

The Vinyl Dialogues
Volume IV

“From Studio to Stylus”

Mike Morsch

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Introduction

There is a scene in the Broadway show *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* where King is offering the song “Will You (Still) Love Me Tomorrow” to the all-girl group the Shirelles.

Written by King and then-husband and songwriting partner Gerry Goffin, the Shirelles’ lead singer Shirley Olson (later Shirley Alston Reeves) at first didn’t like the song. She thought it was “too country” and didn’t want the group to record it.

But the Shirelles did eventually record the song and it would become the first song by an all-girl African-American group to reach No. 1 on the charts in the United States after its release in 1960. And it would be the first No. 1 hit that Goffin and King would write.

The scene helps advance the storyline of the hit musical, which is still appearing on Broadway as of 2017.

While *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* details King’s recollections and perspective on her career from its beginning up through the time of the making of her first solo album *Tapestry* in 1971, Shirley Alston Reeves’ account of that story — of King pitching “Will You (Still) Love Me Tomorrow” to the Shirelles — is included in this volume of *The Vinyl Dialogues*. And it helps illustrate what this series has been about since its inception: Not many artists will be fortunate enough to have a Broadway musical written about their careers, shows that detail the inspirations for the songs and the stories behind the making of their albums.

The Vinyl Dialogues does record and preserve those stories from the perspectives of the artists who made up the soundtracks of our lives.

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Up to this point, the series has been about albums made in the 1970s, which happens to be my decade, the period when I was in both high school and college.

In *Volume IV: From Studio to Stylus*, I decided to include details of some albums made in the 1960s. People have asked me why I haven't advanced the series to include albums from the 1980s. The answer is that by the time the 1980s rolled around, I was focused on career, marriage and fatherhood. I just didn't connect with much with the music from that decade.

But the 1960s music — the records that my parents had in their vinyl collection — provided the foundation for my musical tastes. Since there are a lot of happy memories for me associated with that music, I wanted to explore some albums from that decade.

And that decision has not been a disappointment. While there are still many albums from the 1970s detailed in this volume, I was thrilled to be able to talk to some highly accomplished artists of the 1960s. In addition to Shirley Alston Reeves, I had wonderful conversations with Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr. of the 5th Dimension; Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits; Felix Cavaliere of the Rascals; Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary; and Bob Berryhill of the Surfariis, among others.

It's made for a diverse and eclectic group of well-known — and some not-so-well-known — albums from the 1960s and 1970s that are detailed in this volume.

The music from these two decades has stood the test of time. And it never gets old.

So sit back and drop the needle on this next group of albums.

— **Mike Morsch**

A good night to write a hit song

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT

The Shirelles

(1961)

The Shirelles had two singles that charted in the late 1950s — “I Met Him on a Sunday” in 1958, and “Dedicated to the One I Love” in 1959 — but neither had broken into the Top 40.

One of the first all-girl groups of that era, the Shirelles — Shirley Owens (later Shirley Alston Reeves), Doris Coley (later Doris Kenner-Jackson), Addie “Micki” Harris (later Addie Harris McFadden), and Beverly Lee — were signed in the early 1960s by Florence Greenberg for the newly formed Scepter Records.

“The record company didn’t ask us; it told us to do an album,” said Shirley Alston Reeves. “We were about to record in the studio and Florence Greenberg, who owned the label, said, ‘Why don’t you girls write another song?’ We had written ‘I Met Him on a Sunday,’ our first record. And Florence said, ‘You can make money writing, so go home and write a song.’ I said, ‘When do you want us to do it?’ And she said, ‘Tonight.’ I said, ‘OK, tonight’s the night.’ And I went home and I wrote it. It was as simple as that.”

The song is about a woman who is both hesitant and expectant over her first sexual experience, an edgy proposition to sing about in a song in the early 1960s. The lyrics included the words “You said you’re gonna meet me, tonight’s the night. You said you’re gonna kiss me, tonight’s

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Shirley Alston Reeves, along with Luther Dixon, co-wrote and sang lead on the title track “Tonight’s the Night,” which got to No. 39 on the U.S. Billboard Top 100 Singles chart. (Photo by Mike Morsch)

the night. ... I might love you so. ... Turn the lights down low, you said you’re gonna make me feel all aglow. Well, I don’t know, well I don’t know right now, I might love you so.”

