



20 questions

Al Jardine during the recording of *Beach Boys' Party!*, September 1965

PHOTO: CAPITOL RECORDS ARCHIVES

Keepin' It Clean

With the release of *We Gotta Groove: The Brother Records Years* and a tour with The Pet Sounds Band, **JON 'MOJO' MILLS** hopped on the phone to chat with a very busy **AL JARDINE** about 60-plus years of being a Beach Boy and a lifetime of experience.

“Apparently, I must have had this thing about keeping things in certain order”



Stripes and smiles in 1964. The Beach Boys. L-R: Carl Wilson, Dennis Wilson, Mike Love, Al Jardine, Brian Wilson

Shindig!: Of the original line-up of The Beach Boys – the quintessential California band built upon the harmonising of three brothers – you were the one non-blood related member. You were also born in Ohio and brought up on the East Coast. Did that give you an outsider point of view within the band, and did that ultimately reflect in the creative process?

Al Jardine: I came from a different place. I was just a folkie from Ohio. Basically, I loved folk music, so that influenced the band. In terms of material, we came up with a couple folk songs.

S!: You take the lead on the fabulous 'Mountain Of Love' from the underrated *Party!* album. Did you bring that one to the table? Also from that album, did it bother you that the others didn't take the Dylan cover seriously?

AJ: I don't remember singing 'Mountain Of Love'. Maybe it wasn't me. But yeah, the Dylan cover, that was on the *Party!* album. I just love that one. We were just having a ball. I sounded like a goof. I think I did a very good job, but it was just the idea of doing something fun and cavorting around. I met Dylan at a folk club down in Greenwich Village, and we had a nice chat. He was telling me how much he enjoyed The Beach Boys, which is nice. The appreciation was mutual.

S!: Are you still at odds with goats in general? (After the altercation with the big white goat shooting the *Pet Sounds* sleeve and that ornery goat on your Big Sur farm in the

"Brian was not a not a folk music fan at all. So he was, basically, just going along with me. I thought he would shut me up when I said, 'No, this isn't gonna work'"

It's OK NBC special).

AJ: We don't like goats. They ate the side off of my barn. Literally, some guy asked me if he could keep his animals over here, and when I went to the back of the barn the goats had chewed the wood off. They'll eat anything. You gotta be careful.

S!: You were always a fantastic lead vocalist in your own right, but live you were The Beach Boys' secret weapon, often taking over Brian's lead vocals on the road. What was/is your favourite song to sing on the road?

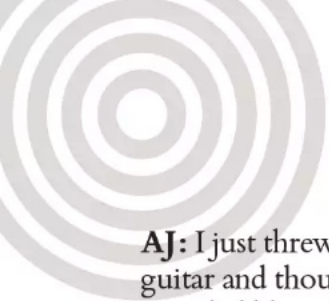
AJ: On stage now, I've learned all the parts pretty well. Brian's parts, and Carl's. I love all the songs. My son Matt actually sings Carl's and Brian's falsetto parts, but I take the lower range in between us, and Darian [Sahanaja] has got a great voice. Robbie Bonfiglio, Carnie [Wilson's] husband, he is great too. We have such a balance on stage. You won't believe it. And we're covering everything that's possible. We've just premiered the box set in LA. We played the whole thing, including the three extra songs to make a complete performance. And that was the world premiere. But we'll bring it to London.

S!: You sang lead vocals on 'Vegetables', an

underrated 1966 highlight (and arguably the finest veggie anthem of all time). You're also credited with contributing sound effects, whistling and vegetable chomping (legend has it that Paul McCartney also helped with the chomping on the original *Smile* session). What are your memories of recording this most unique number? Did you all share Brian's vision of promoting a healthy lifestyle?

AJ: Paul McCartney came over and co-produced... We shared the same publicist, Derek Taylor. And I'm sure Derek squealed on us and told Paul what we were doing that night. So he showed up really late, and we all had a lot of fun. I was standing at the microphone, and I should have invited him up to sing the lead. Or share the lead. He would have sounded great on it. I tuned some water bottles. It was more of a calliope sound. I did little things like that, and the vegetables, and chewing, stuff like that. Paul even chewed some fresh Californian veg. Healthy eating? Sure.

