



Double Good Vibrations: 'Brian Wilson Songwriter 1962-1969' on DVD

"He created this idea of California as a state of mind," says Rolling Stone contributing editor Anthony DeCurtis early on in the DVD "[Brian Wilson Songwriter 1962-1969](#)," which drops Nov. 23. DeCurtis' quote is indicative of how this release sets out to analyze the work of the Beach Boys songwriter not just musically but sociologically.

If you've ever wondered how Wilson's music grew from being a field report on youth subculture to incorporating jazz and classical elements, then this three-hour-plus, two-disc journey should absolutely enthrall you. On the other hand, the massive amount of information presented probably won't be fun, fun, fun for anyone who isn't a Wilson fanatic. But Sexy Intellectual, the company that put out this set, is playing to the faithful here and in that they do a first-rate job.

By now, most students of pop music know that back in the 1960s, Beach Boy Brian Wilson wasn't merely a surf music pioneer but a groundbreaking composer along the lines of Burt Bacharach, Laura Nyro and Jimmy Webb. To make all that perfectly clear, this DVD rounds up the creme de la creme of Wilson scholars and colleagues and has them each riff on various aspects of the composer-producer.

Biographers [Peter Ames Carlin](#) and Domenic Priore wax eloquently about how Wilson's songs were constructed while music professor Philip Lambert sits at the piano and shows why they work so brilliantly. Former Beach Boy [David Marks](#) muses on the band's early days, while current Beach Boy Bruce Johnston gives an insider's account of the legendary sessions of "[Pet Sounds](#)." Session musicians [Carol Kaye](#) and Hal Blaine speak at length about Wilson's unorthodox recording techniques and a plethora of rarely seen photos and videos should have fans repeatedly reaching for the pause button.

The wealth of information often veers off-course from its subject — songwriting — but the interviews are so interesting that this shortcoming is easily overlooked. Another big point in this DVD's favor is that the producers were granted permission to use original Beach Boys recordings even though the release was "not authorized by Brian Wilson" (as the box notes). It's a lot easier to learn about songs when you actually get to hear them.

On the downside, several groundbreaking Wilson tracks are overlooked (like "When I Grow Up (To Be a Man)") while others could have been better dissected had they been presented in a cappella and/or instrumental mixes (a technique used to great effect by YouTube user [Behind the Sounds](#), who specializes in such blow-by-blow musical breakdowns).

On the plus side, the focus is kept almost solely on the music, not on Wilson's troubled personal life. For that, you can access the extras, where Blaine gives a soul-crushing account of Wilson's mental state in the 1970s. It's much more illuminating, though, to hear how classical influences inform the intro to "California Girls."

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