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After Sundown

The Beach Boys' Experimental Music

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Sometimes it happens in this crazy world that the cartoon becomes great art, the self-indulgent reveals generosity, the absurd comes to contain meaning, the silly shows profundity. Sometimes drinking songs end up as national anthems, young shepherds defeat giant warriors, and Hollywood personalities become leaders of the free world.

Sometimes raucous singing at an innocent party shows a keen artistic consciousness, and inscrutable, off-the-wall songs that fail as rock music succeed as chic, minimalist art music. Sometimes musicians who gain fame hymning to surfboards and hot rods, who record not in stereophonic splendor but in monophonic modesty—sometimes such a group succeeds in honing for a little while an edge that cuts open convention, prunes away proprieties, and clears the way for a music that both taps your foot and feeds your head.

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Those who have only a top-forty acquaintance with the music of the Beach Boys might have smiled their way through the opening paragraphs of this piece. Surely, the Beach Boys as art rockers is a ridiculous proposition. Summertime is hardly the season of quiet contemplation, as the beach is conducive more to the sweating of

erotic perfumes than to the cool meeting of minds. But one famous top-forty Beach Boys hit ought to give the reader pause: "Good Vibrations," widely acknowledged as one of rock music's greatest masterpieces, can hardly be dismissed as mindless beach fare. Indeed, its prominent images are not surf 'n' sun but sensory stimuli of near psychedelic intensity; the atmosphere is one not of roaring fun, but of deep yet seemingly improvised introspection. "Good Vibrations" clearly expresses another, far different sensibility from that of the Beach Boys' better-known top-forty hits. It is both so exotically different and yet recognizably within the Beach Boys' style that one cannot help but wonder about the existence of other like-minded works. What else happened when the surfboards were put up for the night?

Even from their inception the Beach Boys were an experimental group. They combined, as Jim Miller has put it, "the instrumental sleekness of the Ventures, the lyric sophistication of Chuck Berry, and the vocal expertise of some weird cross between the Lettermen and Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers" with lyrics whose images, idioms, and concerns were drawn from the rarefied world of the middle-class white male southern California teenager.¹ This choice of subject was itself a highly experimental act; instead of exploring typical adolescent topics as generally as possible—an artistic and marketing strategy that targets a wide audience—the Beach Boys refracted them through a very specific and, indeed, esoteric worldview. Full of the specialized slang of surfers and street racers, localized geographic and climatic references, and obsession with good times and fun, Beach Boys' songs proved highly attractive to teenagers across the world despite their apparent esotericism; being in on the ways of an elite and hip subculture as well as its thickly textured hedonism turned out to be a powerful engine for promoting escapism, fantasy, and frolic—prized commodities for any teenager.

While the unusual and, for a while, interesting combination of elements made the Beach Boys almost single-handedly responsible for a national surf-music fad in the early 1960s,² it was the profound vocal virtuosity of the group, coupled with the obsessional drive and compositional ambitions of their leader, Brian Wilson, that promised their survival after the eventual breaking of fad fever. On the first point, the original group of three brothers, a cousin, and a neighbor possessed a rare and wonderful vocal tightness. Comparison to other contemporary vocally oriented rock groups, such as the Association, shows the Beach Boys' technique to be far superior, almost embarrassingly so. They were so confident of their ability, and of Brian's skill as a producer to enhance it, that they were unafraid of doing sophisticated, a cappella glee-club arrangements containing multiple suspensions, passing formations, complex chords, and both chromatic and enharmonic modulations.³ Some of these techniques are shown in example 2.1, an excerpt from Brian's arrangement of a Four Freshmen hit, "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring." The example gives the wispiest taste of the technical ability the Beach Boys had at their disposal; unable to be captured in the score is the sensitivity to blend and intonation that enabled the group to undertake such arrangements, as well as Brian's expert recording technique.⁴

Clearly, "Hearts" is not rock 'n' roll, so citing it can seem a bit disingenuous. Yet the point here is not that the Beach Boys made rock 'n' roll out of glee-club mater-

Example 2.1. Bobby Troup: "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring," arr. B. Wilson, mm. 1–8

ial, but that the harmonic resources and the compositional sophistication of that repertory (relative to the rock 'n' roll of the early 1960s) were available to them, and that they could bring these to their original works.

The easiest point of transfer for these sophisticated techniques was the ballad, generally identifiable by slow tempo in compound duple meter. The Beach Boys added their own stylistic signature to this common genre: a falsetto lead melody over both an unobtrusive instrumental accompaniment and a thick choral texture. "Surfer Girl," "In My Room," and "Warmth of the Sun" are perhaps the best-known exemplars of the Beach Boys' ballad style, and in each of these one finds at least one harmonic or formal twist not native to rock 'n' roll. Example 2.2, for instance, which illustrates the harmonic and rhythmic structure of "Warmth of the Sun," shows a self-consciously intrepid root motion by tritone from vi to ♭III. The problems in carrying off such a remote chord change are mitigated by the larger-scale modal mixture. As the analysis shows, the tritone motion marks the entry point of minor mode; major returns subtly upon the entrance of ii⁷ and more firmly upon the resolution of the augmented-minor seventh chord at the end of the first ending. Later in the song, VI is revisited—this time as a key—and again participates in modal mixture; the refrain begins upon a tonicized VI[♯] (A major) and then slips into its natural version before progressing to G major as V of C. Needless to say, the voice leading carrying out these chord changes is clean and classically correct.

"Warmth of the Sun," as well as the other ballads, shows its stylistic and genre origins most clearly. But even the least distinguished of the Beach Boys' early up-tempo rock 'n' roll songs show traces of structural complexity at some level; Brian was simply too curious and experimental to leave convention alone. Consider in this regard example 2.3, which shows the harmonic structure of an otherwise ephemeral

♩ = 4 mm.

C: I vi \flat III i⁷ ii⁷ V⁷ $\frac{7}{5}$ $\frac{7}{5}$

da capo

A: V I i⁷ 9-8-7 V⁸ $\frac{8}{5}$ $\frac{7}{5}$ $\frac{7}{5}$

G: ii V I

Example 2.2. "Warmth of the Sun," comp. B. Wilson. Harmonic analysis

surf-music work, "Don't Back Down." Of interest here is obviously not the harmonic structure of the individual structural components, which is quite conventional, but the large-scale modulatory plan that takes the A-major verses into B \flat -major refrains and back again. Though half-step key relationships are common in rock 'n' roll—they afford a dramatic and expressive use of tonality, as well as a minimal change in range for the vocally untrained lead singer—the manner in which the Beach Boys carried out this key change is quite complex. The analysis shows a chromatic modulation that depends upon modal mixture: an F-major chord as \flat VI of A major pivots to become V of B \flat , a shift marked with an asterisk in the example. The dramatic effect of the F-major pivot chord is strengthened by its unexpected shortness: it lasts only a measure, while previous harmonies filled out at least two measures. The new B \flat tonic thus rushes in a full measure sooner than expected based on the preceding hypermetrical structure of the verse. The return to A major is handled in a different, though equally interesting way. Example 2.4 shows a transcription of the last three measures of the refrain, which then connect to the opening of the verse. The refusal of I in favor of IV in measure 2 is followed by a passing

♩ = 4 mm.

