

California State University, Northridge

A Spatial Analysis of Surf Music: 1961-1966

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By

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## Abstract

### A Spatial Analysis of Surf Music: 1961-1966

By

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Master of Arts in Geography, GIS Program

In 1961, a new form of music was created in Orange County, California that swept across the United States in a fervor before it was finally wiped out by the monstrous wave of The British Invasion groups. This form of music was “surf music.” Surf music was an enormous part of Southern Californian culture from 1961-1966 and, in the broader sense, it was an integral part of American culture during that same time span. This new music style had two major forms: instrumental, and vocal. A major characteristic of the style was electric guitars with a “wet” sound created by using a Fender Reverb Unit to try to emulate the sound of waves. Song titles and lyrics generally revolved around surfing, having fun in the sun, and girls. Although the majority of the surf music that was produced came from Southern California, there were also bands playing surf music from such seemingly unlikely places as Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, and even Minnesota. My thesis analyzes the spatial and temporal dynamics of this music genre at the national level during its peak years from 1962-1966. Using top chart favorites from radio stations across the country, a selection of ten hit songs that are definitive as surf music have been analyzed to understand how successful this form of music was in



various parts of the country compared to other parts of the country. Also analyzed were dates and locations of vinyl record releases of surf music to understand the shift in popularity of surf music both temporally and spatially during the different years from 1962-1966. Interviews were also conducted with musicians that were, and still are, in the most popular surf bands.

## Introduction

The genre of surf music was born in Orange County sometime in 1961. In a relatively short amount of time surf music went from being a small-scale regionalized style of music to one of the most popular forms of music in America. I analyze and discover the spatial and temporal dynamics of surf music at the national level from 1961-1966. I discuss specific factors that contributed to how successfully and rapidly surf music diffused to the rest of America thus becoming a huge part of American popular culture. There are many case studies on cultural diffusion that have discussed various forms of musical expression such as jazz and blues; however, there are currently no case studies on the factors involved in the diffusion of surf music. Drawing on previous work by Redlich (1954) and Ford (1971), I believe a combination of various factors contributed to the diffusion of surf music, which are human interaction, human migration, and objectification. However, these reasons are not sufficient enough by themselves to explain the highly successful diffusion of surf music.

I believe other reasons contributed to this diffusion. The allure created by Southern California's fun in the sun imagery certainly influenced how surf music evoked and represented that image. As Halfacree and Kitchin (1996) argue, geography through imagery has been used by bands as a resource to develop their art form as well as sustain musical genres and market and promote them beyond their place of origin. Also important is the relationship that surf music had with technological innovations of the music world. For example, the inventor of surf music, Dick Dale, worked closely with Leo Fender in developing a new, and in many ways superior, guitar amplification unit known as the 100-Watt Dual Showman Amp. This amplifier helped enable the surf bands

to play at a much larger volume while retaining a great sound. As Bob Berryhill, guitarist of The Surfariis, remembers: “When you played in a large venue, the Fender instruments that we had, they were the only way people could hear what you were doing. The drums would echo in the room...the only way to tap through it was with a Fender Showman Amp” (McCarter 2011). Other products that Fender created that were widely used by surf bands include the Reverb Unit, and revolutionary electric guitars such as the Stratocaster and the Jaguar.

Surf music has something in common with space and many other major concepts in geography: it is hard to define. Particular songs and bands are regarded by some as surf music, while others argue otherwise. To help illustrate the problem with definition, in 1961 Chubby Checker released a very successful song, ‘Let’s Twist Again’, which is not regarded as a surf song. But two years later, Chubby Checker twisted his way into the surf music scene with his album *Beach Party*; on it is a song called ‘Let’s Surf Again’. ‘Let’s Twist Again’ and ‘Let’s Surf Again’ are almost identical, except he replaced the word “Twist” with “Surf.” Hence, with this small change was the birth of a surf song.

When Mike Love of The Beach Boys was asked to define surf music, he replied, “It’s just beat music with surfing words” (Burt 1986, 25). Dick Dale on the other hand, who is often credited with the invention of surf music, wanted to create music that emulated the feeling he had while surfing. According to him, “Real surfing music is instrumental... characterized by heavy staccato picking on a Fender Stratocaster guitar, and it has to be a Stratocaster” (Burt 1986, 25). According to Bob Keene, president of Del-Fi Records, it is “music in which the lead guitar plays a double beat, with the instrumentation invariably consisting of two guitars, bass, and sax” (Billboard Magazine

1963, 26). And according to Murry Wilson, composer, music publisher, and father of three of the five Beach Boys, “The basis of surfing music is a rock and roll bass beat figuration, coupled with a raunch-type weird-sounding lead guitar, an electric guitar plus wailing saxes. Surfing music has to sound untrained with a certain rough flavor to appeal to the teenagers. As in the case of true C. & W., when the music gets too good, and too polished, it isn’t considered the real thing” (Billboard Magazine 1963, 26).

Some things can be agreed upon. The sound often has reverb on the guitars, and the bands generally consist of two guitars, a bass, drums, and sometimes a piano or sax. The form is either instrumental (i.e. Dick Dale and The Deltones, The Ventures) or with vocals (i.e. The Beach Boys, Jan and Dean). The topics often include the beach, surfing, girls, cars, and the ideal early 1960s California teenage lifestyle. Many times the song titles had a surfing connotation, such as ‘Surfin’ Bird’, ‘Surfer Girl’, ‘Wipe Out’, ‘Surfin’ U.S.A.’, ‘Pipeline’, and ‘I Live for the Sun’.

Dick Dale & the Deltones experimented with surf music and shaped the surf sound in the summer of 1961. Their frequent live shows were a big hit at the Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa, California where they often had an audience of 4,000 teenagers and his debut single ‘Let’s Go Trippin’,’ topped the California charts and made it into the Billboard Hot 100. A few of the other top surf music groups from Southern California included The Beach Boys from Hawthorne, who were the most successful and well-known of the surf bands; Jan and Dean from West Los Angeles; and The Surfaris from Glendora. The two most popular surf bands from outside of Southern California were The Astronauts and The Trashmen. The Astronauts were a Midwest high school rock and roll band from Boulder, Colorado who, because of the huge success of The Beach Boys, were

asked by RCA if they played surf music. They answered “Yes,” and became a surf band with a record contract. The Trashmen, a Midwest band from Minneapolis, Minnesota, were best known for the song ‘Surfin’ Bird’, a combination of two songs (‘Papa Oom Mow Mow’ and ‘The Bird is the Word’) by the doo-wop group The Rivingtons.

Many events contributed to surf music being played far away from the sunny beaches in Southern California in locations like Colorado and Minnesota. May (2002) argues that the Californian teen became viewed as a national icon and that the idealized image of the Californian youth culture helped ease the country’s post-war nerves. Southern California became the geographic location of mass media productions where movies, television programs, and magazines showed it as an ideal place with “...a life of cars, fashionable clothing, the drive-in, and the beach...” (May 2002, 5). Movies like *Gidget* (1959) portraying an ideal existence filled with sand and surf replaced movies like *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) that illustrated the moral decay of American youth. In 1955, Disneyland, “The Happiest Place on Earth,” opened in Anaheim, and that same year saw the beginning of *The Mickey Mouse Club* that starred California kids who later became role models for the kids living in other states. Migration to California in the 1950s and 1960s made the state a mecca for baby boom families and American teenagers had become primed to buy into the cultural idealism of California. May (2002) also argues that the demise of surf music wasn’t just a case of the British invasion led by The Beatles, but that the Californian youth culture shifted from idealization to an image of youth taking too many drugs, protests, and race riots.

This cultural idealism of California also prompted vacations to its beaches. Some of the members of The Trashmen took a vacation to Southern California, and only

months after the vacation released their classic hit 'Surfin' Bird'. Similarly, Bobby Fuller of The Bobby Fuller Four traveled from El Paso, Texas to Southern California and also witnessed the sounds of surf music at the Rendezvous Ballroom. Fuller brought this surf sound back to his band in El Paso and also opened a club where these surf sounds could be played in front of Texas teenagers (Chidester and Priore 2008).

Migration, even if it was just temporary migration while going to school, played a role in popularizing surf music thousands of miles away from its origins. According to John Zambetti, lead guitarist of New York City's surf band Malibooz, "A lot of the kids in the private schools around New York and Connecticut came from the West Coast. When their parents sent them off to boarding school, they came with stacks of records that you couldn't easily find on the East Coast...Dick Dale singles, 'Mr Moto' by the Belairs and others" (Chidester and Priore 2008, 186).

Giving rise to the whole surf culture were the advancements in surfboard designs. Previously, surfboards were made from expensive balsa wood, which meant that the boards were too expensive for the average teenager. They were also heavy and hard to carry and maneuver; not to mention the boards were scarce because they could take three weeks to craft one. But when Hobie Alter and Dale Velzy started using foam, the boards became much lighter, easier to maneuver, and the cost went down because they could now make 160 boards in a week at a cost of \$70 - \$80. As Alter noted, "If that movie'd [*Gidget*] come out in the balsa era...no one could have supplied 'em" (Kampion 1998, 65). This design improvement to the surfboard is important to surf music because it made surfing easily accessible to teenagers, which in turn paved the way for all the other aspects of surf culture.

Another factor that cannot be underestimated is the expanded highway construction that was going on at the time. Although it was not a technological advance, as highways had existed for some time, the Interstate Highway System was President Eisenhower's campaign to improve United States highways in the mid-1950s, and much of this construction was in California. It was now much simpler for youths to travel to the beach and to music venues where they could be exposed to surf bands. This produced a highway/car culture in Southern California that was intertwined with the surf culture. This is made obvious by the fact that most surf bands also recorded "hot rod music," - surf music except that the theme was switched from surfing to cars. Examples include, 'I Get Around' and 'Little Deuce Coupe' by The Beach Boys, 'The Little Old Lady from Pasadena' and 'Dead Man's Curve' by Jan and Dean, 'The Scavenger' by Dick Dale and His Del-Tones, and 'Hey Little Cobra' by The Rip Chords.

My surf music research will expand on the current music geography literature. Much of music geography literature discusses country music and its substyles or rock music and its substyles. Geographers have also written on ethnic music, religious music, martial music, and stage and film music. Geographers have written almost nothing however, on surf music. My research will help fill this gap in surf music literature by examining the spatial and temporal aspects of this musical style.

## Literature Review

### *Music Geography*

Music geography emerged in the late 1960s with Nash's (1968) "Music Regions and Regional Music." In 1973, Zelinsky encouraged geographers to study folk music as a methodology in order to better understand the intricate spatio-temporal aspects of American culture (Zelinsky 1973). Arkell (1991, 30) understood this concept when he wrote "A discerning collection of blues records can act as a vinyl stratigraphy of North America's black population, reflecting the development of a people and of how it responded to the environmental changes that were thrust upon it." By the 1980s and 1990s, music geography became accepted and legitimized by publications in academic journals and conference paper presentations.

Carney (1998) revealed that most of the research falls within ten approaches and themes. A regional theme studies the delimitation of music regions and the interpretation of regional music. A second theme discusses how music evolves with place and place-specific music. A third looks at a specific cultural hearth and diffusion of music phenomena from that place. A fourth explores the spatial dimensions of music using human migration, transportation routes, and communication networks. The fifth looks at how the symbolic and psychological elements of music shape the perceptions of place and the sixth studies the effect that music has on the cultural landscape. The seventh theme is the spatial organization of the music industry. The eighth analyzes the relationship between music and the natural environment. A ninth theme is the function of



nationalistic as well as antinationalistic music and the tenth major theme is how music spatially interrelates with other cultural traits.

Other important contributors to music geography include Halfacree and Kitchin (1996), who used Manchester, United Kingdom as a case study to argue that different cities develop musical distinctions which are utilized by the bands to develop, sustain, and promote their sound to a global audience. Regarding how the popularity of an image of a place changes over time, Ford and Henderson (1974) researched big hit songs from 1890 to 1970 to find the ones that made a reference to a place or region and found that the regions that were favored in popular music shifted from New York in the 1890s to the South in the 1920s back to New York in the 1930s and then to Southern California in the 1960s. Willett (2010) wrote about the music scene in California, and argued that following World War II, migrations and technological advances created changes in popular music and a major advantage of the music scene in California was that it lacked the musical traditions of the American Northeast.

