



Beach Boys in the 60s

The Beach Boys
CBS

A long time ago, barely adequate as instrumentalists, but who sang melodies and harmonies which were a joy to hear. The band had a songwriter able to encapsulate (or was it idealise?) a lifestyle in music so sublime that teenagers the world over felt they vicariously belonged to some leisured surf and hot-rod crowd of mid-60s Californians. Twenty years later, all those teenagers have aged and taken on different preoccupations (such as worrying about the economy or the incipient lifestyles of their own kids). But that band they used to listen to hasn't. It's still desperately hanging on to a shopworn dream of "some beautiful women ... to show me how to ride the ultimate wave."

As if that weren't enough, the songwriter has been recovering from a mental breakdown by writing substandard new songs and rewriting one or two of his early ones. The rest of the band has virtually abandoned any pretence of instrumental competence, leaving such matters in the hands of studio pros. The band also solicits songs from sympathetic outsiders like Boy George and Stevie Wonder when they make an album.

Now it's just possible that some of the band's old audience might be nostalgically tempted to purchase such an album (it's hard to imagine anyone else wanting to), particularly if they hear the few bars of glorious old harmony that introduces the first song, 'Getcha Back'. They should be warned though — what they just heard was the highpoint of the album.

Peter Thomson

Thomas McClary
Motown

Here is an album without a single. McClary, a Commodore for 15 years, has the talent to do some fine work. He has a great voice, not as sweet or refined as someone like Luther Vandross, but McClary does have the versatility to sidestep the endless rehashing of the same song we seem to get from that other man.

His years with the Commodores have made him a very professional performer, and the opening track 'Wild Imagination' is a graunchy soul stomper that really warms the feet. Two songs later, still no sight of a single, but instead a teasing anthem, 'Thin Walls', about a guy who wants to meet the girl in the next apartment. It's steamy, a summer song that's beer-sodden and horny.

'Man In the Middle' rides debarge down de Nile Rodgers without the jaunty Egyptian guitars and sweaty, hairy palms. It's a quirky dance step and it deserves club time. The following track, 'Contagious', not the Whispers' recent single, is a pretty duet with the makings of a dancefloor blockbuster. Laugh along to the final track of the album, if you dare; only people who don't know the words to 'Three Times A Lady' are allowed to throw stones at this one.

Why be rude about an album that tries hard and succeeds most of the time? I liked the Commodores (until Lionel Ritchie got so silly) and I want to like Thomas McClary. This is an album I'll keep and play again over summer.

Peter Grace

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