock and Roll Music,” just like “baby, he-ey, dig them shorts” at the end of blues choruses in “Bermuda Shorts,” or the repetition of the song title to conclude the blues choruses in “Johnny B. Goode.” The list also includes 12-bar blues progressions not in verse-chorus forms but in A sections of AABA structures (with non-blues bridges): “Smokey Joe’s Cafe,” “Don’t Be Cruel,” “Bird Dog,” “Mountain of Love,” and “The Wanderer.” Equally well-represented are songs in which the 12-bar blues progression is presented in its most traditional way, as just a repeating 12-bar pattern with continuously changing text: not part of an AABA or ABAC or verse-chorus form but simply theme and variations (“Rock Around the Clock,” “Honky Tonk,” “Baby What You Want Me to Do,” and “Let’s Go Trippin”).

What may have been especially intriguing to a young Brian Wilson are instances where songwriters do something new and different with a blues progression. “Blueberry Hill,” for example, has a strong flavor of blues and yet the main melody lasts only eight bars; essentially it skips the first four bars of a blues progression and then faithfully follows the progression to a typical completion of bars 5 through 12. The verse of “Hully Gully” seems to take twice as long as expected to complete the first eight bars of its blues

progression, then unfolds bars 9 through 12 at a normal pace; the result is essentially a “20-bar” blues, and not uncommon in music of this era. In the chorus of “Barbara Ann,” the distinctive “Ba-ba-ba” vocal intro stretches the beginning of a blues progression, resulting in a “14-bar blues.” And in many other examples, including “Speedoo,” “A Casual Look,” and “Summertime Blues,” important elements of blues progressions are present even while the overall momentum seems to want to break away from any kind of predictable pattern.

In other respects, predictable patterns flourish in abundance. A non-blues chord progression that gained particular currency during the rock-and-roll and doo-wop era—although it was also common in earlier music in a variety of styles—is a four-chord progression beginning with the movement of the bass line down by thirds and then moving to the dominant in preparation for the return of the main chord of the key. In the key of C, for example, this progression would typically present the chords C major, A minor, F major, and G major, often followed by a return to C major. A common variant uses the same first, second, and fourth chords but has D minor in place of F major for chord three. The song favorites list contains classic instances of this progression, in “Gee,” “Why Do Fools Fall in Love,” “In the Still of the Nite,” “Goodnight My Love,” “Come Go with Me,” “All I Have to Do Is Dream,” “The Diary,” “Hushabye,” “Mama Said,” “Quarter to Three,” and “There’s No Other (Like My Baby).” This four-chord pattern has been called the “Stand by Me” progression, after one of its most notable presences; I will call it simply the “doo-wop” progression. Brian used the doo-wop progression in one of his earliest songwriting efforts, “Surfer Girl.” I’ll have more to say about that song in the next chapter.

The doo-wop progression has been subjected to a great number of variants and flavorings. One common variation involves inserting an additional chord that changes one of the major triads to minor. Instead of C major / A minor / F major / G major, for example, we might find C major / A minor / F major / **F minor** / G major. Indeed, such chord alterations, whether in a doo-wop progression or not, are common methods of adding interest and flavor within chord changes and are found throughout the favorites list, as well as in many Four Freshmen tunes. In the music he heard on the radio Brian also would have recognized techniques of key change that are very common in Freshmen recordings; typical examples from the favorites list include the bridges of “The Way You Look Tonight” (where the bridge temporarily moves the key from E-flat to G-flat), “Blueberry Hill” (B major to D-sharp minor) and “Goodnight, My Love” (from B-flat to D and F).

Finally, let’s consider vocal harmony. To start, we’ll consider these three general categories of vocal style:

*solo/unison*: single-line singing, where one or more voices sing the same text and rhythms on the same notes;

*choral*: multi-part singing, where at least two different voices sing the same text and rhythms on different notes;

*melody-background*: accompanied singing, where a single voice carries the tune while the background vocals contribute either additional text or neutral syllables in contrasting rhythms, or held notes on ooh or ah.

