

## CD REVIEWS

## ROCK

**Le Noise**  
Neil Young  
(Warner)

★★★★★

RESPECTED *Rolling Stone* rock critic Dave Marsh once made the bold call of declaring that Neil Young was "not a major artist". Marsh said while a greatest hits package of "Shakey's" work looked superficially impressive, his individual releases were "just a series of fragments". Like Bob Dylan, he said, Young liked to generate "self-mythology". Dylan managed to regenerate his flagging career on several occasions by teaming up with producer Daniel Lanois – a move Young has followed here.

Unfortunately, Lanois is not as perfect a fit with Young and *Le Noise* is not in the class of Dylan's *Oh Mercy* or *Time Out of Mind*. Still, any Young album that begins with monstrous, fuzzy guitar chords can't be all bad and *Walk With Me* certainly promises that *Le Noise* will live up to its title.

*Sign of Love* gives us more of the same, but it also makes you realise this is no *Crazy Horse* outing. One of Young's most appealing characteristics is the "ragged glory" of the man in full-on feedback frenzy. While Lanois' lush production added to the atmosphere of Dylan's albums, giving them a dark brooding menace, polishing Young's playing takes away some of its messy magnificence. It is certainly a more consistent album than most of Young's catalogue, but could still only be considered a "minor" success.

Garry Williams

## ROCK

**Who We Touch**  
The Charlatans  
(End Records)

★★★★★

THE Charlatans is a band with a solid output of satisfying and often intriguing albums. The band shot to fame in the

Madchester craze of the late 1980s-early '90s with a swaggering, swirling brand of rock that relied heavily on keyboards and bass, with vocals almost more notable for their sound than their lyrical content. In a genre dominated by the Stone Roses, Happy Mondays and Primal Scream, the often psychedelic tonings of the Charlatans helped form a bridge to the equally swaggering Britpop output of Blur and Oasis. On 1999's *Us and Us Only* they styled their sound on the drugged-up *Beggars Banquet* phase of the Rolling Stones, before turning in quite different flavours on *Up at the Lake* (2004) and *Simpatico* (2006). On this album there's a powerful blast of Britpop again, with songs brimming with pop hooks and heavily played rhymes. And to close, a riotous six-minute spoken-word piece by anarchist poet Penny Rimbaud over crashing instrumentation.

Graeme Hammond

## GYPSY

**Habanera**  
Elina Garanca  
(Sony)

★★★★★

UTTER Elina Garanca and *Carmen* in a single breath to opera goers in the US or Europe and informed word is they instantly begin salivating. On the evidence here, this beautiful blonde Latvian mezzo-soprano qualifies as today's pre-eminent *Carmen*. Thus, Garanca not surprisingly sings three *Carmen* excerpts, including the rarely aired original *Habanera*, dumped by Bizet in favour of the plagiarised classic that became one of the genre's most recognisable, and prostituted, tunes. Garanca's voice has dazzling sparkle in the top register, but a little more growl in the lower register could have given several pieces in this fascinating recital the grunt the definitive *Carmen*'s have projected.

Robert Crimeen



Do it again: Long-time members (centre) Bruce Johnston and Mike Love front The Beach Boys

# They get around

Fast cars near the beach – the perfect setting for The Beach Boys, writes Sally Browne

IT could be because of their association with the surf that The Beach Boys have been invited to headline the Gold Coast 600 festival, or it could simply be because they're one of the biggest bands of all time.

But Mike Love, original member and voice of The Beach Boys, reckons it's because of their car songs.

"We have a lot of car songs. *Little Deuce Coupe*, *409*, *Shut Down*, and of course *I Get Around*. *Fun, Fun, Fun* was about borrowing your daddy's car, you know," he laughs.

"Between surfing and the cars, we're all set for the Gold Coast."

But that's not their only Gold Coast connection. Keyboard player and vocalist Bruce Johnston, who has been with the band since 1965, has a son who attends Bond University.

"I know he's studying volleyball," Love jokes. "A very big subject."

Mike Love started The Beach Boys with his cousins back in 1961 and is the recognisable voice on many of their biggest hits.

The Beach Boys promise to deliver everything from *Surfin'*, their first ever record, written by Love, and *Surfin' Safari*, their first international hit, to *Kokomo*.

Like the rest of the world, Australia has long had a love affair with The Beach Boys, who once held the record here for the largest outdoor event. Love still remembers their first visit here.

"The first time we came Down Under we played with Roy Orbison. That was in the early-to-mid '60s. I remember the beer was really good and I had trouble getting back into the beach at Bondi – there were ridiculously large waves that day. I remember just hanging out at the Sydney Rowing Club. It was a big excuse to drink I think.

"I find that not only you are hundreds and hundreds of miles of coastline and are a surfing nation, but I think the attitude and the lifestyle is so similar to

where I grew up in southern California that you feel quite at home. Well, I do."

Last time the band played Australia they performed three shows with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House, receiving standing ovations. The Gold Coast 600 festival, which includes three nights of music to round out the roar of engines, will be a very different affair, however, with fellow artists on the bill including Baby Animals, Noiseworks, The Angels and Mondo Rock.

Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of The Beach Boys' first release, which Love agrees is pretty mind-blowing.

"It's kind of significant I'd say and in fact I've had a couple of conversations with my cousin Brian (Wilson) about getting

**I've had a couple of conversations with Brian about going in the studio**

together and going in the studio. "Nothing exactly has been confirmed but the conversations have been had and I'm looking forward to it.

"We're looking to get a tribute album together, meaning other artists singing Beach Boys songs maybe with us – we could supply some background harmonies – I think that could be a really fun thing to do. From different genres of music, from R'n'B to country to pop. That would be a fun project to work on."

The band's first single, *Surfin'*, was released late in 1961, with New Year's Eve that year being their first public performance.

"I've always wanted to do New Year's Eve in Australia and then cross the dateline and do it again in the US. That would be radical. We'll have to try it out. Maybe that'll be the time."

Currently, Love is the sole original member of the band he started with his cousins Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson and their friend Al Jardine. Carl and Dennis have passed away, while Brian is pursuing a solo career.

The Beach Boys remains a family affair, however, with Mike's son Christian a member of the band. He takes on many of Carl's lines, says his dad, and is a die-hard surfer too.

The Beach Boys have always been characterised by their pitch-perfect harmonies, which Mike says Brian had a knack for arranging, and family voices blend beautifully.

"My Mom sang in a trio and my uncles sang on the radio. Music's been a part of our family history the last couple of generations and we sang together and harmonised. Harmony is a characteristic that distinguishes The Beach Boys from many other rock groups."

Apart from playing music regularly Mike is still a keen practitioner of transcendental meditation. In fact he practised not long before our interview, he says. He first learned the technique in the late '60s from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whom he met at a Unicef benefit show in Paris that included The Beatles, Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando performing with Tahitian dancers.

Not long after, Love travelled to India where he lived for a month at Maharishi's ashram, along with The Beatles, creating lasting memories.

"I was sitting at the breakfast table one morning when Paul McCartney came in with his acoustic guitar playing *Back in the USSR*," he tells. "I said, 'Paul, you've got to talk about the girls in Russia like we did with *California Girls*.' And he did."

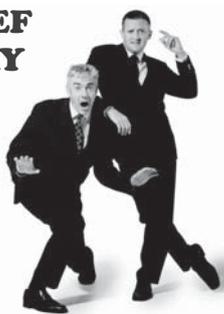
**The Gold Coast 600 runs from Friday to next Sunday. The Beach Boys perform on Saturday. Tickets: 132 849. Details: goldcoast600.com.au.**

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