“The other girls really liked it. We just sat down and got it together and sang it and it came out real good,” said Alston Reeves.

Upon hearing the song, Greenberg paired Owens with Luther Dixon, who had already worked with Perry Como, Nat King Cole, and Pat Boone. Dixon would add to the song, eventually sharing songwriting credit with Owens, and produce the single.

The song was released in September 1960 and went gold in 1961. That success prompted Scepter Records officials to urge the Shirelles to record an album.



**Carole King, who along with husband Gerry Goffin wrote “Will You (Still) Love Me Tomorrow,” pitched the song to the Shirelles and it went all the way to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart and became a million-seller for the group.
(Photo by Phil McAuliffe)**

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“Tonight’s the Night” would become the title track to the Shirelles’ debut album of the same name, also released in 1961. It would become the first single from the album, and it cracked the Top 40, coming in at No. 39 on the U.S. Billboard Top 100 Singles chart.

But the follow-up single from that album really put the Shirelles on the map. Written by Carole King and Gerry Goffin, “Will You (Still) Love Me Tomorrow” went all the way to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and became a million-seller.

King and Goffin had met in college in the late 1950s and began a songwriting collaboration — with King writing the music and Goffin writing the lyrics — as well as a personal relationship. When King became pregnant in August 1959, they married. Goffin was 20 years old and King was 17.

Both secured jobs at Aldon Music, a New York-based music publishing company founded by Al Nevins and Don Kirshner and in 1958. Aldon would end up playing a significant role in the development of what was called the Brill Building Sound in the late 1950s and 1960s.

The Brill Building, an office building at 1619 Broadway on 49th Street in Manhattan, housed scores of music publishers and songwriting teams, including Burt Bacharach and Hal David, Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart, Neil Sedaka and Howard Greenfield, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil; and solo songwriters including Sonny Bono, Neil Diamond, Marvin Hamlisch, Laura Nyro, Paul Simon, Phil Spector, and Steve Tyrell.

It was that creative environment that Goffin and King entered.

But when King first pitched “Will You (Still) Love Me” to the Shirelles, Alston Reeves didn’t like it at all.

“Carole came in and she played it on the piano and sang it for us. And I looked at Florence, I said, ‘Let me tell you, that’s not a Shirelles record.’ She said, ‘What do you mean?’

I said, ‘I’m telling you, that’s a Country Western song and we don’t do Country Western. I don’t think it’s gonna work,’” said Alston Reeves.

“It was the way Carole was singing and how she was playing it. There were no strings or anything. She was just banging it out on the piano and singing it,” said Alston Reeves. “And she sang with a little drawl. It wasn’t a Southern thing, but the song was slow.”

Greenberg didn’t hear it the same way, though, and wanted the Shirelles to cut the song anyway.

“Florence said, ‘If it doesn’t work, we’ll just put it on the album; maybe it will come out better.’ That’s what they used to do then; they would stick things on the album that they didn’t think were going to be hits for filler,” said Alston Reeves. “A lot of times, though, that’s when a good one comes out. It does happen at times.”

Alston Reeves changed her mind, though, when it came time to record the song.

“When I got to the studio with the girls and we got the music team and started with the strings and everything, we fell in love with the song. It was beautiful,” said Alston Reeves. “After that, whenever we had to record, Florence would ask me what I thought was not a good Shirelles song, and that’s what we’d put out. Florence would say, ‘Let’s ask Shirley what she thinks isn’t going to make it.’”

Another song on the *Tonight’s the Night* album that got some attention — but not until a few years later when it was recorded by another group — was “Boys,” written by Dixon and Wes Farrell. It was the B-side of “Will You (Still) Love Me Tomorrow.”

The other band that covered it? The Beatles.

The song, recorded in one take at Abbey Road Studios on February 11, 1963, was included on the Beatles’ first album released in the United Kingdom, *Please Please Me* in

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1963. It's also notable because the song is the first recorded lead vocal by Beatles drummer Ringo Starr.

In a 2005 interview with *Rolling Stone*, Paul McCartney said "Boys" was a favorite of Beatles fans in the band's early years in the UK.

