

# IN MY ROOM

Feuille d'information consacrée à Brian Wilson et aux Beach Boys

Issue # HS 2 – March 2007

## Pet Sounds

Words by Tony Asher

**What do you think of the famous "Don't fuck with the formula" that Mike Love was supposed to have said ?**

I never heard that remark at the time. I only read about it many years later. So, first of all, I don't know if it is accurate or not.

However, it seems very much like Mike. And, to tell the truth, I think he had a point. I mean, at the time he was supposed to have said it, the album was not much of a success. And I think the argument could have been made that the music on Pet Sounds was not what Beach Boys fans were expecting. So, I suppose it was a reasonable question to ask "Why change styles at this point?"

Fortunately, in the long run, the album achieved success so I guess that the answer to the question would be something like, "Well, you change styles because there is more to being an artist that just repeating your successes over and over again."

**Did you stay in touch with Brian ?**

Yes. There was a period of many years when we were not in touch.

During the Eugene Landy period, Brian was not in touch with very many people during that time. But after that we re-connected. We wrote some more songs together, as you may know. One of them was on his daughters' album (The Wilsons) and was called "Everything I Need". We also wrote a song called "This Isn't Love" which Brian recorded on his album "Live At The Roxy". The song was also used in a terrible movie called "The Flintstones: Viva Rock Vegas". Truly a dreadful motion picture. We also wrote a number of other songs that Brian has never recorded.

**Who is the originator of the Pet Sounds concept, you or Brian, or both of you ?**

Both of us. Pet Sounds was truly a collaborative effort. We wrote almost all of the songs together, by which I mean, we were both at the piano at the same time. Brian was writing the music while I was writing the lyrics on most of the songs. So we were constantly trading ideas about both words and music. And we spent a lot of time discussing the concept of the album before we ever started writing - although I don't think we would have called it "concept" at the time. We were more interested in the mood we were trying to establish (which might be the same thing as "concept"). We also had long discussions before we began writing each of the songs.

**Can we compare your collaboration on Pet Sounds with VDP one on Smile ?**

Ge, to be honest with you, I don't know much about "Smile" and how Van Dyke worked with Brian on it. I knew Van Dyke at the time. But I was out of the picture by the time "Smile" got started. I know a little about the way the final, recent version was put together. That was done

### Edito

Here it is again ... the Beach Boys french fanzine ... in english !

A special Pet Sounds issue.

Tony Asher and John Stebbins shared their thoughts with us.

We also asked a lot of people, well-known or noy, what their favorite album track is. Their answers are printed throughout the issue.

And you, what is your favorite song on this wonderful album ?

Enjoy !

Charlie Dontsurf



- I think - mostly by Darian Sahanaja from the Wondermints who spent many hours reconstructing the original recordings. I think Mark Linnet was also very important in helping with that. Maybe Van Dyke was too. I don't really know. I do know that it was a very tedious and painstaking effort. But as for how the original album was recorded back in the old days, I don't know much about that. I know that Van Dyke was - and is - a very gifted musician, composer and arranger. And as far as I know, that was the first time that Brian worked with someone who had Van Dyke's skills.

**Did you suggest some musical ideas to Brian or did you stick with just the lyrics ?**

We both did both. I contributed much more in the way of lyrics than Brian. And Brian contributed much more in the way of musical ideas than I did. But we both did both. I was a keyboard player, as you may know. So I was able to play my

ideas on the piano.

**40 years after, did you discover things that you didn't notice on Pet Sounds the first time around ?**

Well, I've learned to appreciate it more and more over the years. That goes both for my work on it and for Brian's talents, as well. In some ways, it was the fans and the reviewers who convinced me that it was really something special. I think artists - songwriters, etc. - have difficulty being satisfied with the work they do. We tend to listen to things after they are recorded, for example, and hear all the things we don't like about them. It's very easy to be self-critical. But over the years, hearing fans tell me how much the album has meant to them, I have become more comfortable with it. Let's say, I've become less critical of it and I've been able to simply enjoy it and accept it for what it is.