A: I IV I V \flat VI 3X da capo

B \flat : V I IV V IV I⁶ V⁷ of V

Example 2.3. "Don't Back Down," comp. B. Wilson. Harmonic analysis

B \flat : IV V IV I⁶ "V⁷/V" A: I

Example 2.4. "Don't Back Down," transcription of mm. 5–8 of refrain

motion that reaches a major-minor seventh over C in measure 3. (Temptingly analyzable as V⁷ of V in B \flat , it is rather a passing chord whose ultimate goal is—or rather should be—I in B \flat .) Yet this unstable chord serves as the tentative conclusion of the refrain. The E appearing on the fourth beat, far from harmonizing nicely with the C-major-minor seventh, introduces itself as $\hat{5}$ in A, thus effecting a common-tone modulation back to A. Again, as in the movement into B \flat , a rhythmic irregularity highlights the modulation; in this case, odd-even measure alternation of one and two harmonies per bar (clearly seen in ex. 2.3) is broken, so that measure 2 of the example (which is the seventh measure of the refrain) receives two harmonies, the following measure, only one.⁵

The Beach Boys' initial commercial success gave Brian the prestige, resources, and courage to carry out further stylistic experiments. The motivation for these is complex. Certainly much must be attributed to Brian's innate musical curiosity. But also at work here is the inherent stylistic constriction that created such narrow genres as "surf" and "hot-rod" music. If they were to be anything more than a musical nine-days'-wonder, the Beach Boys had to find ways to broaden the range of their lyrics, the structure of their songs, and the texture of their vocal and instrumental sounds.⁶

Glimmerings of change can be heard in the two 1965 albums, *The Beach Boys Today!* and *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!)*.⁷ The ballads and slower numbers contain more complex lyrical expressions than before, treating such "un-fun" topics as the loss of youthful innocence ("When I Grow Up") and emotional vulnerability ("She Knows Me Too Well"). But harmonic and formal innovations in these songs are just as notable. In light of subsequent developments, one of the most interesting technical experiments involves quick-changing, unpredictable, yet logical harmonic relationships to access remote keys, thereby giving an illusion of a formal expanse larger than the eight or so measures that actually contain it. The most famous example is the refrain of "California Girls," transcribed in example 2.5. Although on paper it is easy enough to see that the structure is "logically" governed by a descending sequence, the effect in sound of this sequence is quite remarkable, largely because arrivals at the third and fifth measures are so extraordinarily striking and affecting. In fact, these moments are so arresting, so harmonically unusual, so unexpectedly expansive, that one is drawn away from hearing the passage as one would normally listen for sequence—that is, as model and imitations in measures 1–2,

Example 2.5. "California Girls," harmonic structure of refrain

3–4, and 5–6—and is drawn instead to the connections between these units—to measures 2–3, 4–5, and 6–7. It is at these points where the expectations of the I–ii⁷ progression of the model (i.e., I–ii⁷ . . . V!) are thwarted and where harmonic structure seems to push apart the formal unit.⁸ Though the refrain is actually no longer than expected given the hypermetrical behavior of the rest of the song, it gives the impression of being something larger. The harmonic innovations of the refrain simply reverberate far longer than the more prosaic progression of the verses.

The album that all but announced the renunciation of their early work was *Pet Sounds* (1966).⁹ Even the title, in comparison with that of their previous album, *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!!)*, demonstrates a curious detachment from their usual themes.¹⁰ The most obvious stylistic difference is the nature of the lyrics. Not a single reference to surfing or hotrodding appears in any song; instead, the album works out in song-cycle fashion a complex treatment of love and loneliness, moving between these two with an attitude that itself alternates between naive fantasy and budding cynicism. Though the subject matter is considerably removed from their earlier topics, the use of current and faddish idiom in the lyrics is familiar. This time, however, the specialized language of beach and garage is replaced by that of the nascent California counterculture of the 1960s, spiced with some leftover beatnik lingo.

Accompanying this change in the style of the lyrics is a broadening of the musical palette. Taking a cue from Phil Spector, Brian explored all manner of unusual instrumental combinations and percussion instruments.¹¹ "Caroline No," for example, seems to use harpsichord, guero, alto flute, electric bass, and—outrageously—an empty and overturned plastic water jug as percussion instrument.¹² The showcasing of these unusual combinations was done at the expense of the traditional two-guitar, bass, and drum-set arrangement. The close vocal harmonies, however,

the Beach Boys' central expressive vehicle, are still prominent, and they now find more congenial and expansive surroundings among the ambitious lyrical and accompanimental styles.

Pet Sounds was a showcase for a new style of lyrics and instrumentation. In terms of the structure of the songs themselves, there is comparatively little advance from what Brian had already accomplished or shown himself capable of accomplishing. Most of the songs use unusual harmonic progressions and unexpected disruptions of hypermeter, both features that were met in "Warmth of the Sun" and "Don't Back Down."

One of the songs on the album, however, does have a remarkable formal characteristic that can best be appreciated in light of the technique of "California Girls." "God Only Knows," because of its avoidance of root-position tonic and lack of cadential drive, seems the ultimate expression of the form-expanding illusions that Brian created in "California Girls." Example 2.6a presents the harmonic structure of the verse and refrain using figured-bass symbols and some rough realizations of the chords. A number of features of this structure are remarkable. First, note the extraordinarily weak versions of tonic favored in the progression. Ostensibly set in E major, there is not a single root-position E-major triad, the ξ position being the privileged tonic form. (See the neighbor motion at chords five through seven that prolongs I ξ in E.) Second—and working in tandem with the avoidance of E major in root position—the highly chromatic nature of the progression militates against the influence of E tonic and seems to leave the progression without any tonic support. The D-major ξ that opens the verse signals the overall weakness of E tonic, and this signal is boosted at the following chord, a B-minor triad that in no way is heard as V of E. Finally, in the absence of a strong E tonic, A major seems to fill the vacuum at the tonal center, since it is the chord that begins the refrain, and since it receives a strong tonic charge upon the resolution of the chord preceding the refrain.¹³ In addition, the opening chords of the verse, while nondiatonic to the nominative E-major tonic, are diatonic to A.¹⁴

The competition between E and A for tonic control is made clear during the break between verse 2 and the recapitulation of verse 1 lyrics. A bass-line sketch of the later portion of that section appears in example 2.6b, along with some analysis of phrase-joining technique. During the second half of the break, the harmonic progression of the verse is interpolated but transposed to the key of A; the asterisks in both examples 2.6a and 2.6b show this correspondence. During this interpolation, no words are sung, and the singers are involved in complicated contrapuntal play over the progression—in other words, the allusion to the harmonic structure of the verse is made subtle both by the transposition and by different melodic activity. Only when the music of the now A-major refrain is encountered do the voices return to their familiar words. Yet, at the end of the first sentence of the refrain, the progression elides with wonderful smoothness into the beginning of the E-major verse. The A-major refrain seems shunted aside as the E-major verse inserts itself into the musical flow, an impression conveyed visually by the phrase markings above example 2.6b. There is no moment in rock music more harmonically and formally subtle than this transition. It is the apex of Brian Wilson's first period of formal experimentation.

