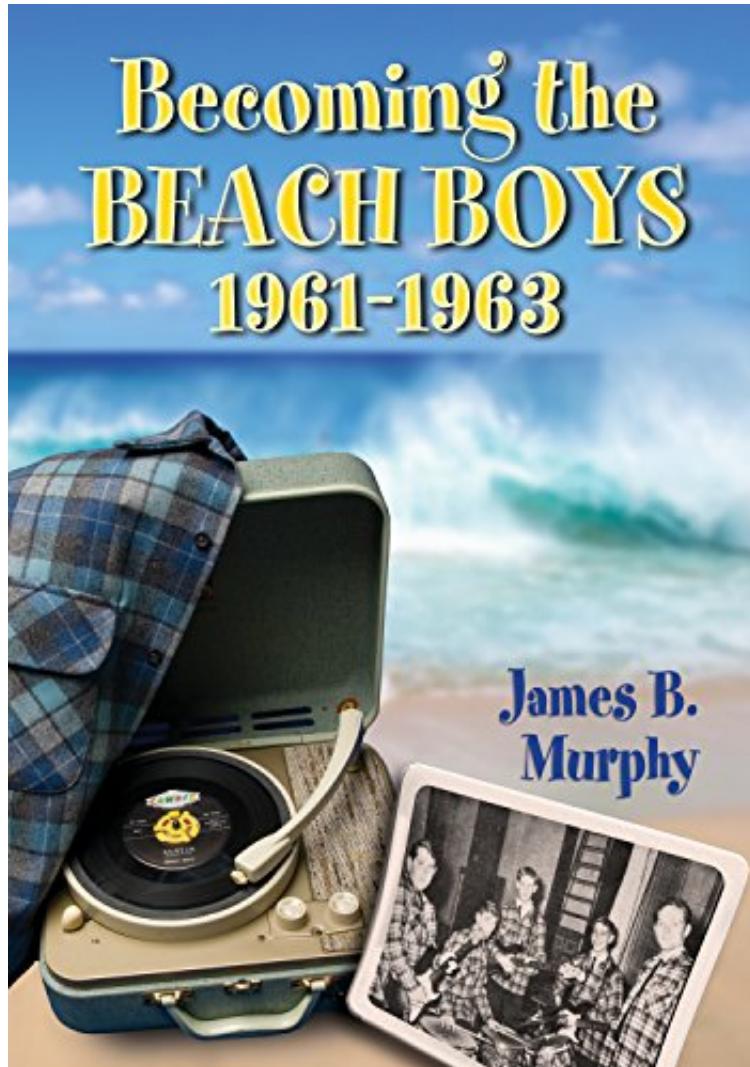


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## **Becoming the Beach Boys, 1961–1963**

*James B. Murphy*

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**James B. Murphy : *Becoming the Beach Boys, 1961–1963*** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Becoming the Beach Boys, 1961–1963*:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. In the Top Five By The Magic Christian The field does not lack for books on Brian Wilson or the Beach Boys, but James B. Murphy's 'Becoming the Beach Boys, 1961-1963' joins a small group of must reads for those who are fans of the Beach Boys. Murphy's book demonstrates a level of scholarly rigor that is seldom found in books on Brian and his band, but he does not sacrifice accessibility for detail. This immensely readable narrative focuses on the first two years of the band's existence that previously has been the source of countless tales and conflicting facts. Like McParland, Elliot, and Lambert, Murphy consulted numerous primary sources and untangled more than a few of the myths that surround the band's early history, and his many interviews

with people who were off-stage or on the sidelines help to provide context for the larger story. I grew up in the South Bay area where Brian and the band were raised and attended some of the same schools, and I found Murphy was able to convey a sense of place and time like no other author on this band has dared to consider. Hawthorne, Inglewood and the surrounding towns were unremarkable, but newly built hamlets for working class families in the post-war era.

Unlike the Los Angeles of today where perpetually congested traffic and the cost of living are anything but ordinary, the 1950s-1970s were the last phase of affordable livability for this region where anything was possible on minimal resources if you had the imagination and the right timing. Brian and his band created something extraordinary from the ordinary of their surroundings, and 'Becoming the Beach Boys' conveys the hustle of the small, independent record industry, the evolving gap between the silent generation and the baby boom youth culture, the beach towns before they became the real estate gold of the state, and the many players who contributed, not only to the Beach Boys, but to other important artists of the period. More than a few of the people he interview for this book have passed on in the last few years, so we have some of the final memories of many players in this story, which makes this book that much more important.

NOTE: I purchased the Kindle edition of the book for portability and convenience. This edition is fine if you are a casual, one-time through, reader and fan of the band, but I recommend the hard copy because of the many excellent illustrations (many from the authors substantial collection) and the wealth of references and footnotes he provides, which are difficult to navigate in Kindle texts.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Not just another book about the Beach Boys. An important addition to their story.