S!: How did Murray Wilson wind up recording your 'Italia' song on his *The Many Moods Of Murray Wilson* album for Capitol in 1967? Did Murray approach you for the song? Did you write it for him? And what did Brian think about Murray's album, if anything?



AJ: I just threw it together one day on the guitar and thought it was really pretty and sounded like something Lawrence Welk would do. I heard orchestration on it in my head, so Brian wrote the lead sheet and presented it to Murray for the orchestra. That was really nice. It was like a little offshoot thing that. Murray retitled it 'Italia', which wasn't the original title, but that's okay. It's got that universal sound to it. Well, I don't know how Brian felt about the album, but I'm sure he liked the song. It wasn't like a hit song. It was very innocent.

SI: You introduced the group to 'Sloop John B' and 'Cottonfields', two staples of the '60s folk scene. How receptive were The Beach Boys to folk songs, and why did you feel it necessary to re-record 'Cottonfields' for single release after its initial appearance on *20/20* in 1969?

AJ: I didn't enjoy the 'Cottonfields' arrangement. I thought it was really clunky. Brian was not a folk music fan at all. He was, basically, just going along with me. I thought he would shut me up when I said, "No, this isn't gonna work." But Dennis and I took the performance band into the studio down the street from Capitol to Sunset Sound Recorders and cut it. That was the way it sounded to me. And

so that became the single.

SI: Who coined the phrase "Keep it clean with Al Jardine"?

AJ: My roadie. He thought it was funny. Apparently, I must have had this thing about keeping things in certain order, so he put a vacuum cleaner on stage with a sign on it. That was kind of funny. The audience got a kick out of it. This was probably 1968-70. Somewhere about then. A little vacuum cleaner with a big bag on it, you know, those giant old airbags. On stage. Funny.

SI: *Pet Sounds* may be regarded as The Beach Boys' greatest album but was the collaborative creative process of records like *Sunflower* and *Holland* personally more rewarding?

AJ: God, *Sunflower*, 1970. Gorgeous. That's where you hear the Moog on 'Cool, Cool Water'. It's Robert Moog's actual giant; they filled a room with it for one note. We filled our studio with these big banks too. They were huge. And it was only monophonic. You could only play one note at a time, but

it's so beautiful when you hear the effect of that on 'Cool, Cool Water'. It blew the guys from Warner Brothers away too. When they heard it, they went, "Okay, guys, well, we're in. We'll sign

you." Remember, we were looking for a new label at the time. "Man, just turn the lights out and play 'Cool, Cool Water'."

SI: Your songwriting seemed to blossom on *Surf's Up*, with all three of your contributions spotlighting environmental and social themes. Were you aware of, and interested in the rising tide of eco-consciousness?

AJ: Sure. 'Don't Go Near The Water' is one that I wrote about phosphates. There were phosphates that were in the water, and sudsing up the ocean. I was very targeting with that one, for sure. I was advocating that we remove phosphates from our detergents and cleaning products. I think it helped. I got written up in *Time* magazine about it. It's so very sad where we are now, but that's another conversation.

SI: The folk protest song 'Lookin' At Tomorrow' hinted at a different artistic direction for you. Did you ever think of pursuing that further? Was the process of lead vocal allocation always democratic within the band?

AJ: I'm not sure if I did or not. I'm not that creative a guitar player, to be honest with you. I wish I could be like the real folkies. But that was my crack at it, just to see what it would sound like. And it sounded pretty good. Daryl Dragon helped me with that one. Vocally, everyone has a range. And



Bruce Johnston joins just in time for 'Sloop John B'
PHOTO: CAPITOL RECORDS ARCHIVES

Brian knew exactly where our ranges were. So yes, he would pretty much dictate that. Who sang what, and so on.

SI: Was Susie Cincinnati a real person?

