

Beach Boys record coming is great

By STEVEN DAVEY

The Beach Boys were everyone's favorite group before the Beatles came along in 1964. After that they had a few years in second place, but with the popularity of groups such as Jefferson Airplane and Cream, how could a group singing of cars and surf be liked when the trend was to "serious" music?

Their last major hit was "Good Vibrations" in 1967. For most people it was a radical change for the Beach Boys (or in those heady days it was called "psychedelic"), and it appeared that the Beach Boys were going to revolutionize rock music, but they didn't. As their songs grew longer and stranger and more elaborately produced, the record buyers and their record company, Capital, withdrew their support. Why weren't they singing about California girls and what were all these songs about vegetables, anyway?

Post 1967 saw fewer and fewer hits from a group which had never left the charts in the previous five years. There was Wild Honey, Heroes and Villains, Do It Again and the albums "Smiley Smile", "Wild Honey", "Friends" and "20 20" but they collectively sold fewer copies than "Little Deuce Coupe."

Last year the Beach Boys, after years of hassles with Capital, formed their own company and released Sunflower (Brother 6382), an album that made many people re-evaluate their old forty-fives. That album's highlight was "Cool, Cool Water", which has the distinction of being rock's first quadraphonically recorded song.

Four months ago, the Beach Boys released Surf's Up (Brother 6453). Time ran a full-page review of it and Rolling Stone has just spent two issues telling the hip that the Beach Boys have really been groovy all along. Macleans even reviewed it. Not being one to jump on critical

bandwagons (check Excalibur's review of Sunflower last December), I've waited it out (the proverbial dust having fallen). Here goes:

The Beach Boys with Surf's Up have made the perfect album.

For three months now this entire album has lifted my head off (true). There isn't one bad song, note, anything on the whole album. It's astounding! Brian Wilson's production (in quadraphonic, kids) is nothing short of inspired. Listen to the fading Moog in Carl Wilson's "Long Promised Road". Bruce Johnston's "Disney Girls-1957", and Charles Lloyd's (yes, Charles Lloyd!) solo on "Feel Flows". Like the continuous image throughout the album of water (notably "Don't Go Near the Water" and "Surf's Up"), the music has been produced so that it sounds liquid (you'll have to hear it to understand).

The fabled collaboration between Brian Wilson and Van Dyke's Park, "Surf's Up", is the final cut on the album (originally recorded five years ago for a Leonard Bernstein special on rock, the tapes were "lost": the story has it now that Brian Wilson simply wouldn't let Capital have it for fear of their butchering it). Bernstein called it the single greatest work of all time. (However, on the same show he said that Janis Ian's "Society's Child" was a work of genius). Anyway, the song "Surf's Up" does not live up to its rumours. It is good, but compared with many of the album's cuts ("Feel Flows", "Til I Die") it is not particularly outstanding.

As a whole, "Surf's Up" far surpasses any other contemporary work, and now takes the place of Sgt. Pepper, as the album everything else will be compared to. The Beach Boys are back at the vanguard.

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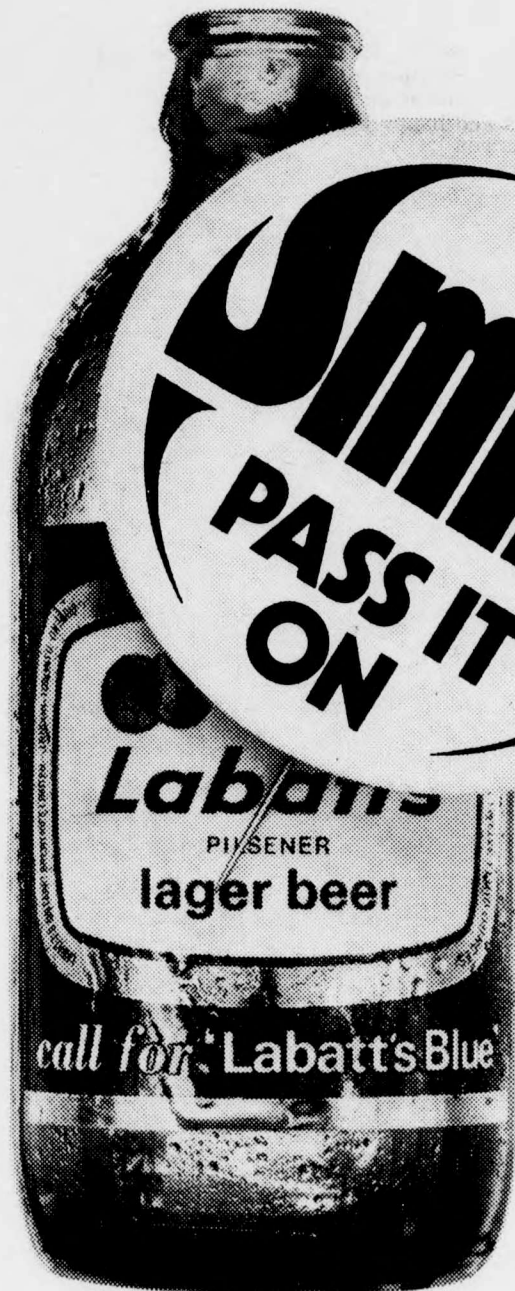
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