I noted earlier in this chapter that Four Freshmen arrangements usually favor either solo/unison or choral textures, while the melody-background style is relatively uncommon in Freshmen recordings. In the favorites list, the vocal arrangements exhibit more of a balance of all three types. Some entire songs are presented by a single soloist without background vocals, as in the recordings by Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Buddy Holly, plus “Rock Around the Clock” and “Summertime Blues.” Other songs are dominated by choral textures of two or more parts, notably “Tonight You Belong to Me,” “Goodnight My Love,” “(The Wreck of the) John B.,” “There’s No Other (Like My Baby),” and the Everly Brothers’ songs. In other cases the choral texture isn’t pervasive but is still an important part of a song’s basic personality, as in “Hushabye” and “Sweets for My Sweet.”

The different forms of melody-background textures all turn up in Beach Boys recordings at some point, and are all amply represented on the favorites list. Sustained “ooh” and “ah” backing sounds are common enough (“Travelin’ Man,” for example), but in many more cases, the background vocals become their own independent and distinctive textural layer. This can occur rather modestly, as in the “bop bop” backing to “Don’t Be Cruel,” or quite conspicuously, in the manner of classic doo-wop, of which the “shoo-doot-n-shoo-be-do” of “In the Still of the Nite” is a perfect example. In other songs, such as “The Diary,” the background gains distinction not from a repeated phrase and/or rhythm but from its clear statement of a distinctive melody working in counterpoint with the lead.

When a background layer in melody-background style is distinctive, it often enters into a musical dialogue with the main melody. This can happen in several ways, and it will be useful to break down the possibilities into four categories:

1. In *straight-dialogue*, the lead and background alternate ever-changing text, literally “in dialogue.” This happens in “Bird Dog,” for example, between the sung duet and the spoken commentary. The second verse shows it best:

<i>sung</i> :	Johnny sings a love song
<i>spoken</i> :	Like a bird
<i>sung</i> :	He sings the sweetest love song
<i>spoken</i> :	You ever heard

<i>sung:</i>	But when he sings to my gal
<i>spoken:</i>	What a howl
<i>sung:</i>	To me he's just a wolf dog
<i>spoken:</i>	On the prowl
<i>sung:</i>	Johnny wants to fly away and puppy-love my baby
<i>spoken:</i>	He's a bird dog

2. In *half-dialogue*, the background interjects a repeated phrase between phrases of the lead vocal. It's "half-dialogue" because it's in fact an interchange between melody and background, and yet only the lead is really advancing an argument; the background is simply repeating the same thing over and over. This is the most common type, found frequently in Brian Wilson productions. Examples of half-dialogue in the favorites list can be found in "Smokey Joe's Cafe," "Alley Oop," and "Hully Gully"; in each case, the lead vocal tells a story or paints a scene while the background vocals interject the song title. Here's how it happens, for example, in the main tune of "Alley Oop":

<i>lead:</i>	There's a man in the funny papers we all know
<i>background:</i>	Alley oop, oop, oop, oop-ooop
<i>lead:</i>	He lived way back a long time ago
<i>background:</i>	Alley oop, oop, oop, oop-ooop
<i>lead:</i>	He don't eat nothin' but a bear cat stew
<i>background:</i>	Alley oop, oop, oop, oop-ooop
<i>lead:</i>	Well this cat's name is-a Alley Oop
<i>background:</i>	Alley oop, oop, oop, oop-ooop

3. An *echo-dialogue* occurs when the background simply restates, in direct echo, phrases from the lead. In "(The Wreck of the) John B.," for example, a single background singer reiterates phrases from the group lead in both verse and chorus. The echoed phrases in the first verse are "drinkin' all night," "got into a fight," and "I wanna go home":

<i>lead:</i>	We come on the Sloop John B. My grandfather and me Around Nassau town we did roam Drinkin' all night
<i>background:</i>	Drinkin' all night
<i>lead:</i>	Got into a fight
<i>background:</i>	Got into a fight
<i>lead:</i>	Well I feel so breakup I wanna go home
<i>background:</i>	I want to go home

