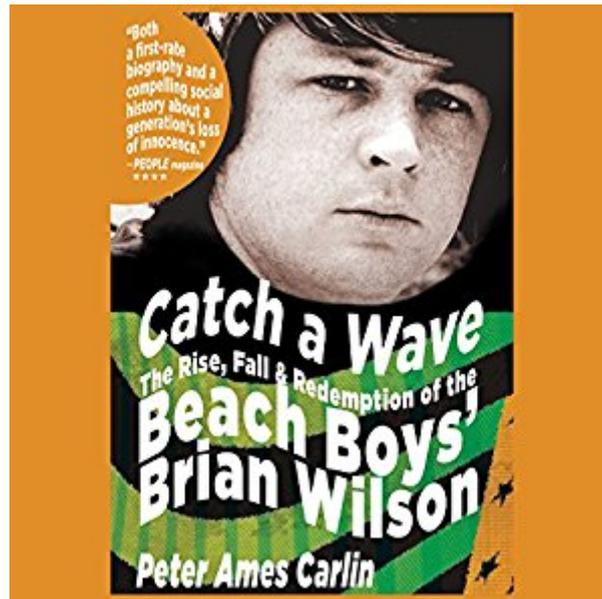


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Catch A Wave: The Rise, Fall, And Redemption Of The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson



Synopsis

Brian, Carl, and Dennis Wilson, along with Mike Love and Al Jardine - better known as the Beach Boys, rocketed out of a working-class Los Angeles suburb in the early '60s, and their sun-and-surf sound captured the imagination of kids across the world. In a few short years, they rode the wave all the way to the top, standing with the Beatles as one of the world's biggest bands. Despite their utopian visions, infectious hooks, and stunning harmonies, the Beach Boys were beset by drug abuse, jealousy, and terrifying mental illness. In *Catch a Wave*, Peter Ames Carlin pulls back the curtain on Brian Wilson, one of popular music's most revered luminaries, as well as its biggest mystery. Drawing on hundreds of interviews and never-before-heard studio recordings, Carlin follows the Beach Boys from their earliest days through Brian's deepening emotional problems to his triumphant reemergence with the release of *Smile*, the legendarily unreleased album he had originally shelved.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a big fan of the music of Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys. I had listened to Peter Carlin discuss the book with Bob Edwards on XMPR radio and thought it sounded really interesting (particularly his discussion of his meetings with The Wondermints and the creation of the *Smile* CD two years ago) despite the fact that so much has already been written about Brian. On the pro side, I thought this was a very well-written book that carries the reader along quickly and enjoyably. Carlin has taken a clear-headed approach and avoids getting mired in the grotesque stories of Murray

Wilson's alleged abuse (though he doesn't stray from discussions of Murray either). Further, although I suspect Mike Love might disagree, I think he gives the reader a fair amount of insight into the frustrations that the other members of the band may have experienced in dealing with Brian after he stopped touring (and especially from Pet Sounds on) and how that impacted their relationships. However, on the con side: I think the book really doesn't spend nearly enough time detailing the "Fall, and Redemption" of Brian. Though he mentions some incidents on airplanes in the early/mid 1960s, the bizarre behavior in the decades thereafter, and some of the behavior of "Dr." Landy, I don't feel like it was detailed enough for me to get much insight into what caused the breakdowns and fall (and what the fall really entailed) and whether the redemption was truly a redemption (his descriptions of a waxy Brian performing make me question whether he has returned to health).

Beach Boys fans read this excellent book at their peril. There are a very few good vibrations in the story of Brian Wilson and his group, but there's no shortage of extremely bad vibrations. By the end of the book you may feel you're heartily sick of each and every drug-addled, money-obsessed, talentless washed-out Beach Boy with the exception of Brian himself. These days they're a living, breathing embarrassment. They sue each other perpetually, and Al Jardine and Mike Love now tour America with rival bands claiming to be the Beach Boys. Pity rich pop star Brian Wilson. First he was bullied and humiliated by his father, the repulsive Murray Wilson. Later he was bullied and harrassed by Mike Love. Years after that he was taken prisoner by a deranged psychiatrist who bullied him 24 hours a day. What all these people wanted was - more hit songs! More! Another million seller! Now! The exhilaration of making hit record after hit record quickly became a relentless treadmill. Brian was the sole creative force in the group. By the age of 22 he was composer, lead singer, bass player, arranger and producer. After two years of that he had his first breakdown and quit touring. The wave crested in 1965 when everything was working out - they'd fired Murray as manager, Brian stayed home and wrote more hits and the group toured. But then he began to change. Within three years there was "Pet Sounds", the still astonishing single "Good Vibrations", and then the disaster of "Smile", Brian's increasing psychological problems, and by 1968 the Beach Boys were pulling crowds of 200, hopelessly out of fashion. The 1960s was a very fast decade. During the next 20 years (!) Brian was not a functioning human being.

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