A Verse Refrain

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

passing 14 2 6 4 14 6 16 14 12 12 16 6 7 4 1

E: IV V I ——— passing IV I passing (A: I V)

B Break Refrain Verse

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6
4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

6 7 14 2 6 4 14 6 16 14 12 12 16 6 7 4 1

IV I passing E-major tonic

Example 2.6. Some aspects of harmonic structure in "God Only Knows"

Two significant and complementary projects were undertaken around the time of *Pet Sounds*, though to call the album *Beach Boys Party!* a project is perhaps a misnomer, and many critics might quibble with the label "significant."¹⁵ Made in response to record-company demands for new material, *Party* was an exercise in minimalistic production that was ostensibly recorded during a party at bandmate Mike Love's house. (Recording-studio logs indicate otherwise.) The performances seem unrehearsed, the instrumental support is minimal (acoustical guitar, bongo drums, tambourine), and fooling around (laughing, affected singing, background conversation) pervades every track. Compositionally, the album is a compilation of fun-to-sing music composed mostly by others.¹⁶ The significance of *Party* is twofold. First, the seeming inattention to production niceties, the extraordinarily thin instrumentation, and the loose, relaxed ensemble would all be incorporated into the albums of the very experimental and noncommercial period from 1967 to 1970. Here, they appear in fun; later, they accompany more complex expressions.

Second, while the Beach Boys give other groups' material bona fide performances—even if the general performance atmosphere is hardly reverent—the two songs of their own are given savagely satirical treatments. "I Get Around," for example, is given new lyrics appropriate for singing by a social maladroitness ("doofus" is the term that comes to mind), not by the cool persona who throws off the original lyrics.¹⁷ A comparison of the two can offer only the barest hint at the change in tone:

Original lyrics

Lyrics on Party

I'm gettin' bugged
drivin' up and down the same old strip.
I gotta find a new place
where the kids are hip.

I'm getting awfully mad,
driving down the street.
I just don't want to be bugged,
sitting next to my sweets.

My buddies and me
are gettin' real well known.
Yeah, the bad guys know us
and they leave us alone.

The other guys
are pretty tough
so those other cats over there,
better not get rough.

We always take my car
'cause it's never been beat,
and we've never missed yet
with the girls we meet.

We always take my car
although it's a heap,
and we never get turned down
by the chicks we pick up on the street.

While hilarious, the biting-the-hand-that-feeds-you treatment of their own work presages a more coordinated rejection of their early work that occurred after "Good Vibrations."

And it is to "Good Vibrations"—the second project of the period—that we now turn, for it represents the most successful intersection of the Beach Boys' commercial appeal with Brian's artistic ambitions.¹⁸ The trajectory suggested by *Pet Sounds*

clearly is followed upon here, in that the instrumentation, lyrics, and general atmosphere are markedly different from those in the earlier music. (This, of course, is also the case with *Party*, but for different reasons.)

"Good Vibrations" represents a significant change with respect to *Pet Sounds* in the treatment of form. Whereas in "God Only Knows," for example, Brian attempted a seamless if repetitive form by suppressing both tonic strength and cadential drive, in "Good Vibrations" he creates the opposite—a highly articulated and contrastive march of formal units that simply breaks apart the traditional verse-and-refrain format of rock 'n' roll. The formal techniques of "California Girls" and "God Only Knows" simply were not dramatic enough to accommodate the type of expression Brian had in mind. This change in formal structure is linked directly to a new compositional technique that Brian began using during *Pet Sounds*. Beach Boys commentator David Leaf writes:

Beginning with *Pet Sounds*, Brian's recording methods changed considerably from his past work. Rather than going into the studio with a completed song, Brian was writing music in the manner of an impressionistic painter. Brian, according to [Tony] Asher [principal lyricist for *Pet Sounds*], "used to go in and record [instrumental] tracks. We didn't know what they were going to be. They didn't even have melodies. They would just be a series of chord changes that Brian liked, with some weird or not-so-weird instruments. Then, we would bring these back [to the house] and play them and kind of write a melody to them and then write some lyrics."¹⁹

Brian himself explained the process this way: "I had a lot of unfinished ideas, fragments of music I called 'feels.' Each feel represented a mood or an emotion I'd felt, and I planned to fit them together like a mosaic."²⁰ "Good Vibrations" was the first piece where this mosaic effect was felt most strongly, since six different—and mostly disparate—"feels" are assembled. Example 2.7 shows these through an overview of the formal, harmonic, and metrical structure of the song.

"Good Vibrations" begins without introduction²¹ in a traditional verse and refrain format, though the harmonic relationship between the two is more sophisticated than normal; the verses are set in E \flat minor, while the refrain begins in the relative major, G \flat . Yet the relationship is even more complex: the verse emphasizes descending harmonic motion through scale degrees still controlled by a single tonic, while the refrain marches upward through scale degrees heard as individual keys. Differences in metrical structure highlight this opposition, since the verse has a regular one-harmony-per-measure harmonic rhythm, while the refrain is more expansive, starting with a four-measure harmony followed by two-measure groups. Already, we can sense in this complicated relationship between such stock formal players as verse and refrain the mosaic effect to which Brian alluded earlier.

The verse and refrain form goes through two cycles before it is broken by the appearance of episode 1. This section begins disjunctively, in that the B \flat harmony concluding the refrain, which, in the context of the verse, had acquired a dominant charge, is now maintained as a tonic. Over the course of the next ten measures (6 + 2)—unexpectedly long in light of previous patterns—the upper and lower dominants are visited and prolong B \flat as the local tonic (or can one still detect the lingering dominant charge from the end of the refrain? The ambiguity here is exquisite). B \flat is rudely abandoned, however, when a new, pianissimo "feel" is spliced in to

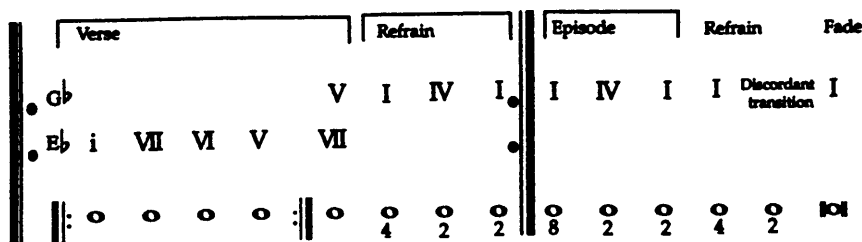
The musical score for "Good Vibrations" is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff shows the key signature (B \flat) and the overall structure: Verse (measures 1-8), Refrain (measures 9-16), Episode 1 (measures 17-26), Episode 2 (measures 27-36), Retro-Refrain (measures 37-41), and Closing (measures 42-45). The chord progression is as follows:

- Verse:** i VII VI V V VII
- Refrain:** I I V I
- Episode 1:** I IV I (V I V)
- Episode 2:** V IV
- Retro-Refrain:** I I I I
- Closing:** I I I I

The metrical structure is indicated by brackets and numbers below the staff: Verse (4x2=8), Refrain (8), Episode 1 (10), Episode 2 (10), Retro-Refrain (5), and Closing (4). The total length of the piece is 45 measures.

Example 2.7. Formal and harmonic structure of "Good Vibrations"

become episode 2, set in the key of F.²² At this point, it is clear that "Good Vibrations" is not developing along the lines of any predictable formal pattern. The radical disjunctions in key, texture, instrumentation, and mood between episodes 1 and 2 are astounding and arresting. The appearance of episode 1 was unusual enough but could be explained as an extended break between verse and refrain sections. Episode 2, however, makes that interpretation untenable, and both listener and analyst must entertain the idea that "Good Vibrations" develops under its own power, as it were, without the guidance of overdetermined formal patterns. Brian's own description of the song—a three-and-a-half-minute "pocket symphony"—is a telling clue about his formal ambitions here.