4. A *repeating-dialogue* is just like an echo-dialogue except that both lead and background simply repeat the same phrases. It's thus a sort of hybrid of types 2 and 3. A brief moment of repeating-dialogue occurs in the chorus of "One Kiss Led to Another":

<i>lead:</i>	One kiss led to another
<i>background:</i>	Ah-ooohm
<i>lead:</i>	And another
<i>background:</i>	Ah-ooohm
<i>lead:</i>	And another
<i>background:</i>	Ah-ooohm

What else would a young Brian Wilson notice about the basic vocal sound of late-1950s radio? Certainly, anyone familiar with Four Freshmen vocals would be likely to appreciate songs with a prominent role for the high tenor, like the soaring “tell me why” in the refrain of “Why Do Fools Fall in Love,” the falsetto “ooh” line at the end of “In the Still of the Nite,” and the high lead vocal in the chorus of “Barbara Ann.” At the bottom end of the texture, he would notice that the bass vocal is much more active in doo-wop and pop than in a typical Four Freshmen chart; it can even take the lead in some instances and start to challenge the high voice for prominence. The bass voice is conspicuous but still subservient in most of “Smokey Joe’s Cafe,” for example, but it takes on a leading role at the beginning of “Speedoo,” “Why Do Fools Fall in Love,” and “A Casual Look.” In other cases, such as “Come Go with Me,” the bass isn’t exactly in control, but listeners are easily aware of what the lowest voice is doing at any given moment.

The entries on the favorites list are just representatives. So many other tunes from this era make connections to Brian Wilson that are just as musically palpable, if not biographically traceable. He absorbed the sounds of this music and found ingenious ways to craft a personal style that both reflects and reconceives it. Listen to a few early Beach Boys albums and then to a song from this era, perhaps “Smokey Joe’s Cafe” or “Ivory Tower” or “Speedoo” or “Bermuda Shorts” from the favorites list, or something different, perhaps a record by the Fleetwoods or Platters or Diamonds, perhaps the Cleftones’ “Heart and Soul” or the Elegants’ “Little Star” or the Tokens’ “Tonight I Fell in Love.” Then close your eyes and travel a few decades back in time to a modest Southern California suburb. Soon you begin to hear a pure teenaged vocal blend, imperfect but sincere, floating forward from the back seat on a Friday night drive, or out from under the covers in a moonlit bedroom, or into the front yard from the open windows of the Rambler, through dreams and imaginations.

## *Chapter 2*

# **Surf Harmony**

**I**t's the summer of '61. The radio is playing the Marcels' "Blue Moon," Del Shannon's "Runaway," the Shirelles' "Mama Said," Ricky Nelson's "Travelin' Man," the Regents' "Barbara Ann," Ben E. King's "Stand by Me," the Coasters' "Little Egypt (Ying Yang)," Gary U.S. Bonds's "Quarter to Three," and the Belmonths' "Tell Me Why." Brian and his cousin Mike Love and Mike's sister Maureen are spending weekends re-creating their own top-40 countdown. In the year since finishing high school, Brian has been taking classes at El Camino Community College, while Mike has been in the real world for two years, working part-time for his father's sheet-metal business and at a local gas station, taking classes at Los Angeles City College, and getting married in January to Frances St. Martin, who gives birth to their daughter Melinda in July. Brian's brother Dennis, younger by two-and-a-half years, is technically still in high school but has found himself drawn increasingly away from institutions and conformity and his abusive father and toward a vibrant counterculture down at the beach, centered around surfing, girls, and altered states of consciousness. Youngest brother Carl, two years younger than Dennis, is between his freshman and sophomore years at Hawthorne High School and is blossoming into a capable guitarist. Brian has recently reconnected with high school friend Al Jardine, who is also taking classes at El Camino and who has ideas for several different musical projects, including a singing group involving Brian.

