

# Al Jardine, Family & Friends Concert Review

Bethesda Blues & Jazz – Bethesda, MD March 2, 2022

*Scott Paton*



On a winter night, just outside the nation's capital, an early hint of spring gave way to full bloom of summer as Beach Boys co-founder, Al Jardine, brought his Family & Friends tour to the DC-Maryland suburbs.

Since 2006, Jardine has been a vital component of Brian Wilson's touring ensemble, as well as Wilson's recorded output. Of course, 2012 saw the celebrated, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reunion tour of the five surviving Beach Boys. But in between the big extravaganzas, Al has hit the club circuit in a variety of different configurations, often featuring former members of the Beach Boys' veteran back-up musicians, and always with his son, Matt Jardine, who so splendidly handles Brian Wilson's original falsetto vocal parts in Brian's touring band.

Perhaps most satisfying was Al Jardine's Storytelling Tour, launched in 2017 and appearing periodically up until the pandemic brought live music to a screeching halt in 2020. Accompanied by Matt and a musical director on keyboards, those performances revealed Jardine to be a superb raconteur, regaling enthusiastic audiences with stories behind Beach Boys' classics while vintage images were projected behind him onscreen.

And surprisingly, the lean complement of voices onstage was able to do justice to Brian Wilson's original, complex vocal arrangements.

But Wednesday night's performance was a throwback to Al Jardine's first stab at post-Beach Boys performance when, in 1999, a year after the untimely death of Carl Wilson, the band splintered. With Matt in tow, along with son Adam Jardine, Al recruited Brian's daughters, Carnie and Wendy Wilson, complemented by some of those aforementioned touring vets of the old Beach Boys band. The troupe began playing dates to great reviews, even releasing a fine live album in the process. But a legal injunction filed by Beach Boys frontman, Mike Love, claiming that Jardine's ensemble infringed on Love's exclusive license to the band name helped put the brakes on the enterprise.

Cut to 2022. After two years of scuttled live performances and itching to play again, Al decided to put the band back together. Now absent the "Beach Boys" moniker, this latest iteration of Family & Friends includes son Matt, of course. Carnie and Wendy Wilson are back, too. And the lean, mean four-piece back-up band includes Ed Carter on bass who first assumed those duties with the Beach Boys in 1968. Ed was a sideman who certainly could have qualified for full membership. A 1974 recruit and, as Dennis Wilson told me in 1978, "the best drummer ever to play onstage with the Beach Boys," is Bobby Figueroa. For the unfamiliar, those words were coming from the band's original drummer. Playing guitar is utility man and multi-instrumentalist of Brian Wilson's group, Probyn Gregory. And on keys, Debby Shair, a veteran of Heart's touring band, now working with Brian's outfit, too.

Al Jardine, a long-underrated rhythm guitar player, fleshes out the band that effectively re-creates the sound of the original records. A full orchestra not required!



The Family & Friends' 24-song set hewed closely to a standard Beach Boys set list, opening with "Do It Again," "Catch A Wave" and "Hawaii," followed by, as Jardine described it, "Brian Wilson's opus," "California Girls."

The vocal spotlight was turned over to Carnie Wilson and Matt Jardine who split the duties on "Darlin'." After a segue to "Surfer Girl," Matt brought down the house—as he does during Brian's shows—with his falsetto lead on "Don't Worry Baby."

Al's chatter onstage, even when recovering from a flub, was clever and humorous, eliciting much laughter from the audience. Recollections between the four principal singers was a great reminder that the three second-generationers have known each other and "Dad"/"Uncle Al" for their entire lives. Few ensembles can boast such family history or shared affection.

After a car medley of "Little Deuce Coupe" and "I Get Around," Matt, Wendy and Carnie sang the opening vocal round of "In My Room," and I was reminded of a quote from the late Dennis Wilson in 1976. "The Beach Boys will go on forever. Someday, our kids will take over and it will just keep on going." I choked up a bit thinking about how prescient that sentiment was so long ago.

The two deep cuts featured in the night's set were "Wake The World" from the Beach Boys 1968 "Friends" LP and "Add Some Music (To Your Day)" from one of the band's most-lauded albums, "Sunflower." Of the former, Al Jardine recalled that he and Brian wrote it in the Wilson living room. "It was inspired by a conversation about people having to get up everyday and go to work. Something, thankfully, we never had to do!" Again, a quip that generated much laughter.

The spotlight was then focused on the Wilson sisters, with Wendy handling lead on her Wilson Phillips hit, "Impulsive." "Monday With You" followed, the Carole King tune they cut with their dad, Brian, in 1997. With a nod to her late Uncle Carl who had sung lead on the Beach Boys original, Carnie delivered a lovely interpretation of "God Only Knows." And Wendy, in what was perhaps the most surprising song casting of the evening, tackled "Sail On Sailor."

The Jardines, father and son, rounded out the main set with Beach Boys staples "Sloop John B.," "Wouldn't It Be Nice," "Help Me, Rhonda" and "Good Vibrations." Extra kudos go to the four-piece band whose combined 100-plus years of playing these complex arrangements delivered a soulful and accurate authenticity that would challenge most musicians. As someone who began catching the Beach Boys live nearly 50 years ago, seeing Ed Carter and Bobby Figueroa onstage with Al again added some fond emotional resonance to the proceedings.

A genuine standing ovation brought the troupe, minus the Wilson sisters, back to the stage and Al shared some family history of how his father had migrated from upstate New York to California in the 1940s seeking work, leaving the family behind 'til he was established. That experience became the inspiration for the title cut of his 2010 LP "Postcard From California." As it was a generational story, Al's handing off a verse of the song to son Matt was a nice touch.

Carnie & Wendy returned to the stage and, in the absence of Chynna Phillips, Wendy took the lead on Wilson Phillips' Number One hit, "Hold On," with Matt Jardine deftly handling the high harmonies.

The encore concluded with "Surfin' USA" and "Fun, Fun Fun," and the group took their bows before an appreciative crowd.

In an interview in 1981, while discussing the roles that various members of the Beach Boys played, Carl Wilson told me, "You know, in some ways Alan Jardine has been under-utilized in the group. He's such a great singer. But then again, his voice is so

important in our vocal mix, he's key to the Beach Boys' sound." 40 years on, that voice remains strong, and now it's out in front of a very satisfying ensemble.

*Thanks to the lovely Mary Ann Jardine, Bobby Figueroa, Matt Jardine, Carnie Wilson and Mr. Alan Jardine!*

*Three dates remain on this limited four-show tour. Tickets are still available.:*

**Fri Mar 4**

Patchogue Theatre for the Performing Arts  
Patchogue, NY

**Sun Mar 6**

Wall Street Theater  
Norwalk, CT

**Tue Mar 8**

Sony Hall  
New York, NY

*For further information, go to [AL JARDINE OFFICIAL SITE](#)*

Set List:

Do It Again  
Catch A Wave  
Hawaii  
California Girls  
Darlin' – Carnie & Matt  
Surfer Girl  
Don't Worry Baby – Matt  
Little Deuce Coupe  
I Get Around  
In My Room – Matt, Wendy, Carnie & Al  
Wake The World  
Add Some Music To Your Day  
Impulsive – Wendy  
Monday Without You – Carnie & Wendy  
God Only Knows – Carnie  
Sail On Sailor – Wendy  
Sloop John B.

Wouldn't It Be Nice – Matt

Help Me, Rhonda

Good Vibrations – Matt

Encore:

Postcard From California – Al & Matt

Hold On – Wendy & Carrie w/Matt

Surfin' USA

Fun, Fun, Fun