Was "Caroline, No » a song about :

- 1 Brian college girlfriend, Carol Mountain (Brian's version),

- 2 Marilyn Wilson (Marilyn Wilson's version),

- 3 Brian himself 'Bruce Johnston's version) ?

What's your version ?

I had a girlfriend - my "High School Sweetheart", as we say - whose name was Carole Amen. (She used to tell people that her last name was "Amen - like the last word of a prayer".) I still see her from time to time, by the way. We've stayed in touch over the years. Anyway, I

thought maybe we were writing about her. But the truth is that Brian and I never discussed who it was about. At first, I thought Brian was singing "Oh, Carol I know." But then, later, I realized that he heard it as "Oh, Caroline, No" which I liked better because it was sadder and more poignant. At the time I didn't know anyone named Caroline. I can honestly say that I wasn't aware of who we were writing it about. At least Brian didn't tell me about any of the "Carols" you listed above. Although over the years I've heard those same names mentioned.

Jean-Emmanuel Dubois

# Pet Song, their favorite track

**Douglas T. Stewart, musician (BMX Bandits)**

My favourite Pet Sounds track is Wouldn't It Be Nice. This track seems very upbeat compared to the later tracks. I love the beautiful sadness of tracks like I Just Wasn't Made For These Times but the innocent optimism of the album's opener moves me even more. It has its own sadness as we know that love and life rarely turn out as simple as the love the singer hopes and longs for. Musically this song is a lot more sophisticated than it appears. The great gift Brian Wilson has as a songwriter is to use very sophisticated musical techniques so the music sounds beautiful but still childlike and pure. I believe if the album didn't start with the track we wouldn't be as moved by the later tracks and the loss of innocence that they reflect. This track puts the others in context as it shows the innocence and sense of wonder that Brian was losing. This is music for the heart not the head and that's what I think music should be.

**Tony Asher, musician & songwriter**

God Only Knows, I suppose. Because it's been so good to me. But I also like Don't Talk (Put Your Head on My Shoulder) because it's just such a romantic idea for a song. And the melody is so warm and rich.

**JD Beauvallet, journalist**

My favourite track from Pet Sound is 'God Only Knows' because it is my favourite track full stop. Even really bad versions of it (and God knows there has been lots of sacrileges) make me cry. And I am not a cry baby. Not too often, anyway. Just for songs...

**Andrew Sandoval, musician**

I have heard the album so many times that occasionally I consider it to be one long song : a full cycle of music from start to end. The ebb and flow of each transition from song to song is burned into my memory. But, if I had to pick a song to hear right now, it would be either "That's Not Me" or "Here Today."

**Mark Greenberg, musician**

That's a tough question since there are so many "greats" on the album. I guess I would say "Wouldn't It Be Nice" because of the production and the way the vocals are so perfectly arranged. That said "God Only Knows" is imo the greatest song on the album

**Monkberry Momma, musician**

My favorite Pet Sound is "Lets Go Away For a While".... It flows along beautifully, short & so sweet that one listen is never enough. I have to hear that track at least twice on each listen for it all to sink in ... and of course, it has occasionally made me well up ... If I could pick a second track then it would be "I Just wasn't Made For These Times".... For me it's probably on apart with "Lets Go away...". It's also the first Pet Sounds track I ever heard and turned me on to the album...

**Roland, musician (Riviera)**

I think to me the song "Dont Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)". The chord changes are amazing, the string arrangement is so beautiful, the melody is beyond everything a 23 year old pop musician usually comes up with. But I remember, that I used to be so fascinated by "Let's Go Away For Awhile" that I found myself playing this one over and over (got my CD-Player on Repeat, which I rarely do.) So these 2 are the ones. If I have to choose from one, it must be "Dont Talk", though.

**John Carter, musician (The First Class... )**

How do you pick favorite tracks from a complete MASTERPIECE ? I suppose God Only Knows because it is one of the best songs ever written. It has the feeling of a hymn and yet has a quite complex chord structure. The arrangements on Pet Sounds were extremely inventive. I would pick out Here Today. Brian showed how instruments could be used in a classical way. For example the drums and percussion are only used when they are needed to lift a section. And that bass episode in the middle ... outrageous!! I think we all learned a great deal from this album.