Of great importance to the sounds of music are the instruments that are used to produce those sounds. Cooper (1994) discussed how stringed instruments were introduced into the Hawaiian Islands and how the Hawaiians made their own variations of those instruments. By 1916, their style of music was a huge success in the United States. Wheeler (1990) wrote extensively on guitars that were made in the United States, covering the history and designs of the various guitars, including those made by Fender in Orange County, California preceding and during the surf music explosion in that same county. Smith (1995) also wrote about the history of Leo Fender and his company that produced innovative musical instruments that were highly utilized in surf music.

Supplying valuable data that can be utilized by music geographers is The Airheads Radio Survey Archive (ARSA) (accessed April 7, 2011), which is a non-profit website that preserves radio history by having a database of radio station surveys. These surveys and the way the database is organized, enables the user to compare how a particular song ranked at various radio stations across the country.

### *Diffusion*

There is a body of work discussing the diffusion of cultural ideas, and more specifically, to that of various music styles. Redlich (1954) studied the diffusion of cultural ideas and argued that there are three main ways that cultural ideas diffuse: the personal correspondence between senders and receivers via being neighbors or congregating in a face-to-face situation; act of human migration where people bring their ideas with them, thereby introducing or strengthening these ideas to new places and populations; and objectification, where ideas become physical objects that can be diffused via retailers of mass media.

Geographers have done case studies on such music styles as rock and roll, blues, and jazz to analyze the diffusion of music. Perhaps the most notable is that of Ford (1971) who wrote about how rock and roll was born and how and why it diffused the way it did. Ford found that the American south gave birth to most of rock and roll's components, yet it was the country's last region to accept it. Ford argues it was most likely due to the south's satisfaction with country and blues, while the north was relatively amusical.

The normal diffusion route of cultural ideas is for the cultural idea to begin in the core and work its way outward to the periphery. Several music geographers have found that the opposite is true when it comes to the diffusion of a music style. Glasgow (1979), discussing the diffusion of jazz music, explained the key factors involved with why jazz music diffused from the periphery to the core and why it was accepted in Chicago a decade before it was accepted in New York City. Glasgow found that diffusion seemed to be related to westward migration from three major cultural hearths from the east coast.

Arkell (1991) wrote on the origins and diffusion of the blues from its birth in the Mississippi Basin to the north as it mirrored the movement of Africans from the plantations of the rural South to the urban North. Kuhlken and Sexton (1991) discussed the diffusion of zydeco music arguing that the diffusion was a result of the migration of the zydeco musicians as they mirrored the migration of the Creole population followed by commercial recording and distribution of their music as well as national and international tours by the zydeco musicians. Lewis (2008) studied the diffusion of black gospel music in Denmark and argued that diffusion theory itself is not sufficient enough by itself to explain its successful diffusion. Lewis argued that other perspectives such as ethnohistorical analysis and globalization forces are needed in order to understand why black gospel music successfully diffused in Denmark.

In addition to understanding how a style of music diffuses, it is important to understand the factors involved in why a regional music style is popular in its point of origin but finds little success at diffusing outside its regional realm of existence. Understanding the factors that contribute to why a regional sound *does not* diffuse is important in understanding how a regional sound *does* diffuse. Gill (1993) researched

popular music in the Northwest (“Northwest Sound”), centered in the Seattle/Tacoma, Portland, and Vancouver, British Columbia areas, from 1958-1966. He explains its birth, death, and the events that took place in-between and further argues why the Northwest Sound did not successfully diffuse and become popular outside the Northwest. In the late 1950s this area was still relatively remote. The most successful band to emerge from the region at that time was The Ventures, who hailed from Tacoma, and became much more noted for their contributions to surf music. The Ventures style of music was different from the other bands in the region in that “their music wasn’t raunchy like that of the Northwest groups... it was smooth, polished and technically precise” (Shaw 1980, 105-6). The Northwest sound wasn’t able to compete against the emergence and flood of British bands whose “sound was cleaner, more polished, and more melodically and vocally sophisticated” (Gill 1993, 127).

### *Surf Music and Surf Culture*

There is a lack of literature written by geographers on the style of surf music. Carney (1999) wrote *Cowabunga! Surfer Rock and the Five Themes of Geography*, the purpose of which was to show how surf music could be used to teach the five main themes of geography to high school students. Carney discusses three diffusion principles and how they can be illustrated with surf music: Contagious expansion diffusion, when a cultural idea spreads from personal contact or face-to-face communication; (2) relocation diffusion, when people migrate to a new area while bringing cultural ideas with them; and (3) hierarchical diffusion, when a cultural idea spreads from one level of society to another (i.e. core to periphery or vice-versa).

Carney's central focus however was on how to engage students with the fundamental concepts of geography. Therefore, to learn more about surf music, it is crucial to look outside geographical literature. Chidester and Priore (2008) wrote numerous essays on surf music of the 1960s and its relationship and embeddedness with the pop surf culture. They also explored the surf music scene that took place on the East Coast and the one that took place in the Midwest. They argue that band members from outside of California would take a vacation to Southern California and witness the energy from the surf bands at The Rendezvous Ballroom and the excitement it created, and then brought it home with them.

May (2002) wrote extensively on the California culture in the years preceding the birth of surf music and the cultural transitions and perceptions that took place that led into the surf music craze. Kampion (1998) wrote about the history of surf culture from its origins in Hawai'i to the big-wave contests of today. Wardlaw (1991) discussed various aspects of the surfing culture including how many surf bands recorded their music in the early 1960s and the popularity of surfing films such as *The Endless Summer*. Booth (1996) discussed surfing films and videos and the role that these approximately 200 films and videos played in the surfing culture, and Ormrod (2005) discussed the popularity and success of Bruce Brown's surf movie *The Endless Summer*, which is considered by many as the definitive surf movie. Stecyk (2001) wrote about the success of the surfing movie *Gidget* and the impact that it had on surfing and the culture that grew from it, while Rensin (2008) wrote extensively about the legendary surfer Miki Dora and the commercialization of Malibu and surfing that exploded after the release of *Gidget*. Meanwhile, Zion (1987) studied the musical trends of Australia and found that American

music was a big hit there, but by late 1963 the popularity of surf music was declining and being replaced by the Beatles.

Packed with valuable data, Blair (2008) documented hundreds of surf bands of the early 1960s, and while a vast amount of those bands were from Orange County, California, Blair discovered that many were from such places as Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin, the East Coast, and even Belgium. He reveals what records were released on what labels and provides the year and approximate month of the releases.

Burt (1986) wrote on the origins and histories of some of the more popular surf bands; he chronicled the birth and life of such bands as Dick Dale & the Deltones, The Astronauts, The Trashmen, The Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, and many others. Wood (1995) also wrote about some of the top surf music musicians and groups such as Dick Dale, The Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, and The Pyramids, while Dalley (1996) interviewed members of 49 different surf bands from the 1960s which tell the bands' histories from their beginnings to their ends. Crowley (2011) also wrote about the histories of many of the surf bands, and also discussed Leo Fender's role in surf music and the guitars and amplifiers that he produced that were utilized by the surf bands. Gaines (1986) wrote extensively on The Beach Boys and chronicled their history, influences and hits. Billboard Magazine (1963) also covered the topic of surf music with descriptions of the style from Bob Keene (president of Del-Fi Records) and Murry Wilson.

Blair (1996) wrote an overview of sixty surf songs from the 1960s that had an influential and historical impact on the surf music genre, while Billboard (2011) released

*Top 30 "Summer" Songs of all Time*, which included songs from the beginning of the Billboard Hot 100 chart on August 4, 1958 to the present. Of those thirty songs, five of them were by The Beach Boys, one was by The Surfaris, and one was by Jan and Dean. The San Gabriel Valley Examiner (July 1-7, 2010) discussed the history of The Surfaris including their 1962 hit song 'Wipe Out' and Mizutani (2010) did an interview with guitarist Bob Berryhill of The Surfaris and discussed the history and success of 'Wipe Out'. Burt (1999) wrote the liner notes for The Surfaris' album *Wipe Out/The Surfaris Play* and discusses their history and the events that took place in the studio during the recording of 'Wipe Out', while The Chantays Official Website (accessed February 18, 2012) tells the history of The Chantays, who released their classic surf hit 'Pipeline' in January 1963. Alfonso (2006) wrote the liner notes for Dick Dale's album *Surfer's Choice* and discussed Dale's success as a musical innovator and his collaboration with Leo Fender, and Palmer (1995) wrote about Dale's unique playing style and technique. Dalley (1997) wrote the liner notes for The Astronauts' album *Surfin' with the Astronauts/Everything is A-OK!* and covered their history and success as a Colorado surf band, while The Trashmen (1990) provided liner notes for their album *Live Bird 65-67*, discussing their history and success as a Minnesota surf band.

## Background

### *Pre-Surf Music Influences*

One of the music styles that had an influence on surf music was Hawaiian music. Bob Berryhill of The Surfaris recalls a trip he took to Hawai'i with his family when he was 13: "I saw a guy playing the ukulele on the stage and I just fell in love with that music. So I started out really loving the Hawaiian music that was played in Hawaii on ukuleles and steel guitars" (McCarter 2011). Just two years later, his band would record the classic song 'Wipe Out'.

Hawai'i was where surfing was invented, so it was natural that Southern Californian surfers bonded early on with the islands of Hawai'i and the music that resonated from them. Sailors and cowboys from Spain, Portugal, and Mexico brought guitars with them to Hawai'i, and the Hawaiian cowboys learned how to control cattle herds with the hypnotic melodies that they could produce. Meanwhile, Portuguese sailors brought with them an early form of the ukulele, and not too long after that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hawaiians invented the slack key and then the steel guitar (Cooper 1994). The slack key is a tuning style on the guitar where strumming the open strings produces a harmonious chord. The steel guitar was a new style of playing the guitar and was invented by Joseph Kekuku; "He discovered that if you slid a solid object up or down the strings after you had plucked or strummed them, you got the chord sliding up and down in a glissando" (Cooper 1994, 649). This new style also required a new playing posture, where the instrument is played either on the lap or on a stand.



In 1915, the San Francisco Panama-Pacific Expo celebrated the opening of the Panama Canal. The Territory of Hawai'i represented themselves with the sounds of their string bands; it made such a huge hit that by 1916 more Hawaiian records were sold in the United States than any other type of music (Cooper 1994). Not long after, the stage play *Bird of Paradise* opened on Broadway, and introduced a mainstream audience to a combination of percussion and chant-style of ancient Hawaiian tradition, musical influences from the Mexican vaquero guitarists, and the ukulele. Soon after that, Tin Pan Alley songwriters wrote their own versions of Hawaiian novelty songs. These versions became known as "hapa haole," which basically translates to 'half white - half Hawaiian' (Chidester and Priore 2008).

One of the key musicians in the popularity of Hawaiian music was Bennie Nawahi, nicknamed "King of the Ukulele," and who was also highly competent at playing the steel guitar and the mandolin. He was a lively and hard-to-forget showman who played the steel guitar with his feet and the ukulele behind his head with one hand. Another key musician was Sol Ho'opii, who played the steel guitar combining American jazz with traditional Hawaiian music. He recorded extensively throughout his musical career and developed the tuning that led to the development of the pedal steel guitar and the modern country music/Nashville sound that is so well known today (Cooper 1994).

From the late 1930s on, Hawaiian-style bands popped up all around the world. In the 1950s, tourists flocked to Hawai'i, and were further exposed to the catchy and contagious Hawaiian musical vibrations (Cooper 1994). The ukulele's extreme portability as well as its mellow sounds reminiscent of the beautiful and surf-drenched islands of Hawai'i made it a popular and ideal instrument for outings to the beach. The steel guitar

and Hawaiian-type arrangements can be heard in such songs as ‘Tears’, ‘Blue Surf’, and ‘Lisa’ by The Impacts from San Luis Obispo. Chidester and Priore (2008, 10) also argued that “[Beach Boys] leader Brian Wilson’s jazz roots could be traced as much to Hawaiian music as to the Four Freshmen (who had taken key vocal arrangement phrasing from the Hawaiian style).”