AJ: Yeah, her name is Joellyn Lambert. And she lives in Cincinnati. She probably became a big star down there. She was a tough, tough, wonderful, cigarette smoking, cab driver, and she was filling the car full of smoke, so I had to write about that because I'm an anti-smoker. I was serious, and still am, about lung and respiratory health. I do not tolerate smoke like that, so that's my take on it. "Susie Cincinnati, but you're the city's number one sinner." That's what I meant.

SI: You co-wrote and sang lead on 'All This Is That' on *Carl And The Passions – "So Tough"*, a song about Transcendental Meditation. Around the same time, you also became a TM teacher/initiator. How did TM enter your life and is it something you still embrace today?

AJ: 'All This Is That' was one of the Maharishi's famous phrases. He would always grab you with that one, so I came up with what I think is a pretty darn good expression of it. "I am that, thou art that." Oh, 'All this is that.'" Man, it gives me chills, just thinking about it.

Mike and I became teachers. The "Poojas" are beautiful. The melody is gorgeous. I'd like to write an arrangement on that. It's lovely, and TM's an amazing thing. The Beatles introduced us to the Maharishi. The guys and I, we went over and he gave us a lecture. And that was it. I still practice it. If you can't sit down and meditate occasionally, I don't even care if it's TM, it's the practice of going within rather than always expressing your needs and your desires that matters. It's wonderful, you've got to take a little time to go within your consciousness. Just sit down and close your eyes, even if you don't have a mantra. If you're really distressed, and especially if you can't sleep, just sit up in bed, close your eyes, and just think of a number and say it to yourself. Just anything that doesn't distract you. You'll find yourself falling asleep. Go to your TM outlet, they're around. I recommend it highly.

SI: The late '70s was an interesting time for the band – you were touring to great success but following unusual creative pathways with album like *LA Light Album* and *MIU*. What were your creative goals, was it a difficult time for the band, and was it important that a song like 'Lady Lynda', which you co-wrote, was a hit?

AJ: I have no idea what our goals were, we just wanted to survive the transition from one decade to the next and with Brian not functioning at his highest level, we all had to take the lead. *Keepin' The Summer Alive* was designed to get us out of LA and away from all the distractions, so we worked on that



one at my home studio in Big Sur. I remember we had a recording truck that belonged to Frank Zappa. It was a turning point to get our juices flowing and I thought it was

phenomenal that 'Lady Lynda', like 'Cotton Fields', was a big hit in the UK. The Brits have always appreciated us!

SI: Great as it is to see the *Adult Child* and *Love You* sessions being released, the period between *Holland* and *15 Big Ones* has been completely skipped over. Is there any chance that the out-takes from this era (the *Caribou* sessions, the live tracks with Chicago etc) being released, even digitally?

AJ: I would imagine so, that's what Iconic (Iconic Artists Group, The Beach Boys' digital partner) does. They own the publishing, so they're going to make sure all that stuff comes out. I'm sure. I've forgotten about these periods myself. So much has gone on in between, so that would be interesting. There's a lot of out-takes out there, so we may as well put them in their proper order. I suspect *Holland* will eventually follow, but they don't really

consult us to be honest with you. We usually have a pretty good idea of what's going to happen down the line, so all the Brother Records missing pieces should see the light.

SI: *Adult Child* and *Love You* represent a real break, both from *15 Big Ones* and from the more collaborative group work of the early '70s. While this is clearly where Brian's head was at and, in retrospect, do you wish the group had instead continued with either of those earlier directions and where might you have ended up if you had?