By late summer the musical energy surrounding Brian has coalesced into a group, calling themselves the Pendletones, consisting of Brian, Al, Mike, Dennis, and Carl. The rest of the story is familiar music history: over Labor Day weekend, the Wilson parents having left town, the group spent several hundred dollars of "emergency money," plus funds contributed by Al's mother, on instruments and sound equipment, and played and sang together obsessively

until they had created “Surfin.” It was a fulfillment of the musical dream Brian had been working toward since his early teens. With his collaborators he was able to create not only vocal harmonies, drawing inspiration from the Four Freshmen, but also the complete instrumental sound he heard on the radio. Most important, he now had an outlet for a creative impulse that had been slowly emerging in some of his earlier school projects and that his new group was eager to cultivate and realize. The Pendletones made a demo of “Surfin” at the home studio of Hite and Dorinda Morgan, on September 15, 1961, and then recorded a fully produced version of the song under the guidance of Hite Morgan, at World-Pacific Studios in Hollywood, on October 3. At the same sessions, they also recorded “Luau,” a song by the Morgans’ son Bruce, and Brian’s Four Freshmen–style arrangement of Dorinda Morgan’s song “Lavender.” “Surfin” was released as a single, with “Luau” on the reverse, in December, under a new name chosen for the group without their consent, “Beach Boys.”

## SURFIN’

All songwriters’ earliest efforts are naturally inspired by the music they know, the music they grew up hearing and singing. Let’s consider in more detail exactly where “Surfin” came from. If the legend is accurate, the idea for the song and its essential lyric content came from Dennis. Mike Love’s distinctive bass line, as record company executive Russ Regan is said to have proclaimed, “sounds like a Jan and Dean record.” Indeed it does sound very much like “Jennie Lee” and “Bonnie Lou” and “Baby Talk” and several other Jan & Arnie or Jan & Dean recordings from the late 1950s. But of course Jan Berry and friends were themselves only making music in a vocal style that had been flourishing for years, at least since mid-1950s doo-wop classics such as “Why Do Fools Fall in Love” (#6 on the American pop charts in 1956 for Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers), not to overlook proto-doo-wop and R&B songs of the early 1950s by the Crows, Clovers, Drifters, Five Keys, Moonglows, and many others. Other purveyors of this tradition with strong similarities to Mike Love’s “bom bom dit-di-dit-di-dit” include the Six Teens’ “A Casual Look” (a modest hit in ’56) and the Silhouettes’ “Get a Job” (#1 in early 1958, just when Jan Berry was getting started in the recording business).

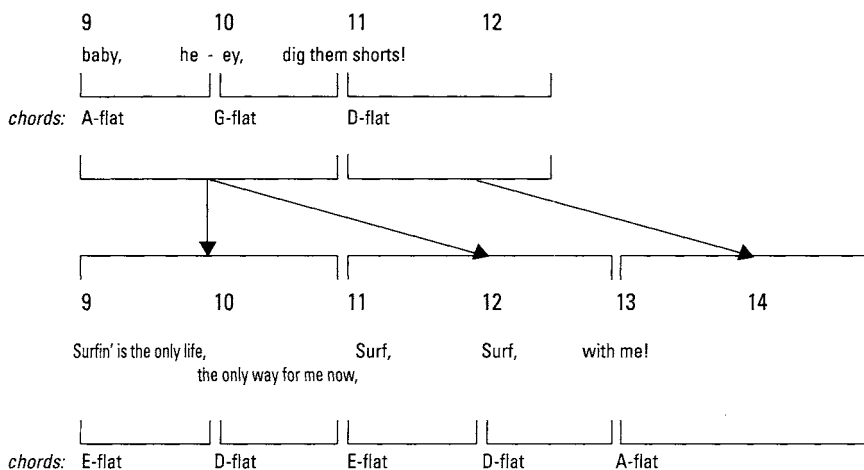
The September 15 version of “Surfin” starts with that bass line, after a few strums on the guitar, and then launches right into the chorus, with Brian and Al repeating the song’s title above Mike’s hyperkinetic bass, culminating in a choral proclamation of the hook, “Surfin’ is the only life, the only way for me,

