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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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20 Favorite CDs -- The Full Story

THE BEACH BOYS/Pet Sounds -- One of my favorite pleasures is the comic strip Doonesbury, which I firmly believe combines the social satire/awareness of Charles Dickens with the ongoing pleasures of a TV show and the political bite of Mencken to create one of the most lasting, revealing and remarkable chronicles of any age. (It's been ongoing for 30 years and shows no sign of stopping. Future historians wanting to know what our times were like would do well to start with it. So would future readers looking for entertainment of the highest order.) And I was never a particular Beach Boys fan till a gay character on Doonesbury who'd been around for many years came back into the picture because he had AIDS. Slowly, over many months (if not longer), we returned to him and saw his progress in the 80s as he got sicker and sicker. This coincided with the rise of the CD, when fans of particular artists waited with bated breath for certain classic albums to finally come out on the new format. The release of the Beatles, for example, made headlines. And the man dying of AIDS in this comic strip ultimately had one goal: to live long enough to hear Pet Sounds on CD. I don't know how long Trudeau stretched that storyline out. But in 1990 on a Tuesday on the very day that Pet Sounds hit stores, Doonesbury simply showed the empty bedroom where the man had been seen in his final days, a cool breeze blowing in the curtains and Pet Sounds playing on his CD player. The mix of the comic strip world and the real one (hey, I was running out that day to buy the CD too) was stunning and moving and heartbreaking. Needless to say, the album is worthy of that moment, gorgeous and reflective and exhilarating and sophisticated and sad, often in the same song.

BEASTIE BOYS/Paul's Boutique -- Opened my mind once and for all to how bold and experimental and hilarious and complex rap music and hip hop could be.

THE BEATLES/Revolver -- Next week it'll be the White Album or

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