



Handout 3 - Surf Listening Stations

Listening Station 1: Vocal Harmonies

- Song 1: “The Things We Did Last Summer,” the Beach Boys (1963)
- Song 2: “Angel Eyes,” The Four Freshmen (1956)

Founded in Indiana in 1948, the Four Freshmen were a popular male vocal group that combined Jazz stylings with the sound of traditional barbershop quartets. As you listen to the two songs, think about the ways in which the groups use their voices to create a specific mood.

- In the two songs, is every singer singing the same part?
- How do the combinations of different sounds create a single whole?
- Note that the Beach Boys’ performance came seven years after “Angel Eyes.” How do you think groups such as the Four Freshmen might have influenced the Beach Boys’ vocal style?
- Note that “The Things We Did Last Summer” is a 1946 song that has been recorded by numerous artists. Why do you think the Beach Boys chose to perform this song in 1963? What does it suggest about the influence of earlier musical styles on them as a group?

Listening Station 2: R&B Guitar

- Song 1: “Fun, Fun, Fun,” The Beach Boys (1964)
- Song 2: “Johnny B. Goode,” Chuck Berry (1958)

Chuck Berry’s “Johnny B. Goode” remains one of the classics of early Rock and Roll, and a source of inspiration for many subsequent Rock and Roll groups.

- The first time you listen, listen only to the first 18 seconds of each song. What do you notice?
- Listen to each song in its entirety. Why might the Beach Boys have borrowed the opening guitar riff to “Johnny B. Goode” for their song? What does it add to the song? Do the Beach Boys successfully take this famous guitar riff and make it their own?
- In the two songs, is every singer singing the same part?

Listening Station 3: Wall of Sound

- Song 1: “Don’t Worry Baby,” The Beach Boys (1964)
- Song 2: “Be My Baby,” the Ronettes (1963)

The Ronettes’ recording demonstrates a production technique called the “Wall of Sound,” pioneered in the early 1960s by record producer Phil Spector. It was a style that influenced Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys.

- Pay particular attention to the opening seconds of each song as you listen. What about them is similar?
- Listen carefully and think about how that sound was created. What kind of effect does this technique accomplish? What kind of mood does it create?

Listening Station 4: Instrumental Reverb

- Song 1: “Wipeout,” the Surfaris (1963)
- Song 2: “Miserlou,” Dick Dale and the Del-Tones (1962)

In the early 1960s, the Fender Musical Instruments Corporation introduced a new type of electric amplifier that could produce a reverberating sound, an echo-like effect popularly known as “reverb.” This effect was featured on many instrumental songs of the Surf era.

- What kind of mood does it create in the two songs here? (Note that “Miserlou” is a recording of a traditional Greek song that was written in the 1920s.)