AJ: I think it took the direction it had to take because Brian was recovering from a lot of turmoil in his life, and this was a way for him to express himself. After all, we had just purchased a studio location in Santa Monica, California, and it gave him the ability, and his brothers, to drive down to the studio and work on their own material, even outside of Beach Boys material, particularly in Dennis's case. For Brian, the *Love You* album was an expression that would normally, if he'd been going into the big studios in LA, have been a big Beach Boy project. This now gave

him a little space, just to be Brian Wilson. And he had his brother Carl there to back him up. Everyone else was doing their solo albums at the time too, other than myself, so they supported each other. There was this camaraderie, a brotherly thing, which was great. In hindsight, I don't think The Beach Boys suffered. Even though this and *15 Big Ones* weren't commercial successes, they're now being looked at differently. So, who knows what was on Brian's mind at the time, but it seemed to work for him. I enjoy *Love You*, it's very underproduced. It goes against what we had been doing before "Oh, I'm not gonna add all this", "I'm not gonna add this double take", "I'm not gonna put this reverb

on", "I'm not going to do all the fancy stuff we did in the in the big studios." It was more of a personal "Brian thing".

Adult Child was a big production. It's a production album. I just love the beauty of the music. It's a completely different style. So you've got the difference between the two and you can finally hear them next to each other now, but it's the same time span, and it's very different work.

SI: What music were you listening to at this time both as a band and individually? The Beach Boys'

'50s and '60s influences are well-documented (Spector, *Rubber Soul* etc), but were any contemporary records or artists influencing albums like *Love You*?

AJ: No, because it doesn't sound like anything that would influence that particular session, and of course, the *Adult Child* sessions were entirely different. Some of those were massive arrangements. 'I Still Dream Of It' and 'It's Over Now' were

intended for Frank Sinatra. Sinatra could have recorded 'Deep Purple'. Those are wonderful, and those are going to be experienced for the first time on this box set. It's not inspired by anything. It's obviously Brian. What he was doing was original. And in fact, there's a tune on there that I sung, 'Shortenin' Bread', which we dredged up from the *15 Big Ones* session we had done earlier. At the time, when you did an LP you had to have at least 11 cuts on it, if not 12. You know, we ran out of tunes, and 'Shortenin' Bread' is a charming little piece. And it does have some production. It's got some bass guitar, and it's got that Beach Boy feel. It's just really fun. And it's a little more uplifting. That's one of those more retroactive things Brian put on there, I think, to just put a smile on your face.

SI: You've since said that you're a fan of Dennis Wilson's *Pacific Ocean Blue*. What were your thoughts at the time, and were there any attempts to fold Dennis's solo work into The Beach Boys?

AJ: We thought it was great that Dennis was able to express himself, it was his own dream and style, and he came up with a great solo album. It didn't really fit in with our formula at the time but interestingly, the record label liked 'River Song' enough to include it on the Beach Boys compilation

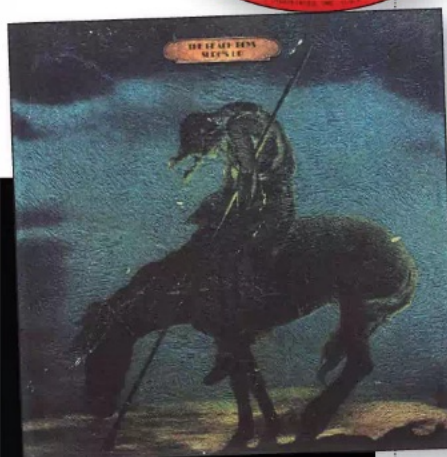
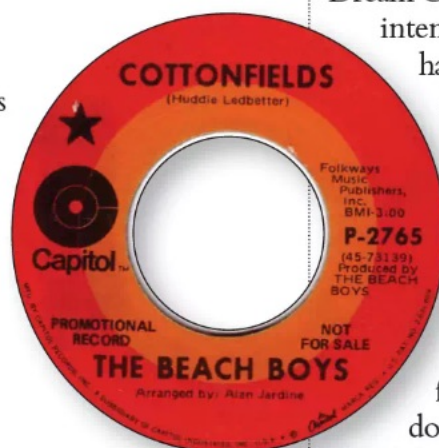
Ten Years Of Harmony.

SI: What are your feelings in retrospect about 2010's *A Postcard From California* and why did it take you so long to make a solo album? It's arguably the most enjoyable (bar *Smile*) solo release this century. Will you ever make another solo album?