Example 2.8. Formal and harmonic structure of early version of “Good Vibrations,” released on Capitol CDP 7 93696 2

The structure of the song is rounded off by the reappearance of the refrain music, though, as example 2.7 shows, it marches through its transpositional structure in retrograde, beginning in B \flat and concluding in an unexpectedly short, one-measure G \flat presentation. There follows a short section of vocalizing in three-part counterpoint. The transpositional structure of this section artfully refers both to the original refrain, in that it reproduces upward transposition, and to the retrograde version just heard, as it falls back one step from the B \flat apex to settle upon A \flat , the concluding key of the song.

“Good Vibrations” luxuriates in harmonic variety, exemplified by the fact that the song begins and ends not only in different keys but also in different modes. Further, all seven scale degrees of the opening E \flat -minor tonic are activated on some level in the song. The verse, for example, is structured by the time-honored ground-bass tetrachord, a descent from 8 to 5 in minor, while the refrain marches upward from 3 to 5. The only scale degree of the opening E \flat -minor key not activated in the verse and refrain, 2, receives twelve measures worth of emphasis in episode 2.

In light of Brian’s compositional technique of assembling various feels as if creating a mosaic, it is instructive to compare the released version of “Good Vibrations” with an early, rough version that Brian assembled and that was released only on a recent Capitol Records CD.²³ The formal structure of the rough version is mapped in example 2.8. One can see immediately that both the harmonic variety and the formal innovation marking the released version are severely attenuated here. The harmonic structure of the verse is the same as in the released version, as is the modulation to the relative major at the start of the refrain.²⁴ The refrain itself, however, has quite a different harmonic structure, essentially the one used in episode 1. (The metric structure, 4 + 2 + 2, is the same.) Because no transpositional ascent to B \flat occurs in this refrain, the connection back to the verse lacks the sureness found in the released version, where E \flat minor, the key of the verse, is easily reached by descending-fifth motion from the B \flat apex.

In addition to the differences in the treatment of verse and refrain, the rough version is considerably more conventional in formal treatment after the end of the verse-and-refrain cycle. Though the basic outlines of episode 1 are present in the rough version, the episode is orchestrated differently (a Jew’s harp is quite prominent here but is missing in the released version) and is also set in G \flat , which contributes to the general harmonic stasis inaugurated in the refrain. The episode is fol-

lowed by a truncated reprise of the refrain music, which thus makes the episode more of a traditional break than a true episode. We get a glimmering that Brian is interested in episodic effects when the reprised refrain is interrupted by two measures of discordant break—essentially a sudden shift into three different keys by three different parts. This break then gives way to the refrain again and is followed by a long fade. Since the break is neither long enough nor integrated well with the rest of the song, it is unable to function as a true episode, and the rough version of “Good Vibrations” thus seems more a funky rhythm-and-blues number than a pocket symphony.²⁵

“Good Vibrations” was phenomenally successful and placed the Beach Boys next to the Beatles in popularity among listeners and leadership among peers. But the cost, in both monetary and spiritual resources, was enormous. Brian himself estimates that the song cost “somewhere between \$50,000 and \$75,000” to produce, which he points out was “then an unheard amount for one song.”²⁶ More significantly, Brian’s obsession with outdoing previous achievements now could only enter an extremely dangerous phase, as topping what many esteem one of rock music’s greatest compositional achievements became his next goal.

The sad story of what happened after “Good Vibrations” is well known: *Smile*, the album that the group worked on after “Good Vibrations” (and the first album since *Pet Sounds*), died aborning after months of intense and contentious labor. Brian simply could not motivate the group for the project, which contained very experimental—and hence commercially dangerous—material.²⁷ First, lyricist Van Dyke Parks abandoned the project after Mike Love expressed frustration at the inscrutable lyrics Parks was penning for the project. Then Brian, left without a lyricist and with too many songs not yet assembled, gave up work, thoroughly discouraged. The final tooth knocked out from *Smile* was the appearance of the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an achievement that Brian believed (rightly or wrongly) he could not surpass.²⁸ The demise of *Smile* marked the beginning of a fifteen-year emotional collapse for Brian.

Considering just the compositional problems involved in the *Smile* project—without, of course, downplaying the complex psychological issues at work—it becomes clear that Brian had too many individual feels to keep track of, and that, moreover, finding the right fit for the appropriate pieces was too difficult. David Anderle, the chief executive of the Beach Boys’ recording company, Brother Records, describes Brian’s compositional process during *Smile*: “He was always interchanging parts. ‘Cause at one point, he’d say ‘OK. This is ‘Surf’s Up’ or this is ‘Bicycle Rider’ or ‘Vegetables.’” And then a night or two later, maybe the first verse and chorus of what had been ‘Bicycle Rider’ was all of a sudden the second verse of something else. It was continually changing at that point. A lot of those titles were at that point really just the tracks without the lyrics put on. That’s why it was so easy to inter-change.”²⁹

The differences between the released and rough versions of “Good Vibrations” discussed above give some clue about the nature of the problems. But an even more telling demonstration involves the one song that Brian did manage to pull together after “Good Vibrations”: “Heroes and Villains.”³⁰ All the feels for this song had been

gathered by January 1967, and for the next few months Brian assembled various versions of the song, some of which are fully mixed and ready for release. One of these was included on the same Capitol Records CD that contains the rough version of "Good Vibrations." Though the alternate version of "Heroes and Villains" maintains the harmonic structure of the verse and has a few other feels in common with the released version, it is quite a different song. The alternate version lacks a refrain but has two lengthy sections (episodes) not found in the released version. These endow the alternate version with a formal structure more like that of "Good Vibrations" than that found in the released version and make the alternate version of "Heroes and Villains" a more compelling song than the actual release. Interestingly, Brian mixed versions of "Heroes and Villains" even more lengthy and complex than the alternate, one of which is reputedly twelve minutes long. That there were apparently at least three complete and ready-to-release versions of the same song gives some indication of the hesitation Brian must have felt in his compositional process. As a gauge of how thorny the problem must have been for Brian, consider what Beethoven might have done had he composed the three *Leonore* overtures at the same time instead of separately and with the benefit of having judged their effectiveness in public performance; which one would he have released first?

Despite the demise of *Smile* and Brian's catastrophic loss of competitive nerve, the Beach Boys were still obligated to Capitol Records for more albums. The album released instead of *Smile*, titled *Smiley Smile*, was similar in name only to the abandoned project. In all other respects, it was a completely different undertaking, which Carl Wilson pithily described as a "bunt instead of a grand slam." The depth of production that marked "Good Vibrations," as well as *Pet Sounds* and "Heroes and Villains," is missing in *Smiley Smile*; in its place is a deliberately understated and loose-limbed production style reminiscent of *Party*. It seems that, in the throes of discouragement, this was the only this kind of production effort Brian could manage. Or, perhaps more accurately, it was the only one the Beach Boys themselves could manage; the production of *Smiley Smile* is credited to the entire group, not to Brian alone—the first album in which Brian is not credited as the sole producer since *Surfin' U.S.A.*³¹ This change in production regime gives eloquent testimony to Brian's abdication from the leadership position in the group.