**Patrick Eudeline, musician & journalist**

I was just not made for these times. I don't know why ... Probably for these very words !

**Jake Austin, writer & journalist, (www.roctober.com)**

This is not the answer to your question at all, but your question inspired this answer. While I have trouble picking my favorite *Pet Sounds* track, I have no trouble choosing my favorite Beach Boys' sound about a pet. The title track for "The Monkey's Uncle" (a 1965 Disney film about a college couple and their chimp) by the Beach Boys and Annette Funicello was not a Wilson composition, and may have little Beach Boys creative contributions other than vocal arrangements. But it has become a very important tune to me, as my three year old daughter loves it and I've heard it over 1,000 times in the last year. Though no one would consider this tune the Beach Boys' crowning achievement, nonetheless, at some point during the

last few months I was listening to the distinct, playful, strange harmonies on it ("Uh huh, she loves the monkey's uncle, oh yeah, she loves the monkey's uncle, whoa whoa, she loves the monkey's uncle") and declared out loud, "The Beach Boys are better than the Beatles !" I had never thought that before, but now that opinion is carved in granite in my musical taste buds. And I'm mad about the chimpanzees

**Tony Rivers, musician & arranger (The Castaways, Harmony Grass, Saint-Etienne)**

A very difficult or very easy question to answer. I love all the tracks because they are all brilliant. Favorites must be Wouldn't it Be Nice. The chord progressions, the harmonies the tempo changes, the absolutely great bass part particularly in the slow bridge section, " Maybe if we think an wish" etc. and the overall fantastic 'pop' record that it is, sits comfortably alongside Brian and The Beach Boys other classics like I Get Around/ California Girls /Heroes and Villains, Good Vibrations etc. Other faves would be Caroline No, once more, great chord changes, nice lead vocal on a great melody. 'Don't Talk' an absolute dreamy gem of a song, the arrangement of the song is perfection. Better not forget I Just Wasn't Made For These Times, a wonderful song, amazing arrangement, great harmonies, and a very weird spooky string arpeggio towards the end, (just before "they say I got brains but they ain't doing me no good").

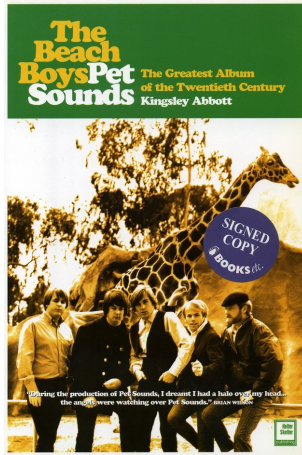
**Tom Taber, (Almeron Records, Albion, NY)**

"Here Today" - Perhaps I like some of the single hits from it a bit more, but it is a longtime favorite, the instrumental break with the talking in the background, and someone saying what sounds like "chocolate!" at its end.



**Kingsley Abbott, writer (The Beach Boys Pet Sounds: The Greatest Album of the Twentieth Century)**

The one I like best does vary almost everyday, but I'll go for Wouldn't It Be Nice for the quality of the (very difficult vocals), the lovely internal rhythm that the accordions provide, and the fact that whenever I play it I know that the rest of the album will follow!



**Kevin Coral, musician (The Witch Hazel Sound)**

My fav "Pet Sounds" track is probably "That's Not Me." the lyrics bounce between corny and profound, like all great Brian songs and the vocals are great and the guitar bit is just the coolest sounding ... plus it has good modulation bit as well ... classic tune..

**Bart Johnson, graphic designer**

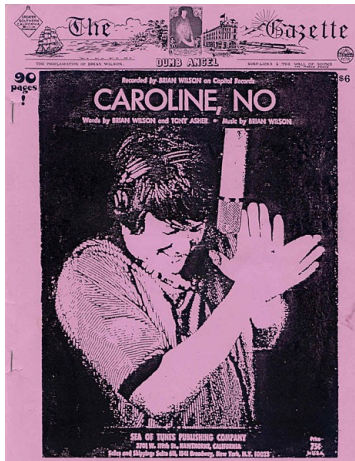
My favorite song on Pet Sounds is God Only Knows. It's hard to explain why, but it's the one song on the album that's never failed to evoke an emotion ever time I've listened to it over the years. There's some kind of raw pathos matched with that voice stretching flawlessly into the high notes. I'm not a musician so I can't really comment on how the song is put together ... the changing tempo and harmonies, etc. However the effect of emotional honesty is achieved it just achieves it perfectly.