Another main pre-surf music influence was the early surf movies by such independent film makers as Bud Browne, Greg Noll, John Severson, and Bruce Brown. These were documentaries that had instrumental background playing so that narration could take place without conflict between the two. The instrumental music styles being played were Hawaiian, West Coast Jazz, flamenco guitar, and Duane Eddy-styled rock and roll (Chidester and Priore 2008).

One of the bands that was very influential was The Fireballs who, in 1959, recorded the hits ‘Torquay’, ‘Bulldog’, and ‘Vaquero’. According to Bud Browne curator Gordon McClelland, “He relied a lot on The Fireballs. They were a New Mexico instrumental band that fit perfectly, with flamenco melodies done in a rock ‘n’ roll context. The Fireballs were really one of the most important influences on surf instrumental bands later on. Bud had two of their albums in his backlog, and he used them liberally” (Chidester and Priore 2008, 55). According to Bud Browne in a 2000 interview, “It was just music that we liked, Hawaiian records, ‘Pipeline’, whatever fit” (Chidester and Priore 2008, 55). According to Bill Humphrey, drummer of the Revelairs, “Surf bands would pull material directly from such films. *Black Saddle* was a short-lived TV show, and I heard that song first in the Bud Browne film *Spinning Boards* before we recorded it with the Revelairs” (Chidester and Priore 2008, 55).

John Severson also played an important part in shaping what would later evolve into surf music. According to Mike Love of the Beach Boys:

For a teenage kid growing up in Southern California in the late '50s and early '60s, I can't see how you couldn't be influenced by that lifestyle. The surfing cult and the movies by John Severson definitely, without a doubt, influenced me and my high school friends, which in turn spread over to the band that my cousins Brian, Carl and Dennis and I formed at this time. Four out of five of our first hit singles even included surfing in the title, 'Surfin' (1961), 'Surfin' Safari' (1962), 'Surfin' U.S.A.' (1963), and 'Surfer Girl' (1963) (Chidester and Priore 2008, 59).

According to surfer Steve Pezman:

Severson was actually an artist and had very stylistic ideas about music. One of the sequences where music really worked for me was in *Surf Fever*. He had a hot, offshore wind morning at Secos with Dewey Weber, with flamenco guitar in the background. It was just this strumming and arpeggios, and it worked so well, it had a huge influence on the sport, to the point where it made flamenco guitar a popular cultural sidebar to surfing. And then you see people like David Cheney and Kemp Aaberg going to Spain to study flamenco guitar (Chidester and Priore 2008, 57-58).

Don Murray, drummer of the band Crossfires, concurs that flamenco was a huge influence, "During the '50s, Spanish guitarists and flamenco dancers would tour the beatnik coffeehouses that dotted the West Coast. They had a 'cool generation' audience that embraced them as readily as they did jazz players, folk singers and poetry readers. It was no accident that the electrified instrumental surf music featured Spanish themes. Acoustic guitars could be taken to the beach and were played around surfers' campfires at night. The chosen music at those campfire gatherings was Spanish melodies" (Chidester and Priore 2008, 95-96).

West Coast cool jazz also played a part in surf music's origins. Bruce Brown's *Slippery When Wet* and *Barefoot Adventure* both featured a soundtrack by cool jazz alto saxophonist and flutist Bud Shank.

### *Major Surf Bands*

From 1961–1965, many surf bands were playing shows and recording, while countless others never left the garage. It has been calculated by surfing author Lee Wardlaw (1991) that more than 800 surf bands recorded one song or more in the early 1960s. There were many surf bands that had an impact on their genre, but the surf bands that were most influential were: Dick Dale and the Del-Tones, The Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, The Surfaris, The Chantays, The Trashmen, The Pyramids, and The Astronauts. All of these bands had hit songs that placed very well on the Billboard Hot 100, so they were played in radio stations across the country and reached a national audience. Dick Dale started surf music, and numerous bands were influenced by his style and the Fender equipment that he used to help create his sound. The Beach Boys and Jan and Dean were the most successful and popular of the vocal surf bands and each of them had numerous songs that ranked in the Billboard Hot 100. ‘Wipe Out’ by The Surfaris and ‘Pipeline’ by The Chantays reached numbers two and four, respectively, on the Billboard Hot 100, and are the highest charting and best known of the surf instrumentals. The Trashmen and The Astronauts were the most popular surf bands outside of Southern California and they had developed a unique and distinct surf sound. “Midwest surf bands were often inspired by the Trashmen (from Minneapolis) and the Astronauts (from Colorado), so they tend to be wild like the former, and rich with reverb like the latter” (Chidester and Priore 2008, 107).

### *Dick Dale and the Del-Tones*

Dick Dale (born Richard Monsour) moved from Quincy, Massachusetts to El Segundo, California in 1954 (Alfonso 2006) and is acknowledged as the first artist whose sound and style were labeled as “surf music.” Dale wanted to create music that matched the way he felt while surfing: “There was a tremendous amount of power I felt while surfing, and that feeling of power was simply transferred from myself into my guitar when I was playing surf music. I couldn’t get that feeling by singing, so the music took an instrumental form” (Burt 1986, 25). “Dale drew on his Middle Eastern heritage (his family, the Monsours, were Lebanese), adapting the rapid-fire, double-stroke picking he heard his uncle use on the oud [a lute-like Middle Eastern instrument] to his own Fender Stratocaster. Dale’s guitar playing was fast, twangy, and metallic, with long-lined Middle Eastern melodies slithering along atop shimmering Spanish-inflected chording, punctuated by slamming slides up the neck” (Palmer 1995, 41). Adding to Dale’s unique playing style was that he was a left-handed guitarist playing a guitar for a right-handed player, so he turned his guitar upside down and left the strings where they were, resulting in the low E string being positioned on the bottom rather than the top, which altered the chord patterns and picking techniques (Wood 1995).

Dale’s song [‘Let’s Go Trippin’](#),’ recorded on August 23, 1961, is considered the first surf instrumental. It reached number 60 on the Billboard Hot 100, making it the first surf hit to reach a nation-wide audience. Also making it onto the Billboard album chart at number 59 was his album *Surfers’ Choice* (Blair 2008). His hit song ‘Miserlou’, released in May 1962, was the first popular song to feature a Fender Reverb Unit on lead guitar

(Blair 1996). He also made four film appearances: *Let's Make Love* (1960), *A Swingin' Affair* (1963), *Beach Party* (1963), and *Muscle Beach Party* (1964) (Blair 2008).

A friend and mentor of Dale's was Leo Fender, who had a small factory in Fullerton, California where he created amplifiers, speakers and musical instruments (Alfonso 2006). Fender was neither a guitarist nor a stringed-instrument player; he was an electronics guy that started out with an electronics and radio repair shop and found himself repairing guitar amps for local blues, rhythm & blues, and country & western artists. "Fender began building amps with an eye toward making them more durable and easier to repair, as he was frequently confronted with working musicians who needed immediate, costly, and time-consuming repairs in order to feed their families" (Crowley 2011, 35). Since Fender didn't play guitar himself, he was always soliciting local musicians for their opinions on how to make his designs better and more functional. Some of Fender's innovative creations that helped shape the surf music sound were the Stratocaster (Figure 2) and Jaguar (Figure 3) guitars, the Dual Showman Amp (Figure 4) and the Reverb Unit (Figures 5 and 6) (Crowley 2011). As Fender biographer Richard Smith relates, "Leo Fender never grasped the full impact of his discoveries on rock and roll, or for that matter how the new style would change his life. He never liked rock and roll and surely dismissed the style at first, although he had designed guitars for roots musicians who had laid its foundations in the late 1940s" (Smith 1995, 167).

Leo Fender worked closely with Dick Dale in order to improve his guitars and amplifiers, and in the mid 1950s, Fender gave Dale one of his Stratocaster guitars and told him to beat it to death and give his opinions on the instrument. Through this testing

process, improvements were made, such as adding a five-position switch and adjustments like repositioning the pickups. As guitar expert Tom Wheeler (1990, 76) explains:

Compared to most guitars of the day it stood out like Dolly Parton in an Amish church...The cornerless body fit the guitarist's rib cage and supported the right arm in a natural playing position, and the double cutaway permitted increased fretboard accessibility. Instead of one bridge it had six, and the player could adjust each string individually for length, height, and lateral positioning. The three-pickup circuitry was versatile, and the lead pickup's 'crooked' placement increased treble response. The vibrato was a mechanical *tour de force*, so far ahead of its time that its musical potential wasn't fully explored until more than a decade later in the hands of Jimi Hendrix.

Dick Dale also tested amplifiers and speakers for Leo Fender; he blew up and destroyed lots of them, leading Fender to create the 100-watt Dual Showman amplifier with two 15-inch JBL Lansing speakers (Blair, 2008). As Willett (2010, 51-52) explains, "The convenience of having the audience, performer, amp designer, and loudspeaker maker in the same community cannot be overstated in how it enabled rapid changes in newer equipment. Dale's demands for better designed amplifiers prompted Fender to collaborate in designing and building more powerful equipment that allowed the electric guitar to continue its rise in popularity, changing popular American tastes."



Figure 1. Dick Dale and the Del-Tones





Figure 2. Dick Dale's Fender Stratocaster



Figure 3. Fender Jaguar



Figure 4. Fender Dual Showman Amp (the speakers were housed in a separate box)





Figure 5. Fender Reverb Unit (front side)



Figure 6. Fender Reverb Unit (back side)

## *The Beach Boys*

The Beach Boys, from Hawthorne, California, were made up of the three brothers Brian Wilson (bass, vocals), Dennis Wilson (drums, vocals), Carl Wilson (lead guitar, vocals), their cousin Mike Love (sax, vocals), and David Marks (rhythm guitar, vocals). They were a vocal group that combined rich harmony vocals with surf guitar instrumentation and became the most popular band to emerge from the surf music genre. Brian, the group's leader and main song writer, was fascinated with harmonies, especially those by The Four Freshmen; "He would sit next to the hi-fi, his head cocked, carefully picking out the different harmonies and studying how they wove into the melody line" (Gaines 1986, 51).

Dennis, the group's only true surfer, knew about the growing popularity of Dick Dale and The Deltones and the success his surf instrumentals were finding in the surf scene, so he suggested to Brian and Mike that they should write a song about surfing. Dennis told them that every morning there was surfing news on the radio, hence was born the lyrics: "I got up this mornin' turned on my radio. I was checkin' on the surfin' scene to see if I would go." Dennis wrote down all the surfing terms he could think of for Brian and Mike, and they proceeded to write the rest of the lyrics.

Surfin' is the only life  
The only way for me.  
Now surf, surf with me

I got up this mornin' turned on my radio  
I was checkin' on the surfin' scene  
To see if I would go  
And when the DJ tells me that the surfin' is fine  
That's when I know my baby and I will have a good time

We're going surfin'

Surfin' is the only life the only way for me  
Now surf  
Surf with me

From the early morning to the middle of the night  
Any time the surf is up the time is right  
And when the surf is down to take its place  
We'll do the Surfer's Stomp it's the latest dance craze

We're going surfin'

Surfin' is the only life the only way for me  
Now surf  
Surf with me

Now the dawn is breaking and we really gotta go  
But we'll be back here very soon that you better know  
Yeah my surfer knots are rising and my board is losing wax  
But that won't stop me baby cause you know I'm coming back

We're going surfin'

Surfin' is the only life the only way for me  
Now come on pretty baby and surf with me

The result was '[Surfin'](#),' which would be the first of a long string of hits (Burt 1986).

Their next hit song, 'Surfin' Safari', was released in June 1962 on Capital Records, and the record producer, Nik Venet, was concerned that because of the surfing theme, sales would be confined to the West Coast. The market proved him wrong when: "The biggest order Capital had from a single market all year was from New York City – where there was no surfing" (Gaines 1986, 85).