"It was great, though, if you think about It — here's us doing a song and it was a girl's song. 'I talk about the boys now!' Or it was a gay song. But we never even listened," McCartney said in the *Rolling Stone* interview. "It's just a great song. I think that's one of the things about youth — you just don't give a shit. I love the innocence of those days."

The Shirelles liked the Beatles' version of "Boys."

"It's just a little old rock and roll song. No heavy lyrics, but there are a lot of hits that didn't have many lyrics. The Beatles' version was a combination of singer and song," said Alston Reeves. "I hate to say it, but we didn't know then who the Beatles were the first time we were asked about them. We had to pretend we knew who they were. Then after we heard their version, we said we have to find out who the Beatles are. But we loved their version right away. Their sound was different and very tight."

The album cover for *Tonight's the Night* doesn't show the Shirelles. Instead, the cover shows a lacy pink dress on the floor next to a small table covered by a gold cloth. A letter on the table sits alongside a photo of an unrecognizable white male. On the floor next to the table and dress is a bouquet of roses with a card that reads, "Dedicated to the One I Love," which is the name of the first track on Side Two of the album.

"Florence had gone to the store, a five-and-dime somewhere, and bought a little round table and a picture frame. It had a picture of some guy, a model, I don't know, a handsome guy," said Alston Reeves. "We said, 'Why can't we have our picture on the cover, like some of the other

artists?’ But the record company officials said it was because a lot of the white people would not want their children to have albums sitting in their homes with black artists on it. So we said, OK.”

“Dedicated to the One I Love,” written by Lowman Pauling and Ralph Bass, was originally a hit for the “5” Royales in 1957. The Shirelles first covered the song in 1959 and it reached No. 83 on the Billboard Hot 100 Singles chart. The group re-released it as a single in 1961, and it climbed to No. 3 on the Billboard Hot 100

Singles chart and No. 2 on the Billboard R&B chart, and was subsequently included on the *Tonight’s the Night* album.

Despite the hit singles, the *Tonight’s the Night* album failed to chart on the U.S. Billboard 200 Albums chart. But more positively, the Shirelles and the *Tonight’s the Night* album have been credited with launching the girl group genre, that included music accepted by both black and white audiences. This laid the groundwork for success by later girl groups from Motown, like the Supremes.

Two of the songs from the Shirelles’ debut album — “Tonight’s the Night” and “Will You (Still) Love Me Tomorrow” — were selected by *Rolling Stone* to be on its list of the greatest songs of all time.

“In that field, we were one of the first girl groups. I think we opened the doors. But it didn’t even brush past us that we were setting any kind of trend. We were just doing it and having fun,” said Alston Reeves. “The whole ride was very good. We opened a lot of doors and broke through a lot of barriers. We played in the South when it wasn’t favorable to us with segregation. We played the first integrated show in Alabama.

“I think that we made a difference. I can tell you this — we had the right music at the time and people loved our music. That’s how we got away with things. And I think we got away with it because we were women, too. I don’t know

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if people were intimidated by the guy groups. Most of the places we played we had great audiences and they treated us with respect. There was no funny business,” she said.

“I can look back on those days and know that we made a difference. Once people got to see us and learn who we were, not what color we were, but who we were, we got that respect. And the music was just that good.”

Discography

The Shirelles

"Tonight's the Night"

Released March 16, 1961

Side one


- 1 "Tonight's the Night" (Luther Dixon, Shirley Owens)**
- 2 "Johnny on My Mind" (Edward Lyons)**
- 3 "Lower the Flame" (Barney Williams, Eddie Snyder, Stanley Kahan)**
- 4 "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" (Carole King, Gerry Goffin)**
- 5 "Doin' the Ronde" (Addie Harris, Beverly Lee, Doris Coley, Shirley Owens)**
- 6 "You Don't Want My Love" (Luther Dixon)**

Side two

- 1 "Dedicated to the One I Love" (Lowman Pauling, Ralph Bass)**
- 2 "Boys" (Luther Dixon, Wes Farrell)**
- 3 "The Dance Is Over" (Luther Dixon)**
- 4 "Oh, What a Waste of Love" (Allyson R. Khent, Luther Dixon)**
- 5 "Unlucky" (Bobby Banks, Lillian Shockley)**
- 6 "Tonight at the Prom" (Barney Williams, Eddie Snyder, Stanley Kahan)**

**A broken piece of plywood
and a control room yelp**

WIPE OUT
The Surfaris
(1963)

ne Saturday, Bob Berryhill got a call from his friends Pat Connolly and Jim Fuller. They asked if they could come over to his house in Glendora, California, to practice.