AJ: Thank you. Golly, that's so nice. It's my little postcard to the coastal California cities in the Monterey Peninsula. First, I wrote a song for *Holland* called 'A California Saga' and I guess that started this. It's just a gorgeous homemade album, like Brian's *Love You*. I had a few more guest artists. I had a lot of great singers on there. It's still a very undiscovered piece of music that people should listen to. Glen Campbell, Stephen Stills, Neil Young, Steve Miller, who flew in from LA just to be on the album and sing 'Help Me, Rhonda'. There're so

"As Brian would always say, 'Finish your songs.' The problem is that the question was, 'How do you write a good song, Brian?' He would never give the secret away"

On stage in London, 1970; AJ's production of 'Cottonfields' hit the UK Top 10 that year; AJ's songwriting blooms on '71's *Surf's Up*; '79's *LA: (Light Album)*. "I have no idea what our goals were"





Into the '80s; 2010's solo debut *A Postcard From California*



many folks on it. It's hard to believe I got all those guys to give their time like that. And America, who did most of their recordings in England. They're on their singing their hearts out. I had so many wonderful opportunities, because I didn't have my Beach Boys anymore. The Beach Boys are gone. You know, pretty much. It took so long because Dennis was doing his thing, Carl was doing his thing. Another reason it took so long is because I have lived up in this area for so long. Stills, Crosby and Young all came up, and they loved it. They said, "We all wanted to be Beach Boys." They all just wanted to be a part of it. That helps, you know?

I still have a lot of stuff in the can. But it's always about finishing your songs. As Brian would always say, "Finish your songs." The problem is that the question was, "How do you write a good song, Brian?" He would never give the secret away. But in my case, it's true, I had to finish them, and it took a while. I mean, there's just so much stuff on the shelf. I'm trying to revive my old analogue studio. The salt air is so corrosive down here that it's ruined some of the circuitry on my English TSM board. So I'm trying to figure out how to get that going again and go through lots of old reels.

I did release an EP last year called *Islands In The Sun*. There are some great little tunes on there, compositions that remind me of my Beach Boys days, and my earlier

become canonised, largely by young fans? **AJ:** Well, it's great because we never played it at the time, ever. We started to rehearse it in 1977, but it never materialised as we weren't able to reproduce it, because we were a guitar band at the time, and we didn't think we could pull it off because we didn't have the technology to take the synths on the road. But today, thanks to my Brian Wilson band, which I've adopted, we can replicate it and actually expand on it with better instruments. In the '70s, The Beach Boys were really a touring band. And now we're out playing those damn songs, which is amazing. Darian, my musical director, is spot on. He knows every darn note. He's such a talent. When we sing this little tune called 'Ding Dang', which is just a crazy little Brian Wilson riff, they go nuts for 52 seconds. That always gets the hardcore fans going. It sounds like a Beatles reunion up on stage. We just

days before that.

SI: You've been playing lots of *Love You* material on tour, a response to its rising popularity. How does it feel to see the album

performed this in LA, and we have some footage on it. The Beach Boys are still around.

SI: You acted in the brilliant web series *Decker* in 2016. How did the collaboration with Tim Hedeicker and Gregg Turkington come about?

AJ: I can't remember, I had the flu and was trying to get out of it, but Mary Ann [Jardine] insisted I give it a try. If I recall, I died laughing! They asked me to repeat, but I said no, so David Marks took my place.

SI: America in 2026. Your generation was pivotal about peace, the environment, kindness. What's happened?

AJ: I haven't changed, but I feel sorry for the rest of the country and can only wish that everyone still has love and hope in their heart. **SI**

Contributors: Camilla Aisa, Chaim O'Brien-Blumenthal, Duncan Fletcher, Russ Gater, Shaun Hand, Gareth Jones, Jon 'Mojo' Mills, Andy Morten, Thomas Patterson, Martin Ruddock, Huw Thomas, Richard Turner, Clive Webb



We Gotta Groove: The Brother Records Years is out now on Capitol