Some of The Beach Boys biggest songs and their Billboard Hot 100 rankings were: 'Surfin'' (#75 in March 1962); 'Surfin' Safari' (#14 in October 1962); 'Surfin' U.S.A.' (#3 in May 1963); and 'Surfer Girl' (#7 in September 1963). Some of their



biggest hit albums and their Billboard album chart rankings were: *Surfin' Safari* (32), *Surfin' U.S.A.* (2), and *Surfer Girl* (7) (Blair 2008).

The Beach Boys lasted much longer than most of the other surf bands and were the only surf band that was able to compete against The Beatles when the British Invasion hit. They were not only the most popular *surf* band, but they were also the most popular *American* band in the 1960s.



Figure 7. The Beach Boys with Annette in the movie *The Monkey's Uncle*

### *Jan and Dean*

Jan and Dean, made up of Jan Berry (vocals) and Dean Torrance (vocals), were also from Los Angeles. They started out as a pop duo, but converted to surf music after meeting the Beach Boys (Burt 1986). They became the second most popular and successful of all the surf vocal groups. Their biggest hit song, '[Surf City](#)' was actually given to them by Brian Wilson around the same time that The Beach Boys were recording 'Surfin' U.S.A.' and made it to number one on the Billboard Hot 100 in July, 1963. Jan and Dean's other hit songs included 'Little Old Lady From Pasadena' (#3 in June 1964), 'Honolulu Lulu' (#11 in October 1963), 'Ride the Wild Surf' (#16 in October 1964), and 'Sidewalk Surfin'' (#25 in December 1964). They also had a string of hit record albums that made it on the Billboard album chart including, *Take Linda Surfing* (71), *Surf City* (32), *Drag City* (22), *Little Old Lady From Pasadena* (40), and *Ride the Wild Surf* (66) (Blair 2008).

# Cash Box

AUGUST 3, 1963



Two young men who are sitting pretty because of the nation's surfing craze as well as their swinging singing are Liberty's Jan and Dean. Having made a strong showing with their last effort, "Linda," the boys came into their own and soared up to the #1 spot with their smash hit "Surf City." And they seem to have a strong follow-up "Surf City" LP which this week broke onto the album charts in the #20 spot. Jan Berry, the Jan half of the boys, produces the J & D disks for Screen Gems, Inc., which releases all Jan and Dean product through Liberty Records.

Figure 8. Jan & Dean



## *The Surfaris*

The Surfaris (Jim Fuller (lead guitar), Bob Berryhill (rhythm guitar), Pat Connolly (bass), Ron Wilson (drums/vocals), and Jim Pash (sax)) originated from Glendora, California (Burt 1999). They had their first recording session in December of 1962 after only being together for four months, entering the studio to record their song ‘Surfer Joe’ based on a dream that Ron Wilson had (San Gabriel Valley Examiner 2010). While at the recording studio, “... ‘[Wipe Out](#)’ was written in about ten minutes... The song was written because the group needed a B-side for their 45” (Mizutani 2010). They played a twelve-bar run with Wilson adding a drum cadence during the twelve-bar breaks based on his high school’s football field march. For effect, the song opens with breaking a wooden roof tile (sounding like a breaking surfboard) and their manager Dale Smallin’s hyena-inspired laugh (Burt 1999). They pressed 500 copies of the record and sold them at school to raise money for guitar amps and both of the songs became Billboard Hot 100 hits with ‘Wipe Out’ reaching number two on the Billboard Hot 100 in August 1963 (Blair 2008) and staying in the top 100 for a total of 189 weeks (Dalley 1996). Internationally, ‘Wipe Out’ reached number one in Australia, Germany, and Japan (Mizutani 2010), and in 2010, Billboard ranked ‘Wipe Out’ as the second most popular song about summer ever recorded; even though the only two words in the song are “wipe” and “out” (Billboard 2011).

The Surfaris toured more extensively than most surf bands, even going to Australia and New Zealand on a tour with The Beach Boys (Blair 2008). Their song ‘Karen’ was a huge hit in Japan reaching number two in the Japanese charts, which enabled them to tour Japan as well (Dalley 1996). They won the BMI Citation of

Achievement Award and the Australian Record of the Year Award in 1964 for 'Wipe Out' (Blair 2008).



Figure 9. The Surfaris

## *The Chantays*

The Chantays (Bob Spickard (lead guitar), Brian Carman (rhythm guitar), Bob Marshall (keyboards), Warren Waters (Bass), and Bob Welch (drums)) were from Santa Ana, California (The Chantays Official Website 2012). Their most popular song, and arguably the second most famous surf instrumental of all time, was '[Pipeline](#)', originally called 'Liberty's Whip', and inspired by the movie *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Then Spickard and Carman saw a Bruce Brown surfing film that featured the pipeline on Hawaii's North Shore and decided they needed to change their song title. It sold more than a million copies and in May 1963 it reached number four on the Billboard Hot 100 (Crowley 2011).

'Pipeline' is one of the earliest recordings to feature the sound of the Fender Reverb Unit (Blair 1996). Bob Spickard:

I can remember the first reverb unit I ever played through. It was Dick Dale's and we used it without Dick ever knowing about it. Rob Marshall's father was in electronics and knew someone at Fender Instruments. He was able to borrow Dick's reverb unit, which was in for service at the time, for a few days. We were so impressed with this new gadget that Brian and I took our share of the profits from a dance and each of us bought one (Burt 1986, 49).

The Chantays was the first surf band to tour overseas, and 'Pipeline' was the first surf record to make it on the British Pop Charts, reaching number 16 in June 1963. The record also won the Australian Record of the Year Award and the BMI Citation of Achievement Award in 1963 (Crowley 2011).





Figure 10. The Chantays

### *The Trashmen*

The Trashmen (Tony Andreason (lead guitar/lead vocals), Dal Winslow (rhythm guitar), Bob Reeds (bass), and Steve Wahrer (drums/lead vocals)) were from Minneapolis, Minnesota (The Trashmen 1990). They started as a rock and roll band, but changed styles in 1962. According to Andreason:

We'd heard about Dick Dale. Steve, Dal, and I went on vacation to California in late '62 and stayed right on the beach in Balboa. The Chantays were playin,' The Righteous Brothers were down there doin' fast R&B. Dick Dale was dynamic, really outstanding, and better even than his records. People tell me that I'm quite a surf guitarist but Dick Dale can run miles around me! We learned all his stuff when we got back, and nobody in Minneapolis had ever heard anything like it. The other groups even started to copy us without even hearin' Dick Dale (Blair 1996, 29).

Their biggest hit, '[Surfin' Bird](#)', was actually a combination of two songs ('Papa Oom Mow Mow' and 'The Bird is the Word') by the doo-wop group The Rivingtons (Burt 1986). 'Surfin' Bird' reached number four on the Billboard Hot 100 in January 1964, and following the release and success of 'Surfin' Bird', the band extensively toured. Dal Winslow recalls: "Prior to the record we were doing all the local ballrooms, roller rinks etc. in the Minneapolis and surrounding area. After the record, in '64 we branched out to the Dakotas, Iowa and Wisconsin. We then expanded to the east coast and did a tour down through Oklahoma, Arizona, California, Washington and Oregon. We continued with the Midwest and did a two-week stint in Venezuela" (McCarter 2011).



Figure 11. The Trashmen



## *The Pyramids*

The Pyramids (Skip Mercer (lead guitar), Will Glover (rhythm guitar), Steve Leonard (bass), Tom Pitman (sax), and Ron McMullen (drums)) from Long Beach, California recorded '[Penetration](#)', reaching number 18 on the Billboard Hot 100 in March 1964. They were known for shaving their heads and sometimes wearing Beatle wigs on stage (Blair 2008). The shaved head and Beatle wig gimmick got them into the United Kingdom national press under the headline 'America's Answer to The Beatles!' (Burt 1986). They were known for other gimmicks like arriving to a show in a helicopter or riding on elephants. Besides appearing on various television shows, they also appeared in the movie *Bikini Beach* (1964) (Dalley 1996).



Figure 12. The Pyramids, sporting their freshly shaved heads.

## *The Astronauts*

The Astronauts (Bob Demmon (lead guitar), Rich Fifield (vocals and rhythm guitar), Dennis Lindsey (rhythm guitar), Stormy Patterson (bass), and Jim Gallagher (drums)) were from Boulder, Colorado.

The Astronauts were a straight mid-west High School rock 'n' roll group until they contacted RCA's A&R Director, Steve Sholes. During an interview with Sholes in Hollywood, where two of the group's members Bob Demmon and Jim Gallagher played him their demo, he was interrupted by a phone-call from a distributor who informed him of the huge sales The Beach Boys were having with *Surfin' U.S.A.* He covered the phone with his hand, leant over the desk and asked Demmon and Gallagher if they played surf music, to which they replied 'Yes' (Burt 1986, 30).

They were flown in to Los Angeles, and before they had a chance to see the beach for the first time, they were brought in to the studio to record a surf album using the technologically superior equipment at the RCA Music Center of the World studio in Hollywood (Chidester and Priore 2008). Although The Astronauts played surf music as good as any Southern Californian band, they weren't afraid of admitting that they were a landlocked group who didn't completely understand the surf culture, as is evident in the following lyrics where they make fun of themselves for not understanding the surfing lingo: "Banzai Pipeline, shootin' the curl, ten toes over and he's caught in a swirl/ Everybody jumps and they point and shout, I wish I knew what they were talkin' about."

Their most successful song was '[Baja](#)', written by Duane Eddy's gifted song writer, Lee Hazlewood (Dalley 1997). 'Baja' reached number 94 on the Billboard Hot 100 in July 1963 while their album *Surfin' With The Astronauts* reached number 61 on the Billboard album chart (Blair 2008). They toured throughout the Midwest, playing in Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, and North Dakota and also played sold-out shows in Japan.

They appeared in four movies: *Surf Party* (1964), *Wild on the Beach* (1965), *Out of Sight* (1966), and *Wild Wild Winter* (1966) (Dalley 1996).



Figure 13. The Astronauts in a photo shoot for Fender.

### *Movies*

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the popularity of the warm and sandy beach culture grew, and one of the factors involved with this were movies with a major beach theme. One of the first movies that featured this theme was *Gidget* in 1959. The movie is about a young girl, Gidget (played by Sandra Dee), who discovers surfing and love in the Southern California beach town of Malibu. According to Paul Johnson, the rhythm guitarist of The Belairs, “Although the plot [of *Gidget*] was corny, the movie showed the surfer as a romantic character that appealed to teenagers looking for their identity”



(Chidester and Priore 2008, 111). "...*Gidget* explosively popularized an edge-dwelling sport enjoyed by a rugged and eccentric few and changed it (many say for the worse) forever..." (Rensin 2008, 1-2). Malibu quickly became commercialized with people going there to write about it and publicize it. According to surfer Greg Noll: "The whole Hollywood bullshit deal just brought more assholes over the hill from the Valley. If you're from the Valley, don't take offense, but this is basically what the beach guys thought" (Rensin 2008, 107). The success of *Gidget* led to an explosion of people going to the beach and trying the sport of surfing themselves, and created people far from the beach to romanticize in the lifestyle. "Kids in Kansas bolted surfboards to the tops of their cars in homage to the imagined surf lifestyle" (Stecyk 2001, 59).

In 1963, American International Pictures released *Beach Party*, starring Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon, and featuring Dick Dale and His Del-Tones. The movie grossed \$3.5 million, setting box office records across America (Booth 1996). Real Californian surfers attending the premiere of *Beach Party* were less than pleased, and at a theatre in Malibu, legendary surfer Miki Dora released a jar of moths that covered the screen (Chidester and Priore 2008). In contrast to this was Annette Funicello's description of the *Beach Party* philosophy, "I think they portrayed everybody's dream of what they would like their summer vacation to be, especially those kids who didn't live near water. Their big dream was to come out to Malibu Beach and to surf and dance on the sand, and to have weenie roasts every night. It also showed you that you could have fun without using vulgar language and without explicit sex scenes" (Burt 1986, 98). American International Pictures followed the box office success of *Beach Party* with a string of other Frankie and Annette beach movies including *Muscle Beach Party* (1964),

also featuring Dick Dale and His Del-Tones; *Bikini Beach* (1964), featuring The Pyramids and The Excitors; *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1964), featuring The Hondells; and *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965), featuring The Kingsman and an appearance by Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys.