**Skip Woolwine, media man**

My favorite Pet Sounds track is Caroline, No. It is different from most other Beach Boys tracks: "Caroline No" has no vocal harmonies, the chord structure is unique, and the instrumentation and arrangement is uncomplicated and brilliant (as all BW compositions). In spite of relatively simple production, all these elements fit together perfectly to form a solid foundation for the song's storyline of a tortured soul who has realized he is losing his girlfriend, with a dash of denial and hope thrown into the recipe. Have we all not had a similar experience at some point in time? Ironic : before I saw your post on Spectropop, this song popped into my head while I was in the shower about a week ago. I cannot rid myself of it!

**Artie Wayne, songwriter & producer (Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Rick Nelson, Paul Anka, Cher, The 5th Dimension...)**

When you asked for opinions of the songs on "Pet Sounds", I didn't



know what was on the album. I just found out through a Google search that two of my favorite Brian Wilson songs are included, "God Only Knows" and "Wouldn't It Be Nice". In 1974, on the day of my taking over as head of Irving-Almo music, A&M records publishing arm, Olivia Newton-John called me from London looking for material. I knew very little about the catalogue, so I held a song casting meeting to take suggestions from everyone on the publishing staff. After listening to quite a few songs, one caught my attention, "I Honestly Love You" by Jeff Barry and the late Peter Allen. I was late for an appointment so I had

only a chance to hear one verse and barely scan the lyric. We shipped it to London as quickly as we could along with an idea I had, Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows". About a month later, Olivia calls me from Beverly Hills, to say she's in town and she wants to come over and play me her recording of the two songs I sent, "God Only Knows" and "I Honestly Love You". I put her on hold and ran through the office yelling, What's "I Honestly Love You"? Things at the publishing company had been moving so quickly, that I didn't remember the song! When Olivia came over to my office with her producer John Farrar and played a dub for me, I was almost in tears. The first thing I said to them was, "This should be the Record of the Year!" You can imagine my surprise when MCA records didn't even want to put it out as a single because, "It was too slow! That's when Jerry Moss (the M in A&M) let me use his top record promotion staff to break it out of the album. Btw, it did become the Record of the Year

**Austin Roberts, musician (Scooby Doo, Josie & the Pussycats ...)** Wouldn't It Be Nice because of it's undeniable melody, part innocent, part sexual lyric, fabulous Brian Wilson arrangement and production and more than anything else, the fact that whenever I hear it on the radio I immediately turn it up.

**Linus of Hollywood, musician**

My favorite Pet Sounds track is, without a doubt, "Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)". I remember hearing that for the first time and really being moved. The chord progression is so haunting and the melody line of the vocal that he puts over those chords is just mind-blowing. Also, this track definitely showcases Brian at his vocal prime.

**James Boticelli, DJ**

I Guess I Just Wasn't Made For These Times. It sums up the Beach Boys raison d'etre and my own.... I Guess

**Steve Dworkin, musician**

"Wouldn't It Be Nice", it's got such a great melody, & after all, there must have been a reason they chose that for their single.

**Phil Milstein, journalist (www.philxmilstein.com)**

My own favorite is "Caroline, No," both for its self-evident musical beauty and for its lyrical theme, in which the subtext of Brian Wilson's heartbreaking elegy for a girl's loss of emotional purity as she slides into womanhood is his concern about his own waning innocence. The use of a simple haircut as a metaphor for that loss of innocence is a stroke of additional genius. Add in an empty plastic jug as a percussion instrument, Brian's gorgeous vocal, which rivals "Surf's Up" as the finest of his career, and wrap it all in a package of deceptive simplicity and you've got a record that, for me, stops time every time.



**Ian Chippett, musician**

My fave BB track on Pet Sounds is "Caroline No" but only because I actually bought the BW single, probably the only one who did.