They were all teenage musicians enamored with surf music, and Berryhill had a place in his parents' house set up with guitars and amps. Kids would regularly come over to the Berryhill household and jam, so it wasn't an unusual request.

Berryhill said sure, come on over. It was September 1962, and that day would be the start of a series of events that would lead to the recording of what would become one of the most iconic songs in the history of surf music.

Connolly, Fuller, and Berryhill rehearsed for about three hours that day. Berryhill played all the Ventures' songs that he knew and Fuller played all the Dick Dale songs that he knew. Both of those bands had already made their marks in the world of surf music, the sound that had gripped southern California at the time and were highly regarded by the boys.

"And then Pat said, 'I've got a gig at Pomona Catholic High School tonight. Would you like to play?'" Berryhill recalled Connolly asking. "And I said, 'Well sure, but we don't have a drummer.' A surf band without a drummer,

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what are you going to do? And Pat said, ‘We’re going to meet the drummer there.’ And if you’ve ever done music, you just don’t show up and play a gig because you have to hope that it’s gonna work out.”

But it did work out. The drummer was an extremely gifted and talented youngster named Ron Wilson.

“I’ve always kind of compared Ronnie to John Bonham [drummer for Led Zeppelin] and Keith Moon [drummer for The Who],” said Berryhill. “Ron was kind of a forerunner of that kind of playing, where it was just all over the place. Ronnie would just stand up and on his drums and beat the heck out of them, and then run around the front and click on them. He would just go nuts.”

The band played that night at a dance after the high school football game, and the kids at Pomona Catholic High School responded positively.

“Everybody loved what we sounded like as a surf band. We didn’t have a microphone and we just played instrumentals through one amplifier and the drums. In the gym, it sounded great to everybody, and that kind of got us going. That was our first opportunity to play,” said Berryhill.

The new group still didn’t have a name but they continued to practice. Eventually they enlisted the help of Dale Smallin, a local businessman and videographer they all knew, who produced bicycle safety videos. Smallin, they thought, could help get them some more local gigs.

Smallin had a studio in Azusa, California, where the teens would rehearse from time to time. It was at one of those rehearsals one evening that Wilson showed up with a sign painted on his bass drum head that read “The Surfaris.” The group had decided to call itself “The Surfaris,” as in, surfing safari.

“Dale said, ‘Hey, I have to sell you guys; what are you calling yourselves?’ We thought were we being real clever calling ourselves ‘The Surfaris.’ At fifteen years old, you

think you're pretty clever and can conquer the world," said Berryhill.

It wouldn't be the last time that creativity would benefit the band as it moved along on the wave of events that would lead them to stardom.

Just a few months later, in November 1962, Wilson again showed up at rehearsal with another idea. He shared with the others that he had a dream about a song called "Surfer Joe."

"Ronnie was a big fan of the Beach Boys and he was a vocalist, so he wanted to sing. The Beach Boys, at that time, were still under the control of their dad, Murry Wilson, and they had 'Surfin' and a few other songs that were being played on the radio," said Berryhill. "So Ron was singing 'Surfer Joe' for me and I started putting a chord progression to it. That was kind of my thing, arranging songs.

"Ronnie basically had a few verses and the chorus. And we had to sit down and write the rest of the verses," said Berryhill. "The famous thing was that there were originally five verses to 'Surfer Joe.' Ronnie had the first three, and we helped him write the next two, a group-think to finish the song out. I did the arrangement of the guitar and music part of it, and Ronnie sang the melody. He's the basic songwriter on 'Surfer Joe' because it's his original stuff."

When Smallin heard the song, he said, "You know, that's a pretty good song. Why don't we record it? I'll find a place," Berryhill recalled.

Smallin enlisted the help of Paul C. Buff, who would go on to be considered the father of surf music recording in California. An ex-Marine who had learned a lot about electronics in his early 20s, Buff had a studio in Cucamonga, California.