now surf, surf, with me.” When the song was recorded for release two-and-a-half weeks later, it was moved to a higher key—perhaps to make Mike’s lowest bass notes easier to sing—and the hook alone was used to start the song. Since the hook always happens at the end of the chorus, placing it also at the beginning of the song has the effect of starting with an abbreviated chorus. This kind of thing happens frequently in late-1950s pop, including, most notably, one of the bass-line-driven doo-wop tunes just mentioned, “Get a Job,” but also including examples from classic rock and roll, such as Little Richard’s “Tutti Frutti” (1956).

The verse and chorus of the final version of “Surfin’,” occur three times each before the final fade. Musically, they are routine melodies over straightforward chord progressions, the verse stating the three basic chords of the key, the chorus based on a blues progression. While many verse-chorus songs of this era have blues progressions in both verse and chorus, it’s not uncommon to find examples like “Surfin’,” where only the chorus is blues-based, as in Chuck Berry’s “Rock and Roll Music” (1957) and the Coasters’ “Run, Red, Run” (1960). What is interesting, however, is that our novice songwriters do not just present these materials in the most customary way. The three-chord verse, for example, isn’t organized into equally sized riffs or measure groups of four, eight, or sixteen, but is actually nine bars long.

Let’s explore what happens in the chorus by taking a look at a song from the “favorites” list of Chapter 1 and Appendix 3 that is both a likely model for “Surfin’” and at the same time an example of an orthodoxy from which “Surfin’” deviates. Both verse and chorus of the Delroys’ “Bermuda Shorts” (1957) are based on blues progressions. For the moment, let’s skip to a typical chorus in the middle of this song for comparison to the “Surfin’” chorus. Both songs begin with eight bars of standard blues chord changes, grouped into four bars of an initial chord, followed by two bars of a different chord a fourth higher than the first one, and then two bars of a return to the first chord. Chart 1 on page 29 lines up the corresponding phrases. The melodies of these bars change little while simply repeating text. This is reminiscent of the blues tradition, in which the first eight bars of a song would often contain repetition of a single phrase.

After the first eight bars, the “Bermuda Shorts” hook complies with the standard format for the last four bars of a blues progression, while the “Surfin’” hook stretches it by two additional bars:



The arrows and brackets show how the chords of bars 9 and 10 of "Surfin'" are repeated as bars 11 and 12, before reaching final resolution with the return of the "bomp" bass in bars 13 and 14. In other words, to complement a 9-bar verse, Brian and Mike have created a chorus of "14-bar blues." Interestingly, in recordings of "rehearsals" for "Surfin'" that apparently pre-date the September 15 version (released on the 1993 *Good Vibrations* boxed set and the 2001 *Hawthorne* compilation), the chorus was actually expanded by one additional bar: an additional "come along baby and" is inserted after bar 12, before the final "surf, surf, with me," resulting in 15-bar blues. In the final (October 3) version, a similar line of text, "come on pretty baby and surf with me," replaces "surf, surf" in bars 11 and 12 of the last chorus.

But remember that this comparison is based on a chorus from the middle of "Bermuda Shorts." If we look at the beginning of that song, we can see a similar stretching, as a result of staggered vocal entries. First the bass enters with "Bermuda, Bermuda, Bermuda shorts," and then the other voices enter one by one, adding progressively higher chord tones to the harmony. The whole process stretches four bars to eight, and the blues progression doesn't move on to its next chord until all the voices have entered, meaning that the 12-bar blues progression has been expanded to 16. Brian had undoubtedly encountered other examples of blues variants in his experience, certainly in the Regents' "Barbara Ann" (1961), which is also expanded by a distinctive vocal refrain, but perhaps also including a song such as the Cleftones' "This Little Girl of Mine" (1956), in which a 14-bar blues results from exactly the same type of repetition of bars 9 and 10 that we find in "Surfin'." And there are other examples from this period of variations of all types, including inserted or omitted bars, surprising chord substitutions, and alternative chord durations. It's significant that, even from their earliest songwriting attempts, Brian

and his collaborators are interested in working outside of conventions and are following models with similar orientations.