The success of *Gidget* and the American International Pictures feel-good beach-themed movies led other motion picture companies to jump onto the bandwagon, and in a very short amount of time there were many beach-themed movies with surf music as a soundtrack released throughout the U.S. These included Twentieth Century-Fox's *Surf Party* (1964), featuring The Astronauts and The Routers; Columbia Pictures *Ride the Wild Surf* (1964), with music by Jan and Dean; and Paramount Picture's *The Girls on the Beach* (1965), featuring The Beach Boys and The Crickets.

Helping prove that the allure of the surfing culture had spread to places as far away from the beach as possible was Bruce Brown's surfing documentary, *The Endless Summer*. Filmed in 1964, Brown asked several Hollywood and New York City companies to distribute the movie; they all declined, arguing that it would do a horrible box office in any city that was further than 10 miles from the beach. In response, Brown screened his own film for two weeks in Wichita, Kansas, in the middle of winter. It had a full house each night and grossed more than either *The Great Race* or *My Fair Lady*, the academy award winner for best picture, at the Kansas theatre. Brown then sold the film worldwide and it was dubbed by *Newsweek* as one of the best ten films of 1964 (Ormrod 2005). Brown, contemplating the film's appeal to a mass audience, said, "I don't know...I've run into so many people who saw *The Endless Summer* particularly back

east, and said it had some effect on them. But a lot of ‘em, they didn’t surf, and they never did surf. It’s always been a mystery to me” (Kampion 1998, 96).

### *Venues*

The early surf bands in Southern California mostly played shows at high schools, civic auditoriums, National Guard Armories, and meeting halls that were sanctioned for dances (Blair 2008). Bob Berryhill recalls, “There weren’t any clubs in those days, like The Troubador or places like that. You had to play at the high schools” (McCarter 2011). The first surf music night club was the Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa, California. It sat dormant for years until Dick Dale started renting it out in the summer of 1961. The first night that Dick Dale played there, fewer than 40 kids attended; therefore, to pick up business, he asked Newport High School if his band could give a music demonstration to the students. It was agreed they would play “nice music” that would make for “wholesome dances.” They performed big band tunes until the last 15 minutes, when he told the audience that they were going to play at the Rendezvous Ballroom that night. They then played a short set of wild rock ‘n’ roll instrumentals, and within three months of the Newport High School show, they were packing the Rendezvous Ballroom with over 4,000 kids a night to their shows (Chidester and Priore 2008).

Some of the other venues in Southern California included Harmony Park Ballroom in Anaheim, which in early 1962, is where Dick Dale and His Deltones started playing regularly in response to a rent increase by the Rendezvous Ballroom. Another popular venue was the Retail Clerk’s Hall in Buena Park, whose house band was the well-known surf band Eddie & The Showmen; it also featured gigs by such surf legends

as The Ventures, The Beach Boys, The Surfaris, The Lively Ones, and The Chantays. Other venues included the Belair Club, later renamed to Reb Foster's Revelaire Club; The Cinnamon Cinder in Studio City, that was opened by KFWB disc jockey Bob Eubanks; The Peppermint Stick on Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks, that booked such acts as The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, The Surfaris, and The Chantays; The Peppermint West on Cahuenga whose house band was The Standells; and The Peppermint Lounge in Long Beach's Nu-Pike amusement park, whose houseband was The Illusions. Apparently The Peppermint Lounge in New York City, which is where The Twist hit the big time in 1961, had some influence on club owners when it was time for them to give their venues a name (Chidester and Priore 2008).

Besides venues that hosted surf music shows, there were surf music events, the most notable of which took place during surf music's peak year of 1963. The Deauville Castle Club in Santa Monica, California, held a three-day event in March called Surf Battle, a competition between 18 surf bands with The Rhythm Kings being the winner. There was the Surf Fair at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium in Santa Monica, California, headlined by The Surfaris, The Beach Boys, and The New Dimensions and also the Teen-Age Fair of 1963, at the Pickwick Recreation Center in Burbank, California. Bands included Dick Dale and His Deltones, The Beach Boys, and The New Dimensions. Besides surf bands, the fair included indie surf films by filmmaker Walt Phillips, booths filled with surf industry entrepreneurs, and actors from the Beach Party movies signing autographs and posing for pictures (Chidester and Priore 2008).



Figure 14. The Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa, California.

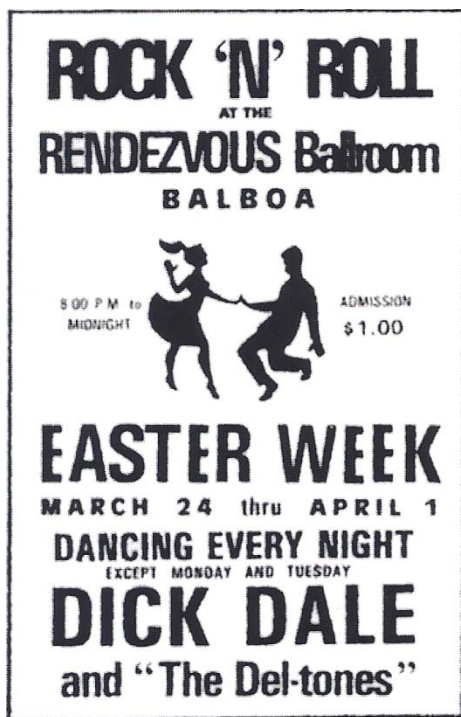


Figure 15. Flyer promoting Dick Dale at The Rendezvous Ballroom.



Figure 16. The Deauville Castle Club in Santa Monica, California.

**"SURF BATTLE"**  
**FRI. Mar. 22 SAT. Mar. 23 SUN. Mar. 24**  
(8:00 P.M.) (8:00 P.M.) (2:00 P.M. - 7)  
**DEAUVILLE CASTLE CLUB**  
 1525 Ocean Front in Santa Monica  
 Where Olympic Blvd. Meets The Surf

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**COMPETING FOR #1 IN THE SURFIN' WORLD**  
 The **RHYTHM KINGS**  
 The **LIVELY ONES**  
 The **SENTINALS**  
 Bob **VAUGHT** and the **Renegoids**  
 DAVE **MEYERS** and the **Surftones**  
 The **BREAKERS**  
 The **RHYTHM ROCKERS**  
 The **CHANTAYS**

---

HORACE HEIDT JR. and the <b>TRADE WINDS</b>	JIM WALLER and the <b>DELTAS</b>
THE <b>CHARADES</b>	THE <b>PERSUADERS</b>
THE <b>RHYTHM CRUSADERS</b>	THE <b>HOLLYWOOD SURFERS</b>
THE <b>STING RAYS</b>	THE <b>SURFAIRIS</b>
THE <b>GOLDEN NUGGETS</b>	THE <b>CENTURIANS</b>
	DANNY and the <b>SESSIONS</b>

---

**TEEN SURFERS ONLY (14-19)**  
**(HODADS NOT WELCOME)**

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All From The **KFWB Battle of the Surf Bands**  
 on **Delfi Records**  
 All from "Original Surfin' Hits"  
 on **Cresendo Records**

---

**FREE SURF MOVIES IN COLOR**

Figure 17. Flyer promoting "Surf Battle" at The Deauville Castle Club.

## Methodology

The methodology was designed to analyze the spatial and temporal dynamics of surf music at the national level during its peak years from 1961-1966. Using top chart favorites from radio stations across the country, a selection of ten hit songs that are definitive as surf music have been analyzed to understand how successful this form of music was in various parts of the country compared to other parts of the country. For example, did surf music always fare better on radio charts in Southern California than the rest of the country? Did a distance decay effect occur where a song fared worse the further away it was from Southern California? Were surf songs constantly a bigger hit in certain cities regardless of how far away they were from Southern California, or did a seemingly random result occur? Also analyzed were dates and locations of vinyl record releases of surf music to understand the shift in popularity of surf music both temporally and spatially during the different years from 1962-1966. In other words, which years, and specifically which months, had the most record releases? Furthermore, where was the location of these record releases and how did the mean location change over time? And to better understand the spatial and temporal dynamics of surf music, interviews were conducted with musicians that were, and still are, in the most popular surf bands.

### *Surf Band Record Releases*

My first step was to meticulously go through *The Illustrated Discography of Surf Music* (Blair 2008), and find data that met two requirements: the band's location, and the month and year of their record releases. The data that met these requirements (n=363), were then inputted into Excel with their latitude and longitude coordinates.

A bar chart with five columns (one for each year of the study) was constructed to reveal how the volume of surf music releases varied over the five-year time span. Next, to see if there was a seasonal trend in the release of surf music, such as more releases during the summer months when teenagers were active at the beach and fewer releases during the winter months when the weather was not conducive to beach activities, a bar chart for each year was produced. The charts for the individual years each have columns, one for each month, so they could be compared to each other and see if they shared similarities to each other.

To understand the direction and speed of surf music's diffusion in the contiguous United States, the mean latitude and longitude coordinates for different intervals of time were calculated: the entire five years of the study, each year of the study, and every six months of the study. This data was then mapped into ArcMap.

### *Radio Station Surveys*

Ten songs were chosen from the top hit surveys put out by radio stations across the United States and Canada. Survey data is being analyzed for Canadian cities because many of those cities are close to the international border, which might produce interesting results. Then the song's radio station rankings were mapped to reveal what ranking that song had in the various cities across the United States and Canada. The purpose was not to compare songs to see which one did better or worse than the other, for that the Billboard Hot 100 would be much more accurate. But rather, the purpose was to get an understanding of how each release, or re-release, fared in the various cities that data was available. An example is 'Let's Go Trippin'' (released September 1961) by Dick Dale &



His Del-Tones. The song ranked number four in Los Angeles, California; 18 in San Francisco, California; 19 in Chicago, Illinois; 23 in Bakersfield, California; 29 in both Toronto, Ontario and New Haven, Connecticut; and 44 in both Vancouver, British Columbia and Denver, Colorado. This data was mapped so that the results can more easily be visualized, and patterns, if any, could be found.

To be unbiased as possible while choosing the ten songs, three criteria were used. The first criterion was simple and straight forward: each song had to have made it into the Billboard Hot 100. This helped guarantee that the sample size of cities would be large enough to produce results that would be more accurate than using songs that did not make it into the Billboard Hot 100, because songs that were in the top 100 generally, if not always, were played in more locations throughout the country. The second criterion was that no more than one song from any one band would be used; there were many surf bands (The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, The Marketts, The Surfaris, The Trashmen, and The Ventures) that had more than one song that placed in the Billboard Hot 100. By limiting it to only one song per band, it helped ensure that the overall results would reflect a spatial trend in surf music's popularity in general, rather than be skewed by the popularity of any one band in particular. The third criterion was used to address the temporal spatial shifts of popularity that occurred between surf music's beginnings in 1961, and 1966 when surf music declined due to the British Invasion. To achieve this, the first song that was used, 'Let's Go Trippin'' by Dick Dale & The Del-Tones, was chosen because it was the first surf song that made it into the Billboard Hot 100. That made it a natural starting point, with a release date of September 1961. Then it was decided to choose a song that was released every six months after that; however, that proved to be

impossible because there wasn't always a surf song that was released exactly every six months that made it into the Billboard Hot 100 and/or wasn't by a band that was already used. Therefore, a maximum give-or-take two month window was used when necessary. The ninth song that was used was 'I Live for the Sun' by The Sunrays, released in June 1965. After that release, it would be another 13 months before another surf song made it onto the Billboard Hot 100. That song, which is the tenth song used, was actually a re-release of 'Wipe Out' by The Surfaris (it was originally released in April 1963). This was the only time when an exception to the maximum give-or-take two month window was used, because otherwise, 'I Live for the Sun' (June 1965) would have been the last song, and this study would be more complete if 1966 was included. No more surf songs made it into the Billboard Hot 100 after 1966, so the re-release of 'Wipe Out' is an appropriate ending spot.