"Paul was an innovator of all types. He was kind of like an inventor. He had never built a studio before, but he knew

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what would come out of it. He was our George Martin,” said Berryhill, referring to the legendary Beatles producer.

Some of the other young musicians at the time had recorded at Buff’s studio, including Frank Zappa and the Strawberry Alarm Clock.

Smallin eventually secured time at Buff’s studio to record “Surfer Joe,” but there was still the issue of where the money would come from to do the session.

“We all stood in the driveway of my dad’s house on 740 South Grand Avenue in Glendora, California — Dale Smallin, the four of us, my uncle, Don Fisher, just sort of standing there. It was where the rubber meets the road, when the manager says, ‘OK, where is the money?’ Pat and Jim and Ronnie unfolded their pockets and nothing came out. They all stood there, and Dale was looking at me saying, ‘Well, we’re not going if we don’t have the money,’” recalled Berryhill.

Berryhill went into the house to ask his mother, Katherine, if she would write the check for \$150 for the recording session. And she did, for which Berryhill would eventually reimburse her from his band earnings.

“People didn’t even make \$150 a week in those days. That was almost a month’s salary. She just gave me a funny look and said OK,” said Berryhill.

This was around early December 1962. The exact date of the recording session has been lost to history, but it was before Christmas, according to Berryhill.

So the band members all piled into two vehicles – Berryhill’s truck and Uncle Don Fisher’s 1953 Chevy station wagon – and headed for Buff’s studio with the check in hand.

The boys did a couple of takes on “Surfer Joe.” They had set up one microphone in the middle of the studio and recorded the music part of the song, then went back and

overdubbed the vocals, with Wilson singing the lead on all five verses of the song.

When they were finished, everyone seemed satisfied with the recording. Smallin and Buff, who were watching from behind the glass in the recording room, hit the talkback button.

“Boys, you need a second song for your forty-five.”

“We go, well, we didn’t write another song. At fifteen you’re really not prepared for life. We didn’t anticipate that situation,” said Berryhill.

Buff suggested that if the boys wanted, he could put “Surfer Joe” on both sides of the 45. “Some groups did that,” he said.

“We said, no, we’ll write another song,” said Berryhill.

Wilson got back on the drums and did what he did best and started playing a beat.

“And I thought, well, we’d better put some chords to this with a melody and a baseline or it’s going to be a drum solo. Ronnie was that kind of a guy. He’d just take over and start playing,” said Berryhill. “And it sounded great.”

They recorded it once, and then again and again. After the third take, they had what they wanted. The entire recording session for both songs took about four hours.

“That’s what we had in the band; each one of us improvised in our own space. But it worked with Ronnie holding it all together with the drums. It worked due to our special chemistry as a band that held us together while creating the music. It was a culmination of what we knew because we were used to playing four-hour dances,” said Berryhill.

When the recording was complete, the question became what to name the song. The week before, Fuller had made a trip to Tijuana, Mexico, where he bought a switchblade, which was illegal to own at the time. He pulled the

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switchblade out of his pocket, stepped up, and clicked it open over the microphone.

“Let’s call it ‘Switchblade,’” said Fuller.

But Buff didn’t like that. So Berryhill’s father, Robert, went outside into the alley behind the studio and found an old cement-soaked piece of plywood and brought it back inside and gave it to Connolly.

“Pat broke it over the microphone and it sounded like a busted surfboard,” said Berryhill. “But guess what, there was already a song called ‘Bustin’ Surfboards.’”

Someone asked, “What causes a busted surfboard?”

A wipeout.

Smallin heard that and came out of the control room and yelled “Ha-ha-ha-ha wipeout!”

“He just yelled it out of nowhere. Nobody had ever heard it before in our lives. So we cracked the board again, Dale yelled out the laugh and we put it on the front of the tape. And two weeks later, we had a forty-five.”

“Wipe Out” would be released on the flip side of the “Surfer Joe” 45 record. And nobody could anticipate what was about to happen with the song, and how it would propel The Surfaris into surf music history.