Musically, *Smiley Smile* is a mixed bag. Two songs assembled under the previous production regime, "Good Vibrations" and "Heroes and Villains," are included, and these contrast markedly with the remaining nine songs, which are all at least a minute shorter than these two and considerably less dense in instrumentation and texture. Some of these nine were new compositions for *Smiley Smile* and thus were not part of *Smile*, but others (such as "Vegetables") incorporated some *Smile* feels among newly recorded material.

At heart, the artistic problem of *Smiley Smile* is one of mixing a compositional technique designed for one production style—that of "Good Vibrations"—with the very different style of *Party*. In other words, while the complex overdubbings and mixings that gave "Good Vibrations" a supremely rich texture are missing in *Smiley Smile*, the unusual harmonic and formal devices showcased in that song, as well its subtle and arch lyrics, were retained. Without the slick production, however, these

techniques made for songs that seemed arid and obscure to most listeners. *Smiley Smile* sold poorly and reached only forty-first position on *Billboard's* charts.³²

What was a listener to do, for example, with a song like "Whistle In"? Lasting for only a minute and six seconds, it consists solely of a repeated harmonic progression, I-V/V-V, supporting the words, "Remember the day, remember the night; all day long (whistle in)." There is a lead singer and a softer background singer (who only sings the "whistle in" line); three other background voices enunciate words from the lyrics; and the whole is supported instrumentally by a very soft honky-tonk piano and somewhat louder bass guitar.³³

What about "Fall Breaks and Back to Winter (W. Woodpecker Symphony)," which is just as enigmatic as "Whistle In"? Formally, it consists of two alternating units, one an unstable vamp over a V⁹ of F and the other based on a stable and static F-major chord. The voices merely vocalize without lyrics, and the instrumentation seems to be two harmonicas, Hammond organ, electronic bass, wood blocks, wind chimes, tubular bell, one bass voice—lowered to an indeterminate pitch in the production stage—singing an occasional "wop," and two voices singing "ooh." The subtitle is obviously a reference to a harmonica lick in the stable F-major section, which sounds like the laugh of the cartoon character.

While these two songs are the oddest on the album in terms of style and structure, they have worn well over the years and can be profitably thought of as a kind of protominimal rock music. The lack of formal or harmonic development makes the listener focus upon other qualities such as instrumentation, timbre, and reverberation. A concentrated listening effort thus goes quickly to subtle details. Other songs, while not so weird, invite the same listening sensibility. "With Me Tonight," for example, begins with a repetitive a cappella feel structured by a I-IV-I progression. This introduction gives way to verse material, but not before it seems to be allowed to go on for longer than it should. That is, a voice from the control room saying "good" (as in "good take") is clearly heard over the studio speakers after the singers finish the first part of the introduction. While one might think that this is an editing mistake, it turns out that the control-room voice comes in exactly one beat after the singers conclude, and that it is delivered with a vocal richness that is itself musical and interesting. Moreover, since the song moves along in sixteen-measure units, and since the "Good" falls on beat four of measure 12, the seemingly out-of-place control-room voice actually provides a crucial formal link to the final four measures of the introduction. That is, the control-room voice—by accident or design—is truly part of the song and acts as a punctuation point in the form. It does not seem intrusive at all. In fact, it was only after many hearings that I understood what the voice was saying and thereby discovered the origin of this punctuation point; I had long assumed that it was produced in the studio as an original part of the feel.

One of the most interesting compositions on *Smiley Smile* is "Wonderful," a song that shows traces of work done during the *Smile* project (Van Dyke Parks is cocredited as lyricist). Some aspects of structure are shown in example 2.9a. In a basic sense, the song is set in a typical Beach Boys fashion: a series of opening verses followed by a break and concluding with a final verse. In "Wonderful," however, this conventional form goes unrecognized. Two very short and seemingly unrelated sections break up the flow of the form, obscuring the relationship among parts. Also,

[A]

A	A'	A		B	A		
Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Discordant transition	Codetta	(laughing)	Verse 4	Codetta
F C	F C	F C		A ^b	E ^b D ^b	F C	A ^b
7 mm.	8 mm.	7 mm.	1 m.	1 m.	9 mm.	7 mm.	1 m.

[B]

Example 2.9. Formal, melodic, and harmonic structures in “Wonderful”

the middle section (“break”) is quite episodic, being set in a different key and tempo. Finally, texture, instrumentation, and harmonic structure are all so absorbing that little attention is left to give to form. The foreground impression, thus, is that “Wonderful” is as formally diverse as “Good Vibrations.”

Consider the melody of the verse, shown in example 2.9b. A more difficult, crabbed, tonally vague, and unfocused tune in the repertory of pop music is hard to imagine. That it is sung almost in a whisper (with a decrescendo into an actual whisper in the fourth verse) only adds to its fascination; the understated virtuosity here is nigh overwhelming. Its instrumental support is a pianissimo Hammond organ joined by a honky-tonk piano in the second verse, a somewhat louder electronic bass, and an off-key harmonica so soft that it seems to be the result of tape bleedthrough.³⁴ Yet this off-key (and off-meter as well) harmonica becomes the focus of attention during the “discordant transition” (see example 2.9a) as it grates uncomfortably against the organ, which is finishing off its material from the verse.

The middle section, as was already mentioned, is set in a different key and tempo. But it is also set in a different style and manner. It has no lyrics and consists only of doo-wop syllables supported by honky-tonk piano and set against a backdrop of group laughter and animated conversation, something introduced in a more light-hearted vein in *Party*. In “Wonderful,” however, the technique is more self-conscious and arty. For example, the background has two levels of organization (if it can be called that). Undergirding the whole is a *Party*-like chatter whose conversational contents are indecipherable. Layered on top of the chatter are voices whose words can occasionally be understood.³⁵ One voice in particular seems loosely coordinated with harmony and rhythm, so that its squeals and giggles subtly alight upon chord members. Thus, in this section “Wonderful” affects the looseness of *Party* but is really just as controlled as the rest of the song.

As the preceding discussion has clearly suggested, *Smiley Smile* is not a work of rock music—at least as rock music was understood in 1967. Listening with ears that have heard other music besides rock, one cannot help but be struck by a self-conscious break with tradition, by the attempt to cut away convention and to explore new—and difficult to understand—musical territory. In this light, *Smiley Smile* can almost be considered a work of art music in the Western classical tradition, and its innovations in the musical language of rock can be compared to those that introduced atonal and other nontraditional techniques into that classical tradition. The spirit of experimentation is just as palpable in *Smiley Smile* as it is in, say, Schoenberg’s op. 11 piano pieces.