**Clark Besch, radio dj (WLS Chicago)**

I would have to choose "I Just Wasn't made for These times". Although I did not know the song in the 60's, I was a big Beach Boys fan then, as a kid. My buddy, Doug Richard, another Spectropopper, and I started our own 60's radio show back in 1980 here in Lincoln and this was a song he played on the show. It has since grown steadily on me to become my most played track off the Lp. I think it is most important now, because since the 60's, my peers were always interested in 70's music, not 60's. No one cared about the songs I did when I was in high school. Now, aside from my internet Spectropoppers and other board friends, most everyone around me here is still the same. Sagittarius? Cryan Shames? Montanas? Ok, how bout the Cyrkle, Buckingham's? Beach Boys? "Oh yeah, Kokomo!" Never mind.

**April March, musician (www.aprilmarch.com)**

I like the whole album actually that's the beauty of it. It's great beginning to end! I don't think I isolate the pet sounds tracks in my mind. It's one continuous thing.

**Margo Guryan, musician & songwriter**

As someone who had studied classical music from childhood and then become enamored of jazz, I found "Pet Sounds" akin to an instruction manual for writing the pop songs of that time. I had previously written songs that were influenced mainly by 50's show, pop and jazz composers. It had something to do with the chord structure following the bass line (rather than the melody following the chords), but I'm sure it encompassed more than that.

**Tony Goddess, musician & producer (Papas Fritas)**

I'm going to have to go with Wouldn't It Be Nice... I've always loved the opening key change / arpeggio....It seems to say we're going on a trip with a twist ... Then that giant snare hit and boom we're off !! That's a hit ! I love that the song goes through so many builds and changes (tempo,key, structure) but still seems inexorably headed towards the final chorus and all it's inherent release ... I guess you could say that about every song on Pet Sounds but this is the first one ! I also like the lyrics. They seem to have the same adult/child nature about them that all my favorite Brian songs have. That he's an innocent who's just trying to get laid but he's also a romantic who's not afraid of, in fact welcomes, marriage, commitment ... and yet it's unresolved whether they will get married, grow old together, etc. ... Maybe if they wish and hope and dream it might all come true..... I also love that it was a bonafide Top 10 hit : see Pet Sounds was all gloomy music and gloomy sales figures! God Only Knows

**Marc Miller, journalist (www.spectropop.com)**

I've been trying hard to pick one song, but I simply can't do it. This was such a huge record for me when I first got it, in 1975. I was 18, just falling in and out of love, and feeling very alienated from my surroundings. The whole album is just one piece, like a symphony. And 40 years after it came out it still sounds like absolutely nothing else.

**James Carter Cathcart, voice actor**

In retrospect, that's really what happened to me as well, and at the same time ! 1975 was pretty strange and lonely, and Pet Sounds was one of my salvations. Maybe the whole album could be my favorite track !

**Al Kooper, musician & producer**

My favorite track is Here Today. It has influenced many productions and arrangements I have done over the years. The instrumental in "You Made Me So Very Happy" is a nod to the instrumental in Here Today. Also the instrumental in "I Can Love A Woman" from my first solo album I Stand Alone is pretty much a Here Today rip. It just sounds so bleeding great that track. Brian roolz !!

**Paul Williams, songwriter (Roger Nichols, Holly Mackerel, Kermit la grenouille, Carpenters, Elvis, Phantom of the Paradise ...)**

I think 'God Only Knows' will have to stand as my all time favorite ... Although musically 'Caroline No' is hard to beat. A classic example of the perfect dynamics of a Brian Wilson composition. There's an elegance about Brian's melodies .. and an emotion that I can only describe as 'a longing' ... It's perhaps what I bring to the experience as much as Brian does ... but what I feel when I listen to many of his songs. "In My Room" ... even 'Surfer Girl' which is a brilliant melody ... is a plaintive ... kind of reaching for love ... a longing ... He's brilliant ... a true genius ... and Tony's lyric to God only knows is a seamless match. I've never ever changed the station when a Beach Boys song comes on the radio. It's hard to get out of the car and leave genius mid-tune.