By johnfEarly this summer (2016) I wrote a series of reviews on Capitol/EMI's double-play series of CD's with two Beach Boys albums on each disc. This meant listening to all of their songs again in a way that I hadn't in a long time. It was a wonderful experience that really brought back memories of those days. I wish I had known of this book then as it may have been helpful. I was lucky it popped up as an recommendation or I might have missed it. Of course writing about the Beach Boys seems to have become a small industry of its own, and I had read enough of the literature and interviews to know the basic story. Still, this book stands out as something special. The author, James B. Murphy has done a magnificent job of writing a scholarly yet readable work. The book is a major compendium of facts about the group and every chapter's facts are carefully cited as they would be in a book of history. The author wisely chose to focus on the formation of the group and not their entire career.. The Beach Boys needed a book like this, which was written for the record as much as it was for the interested reader. By this point in time a major group like the Beach Boys that has had a very long and complex career will many interviews published or taped, many articles and books written about them and many stories told by those who knew them in one form or another. Conflicting recollections and deeply buried data begin to distort the record. Stories grow and start to become legends even when they contain half-truths or false information. What Mr. Murphy has done is to do an incredible amount of minute research to clarify exactly what happened and when it did. If someone enters the Beach Boys story they will receive a mini-biography explaining who they were. If they made an appearance, even in a parking lot or high school auditorium, it is documented. If they sang an old song its writers, performer and chart position will be noted. The book is chock-full of thousands of facts but they are given a compelling, basically chronological narrative that keeps you turning pages and never bogs down. The story is interesting and eventually explores a large part of the rapidly developing Southern California music scene. It took years for the group to get going, much longer than most people would imagine. The book is also well illustrated with pictures of the band, concert posters, singles' labels and album covers, many of them rare. This book is a dream come true for major Beach Boys aficionados, but its thoroughness and historical orientation may make it too much for more casual fans. For someone like me who has many Billboard books and books on pop music it's absolutely tops but admittedly many people won't want so much and would be served by one of the more general surveys of their whole career. But it's a most valuable book for the record and we should be glad Mr. Murphy took the time to write it.

EXTRA NOTE: About the angry, one-star review here. Even if a single fact in a book of many thousands of facts is incorrect, that does not invalidate the entire work. One must find many facts or a pattern of willingly distorted facts to make a case. There are major and minor facts and getting a high school's 1962 address right is not major in this case. Also in the case of a performance, recollection is not acceptable as evidence and must be backed up by tangible proof. I would ask the author of that scathing review to consider picking the book up again and giving it a chance.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Book

By EH

This book is excellent. I have always tried to follow the earliest information about the Beach Boys as closely as possible. This book brings it all together. I had to read this a little at a time so I could absorb the depth of the information. Mr. Murphy does a favor to those of us that wished someone would dig deep into every minutia of the day to day or week to week activities of all involved parties during the growth of the band. The authors depth of investigative journalism needs to be commended. Highly recommended.

They were almost The Pendletonesmdash;after the Pendleton wool shirts favored on chilly nights at the beachmdash;then The Surfers, before being named The Beach Boys. But what separated them from every other teenage garage band with no musical training? They had raw talent, persistence and a wellspring of creativity that launched them on a legendary career now in its sixth decade. Following the musical vision of Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys blended ethereal vocal harmonies, searing electric guitars and lush arrangements into one of the most distinctive

sounds in the history of popular music. Drawing on original interviews and newly uncovered documents, this book untangles the band's convoluted early history and tells the story of how five boys from California formed America's greatest rock 'n' roll band.

"This meticulously researched and presented title gives readers a 'boots-on-the-ground' look at how the Beach Boys got its start and is the definitive book on the humble beginnings of the band...it's almost as if those beautiful Beach Boys harmonies...intricately arranged, soaring, and pleasing to the listener...are invoked in the book's layout...a must-read for Beach Boys fans and popular music historians...readers will love the depth of research...recommended"-- Library Journal; "no definitive rock history collection or Beach Boys fan should be without this reference, which packs in statistics, black and white photos, and insights not available elsewhere"--Midwest Book ; "recommended...engaging and entertaining"--Association for Recorded Sound Collections Journal; "the most in-depth look...fascinating details about the creation of each song...an absolute must"--Examiner; "Murphy is a very good writer, and the book he always wanted to read was definitely worth writing. He lets no detail go un-checked...an important historical document through and through. A top ten best retro Popculture book of 2015."--Psychobabble.  
About the Author James B. Murphy is a companion animal veterinarian in Washington, D.C. He lives in Bowie, Maryland.