## FIRST SONGS

“Surfin’” was a success on local radio, and the Beach Boys began to make public appearances, first at an intermission of a show at the famed Rendezvous Ballroom on December 23, 1961, soon after at the Ritchie Valens Memorial Dance in Long Beach on New Year’s Eve, and subsequently with increasing frequency at events throughout Southern California. They began to develop new material for these performances and eventually returned to World Pacific, on February 8, 1962, to put it on tape, hoping eventually to release a follow-up to “Surfin’.” Two of their new songs—“Surfer Girl” and “Judy”—were love songs written by Brian alone, and one was an instrumental credited to Carl, first named “Karate” and later called “Beach Boy Stomp.” Their first effort on that session, however, was a direct descendant of “Surfin’” that became their first national hit, “Surfin’ Safari.”

*Surfin’ Safari.* The Beach Boys recorded “Surfin’ Safari” again on April 19, 1962, with lyric revisions. This version was released as a single on June 4, and eventually climbed to #14 on the national charts. (The B-side, “409,” made it to #76.) Brian’s book *Wouldn’t It Be Nice* describes “Surfin’ Safari” as a “silly song with a simple-but-cool C-F-G chord pattern that I came up with one day while trying to play the piano the way Chuck Berry played his guitar,” and it’s not hard to hear a connection between “Surfin’ Safari” and a Chuck Berry song such as “Brown-Eyed Handsome Man” (1956), which uses exactly the same chord pattern. Brian’s recollection is refreshingly honest and explicit about his working methods and search for inspiration. Throughout his life, Brian has often been very specific about his songwriting and producing models and sources.

On the other hand, I would also argue that another primary inspiration for “Surfin’ Safari” is, in fact, “Surfin’”—that the new song is simply a development and reworking of the basic framework and ideas of the earlier one. To explore this relationship, let’s break down “Surfin’ Safari” into its essential elements and examine their connections to corresponding aspects of “Surfin’”:

- **Lyrics.** Both songs convey the same message: surfing is fun, and I want you to do it with me. “Surfin’ Safari” provides more vivid detail about ideal surfing destinations; this apparently results from conversations with Dennis about local surfing spots, although the lyric also mentions Cerro Azul, a renowned surfing spot off the coast of Peru, and then “the shores of Peru.” The first version of the lyric (recorded on 2/8/62) also included South Africa in its surfer’s travelogue.

- **Form.** Both songs present a verse and chorus three times. “Surfin’ Safari” adds a guitar solo after the second chorus, based on the chord changes of the verse.
- **Hook.** Both songs begin with a hook that’s heard again at the end of each chorus. These hooks are, in fact, almost identical:

*Surfin’:*                      Surfin’ is the only life, the only life for me, yeah, surf, surf, with me

*Surfin’ Safari:*        Let’s go surfin’ now, everybody’s learnin’ how, come on a safari with me

They convey essentially the same message, are the same length, and start with the same melody and chords in their respective keys. “Surfin’ Safari” does something slightly different at “come on a safari with me,” staying away from the main chord of the key, whereas the corresponding place in “Surfin’”—“surf, surf with me”—repeats melody from the previous two bars and concludes with tonal arrival and resolution on the main chord.

- **Chorus.** Like the “Surfin’” chorus, the “Surfin’ Safari” chorus is also a blues progression stretched by a hook. The hook in the newer song is five bars long and begins in bar 9, resulting in “13-bar blues.”
- **Verse.** The verse in “Surfin’ Safari” is quite regular and predictable in ways that the “Surfin’” verse isn’t. In contrast to the 9-bar groups of the earlier song, now the groupings subdivide clearly into a 4+4 8-bar grouping. The chord progressions are also differently proportioned, but the actual chords used are the same: Brian’s description of a “simple-but-cool C-F-G chord pattern” could apply to both songs.