**Steve Harvey, actor, DJ, producer**

My choice would be "Here Today" if only for the bit where the bass climbs to the top to eventually tumble down to the bottom. It always makes me think of a roller coaster climbing slowly to the top of wooden frame and suddenly pitching head first towards the ground.

**Craig Chereek, fan (www.spectropop.com)**

Picking just one is real hard, the whole album shines, but "Wouldn't it be Nice" has always moved me, for the lyrics. It's a little giftbox and inside, like a fortune cookie, is a note saying that in this world it is not so hard to stay out of the heart's way, why don't we give it a shot - That song was the Spring to the Summer of Love. The production values are still awesome.

**Domenic Priore, writer & journalist**

I think Pet Sounds makes a paradigm shift when "I Just Wasn't Made For These Times" comes on, the whole album just elevates about 6 levels there, with the song "Pet Sounds" really covering a wide, deep range of emotions and "Caroline No" sweeping you off like a dream. I'd say "Pet Sounds" is my favorite track in that equation, because you can feel everything in there... it is akin to the power one feels in Surf instrumental or Exotica music... somewhere between the Sentinels' "Tor-Chula," "Latinia" or "Sunset Beach" and Martin Denny's *Hypnotique* album.

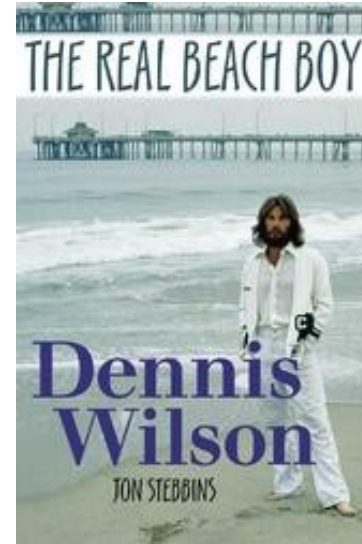
Lead Vocal : Jean-Emmanuel Dubois

# A Real Biographer

## John Stebbins speaks ...

**Your top Pet sounds songs and why ?**

My favorite Pet Sounds song is I Just Wasn't made For These Times. Its so tragic, so sadly beautiful. The instrumentation, the vocal delivery, the lyric. To hear that song coming out of Brian is some kind of pop nirvana. Also Caroline No for the same reasons.



**As a Dennis Wilson specialist can you tell us the real involvement of Dennis in that mighty recording ?**

Dennis was not very involved with Pet Sounds compared to LP's like All Summer Long, Today and Sunflower where he is everywhere. Dennis most important contributions to Pet Sounds were supporting Brian and standing up to Mike also Dennis looks great on the cover he sings some important bits on Wouldn't It Be Nice and Sloop John B and he plays drums on That's Not Me.

**Tell us about your Dennis Wilson book. What was the most striking encounter and what kind of exciting discoveries did you make while writing the book ?**

Meeting Ed Roach and looking through his archives of photos and listening to all the tapes he accumulated of session outtakes, and looking at his film footage. I saw and heard a lot of things no Beach Boys fan ever has, and maybe ever will. It gave me real access to Dennis Wilson, like he was alive for me through Eddie. Also meeting and spending time with Karen Lamm was really intense and informing.

**Tell us about your new David Marks book project ?**

Its simply going to be the best book on the genesis of the Beach Boys as a band. It covers the first few years in meticulous fashion. And then it turns into a wild tragic roller coaster ride after Dave leaves the group. Its called The Lost Beach Boy because he really got lost. This book will shock many people.

**Are there still undiscovered mysteries about the Beach Boys ? Or are all the facts now in print ?**

The book is filled with things people don't know. The Beach Boys early story has never been told truthfully until now. I truly think Dennis led me to David and wanted the story told in this way. But I'm sure more things will be uncovered in the future. Their known story was filled with myth, and I'm finding that more and more the closer I look. Remember when people used to say Dennis was the least talented musically of any of the Beach Boys? Things change once the truth gets out.

**Jean-Emmanuel Dubois**



**IN MY ROOM**, une production du Cabinet Médical Faustroll - Kokomo, Assistant Dentaire : Charlie Dontsurf, Very Special and Great Thanks to Jean-Emmanuel Dubois. With a little help from Bart, thanks Bart !  
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