Yet there is also a spirit of tentativeness in *Smiley Smile*. We must remember that it was essentially a Plan B—that is, the album issued instead of *Smile*. Had Brian been able to finish work on *Smile*, there would have surely been the same confidence in innovation and technique that marks “Good Vibrations,” “Heroes and Villains,” and other works begun during the *Smile* project. Another source of tentativeness no doubt was the anticipation that both Capitol Records and, later, the buying public would at least be baffled, at most irritated by *Smiley Smile*. The marketplace exerts tremendous force on an art so dependent upon expensive technology as rock music. Whereas a Schoenberg could have notated his compositions cheaply on paper and waited for sympathetic performers to play them, Brian Wilson composed in a recording studio that charged by the hour, employed professional musicians, and required the services of a record company to mass produce and distribute his work. Commercial failure simply cannot be tolerated in this regime, and a work like *Smiley Smile* has no place in it. Schoenberg could persevere in writing music according to his muse; the Beach Boys, after *Smiley Smile*, could not.³⁶

To some extent, this situation explains why most of the albums after *Smiley Smile* gradually back away from its artistic implications, a retreat that corresponds exactly to Brian’s progressive retirement from the group and into deep mental illness. Indeed, within a few months after *Smiley Smile* was released, the Beach Boys released another album, *Wild Honey*, which was considerably less experimental than both *Smiley Smile* and—significantly—“Good Vibrations.” *Wild Honey* was a self-conscious attempt by the Beach Boys to regroup as a rock ‘n’ roll band and to reject the mantle of recording-studio auteurs that Brian had made them wear. Without

Vamp

3x

To Coda

Vamp

v I

D.C. al Coda

9-8
V7-6
5-4

Fade

Example 2.10. "Let the Wind Blow," formal structure. N.B. All upper-case roman numerals denote major-minor seventh chords over the scale degree in question; lower-case roman numerals denote minor-minor seventh chords

Brian's drive, of course, they could no longer be those auteurs, hence *Wild Honey*. Carl Wilson again: "Wild Honey was music for Brian to cool out by."³⁷

None of the music on *Wild Honey* has any of the enigmatic weirdness of "Whistle In" or "Fall Breaks and Back to Winter." The album also has no virtuosic mesmerizer like "Wonderful" or "Wind Chimes." Generally, the songs are neither harmonically nor formally adventurous, and they come across as simple, fun-to-sing, and unambitious rhythm and blues—a far different impression than that left by *Smiley Smile*. But the production regime is the same as in *Smiley Smile*: the instrumentation is spare and unusual (organ, honky-tonk piano, and electronic bass seem again to be the instrumental core), complex overdubbings are eschewed, and the overall density of sound is lower than that in the pre-*Smiley Smile* era.³⁸ In *Wild Honey*, this simple production style seems suited to the simple music.

"Let the Wind Blow" is the most arresting and compositionally assured song on the album, and it echoes the formal and harmonic technique of "God Only Knows." Example 2.10 displays a formal diagram of the song along with some notations about harmonic structure. The A section has an unusual twenty-measure rhythmic structure broken up into $(4 \times 3) + 4 + 4$, where the last four-measure unit contains the same vamp material as the four-measure units in the (4×3) segment. The listener is thus confused about whether measure 17 marks the beginning of the A-section repeat or not. There being no harmonic seam between the actual end of the section at measure 20 and the return to measure 1, the listener cannot detect that

the four-measure *concluding* segment is not, in fact, part of the *opening* segment. At the second run-through of the A section, this confusion is heightened because the concluding segment does *not* connect to the opening but continues into the B section, giving the impression of a sudden attenuation of a formal unit after only one measure.

Looking at the song as a whole, it becomes clear that the reappearance of the vamp is always a somewhat surprising event. For example, while the twenty-measure A section is comprised of consistent four-measure units (it is their disposition that is surprising), the B section lasts for only fifteen measures, a three-measure unit at its conclusion being responsible for the odd hypermetric structure. Thus, the A' section and its vamp come in one measure too early, assuming that sixteen measures is the expected, normal length of the B section. A similar surprise occurs at the end of the A' section, where an extra measure of concluding A-minor harmony disrupts the hypermeter, this time making the vamp come in a measure too late. Moreover, there is no palpable harmonic connection at this point; a subtle change of mode alone signals the return of the vamp.

One commentator has considered the 1968 album *Friends*³⁹ to be "a return to *Smiley's* dryness, minus the weirdness."⁴⁰ The opening song, "Meant for You," certainly corroborates this impression. All of forty-one seconds, the song functions as an overture to the album, announcing that "these feelings in my heart are meant for you," that is, the audience. Set in a slow tempo with only one eight-measure phrase followed by a fade, "Meant for You" does indeed hark back to the experimental style of *Smiley Smile*. But the remaining songs on the album have few of the formal or harmonic quirks of the earlier album, though there is no lack of clever and interesting effects, such as the bass harmonica line in "Passing By" or the repetitive monophonic organ line in the break of "Be Here in the Morning."

On *Smiley Smile*, Brian is credited in all eleven songs; on *Wild Honey*, the extent of Brian's involvement drops a bit—he was composer or co-composer of nine of the eleven tracks; *Friends* shows yet another decline in his contribution: eight out of twelve. (Dennis Wilson contributed two songs to *Friends* that showed him to be a close student of Brian's post-*Smiley Smile* style.) Clearly, as Brian's mental health deteriorated, he became less and less able to contribute new material. So, for *20/20*, the album made after *Friends*, the Beach Boys resurrected two songs of Brian's that had been partly assembled during the *Smile* era.⁴¹ "Our Prayer," a sixty-five-second wordless vocalise in a vaguely sacred a cappella style, was actually recorded in 1966, with some additional finishing vocals added two years later. An exquisite exercise of harmonic virtuosity, "Our Prayer" allowed the Beach Boys once again to show off the vocal abilities and stylistic influences earlier demonstrated on such songs as "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring."

The remaking of the song "Cabinessence," all feels of which were recorded in 1966 for inclusion on *Smile*, was more complicated. Apparently, Brian had done a great deal of preliminary assembly work but had not been able to come up with a consistent plan for final assembly. "Reportedly," writes David Leaf, "there were twenty-five different mixes and combinations of that song all put on separate acetate discs before they [i.e., the Beach Boys during the production of *20/20*] put out one version. To add to the confusion, the song in its released form contains por-

tions of 'Who Ran the Iron Horse' and 'The Grand Coolie Dam.'"⁴² It is true that "Cabinessence" seems lyrically disorganized and more episodic than even the alternate version of "Heroes and Villains," but it does have that aura of manic brilliance that characterized Brian's work before the collapse of *Smile*, and thus this narrative problem is easily forgiven and forgotten. The contrast between these songs and Brian's five newly composed songs for *20/20* is stark and poignant.

The 1970 album, *Sunflower*, marks the end of the experimental songwriting and production phase inaugurated by *Smiley Smile*.⁴³ Perhaps not coincidentally, it received the highest critical praise of any Beach Boys work since *Pet Sounds*.⁴⁴ The new production style on *Sunflower* is denser and more conventional than that of the *Smiley Smile* era, but it is not in any way a return to the Spectroesque style Brian had used in the early 1960s. Rather, it is an attempt to update the Beach Boys for the 1970s, an attempt encouraged by their new manager, Jack Rieley. Under Rieley's management, the group put out the albums *Surf's Up*, *Carl and the Passions—So Tough*, and *Holland*, the first of which took its title from another *Smile*-era composition resurrected for the album.⁴⁵ These three albums contain a mixture of middle-of-the-road music entirely consonant with pop style during the early 1970s with a few oddities that proved that the desire to push beyond conventional boundaries was not dead. *Surf's Up*, for example, contains two newly composed Brian Wilson songs, "A Day in the Life of a Tree" and "Till I Die," that use unusual compositional procedures for rock. The former begins with an extraordinarily long pedal point under hymnlike chord changes on a Hammond organ. *Holland* includes a half-sung, half-spoken "fairy tale" written and composed by Brian. This piece was so unusual that it could not be included on the main disk of the album and was put instead on a separate seven-and-half-inch disk.

