

Love You Beach Boys

By way of being a totally balanced and unbiased rave review of the Beach Boys' latest album. A cool and level-headed explanation of why it is so superb. Cut the chatter though and let's look into these immortal grooves.

Quotation, quotation... that's it. "Mona" is a lovely little song full of references to the iconography of pop-culture from "Gimme Some Loving" to the hallowed name of Phil Spector himself. Later in the record another icon or rather monstre sacre of American telekulture is exposed in "Johnny Carson". Well... attacked? At least nudged in the ribs a bit. When the Beach Boys talk about Johnny there is more than a suspicion in my mind that there are a few smirks in between the notes:

It's nice to have you on the show tonight

I've seen your act in Vegas—outtasight!

Don't you think he's such a natural guy

The way he's kept it up could make you cry.

It is the Beach Boys' musical treatment of these lines that adds the irony, the melody ricocheting between high and low notes, the harmonies just so precise. Listen to the way they sing Johnny Carson's name. Harmony and rhythm combine to provide an extra dimension to the lyrics.

More samples of their rather gentle humour are scattered throughout the album. The extended double entendre of "I Wanna Pick You Up" (Brian



Wilson's own explanation was that this song is "descriptive of a man who considers this chick a baby"). The tongue-in-cheek male chauvinistics of "Love is a Woman":

123, she's falling in love with me
456, she fell for all my tricks
789, she makes me feel so fine

Everyone must be aware of the almost manic care Brian Wilson takes with the production side of Beach Boys records. And the poor man is enduring a lot of hyping lately—vide recent Rolling Stone article and the enclosure to this record which reads 'To Brian whom we love with all our heart'—signed by the other four Beach Boys.

But, in the final analysis the sheer sound of the album is very inventively handled. Listen to the chunky menacing tones of "I Wanna Pick You Up" or the buoyant harmonies of "Airplane". What about the very apt use of moog in "I'll Bet He's Nice". What a nice corrective these burbling synthesised sounds prove to the innate romanticism of the lyrics. Further evidence

that the Beach Boys have constructed these songs to work on more than one level.

From the standpoint of harmony, the Beach Boys must still be one of the most interesting groups around. So much so that in an age of simplistic three chord opuses it perhaps does make their music seem a trifle mandarin. Such a song is "Solar System" with its rather fey account of the influence of the planets, a parallel to "Transcendental Meditation" from their *Friends* album. Wilson was inspired to write this song on the way to a school meeting for his daughter—hence the charming and deliberate 'kitsch' of the words:

Then there's the Milky Way
That's where the angels play
You've seen the lover's moon
Looks good in the month of June
Neptune is God of the sea
Pluto is too far to see

I know some people just hate this sort of stuff, and I am obviously not one of those. It is just that same whimsy that I think distinguished some

of the numbers on their Christmas album as well as "Take a Load off Your Feet" from *Surf's Up*.

These are very much random thoughts on the *Love You* album and it certainly seems to have been fairly unsuccessful round the country judging by the numbers of shops who feature it in their sale bins. Wilson was disappointed when the previous album *15 Big Ones* didn't really have a single success, and I think "It's OK" could have made it with the right promotion. A snippet of it certainly distinguished Radio Hauraki's collage-advert for its summer rock programme.

Best bets for single success on *Love You* would probably be either "The Night Was So Young" or "Good Time" a song that was performed by Spring in 1972. And as Wilson says, "Why waste a song?"

So why not give *Love You* a try? I have probably won no more fans for *Love You* than I have dissuaded camp followers from the Divine Miss M... but one must keep trying.

William Dart



Harry Lyons, Hello Sailor

Hello Sailor Key Records

Receiving this record gives rise to a quick mental review of its competition—New Zealand conceived and recorded albums of the last few years. Quite honestly, I can't find anything in them to make me believe any the less that this is the best local album I have heard.

Hello Sailor have been gigging around the country for the last two years or more, building up an impressive personal following, and an unequalled log of playing hours. It is a tribute to them and their material that *Hello Sailor* shows none of the professional lethargy which afflicts so many of New Zealand's experienced musicians.

Quite a proportion of the material on the album will be familiar to avid T.V. watchers, radio listeners and habitués of the pubs of Auckland.

A great deal of the record's appeal stems from the range of styles of the different writers (there are five different credits—combined and individual—for the eleven cuts) and also from the different effect created by the three lead singers used. While they are very much a two guitar band, they have none of the limitations which that formula can give rise to, nor do they seem to feel the temptation to use the studio to radically alter their live sound. What you get on *Hello Sailor* is substan-

tially the same as you might get at your local on a night when things are running hot.

The degree of sophistication which they pack into their tight format is obvious throughout, but most obviously on "When Your Lights Are Out". With the addition of piano, by John Mitchell, they put together a classic rock and roll song, no more than four minutes long with a neat guitar solo, a raunch sax honk and a fading hook that just won't die. Coupled to this are words which throughout the record don't disgrace their place on the sleeve:

Can't outclass the classy
Can't out mean the nasty
You can't do nothing when the lights are out.

Song after song is reeled off in this fashion, all of them in the style but not defined by it. Guitar music has always been the heart of rock'n'roll (and the reason Elton John doesn't rock'n'roll) and *Hello Sailor* is as much an affirmation of that fact as any other mid-seventies album I can name. It soaks up its influences well, from Jimmy Cliff to J. Geils, from Graham Parker to Steely Dan, but comes out as definitely 1977 as any more overtly New Wave effort. I suppose you can say that skilful farming of influence was as much a credential for rock'n'roll success as any other.

The rhythm section is as sweaty tight as you have every right to expect from such an accomplished bar band, with the two

guitars carrying everything between them and making a suitably nasty background for Brazier's often inspired singing. Even in their less than auspicious days as the fag end of 'Vamp Rock', the band had a glittered asset in Brazier's voice, which has paid off handsomely.

Brazier has developed as a singer to the extent where he can effectively throw in one line references to other singers' styles—a little Bowie in "Big Bum", a touch of Gabriel in "When Your Lights are Out", Fagan in "Hooked", Rotten (or is it the Scavs?) in "Last Chance to Dance". The leavening provided by McCartney's two lead vocals and Lyon's one, as well as their harmonies not only extends the range of the band but it also highlights Brazier's contributions.

It is usual, at the end of a review of a record you like to hunt around for some strong point of the artist or recording to hang the approval on. In this case there is an embarrassment of riches. Everything about *Hello Sailor* from the cover, through the songs, the bionically intertwined guitar lines, the so tough rhythm section, the singing and the swagger with which it is all carried off, spells out success.

This record is sitting beside *Heat Treatment* and *Period of Transition* as my favourite new record for 1977, and who am I to say that come Christmas it won't have outstripped them?

Francis Stark

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