The ten songs chosen for this cartographic adventure were '[Let's Go Trippin'](#)' by Dick Dale & His Del-Tones (released September 1961); '[Surfer's Stomp](#)' by The Marketts (released January 1962); '[Surfin' Safari](#)' by The Beach Boys (released June 1962); '[Pipeline](#)' by The Chantays (released January 1963); '[Honolulu Lulu](#)' by Jan & Dean (released August 1963); '[Bird Dance Beat](#)' by The Trashmen (released January 1964); '[Walk Don't Run '64](#)' by The Ventures (released July 1964); '[New York's a Lonely Town](#)' by The Tradewinds (released January 1965); '[I Live for the Sun](#)' by The Sunrays (released June 1965); and '[Wipe Out](#)' by The Surfaris (re-released July 1966).

This data was retrieved from ARSA – The Airheads Radio Survey Archive, which is an online database that houses radio surveys that have been preserved and uploaded by radio survey collectors. There are two limitations to this information. First, not every

radio station is in the database. Secondly, and more importantly, is that for the many radio stations that are in the database, not every single week by any particular radio station is in the database. This creates gaps in the data, causing some cities to be listed on some of the maps, but not on others. It also means that circumstances are created where, for example, a song might be listed on a city's survey for a couple of weeks, then there is a no-data gap for a couple of weeks, then it's back on the survey for a couple of weeks. There is no way of knowing for certain how that song fared during the no-data gap. However, there are enough radio stations and weeks of surveys that spatial-temporal observations and conclusions of academic worth can be made.

### *Interviews*

To get a clearer understanding of the forces underlying the spatial dynamics of surf music from 1961-1966, two interviews were conducted. Both interviews were with musicians that were highly successful and influential during the height of the surf music craze: Dal Winslow of The Trashmen, a band from Minneapolis, Minnesota and most famous for the classics 'Surfin' Bird' and 'Bird Dance Beat'; and Bob Berryhill of The Surfaris, a band from Glendora, California and most famous for the classics 'Wipe Out' and 'Surfer Joe'. These firsthand accounts provided valuable insights on such topics as to how and why surf music spread from Southern California to other parts of the country, especially the Midwest, and how well it was received; the perception of, and participation in, the surf culture and its intertwined surf music scene; the touring that took place, as well as the venues available to play at, which helped connect band performance and sound with its audience; pre-surf music influences; and the importance of the Fender instruments and equipment that helped shape the surf sound, especially the Fender 100-

Watt Dual Showman Amp, which provided the necessary volume to play shows in large venues.

## Results

Of the 363 record releases by surf bands for the five-year interval 1962-1966, 53% (193) of them were released in 1963 (Figure 18).

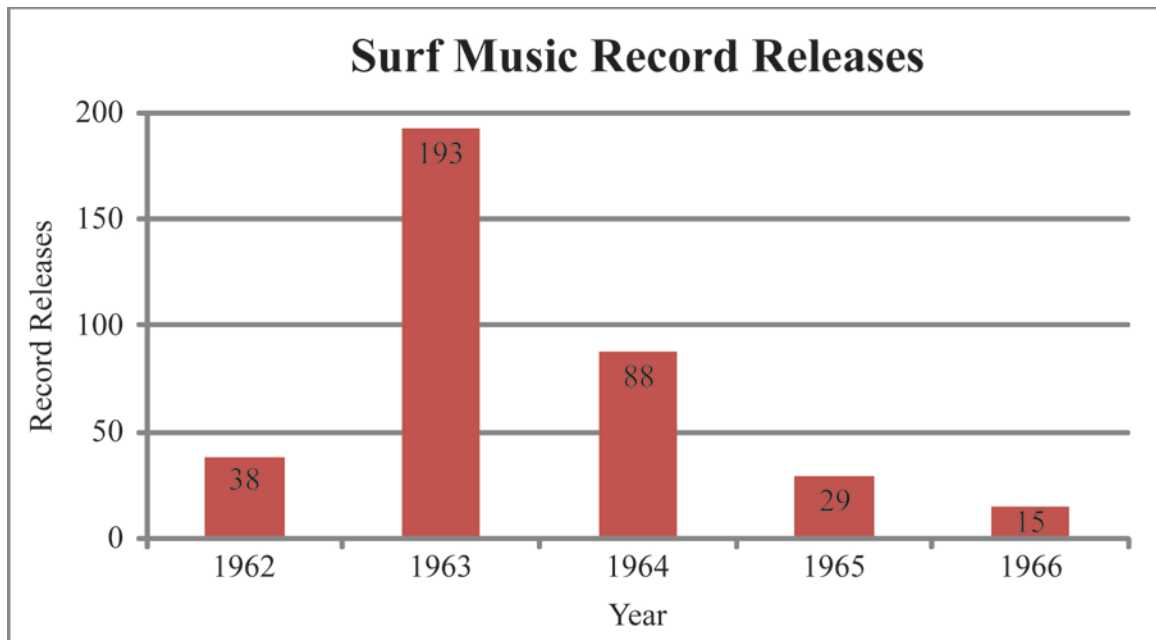


Figure 18. Number of releases by surf bands from 1962-1966.

Each year after 1963, the releases were reduced by more than half of that of the previous year. 1963 was by far surf music's most successful as far as output is concerned. In 1962, there was relatively very little production of the music style, then it erupted in 1963, and within just two years it was producing less than it did in 1962.

Since surf music revolves around the ideal California “fun in the sun” image, bar charts were constructed to test whether or not the time of the year had an impact on the volume of releases (Figure 19). The output in 1962 soared in June compared to its previous months of that year, and then quickly decreased in July. Then in the later months of 1962, it rose again until it finally peaked in December, one of the coldest months of the year. The peaking in December however could be attributed to it being closer to 1963 than the months preceding it, as well as records being released in time for Christmas and Hanukkah.

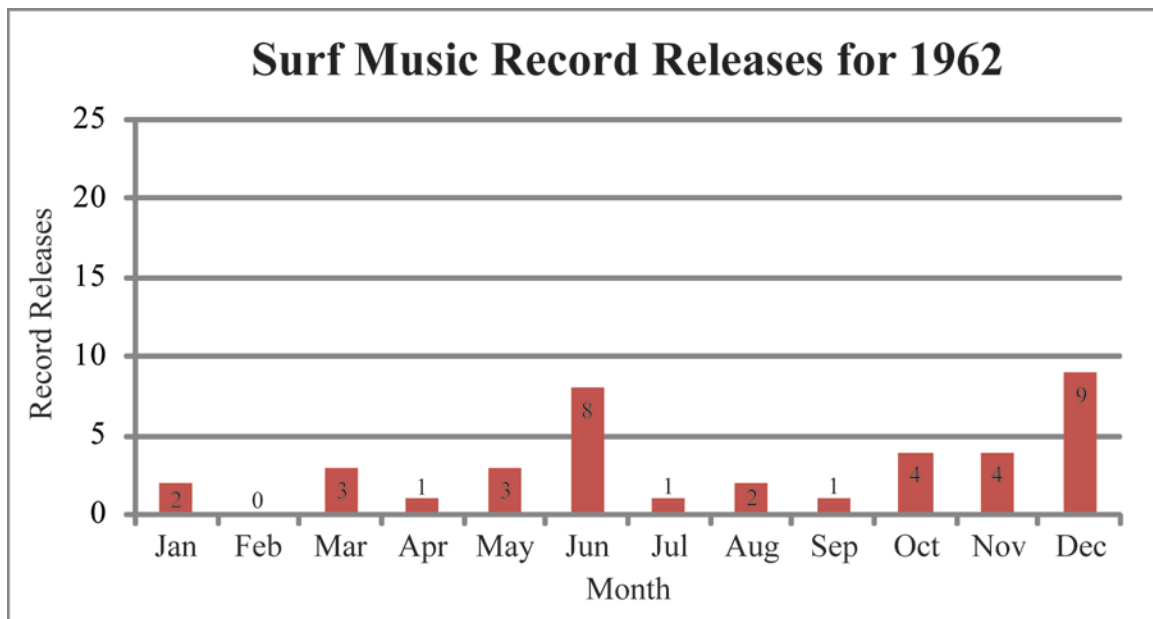


Figure 19. Number of releases per month for 1962.

In 1963, Figure 20 shows that April (Spring Break) was the busiest month of that year, and also the busiest during the five-year study. In the summer months through August, it remained strong, and then dipped down in September and bounced back up in October.

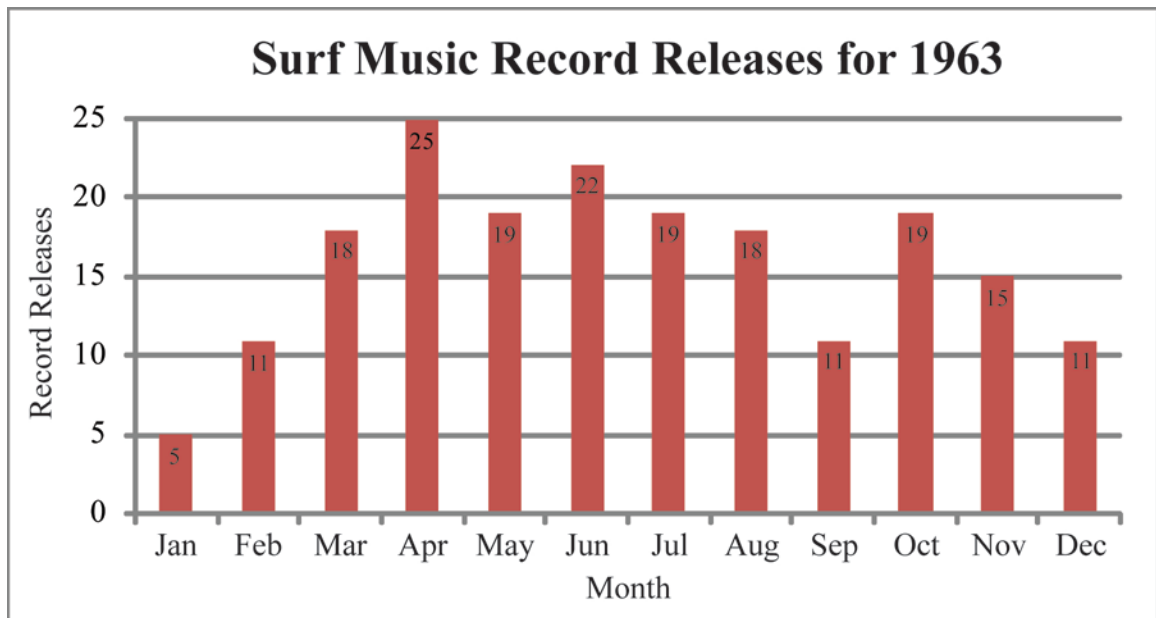


Figure 20. Number of releases per month for 1963.

Figure 21 indicates that April was the lowest producing month for 1964, and Figure 22 shows that it was the second lowest producing month for 1965. In Figure 23, it becomes apparent that surf music had run its course in popular American culture.

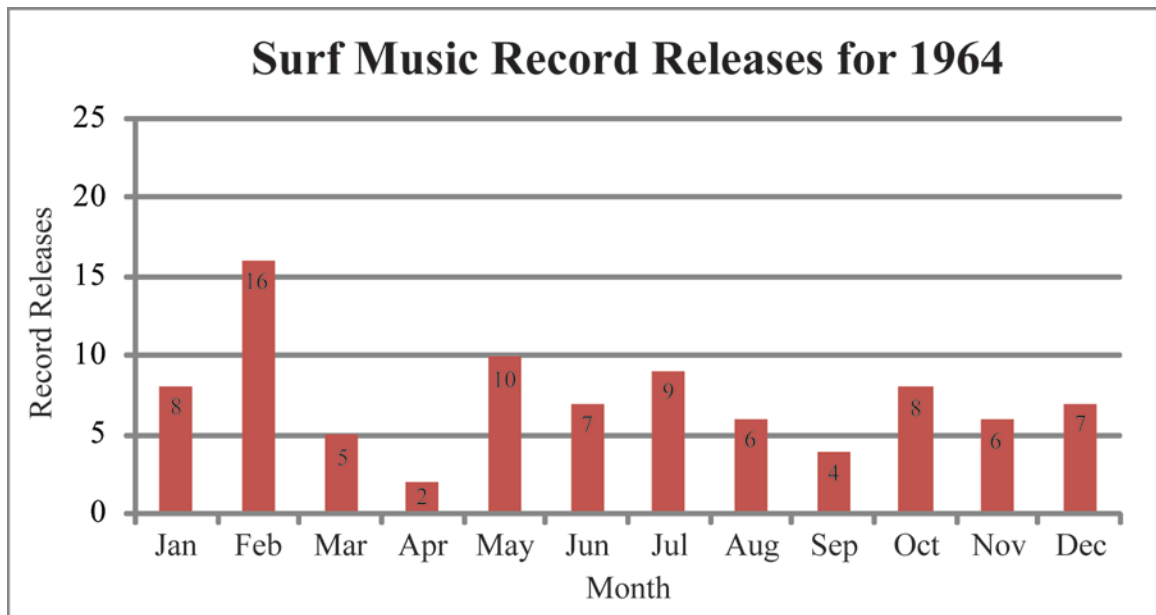


Figure 21. Number of releases per month for 1964.