While both “Surfin’” and “Surfin’ Safari” contain simple blended background vocals in the verse, their choruses use background vocals very differently; this represents the most significant point of contrast between the two songs. In “Surfin’,” the upper voices repeat the song’s title against an extremely active and distinctive bass line on neutral syllables, “bom, bom, dit-di-dit-di-dit,” and so forth. But in “Surfin’ Safari,” the bass is texted and is in fact the main melody, thus forming an interesting counterpoint with the repetitions of the song title in the other voices. Mike’s leading bass melody thereby joins a tradition reaching back to recordings by the Ravens of the early 1950s that had been recently revived in “power-bass” doo-wop of Dion and the Belmonts (“I Wonder Why,” #22 in 1958), the Quotations (“Imagination,” 1961), the Stereos (“I Really Love You,” #29 in 1961), and the Marcells (“Heartaches,” #7 in 1961). The trend, agreeably perpetuated by Brian and his collaborators, was to equalize the various layers of the vocal texture, allowing each part or group to be relatively independent and no more or less important than the others. This would rapidly become an essential element of the Beach Boys’ sound.

We've just seen the first of many instances in which Brian fashions a new song by reworking an existing one. In this case, and in others, the earlier song almost seems like a stage leading to the later one, a study leading to something greater and more interesting. In other instances the relationship may be even closer, as where a song is simply retexted, or it may be more distant, as where a song takes on a radically new character after reworking. Sometimes the process seems to be born of expediency, of the need to generate "new" material quickly. Other times it simply reveals an evolutionary dynamic within a songwriter's project: while working on a song, especially while refining and arranging and producing and performing it, he gets an idea for a different treatment of essentially the same ideas. It's a natural and typical way for a creative artist to work and grow.

*Surfer Girl.* Although Brian considers "Surfer Girl" to be one of his earliest creations, the song didn't appear on a record until the summer of 1963. A demo from February 8, 1962, lay dormant until it was recorded for release some sixteenth months later. The new version included a new introduction and other smaller refinements but left the essence of the song as it was.

Brian has said that when he conceived "Surfer Girl" while "driving to a hot dog stand" in 1961, he "created a melody in my head without being able to hear it on the piano" and then went home and "wrote the bridge" and "put the harmonies together." But he has also acknowledged that his melody was inspired by "When You Wish upon a Star," a song that he apparently sang as a child and that might have been fresh on his mind after hearing a version by Dion & the Belmonts that was on the charts briefly in 1960. It's easy to hear a connection between the two. Both start with two seven-syllable phrases in a simple repetitive rhythm. Chart 2 on page 29 lines up the phrases for comparison. Both songs also begin with a leap up in the melody—an octave in "When You Wish," a sixth in "Surfer Girl"—and use almost the same melodic shape in both phrases. Further, both melodies are oriented around the same scale tones, presented at roughly the same pace: the bold-type words or syllables in the chart highlight the corresponding occurrences of the upper steps of the scale—5, 6, 7, 8—in both tunes.

"Surfer Girl" can be broken down further to reveal distinctive repetitive gestures within each of the phrases. The first three notes ("Lit-tle surf-," stating the fifth, third, and root of the triad) are repeated up a step on "lit-tle one," then up another step on "Made my heart," and up still one more step on "all un-done," before returning to the starting notes (the notes of "Lit-tle surf-" again) to begin the third phrase ("Do you love"). The brackets in Chart 3 on page 29 trace the progress of this three-note figure. A melodic pattern of this sort is common in music Brian knew and can be found in several songs discussed in Chapter 1. Chart 4 on page 29 gives an example of a rising stepwise six-note figure from "Warm," the pivotal cut from the Four Freshmen's *Voices*

in *Love* album. “Warm” starts with a leap the same size as the one in “Surfer Girl” (a sixth), but going down instead of up, and then works its way back up the scale until arriving on “lips” a step higher than the initial “warm.” Subsequently, the words “lips, And warm my finger-” repeats “Warm, my lips against your” up a step, with a slight change at the end, and then “tips by giv-ing me your” does the same thing up one more step. Overall, the word sequence “Warm” to “lips” to “tips” steps upward over three notes of the scale (D, E-flat, and F) just like the bold-type words or syllables shown earlier in “When You Wish upon a Star” and “Surfer Girl.”