“It was a case, though, where ‘Wipe Out’ was an instrumental and we were an instrumental band who happened to do a few vocals. ‘Wipe Out’ really should have been the A-side but ‘Surfer Joe’ was the reason we had the \$150 and why we went out there to the studio,” said Berryhill.

It was at this point when the continued series of events and the evolution of “Wipe Out” went into surf music folklore, according to Berryhill.

Once the 45 was pressed — it was labeled as being on DSF (Dale Francis Smallin) Records — Smallin met the boys once again at Berryhill’s house, where he brought along 100 copies of the 45 record. He gave each of the band

members 25 copies of the record and asked what they wanted to do with them.

“Since we were a group, even though my family and I had paid for the session, it became an ‘all-for-one-and-one-for-all’ situation, so the records were given out equally,” said Berryhill.

According to Berryhill, Fuller planned to take his 25 to school and sell them to his friends so that he could raise money to buy a Stratocaster guitar. Connolly planned to do much the same, because he wanted to make enough money to buy a Fender Precision Bass guitar.

Berryhill had other ideas.

“I said, ‘Hold it guys. We want this on the radio so we can buy multiple guitars,’” said Berryhill.

At this point, there had been no contracts signed by the band members, and that would become problematic because all of them were still minors.

The band members decided to let Smallin take the record and try to get it radio play. Unbeknownst to the boys and their parents, Buff had already taken the record to some of the major labels, including Capitol. All passed on it.

Buff had also shopped the record to Art Laboe, a radio disc jockey at KRLA in Los Angeles, but didn’t want it, either.

Smallin eventually gave the record to a sales rep at Merritt Distributing Company, where it caught the attention of one of the company’s employees, Richard Delvy, who also happened to be the drummer for a group called The Challengers. Delvy in turn gave it to a friend of his, John Marascalco, a songwriter who had written for Little Richard.

Delvy and Marascalco wanted to buy the record for \$200. But The Surfaris didn’t bite. Behind the boys’ backs, the two had already released it on Marascalco’s Princess Record label, had edited “Surfer Joe” down to three verses from the original five verses and cut off the ending to “Wipe

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Out,” ostensibly so that it would be more attractive to AM radio disc jockeys.

Princess Records took the edited songs to KYNO in Fresno, California, and got a disc jockey there to put it into his regular rotation of songs. The company did the same thing with a radio station in San Bernardino, California.

Almost immediately, the record was the most requested song on both stations. Life was about to change for The Surfaris and with it came a boatload of headaches.

Things were moving quickly, but there was still no contract.

On March 21, 1963, Delvy and Marascalco gathered the band members at Berryhill’s home. Neither had heard the band play live yet.

“All they knew was that they came to the house and here were three sixteen-year-olds and a seventeen-year-old sitting around a room at my mom and dad’s house. They were looking at country bumpkins who didn’t know anything. They go, wow, here’s a cherry, we can pick this,” said Berryhill. “So they had us sign contracts. They already had them printed out. Of course, we couldn’t sign contracts because we were under age. But we signed anyway because we were young and inexperienced. They said hey, we’ve got this going and we’re going to give you \$1,200. They already offered us money. We said OK.”

Delvy and Marascalco then shopped the Princess record to Randy Wood, president of Dot Records. He loved it and agreed to distribute it on the Dot label.

As was oftentimes the case, the disc jockeys flipped over the record, and it was “Wipe Out,” not “Surfer Joe,” that was the hit. By April 1963, the song had become No. 1 in the Los Angeles market and was starting to make its way around the world. By September 1963, it had reached No. 2 on the Billboard Top 100 Singles chart and was in the Top 10 in Germany, Japan, and Australia.

Once “Wipe Out” began to hit, the phone started ringing. The Surfariis were getting regular gigs at teen dances around southern California. Due to the band’s popularity, it had outgrown its regional appeal, and offers began coming in from a wide range of places.

Dot Records decided that it wanted an album to go with the single. So the band once again went to Buff’s studio in Cucamonga to record songs to create an album around “Wipe Out” and “Surfer Joe.”

“Smallin said, ‘Here’s a list of songs we want you to record,’” recalled Berryhill. “We said, ‘Well, those are on our playlist, but we don’t necessarily want to record those songs.’ And he said, ‘I’m sorry, that’s what Dot wants.’”