The conclusive and ironic end to any experimental compositional activity was forced upon the Beach Boys by their first number-one product since "Good Vibrations": *Endless Summer*.⁴⁶ But *Endless Summer* was a compilation album of successful singles, all of which were composed before *Pet Sounds*. The message that the success of this album sent to the group only reinforced their concert experience: it was the old surf and hot-rod material that audiences wanted to hear. From this point on, Beach Boys albums lost all sense of experimentation and innovation; milking the formula that gave them their initial success became the focus of their new music. In some senses, 1974 is the year in which the Beach Boys ceased to be a rock 'n' roll band and became an oldies act.

3

Sometimes failure and success occupy the same side of the coin, and sometimes this condition works ironically to the advantage of art. Clearly, Brian Wilson's successes put him in the express lane toward catastrophic failure; remember that lighthearted *Smile* was the proximate cause for crushing depression. But that album was also the dysfunctional parent to a series of sensitive if emotionally injured children. *Smiley Smile* and its siblings have long been bullied by legions of critics and loved by only a

few. The critics have only seen their failure as rock music; the friends, however, have seen their success as genuine artistic expressions and as brave breaks with conventions—conventions whose borders the Beach Boys previously had worked hard to define. But the group then went into the great void beyond. Very few interested in rock music took notice at the time, and most classically oriented musicians did not even know that such an expedition was being undertaken. What influence could these innovations then have? The short answer is, not much. *Smiley Smile*, *Wild Honey*, *Friends*, and *20/20* sound like few other rock albums; they are sui generis. One could perhaps point out the affinities between the Beach Boys' late-1960s experiments and an album like Todd Rundgren's *A Wizard/A True Star* (1973), which mimics aspects of Brian's compositional style in its abrupt transitions, mixture of various pop styles, and unusual production effects.⁴⁷ But it must be remembered that the commercial failure of the Beach Boys' experiments was hardly motivation for imitation.

In the end, we must conclude that the Beach Boys' late-1960s experiments were not reproducible. They succeed on their own terms—that is, as ingenious artistic experiments—only because of the talent and musicianship of the people involved. They fail, however, because few understand how to listen to them: definitely not rock music, and not high-toned enough to be considered classical music. Some might say that they fail also because they were the product of failure: the *Smile* debacle. In this light, they are poor substitutes for what could have been, for the maturing of the fun-loving Beach Boys into the serious Studio Men. But this is uncharitable; it is not art or skill or vision that was lost with *Smile*, only ambition and mania and confidence. Reluctantly leaving these on the beach when the setting of Brian's sun drove them away, the Beach Boys tried to carry on inside and at night without them. Yet they ended up dreaming of high art while in a nightmare of commercial failure. When the *Endless Summer* dawned, they awoke from both, took down their surfboards, and groggily returned to the beach, knowing that they would never leave it again.

Notes

I would like to acknowledge here my friend Dan (now the Reverend Daniel) Meyer, in whose delightful company I first heard the strange and fascinating sounds from *Smiley Smile* and *Friends*, and at whose house we later tried to play these albums during a party, only to have some disgruntled guest commandeer the stereo in the name of rock 'n' roll.

1. Jim Miller, ed., *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll*, rev. and updated ed. (New York: Random House, 1980), 162–63.

2. Greg Shaw writes that "the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean established surfing as the biggest overnight sensation since the twist" (*Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll*, 107). Brian Wilson biographer David Leaf portrays Jan and Dean as followers and not as genuine instigators of the surfing fad; see his *The Beach Boys* (enlarged edition of *The Beach Boys and the California Myth*) (Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1985), 36. Dick Dale and his band the Del-Tones are usually credited with creating surf music, largely because many of their early gigs were for surfers' parties on the beach.

3. This popular vocal style, exemplified in groups such as the Hi-Lo's and the Four Fresh-

men, was a constant musical staple in the Wilson household during Brian's formative years. Murry Wilson, Brian's father, was a pop composer and arranger manqué who encouraged and participated in his sons' early musical interests. David Leaf gives a thorough report about music in the Wilson household during the 1950s in *The Beach Boys*, 14–19. Sometimes described by the label “vocal jazz,” this style that Brian was exposed to is perhaps better characterized by reference to its roots in the collegiate men's glee clubs of the late nineteenth century. (The Yale Whiff'n'Poofs are one of the best known examples.)

4. “Their Hearts Were Full of Spring” was a particular Beach Boys favorite; it was recorded at least three times. The first version is on the album *Little Deuce Coupe* (Capitol 1998 [1963]), where it appears under the name “A Young Man Is Gone.” Released on an album that marked the beginning of the “hot-rod” period, the music had lyrics Brian thought were unsuitable, and he penned new ones telling of a young man's death (a reference to James Dean?) in a car crash. The second version appears on *Beach Boys Concert* (Capitol 2198 [1964]) and was recorded in 1964, though without Brian on the top part. The recording from which example 2.1 was transcribed was made in 1967 during a rehearsal for a live concert in Hawaii; it is included as a bonus track on the CD reissue of *Smiley Smile/Wild Honey* (Capitol CDP 7 93696 2 [1990]).

5. Brian Wilson's penchant for complex modulatory structures in surf music is perhaps best exemplified in “Drag City,” a song he cowrote with Jan Berry and Roger Christian that was recorded by Jan and Dean. Again, taken separately, the verse and refrain are fairly ordinary; but the modulatory link between them is thrilling. The verse progresses I–II–V–I in G major. In connecting to the refrain, the final I of the verse moves to ♭II (A♭) which pivots to become ♭VII (!) for the B♭-major refrain set in twelve-bar blues form. A♭ later appears as a key area after a typical ascending half-step modulation.

6. In his 1991 autobiography (*Wouldn't It Be Nice* [New York:HarperCollins Publishers, 1991] written with Todd Gold), Brian attributes much of the motivation for his artistic progress to an intense competitive drive, especially with the Beatles (pp. 89–90) and Phil Spector, and to marijuana use (pp. 111–13), and incipient mental illness (*passim*—the autobiography is fashionably confessional about these matters).

7. The Beach Boys, *The Beach Boys Today!* Capitol 2269 (1965), and *Summer Days (and Summer Nights!!)*, Capitol 2354 (1965).

8. Walter Everett discovers a powerful relationship of text and music here. Brian's wish that “they all could be California girls” is, of course, impossible to realize; the inability of I–II to reach V, then, underscores this impossibility.

9. The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*, Capitol 2458 (1966); rereleased on CD as Capitol CDP 7 48421 2 (1990) with three additional tracks not contained on the original album and extensive liner notes by David Leaf.

10. Brian Wilson reports that the album title, which on one level is highly personal—[Brian's] Pet [i.e., favorite] Sounds—was actually inspired by bandmate Mike Love's derisive opinion of the music: “Who's gonna hear this shit? The ears of a dog?” Wilson and Gold, *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, 140.

11. Brian cites Spector as the source for much of his experiments in instrumentation. See Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 73. Brian also benefited by using many of the same studio musicians that Spector used—the famous “Wrecking Crew.” See Hal Blaine with David Goggin, *Hal Blaine and the Wrecking Crew* (Emeryville, Calif.: Mix Books, 1990), 76–78.

12. Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 82.

13. The chord in question is enharmonically equivalent to a VII⁷ in B major (a half-diminished seventh). The voice leading of the chord, however, argues for the custom-made notation shown in example 2.6a, in which G♯, understood as 7 of A, is counterpoised with B♭ as ♭2. I treat this kind of mixed-function harmonic structure in detail in my recent book, *Har-*

monic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of Its Precedents (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

14. An additional complication affects the tonal center of the verse. The introduction to the song begins with the harmonic progression of the refrain—that is, with the descending tetrachord from A major. One would seem justified, then, in hearing the song in A, save for a crucial D in the horn melody over the initial A-major triad. Tonal ambiguity thus appears in the very first measure of the song.

15. The Beach Boys, *Beach Boys' Party!* Capitol 2398 (1965).

16. Precedents for *Party* can be discerned on other Beach Boys albums. For example, on *The Beach Boys Today!* the track “Bull Session with Big Daddy” is nothing more than a minimally organized interview with the Beach Boys conducted by the editor of a Capitol Records fan magazine, Earl Leaf. The group is in no mood for serious discussion, and most of the track consists of the participants joking around and trying to figure out how to distribute food from a take-out order. On *Summer Days*, the song “Bugged at My Old Man” is a hilarious twelve-bar blues in which Brian vents frustration at his father. The rest of the group occasionally chimes in with Greek-chorus comments, minimally tuned. The song is recorded simply without any production touch-up.

17. Just before the “real” version of “I Get Around” fades out completely, one of the singers (Brian himself?) can be heard to affect the satirical tone later used throughout the *Party* version.

18. “Good Vibrations” was originally released as a single (Capitol 5676 [1966]) and later included on the album *Smiley Smile* (Brother T-9001 [1967]). The CD rerelease *Smiley Smile/Wild Honey* combines *Smiley Smile* with *Wild Honey* (originally Capitol T-2859 [1967]), includes six alternate tracks that never appeared on either album (including “Their Hearts Were Full of Spring,” discussed earlier), and features extensive liner notes by David Leaf.

19. Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 78.

20. Wilson and Gold, *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, 131.

21. Actually, there *is* an introduction to the song: a one-beat cry/sigh/moan by the lead singer, Carl Wilson. Significantly, this motive recurs—though buried deep within the recording mix—at each transposition level in the refrain.

22. The stark effect of the splice is mitigated by allowing the last chords of episode 1 to decay during the beginning of episode 2.

23. This bonus track can be found on the *Smiley Smile/Wild Honey* CD cited above.

24. The lyrics of the early version are quite different from those in the released version, which were credited to Brian and Mike Love. The lyrics in the rough version may have been written by Tony Asher. See Wilson and Gold, *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, 138.

25. See Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 90, for Brian's original conception of “Good Vibrations” as a rhythm and blues song. Leaf (*The Beach Boys*, 94) also reports that other rough versions of “Good Vibrations” exist.

26. Wilson and Gold, *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, 145.

27. *Smile*—its purpose, contents, and concept—has been the focus of intense investigation. Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, covers the album in chaps. 8 and 9. A crucial if eccentric documentary source is Domenic Priore, *Look! Listen! Vibrate! Smile!* (Surfin' Colours Productions [privately printed], n.d.), which contains many newspaper clippings, reprints from magazines, and some original essays by knowledgeable observers such as Leaf, Priore, and Brad Elliot. Despite all the research, it is still difficult to pin down exactly what *Smile* was to be about. David Anderle, a record company executive close to Brian during this time, explains:

Brian was so creative at this time [late 1966] it was impossible to try to tie things up . . . we were talking about doing humor albums . . . there was the *Smile* talk . . . there was “The Elements” talk. There were film ideas and TV ideas and health food ideas and

entire recordings of just water sounds, all part of an atmosphere of "anything goes." All the various projects that never happened that were part of all that . . . very intensely creative period of time. Every day, something was happening. . . the humor concept was separate from *Smile*, originally. (Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 97. The quotation is Leaf's transcription of an oral interview.)

28. The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Capitol 2653 (1967). Brian's sense of competition with the Beatles was noted earlier. Paul McCartney has acknowledged the Beach Boys' influence, especially during the making of *Sgt. Pepper's*. See David Leaf's transcription of a telephone interview with McCartney in the liner notes to the CD rerelease of *Pet Sounds*.

29. Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 99–100. Brian himself has said that "I couldn't pull the songs together." Wilson and Gold, *Wouldn't It Be Nice*, 161.

30. "Heroes and Villains" was released as a single (Brother 1001 [1967]) slightly in advance of the *Smiley Smile* album, on which it also appeared.

31. The Beach Boys, *Surfin' U.S.A.*, Capitol 1890 (1963).

32. See Miller, *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll*, 168.

33. The Beach Boys had earlier played with this repetitive compositional form in "You're Welcome," the B side of the "Heroes and Villains" single. The insistent repetition in that song is mitigated by the extraordinary long fade-in, giving an impression of development absent in "Whistle In."

34. An occasional glockenspiel note can also be heard at the beginning of the verses. The basic instrumental idea described here—organ, honky-tonk piano, and electronic bass—is the Beach Boys' standard set-up through much of the post-*Pet Sounds* music. Note the lack of percussion and, especially, guitars.

35. A listener can spend a lot of time trying to untangle various conversational threads in this background. The clearest utterance, sung/spoken by Brian, is a vaguely chilling remonstrance: "Don't think you're God."

36. It is interesting to note in this regard that the Beach Boys recognized this problem early and attempted to counter it by forming their own recording company in association with Capitol, called "Brother Records." Brother would give them more financial independence from Capitol so that they could indulge their interests with less interference. The collapse of *Smile* also took down Brother, though it was revived when the Beach Boys signed with Warner Brothers in 1970. By that time recording companies had been forced to grant their artists greater independence. Brother was thus acceptable to Warner Brothers, whereas Capitol had found the idea subversive only a few years earlier.

37. Leaf, liner notes to *Smiley Smile/Wild Honey*, 10.

38. One exception is "Darlin'," which Brian had originally conceived and written in 1963 for another group, but which he rearranged for *Wild Honey* (See Leaf, liner notes, 11). Because of its genesis, however, "Darlin'" could not very well be recorded in the new production style, so it was given a more polished production effort.

39. The Beach Boys, *Friends*, Capitol 2895 (1968).

40. Miller, *Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll*, 166.

41. The Beach Boys, *20/20*, Capitol 133 (1969).

42. Leaf, *The Beach Boys*, 100.

43. The Beach Boys, *Sunflower*, Warner Reprise 6382 (1970).

44. See Irwin Stambler, *Encyclopedia of Pop, Rock, and Soul* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 44.

45. The Beach Boys, *Surf's Up*, Reprise 6453 (1971); *Carl and the Passions—So Tough*, Reprise 2083 (1972); and *Holland*, Reprise 2118 (1973).

46. The Beach Boys, *Endless Summer*, Capitol 11307 (1974).

47. Todd Rundgren, *A Wizard/A True Star*, Bearsville 598 (1973). On *Faithful* (Bearsville 698 [1976]), an album that paid tribute to the musical innovations of a decade earlier, Rundgren artfully covered "Good Vibrations" along with songs by Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and the Yardbirds.