“Surfer Girl” also has the same AABA form that we find in “Warm” and “When You Wish upon a Star.” The chord progressions in “Surfer Girl,” however, are straight out of doo-wop: each A section begins and ends with a standard doo-wop progression (see Chapter 1). It seems only natural that a young songwriter well-schooled in the music of the late 1950s would use this progression in one of his earliest efforts, and it’s of course easy to find many examples of this progression in the favorites list, as explained in Chapter 1. But there is some evidence of a more specific connection between Brian’s early work and doo-wop models. Stephen J. McParland has interviewed Val Poliuto, leader of the vocal group the Jaguars, who was active in Los Angeles recording sessions during the late 1950 and early 1960s, and who was apparently involved with the early Beach Boys to some extent and participated in the February 8, 1962, session. According to Poliuto, Brian relied on him for guidance and advice, and they worked together to fashion the early Beach Boys sound. Says Poliuto of the early Beach Boys recordings,

A lot of the things in the harmony, if you listen to what the Jaguars do, you’ll hear some of that. . . . If you listen to The Jaguars’ “The Way You Look Tonight,” and hear the harmony, that’s what I had to explain to them [The Beach Boys] at that time, because we didn’t have tracking like they have now. I had to explain to them, “put your voices up and have everybody sing the same note,” you know, high and low. That way you’ve got that big stretch sound with the “aaah” [sings high falsetto], up there like that.

While it’s hard to find a specific correspondence between Jaguars and Beach Boys vocals—beyond what’s found when comparing many such vocal groups of that time—it’s worth noticing that the treatment of the doo-wop chord progression in some Jaguars songs could easily have exerted some kind of specific influence on Brian’s early songwriting. That’s true of the song Poliuto mentions, “The Way You Look Tonight” (1956), but it’s even more true of a later Jaguars song such as “Don’t Go Home” (1960). It’s possible, in fact, to line up the A sections of “Don’t Go Home” and “Surfer Girl,” line by line, and hear exactly the same chord changes in their respective keys, with small adjustments in repetition and proportioning:

**Chart 1: "Bermuda Shorts" and "Surfin'"**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bermuda, Bermuda,	Bermuda shorts,	Bermuda, Bermuda,	Bermuda shorts,	Bermuda, Bermuda,	Bermuda shorts,	Bermuda, Bermuda,	Bermuda shorts, Say
<i>chords:</i> D-flat				G-flat		D-flat	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Surfin'....	Surfin'....	Surfin'....	Surfin'....	Surfin'....	Surfin'....	Surfin'....	Surfin'....
<i>chords:</i> A-flat				D-flat		A-flat	

**Chart 2: "When You Wish upon a Star" and "Surfer Girl"***scale steps:*

5						6	7					8	
When	you	wish	up-	on	a	star,	Makes	no	diff-	rence	who	you	are,
5						6	7					8	
Lit-	tle	surf-	er	lit-	tle	one,	Made	my	heart	come	all	un-	done

**Chart 3: A three-note figure in "Surfer Girl"**

Lit- tle surf- er	lit- tle one,	Made my heart come	all un- done
A F-sharp D	B G E	C-sharp A F-sharp	D B G

**Chart 4: A six-note figure in "Warm"**

<b>Warm,</b> my lips a-against your <b>lips,</b> And warm my finger-	<b>tips</b> by giv - ing me your hand
D F G A B-flat D	E-flat G A B-flat C D
F A B-flat C	D F