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Review of The Beach Boys and the Satan



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## The Beach Boys & the Satan

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Reviewed by Lee Zimmerman

**W**ith the exception of the [Beatles](#), no other band has been as widely documented as the [Beach Boys](#).

And rightly so. Brian Wilson, his brothers Dennis and Carl, cousin Mike Love and pal Al Jardine were the preeminent American outfit for a good part of the '60s, at one time the sole defense against what came to be called the British invasion. Wilson's rivalry with the Beatles is the stuff of legend; *Rubber Soul*, *Pet Sounds*, *Sgt. Pepper* and the ultimately doomed *Smile* were all direct results of this intense competition, with the genius that spawned each of these albums leading both bands to strive for something new, better and beyond the realms of traditional pop.

The above facts are, of course, well-known, and for that reason alone, any new documentary about Wilson's troubled psyche and the [Beach Boys](#)' profound effect on music and culture is doomed to redundancy unless there's new video to be uncovered, new thoughts to be shared, new insight from the mouth of the mastermind himself, Brian Wilson. "The Beach Boys and the Satan" manages to offer some of these elements, and while it has its highlights – Brian at the piano playing excerpts from some of his songs, a smattering of rare performance video – it also pads the film unnecessarily. For example, what need is there to have Dean Torrence and Dick Dale recounting for the umpteenth time the evolution of surf music, or musicologist Chris Darrow singing a lame, seemingly made-up-on-the-spot, off-key ode to the '60s? The inclusion of singer David Thomas' insights seems somewhat superfluous, and his cover of "Surfer Girl" is not only ludicrous but wholly unrecognizable. So too, the majority of clips that are included have already been seen in countless commentaries before, creating the suspicion that the producers were desperate to pad the proceedings. Not surprisingly, there aren't any bonus features whatsoever, not even the option of a scene selection.

Originally released in 1997, the primary purpose of "The Beach Boys and the Satan" was presumably to explore the ill-fated connection between the Beach Boys – primarily Dennis Wilson – and the cult activities of Charles Manson. While there are occasional musical references – including a bizarre interview with Manson – those links are never fully unraveled. The reporting of the Manson murders includes graphic photos of the victims but little more in terms of insights, and by the time these events find their way into the [film](#), the synergy between the two subjects becomes fleeting at best.

The lack of a single narrator may be partly to blame for the film's hodgepodge trajectory, but that's a moot point because it's a German production and the language barrier would have been problematic anyway. Rather, it's the overall lack of new facts or revelations that make "The Beach Boys and the Satan" falter. As the saying goes, the devil's in the details.



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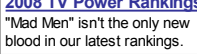
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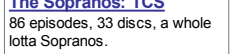
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