“So as sixteen-year-old kids, you just do what you’re told. We went out on a Saturday and recorded all the songs that Dot wanted except ‘Wipe Out’ and ‘Surfer Joe’ for the album,” said Berryhill. “What happened was we recorded the list of songs on the album in eight hours in one day. Two weeks later, the album came out. Now in 1963, there was no way we could record an album, get the photography, printing and pressing done in two weeks. You can do a forty-five, but you can’t do a whole album. It just didn’t happen like that. It took three months to do an album. So we were a little suspicious.”

The band’s suspicions were well-founded when it came to the *Wipe Out* album.

When the album came out, it had a picture of the five Surfariis on the back, including sax player Jim Pash, who was in the band but had not been at the original recording session for “Surfer Joe” or “Wipe Out.”

“He was not there the night we recorded ‘Wipe Out’ because his mom and dad wanted him to go to Juilliard and they didn’t want him infected by young hoodlums playing surf music. They made him stay home because he was only thirteen-years-old at the time,” said Berryhill.

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Once again, the Berryhill household, where the band had all its meetings, was the scene of the next big moment for The Surfaris, playing the *Wipe Out* album for the band members to hear for the first time.

“The number one song on the A-side is ‘Wipe Out,’ two minutes, twelve seconds, written by The Surfaris. That plays, and we go wow, that’s cool. And then the number two song comes up, ‘Wibble Wobble.’ And Jim Pash goes, ‘That’s not me playing the sax,’” recalled Berryhill. “Then the next song comes up, ‘Torque.’ And Jim says, ‘That’s not me, either.’ And then the next song, ‘You Can’t Sit Down.’ ‘That’s not me either.’ And then we get to ‘Green Onions’ and that’s not my guitar playing. And Ron Wilson goes, ‘That’s not my drumming either,’ on ‘Tequila.’ And then ‘Wild Weekend.’ ‘Not my sax playing,’ Jim said.”

Smallin was standing in the room observing the reactions of the band members as they played the album.

“We were having a conniption,” said Berryhill. “We asked Dale, ‘What happened?’

“He said, ‘Well, they overdubbed you a little bit because you’re not union musicians.’ What a lame excuse,” said Berryhill.

The *Wipe Out* album by The Surfaris ended up having only two songs recorded by the band, and no songs that featured saxophonist Jim Pash.

The whole thing ended up in a long, drawn-out court battle, the result of which is that there are five different covers of the *Wipe Out* album — a different one was printed every time a court decision came down in the case.

Pash’s family sued Dot Records to have his picture removed from the *Wipe Out* album cover, which resulted in Pash personally receiving several thousands of dollars, and which marked the demise of The Surfaris’ contract with Dot Records.

“Dot did not pick up our option to record any further albums, and it was over,” said Berryhill.

Despite the legal battles, The Surfaris continued to enjoy popularity. In January 1964, the William Morris Agency had been signed on to represent the band, and the agency secured a spot for them on a 31-date tour of Australia that included the Beach Boys, Roy Orbison, Paul and Paula, and an Australian band called The Joy Boys. Since they were still minors, The Surfaris were accompanied by a chaperone, Jim Pash’s brother-in-law.

“Roy Orbison was already an established star. He was idolized in Australia. The British Empire has a whole different feel for music than the United States does. It was like you could hear a pin drop in the auditorium when he was singing. Everybody wanted to hear every word that he said and every note that he sang,” said Berryhill. “And the Beach Boys were still being managed by Murry Wilson, who we called ‘The Barging Rhino.’ He was just a wild man, always cracking the whip on his boys.”

At one point during that tour, the bands had a night off, and The Surfaris and the Beach Boys decided to take in a movie.

“At the end of the movie, they played a one-minute video clip of the Beatles. We didn’t know who they were. But because Australia was a British colony, they had stuff that we didn’t ever see,” said Berryhill. “So they played the clip, the house lights came up, and Brian Wilson said, ‘They’ll never make it.’”

Just a few weeks later, on February 9, 1964, the Beatles appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and the music industry in the United States shifted overnight.

“*The Ed Sullivan Show*, it was over for surf music that night,” said Berryhill. “What happened was that after that appearance and people saw their haircuts, that was like a

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total revelation. Long hair. It was short, but compared to crew cuts, it was long.