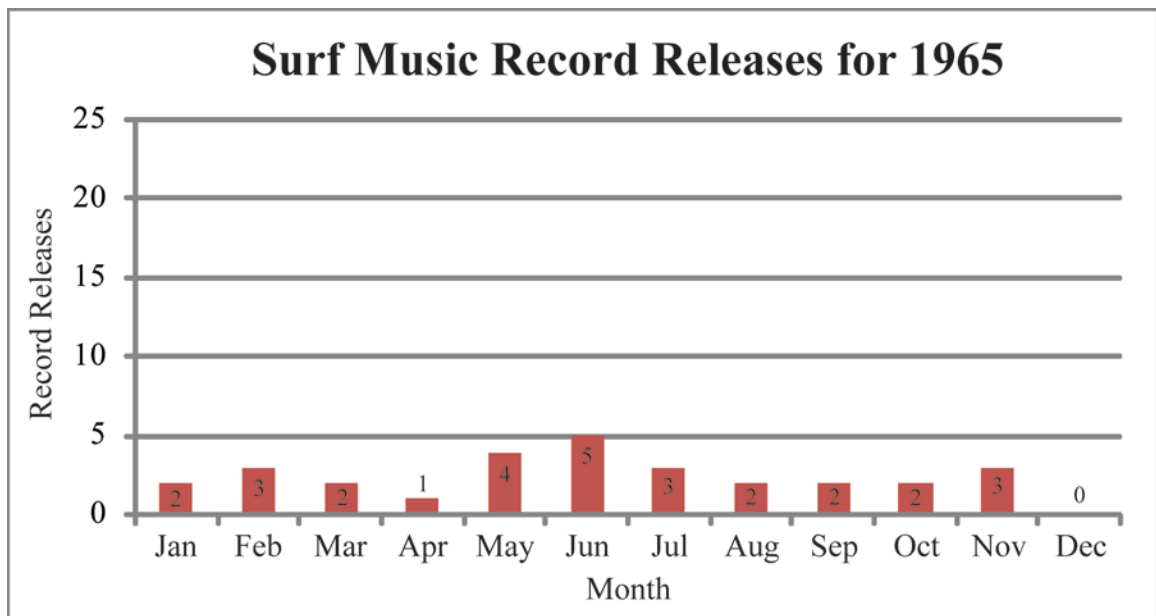


Figure 22. Number of releases per month for 1965.



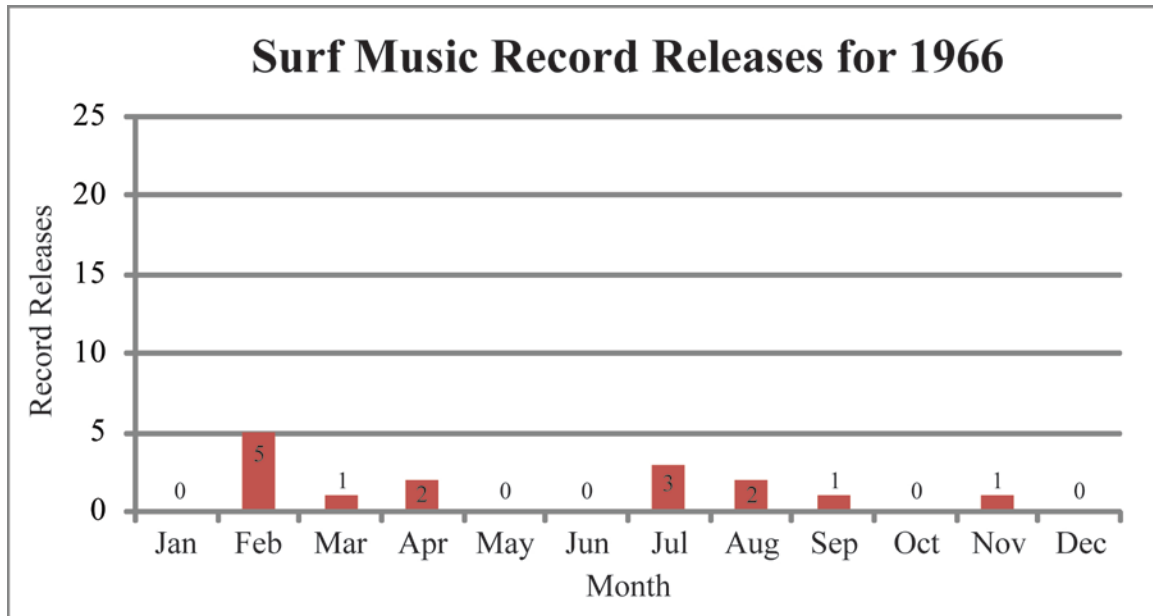
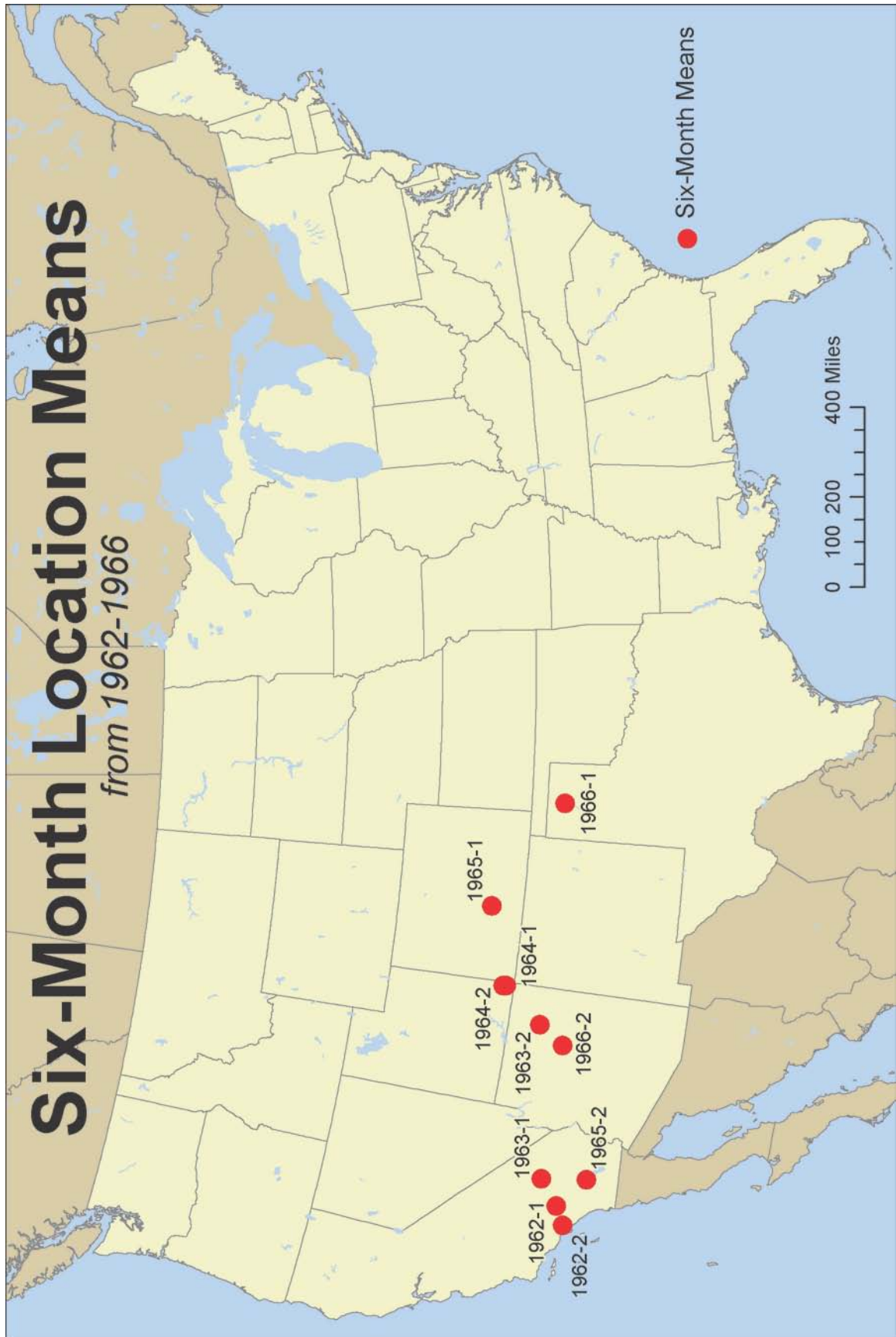


Figure 23. Number of releases per month for 1966.

In Figure 24, we see that when all the surf music releases in the study for the five year period are mapped, the mean location is in northwest Arizona as it is slightly pulled away from Orange County, California to the northeast mainly from bands releasing music in the Midwest section of the United States. As Figure 18 illustrates, most of the releases occurred during 1963 and 1964. Since the other years did not produce a significant amount, the overall diffusion route and speed for the five years can best be visualized by mapping the location mean at one year intervals (Figure 25), while the location means at six month intervals (Figure 26) helps one understand the details of the diffusion during the busier years of 1963 and 1964. In Figure 26, the 1 and 2 separated from the year by a dash denotes whether that particular mean is for the first half (1), or second half (2), of that year.







From 1962-1964, as illustrated in Figure 25, the location mean moves steadily toward the northeast, then in 1965 it takes a u-turn and back tracts toward the direction where it originated (Orange County, California), and then heads east during 1966. In Figure 26, we can take a more detailed look at the mean location during 1963 and 1964. From the shorter interval of six months, it becomes apparent that the largest jump by far in spatial mean during those two relatively busy years occurred during the second half of 1963. It's also interesting to note that the first half of 1964 and second half of 1964 have almost identical spatial means.

The Midwest and East took to surf music more than the South, which could be merely explained away by migration patterns. Similarly, Zion (1987) explains that in Australia, before the British Invasion, they followed the trends of the United States which was "the icon of pop music and fashion." But Australians were tuned into the Beatles months before they took hold of the American public. Zion argues that they took to the Beatles before the United States because of the patterns of British immigration to Australia, where between 1954 and 1966, almost a quarter of a million British immigrants arrived in Australia, and they were more closely aligned with British groups than with American groups. But another factor that shouldn't be overlooked is whether or not the region that is adopting (or not adopting) a musical style is already a hearth of a strongly-rooted musical style(s). The South was already home to Memphis and Nashville and was a musical hearth to rock, country, blues, and jazz.

Many spatial-temporal observations can be made while examining the radio station surveys. It is not at all surprising that surf music started out the strongest in Southern California and remained relatively strong there throughout the years that were

studied. ‘Let’s Go Trippin’ by Dick Dale & His Del-Tones, released in September 1961, ranked number four in Los Angeles, which was just a short drive away from where they would regularly perform at The Rendezvous Ballroom in Balboa, California. That was significantly better than the next highest rating for that song, which was San Francisco at number 18.