“We got back to the U.S. and played a concert up in Sacramento where we had an opening act of guys who were lip-syncing Beatles songs and wearing Beatles wigs. And the crowd was going nuts,” said Berryhill. “It was like what a tribute band would be today. They didn’t even play, but they were holding their guitars. They just played a tape of the original Beatles album. People bought them hook, line, and sinker. If you didn’t have Beatles hair and Beatles songs, you were nowhere.”

Berryhill was still only 17 years old when The Surfaris returned home from the Australia tour.

“To be a has-been at seventeen is pretty tough,” he said.

In 1963, The Surfaris had signed a three-year contract with Decca Records, a five-album deal plus several singles.

According to Berryhill, the group’s best album was produced by A&R (artists and repertoire) man Charles “Bud” Dant, *The Surfaris Play*, which was released in 1963. The band then recorded *Fun City*, *Hit City 64*, and *Hit City 65*.

“After Bud turned us over to Decca’s new A&R man, Gary Usher, things went down fast,” said Berryhill. “He wanted us to become a Beach Boys clone band. That forced us into an all-vocal format, doing cover songs from the late-’60s groups who were on the way up.”

That resulted in what Berryhill calls the band’s worst album, *It Ain’t Me, Babe*.

“The title was fitting because a number of the tracks and song selections were not us,” said Berryhill. “Usher didn’t like our instrumental music but used our name to further his career rather than help us progress and build on the original sound we had created.”

According to Berryhill, the surf music that was so popular before the British Invasion became a stigma for The Surfaris.

“We couldn’t advance either. We started with *Wipe Out* and if you’ve seen the six original albums that we’ve done, you can see how we progressed from an all-instrumental band to an all-vocal band.”

What didn’t die was “Wipe Out” and the legacy that it has left for more than 50 years.

“‘Wipe Out’ is an iconic piece of Americana. The song itself has a life of its own. My publisher calls it the ‘Wipe Out Industry.’ I know that it started out in surf music and it’s considered an iconic part of surf music. But whenever it’s played, it brings a warmth to people’s hearts,” said Berryhill.

The original The Surfaris stayed together only until August 1965, when Connolly departed. He has since left the music business. Fuller left in 1966 and formed his own band, Jim Fuller and the Beatnik. He died on March 3, 2017. Wilson released an album of his own songs in 1987, then died on May 12, 1989. Pash died of heart failure in 2005.

Only Berryhill remains to carry on the legacy of The Surfaris, which is now a family band that includes his wife, Gene, and sons, Deven and Joel.

“I’m the last one playing. And we play ‘Wipe Out’ as our finale song and people stand up and they cheer. People will stand in line for an hour after the shows at the merch table to tell me their stories about how much ‘Wipe Out’ meant to them,” said Berryhill. “I have fought lawsuit after lawsuit to protect The Surfaris’ name and ‘Wipe Out’ because it is that important to me. When I play the stuff it’s authentic, as I sound like The Surfaris without any special effort. I still don’t want to change into a progressive surf band or any other band. It was our unique creation and part of who I am as a musician and part of surf music history.”

Discography

The Surfaris

“Wipe Out”

Released 1963

Side 1

- 1 Wipe Out (2:12) - Bob Berryhill, Pat Connolly, Jim Fuller, Ron Wilson**
- 2 Wiggle Wiggle (2:40)**
- 3 Torquay (2:27) - George Tomsco**
- 4 You Can't Sit Down (4:15) - Dee Clark, Kal Mann, Cornell Muldrow**
- 5 Green Onions (2:45) - Booker T. Jones, Steve Cropper, Lewie Steinberg, Al Jackson, Jr.**
- 6 Tequila (2:05) - Joe Johnson**

Side 2

- 1 Wild Weekend (2:33) - Tom Shannon, Phil Todaro**
- 2 Teen Beat (3:10) - Arthur Egnoian, Sandy Nelson**
- 3 Yep! (2:45) - Duane Eddy, Lee Hazlewood**
- 4 Memphis (2:52) - Chuck Berry**
- 5 Surfer Joe (2:20) - Ron Wilson**
- 6 Walk, Don't Run (2:09) - Johnny Smith**