In January 1962, ‘Surfer’s Stomp’ by The Marketts was ranked number two in Los Angeles, while the next highest was again San Francisco, which closed the gap at number seven. The next highest ranking city outside of Southern California was St Louis at number 21. Just five months later in June 1962, ‘Surfin Safari’ was released by The Beach Boys. While this song was hot in California, ranking number two in both San Diego and San Francisco and number four in San Bernardino, it was received almost as well in several other cities in the United States, including Buffalo, New York at number one; Dallas, Texas at number three; and at number five in the following five cities: Tucson, Arizona; Chicago, Illinois; Dayton, Ohio; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Springfield, Massachusetts. As the maps illustrate, from that time on, surf music’s top performing songs would be ranked in several locations throughout the country just as well as in Southern California. This suggests that although the surf sound was born in Orange County, it only took about one year before some of the other portions of the country were equally accepting the music style, and for some of the songs, more so. Regarding how the popularity of surf music in Southern California compared with surf music’s popularity in other places, Dal Winslow recalls one of The Trashmen’s tours that took them to Southern California:

We were a little apprehensive about playing in the home of surf music...  
We talked to the band that had played there the night before and they said



surf music was dead. You can imagine how this went over with us. We decided the hell with it and we would do our normal gig. Well the crowd went bananas and we ended up doing several encores. After the gig we talked to some fans and they said the surf bands out there at that time sucked and that was why they were failing. They said we added a special and unique sound that they had not heard before (McCarter 2011).

The Midwest, which is about as far as you can get from actual surfing, received surf music quite well. According to Dal Winslow, “I think it was just something different that the fans were not familiar with. They had seen the surf movies and heard the Beach Boys but very few were aware of Dick Dale and the other great surf groups out of California” (McCarter 2011). Bob Berryhill recalls Easter Week, now known as Spring Break except that everybody had it off during the same week, “We were playing music at the beach, and they would hear the music and then they would all go home. These people came from the Midwest, a lot of them, they would go back home and they would bring the music back with them.” Berryhill also recalls that:

When ‘Wipe Out’ was a hit, people were driving around in Ohio with surfboards on racks on top of their cars. There’s no surf in Ohio, but you have pictures of that stuff. People would be doing stuff like that because they wanted to be cool and be part of the genre. So it sort of spread that way, by people seeing it on television, movies, and then coming to the beach and wanting to be part of the scene (McCarter 2011).

This strongly suggests that surf music’s popularity in a region had little to do with whether or not the people of that region actively participated in the sport, but had more to do with a combination of loving the way the music sounded, and wanting to be a part of this emerging and exciting scene.

Another region that received surf music well was the Northeast. It is interesting to note that Buffalo, New York almost always had a significantly better rating than Toronto, Ontario, which is only approximately 60 miles apart. ‘Surfin’ Safari’ ranked number one

in Buffalo and 53 in Toronto. 'Pipeline' was a less dramatic difference with number two in Buffalo and nine in Toronto. 'Honolulu Lulu' was number ten in Buffalo and 28 in Toronto. 'Walk Don't Run '64' was number eight in Buffalo and 26 in Toronto. And 'I Live for the Sun' was number ten in Buffalo and 45 in Toronto. Although 60 miles apart is not much, the cultural differences between the two places created a dramatic difference between the receptivity of surf music. They are not only separated by a Great Lake, but by an international border, which creates a difference in government rules, product availability, and a cultural production machine operating south of the international border and lacking north of the border. Toronto has grown to become one of the top financial centers of the world and could actually be compared closer to New York, New York than to Buffalo. There were two exceptions where Toronto scored higher than Buffalo. The first is 'Bird Dance Beat' which ranked number 30 in Buffalo and 21 in Toronto. This shift could be due to the fact that The Trashmen, from Minneapolis, Minnesota did some touring in Canada, which would have helped popularize the band and its songs. The other exception is the re-release of 'Wipe Out' where it ranked number two in Toronto and 21 in Buffalo, which could be due to the fact that the song was first released in 1963, so by the time the re-release came out it had already been a huge hit for three years.

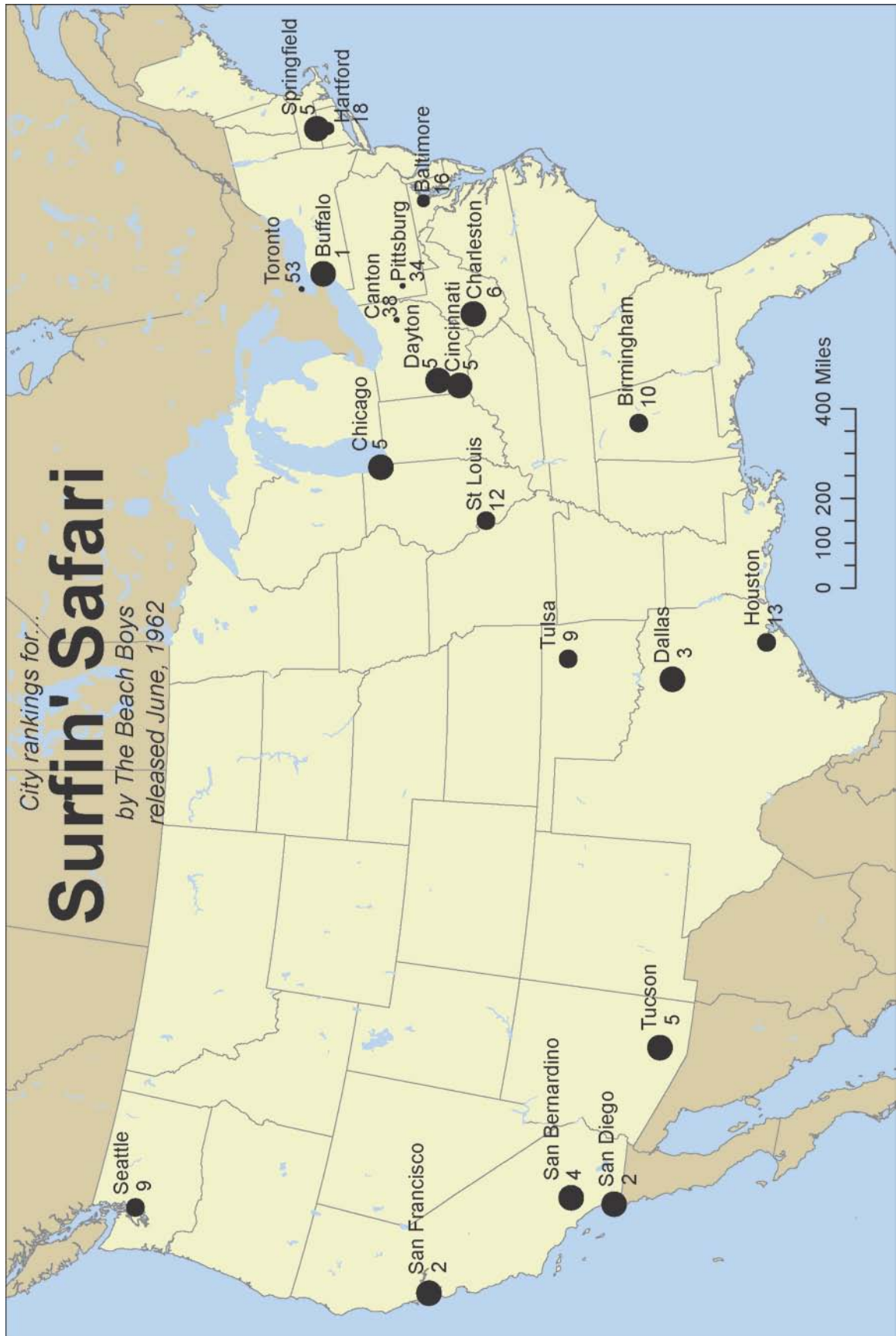
The rankings for New York, New York are also interesting to note because that city did not accept surf music nearly as well as other cities that were close by in the New England states, which could partly be due to ethnicity and identity. 'Pipeline' ranked number 30 in New York, while it was number seven in New Haven, Connecticut; number eight in Hartford, Connecticut; and number 24 in Springfield, Massachusetts. 'Walk Don't Run '64' ranked number 31 in New York, while it was number eleven in



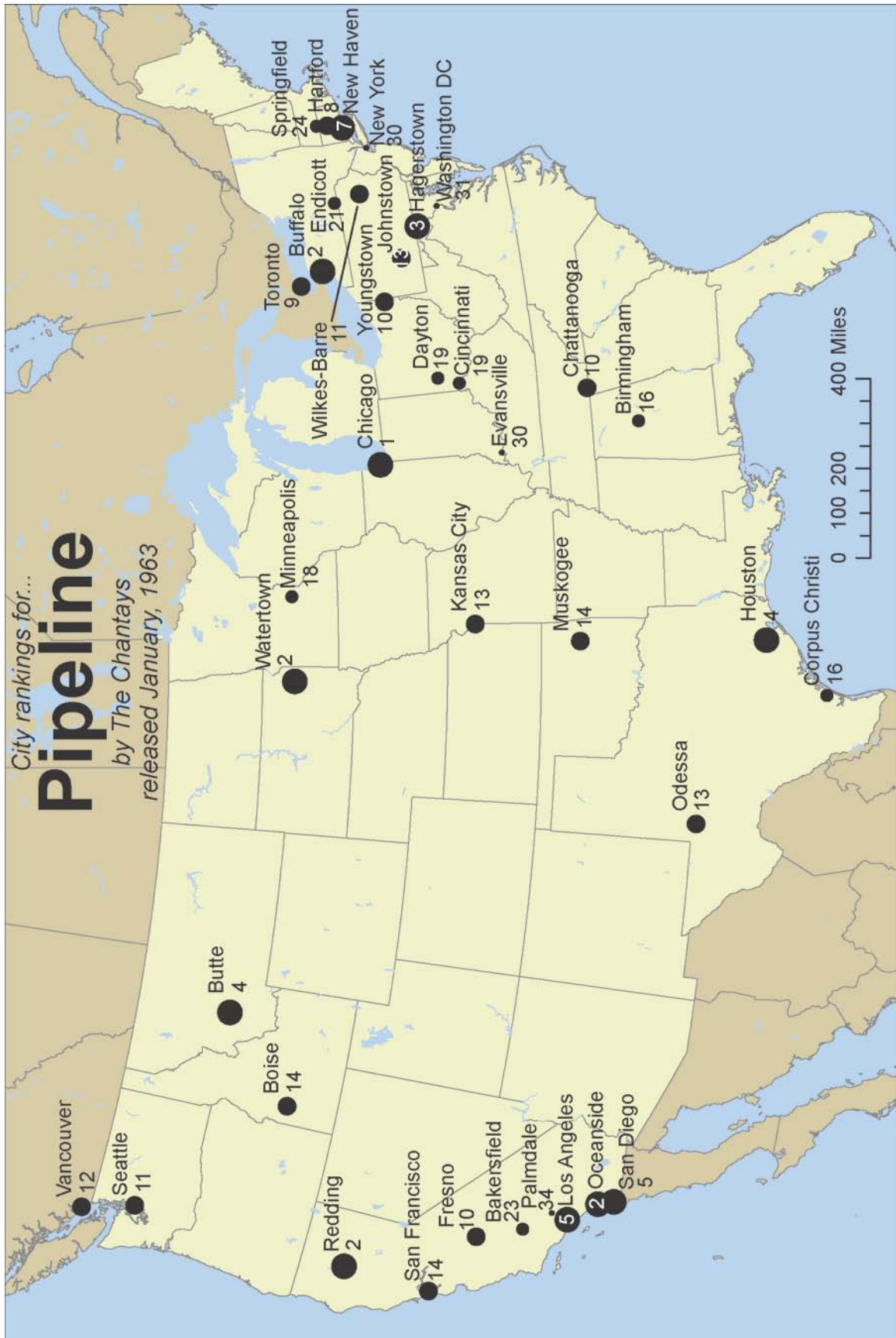
Providence, Rhode Island; 17 in Hartford; and 23 in Springfield. 'New York's a Lonely Town' was number 39 in New York, while it was number eight in Providence; 15 in Springfield; 33 in Hartford; and 36 in New Haven. 'I Live for the Sun' ranked number 39 in New York and nine in Hartford. And the re-release of 'Wipe Out' was number 15 in New York while it was number five in both New Haven and Hartford; six in Springfield; seven in Boston, Massachusetts; and only 24 in Keene, Vermont.

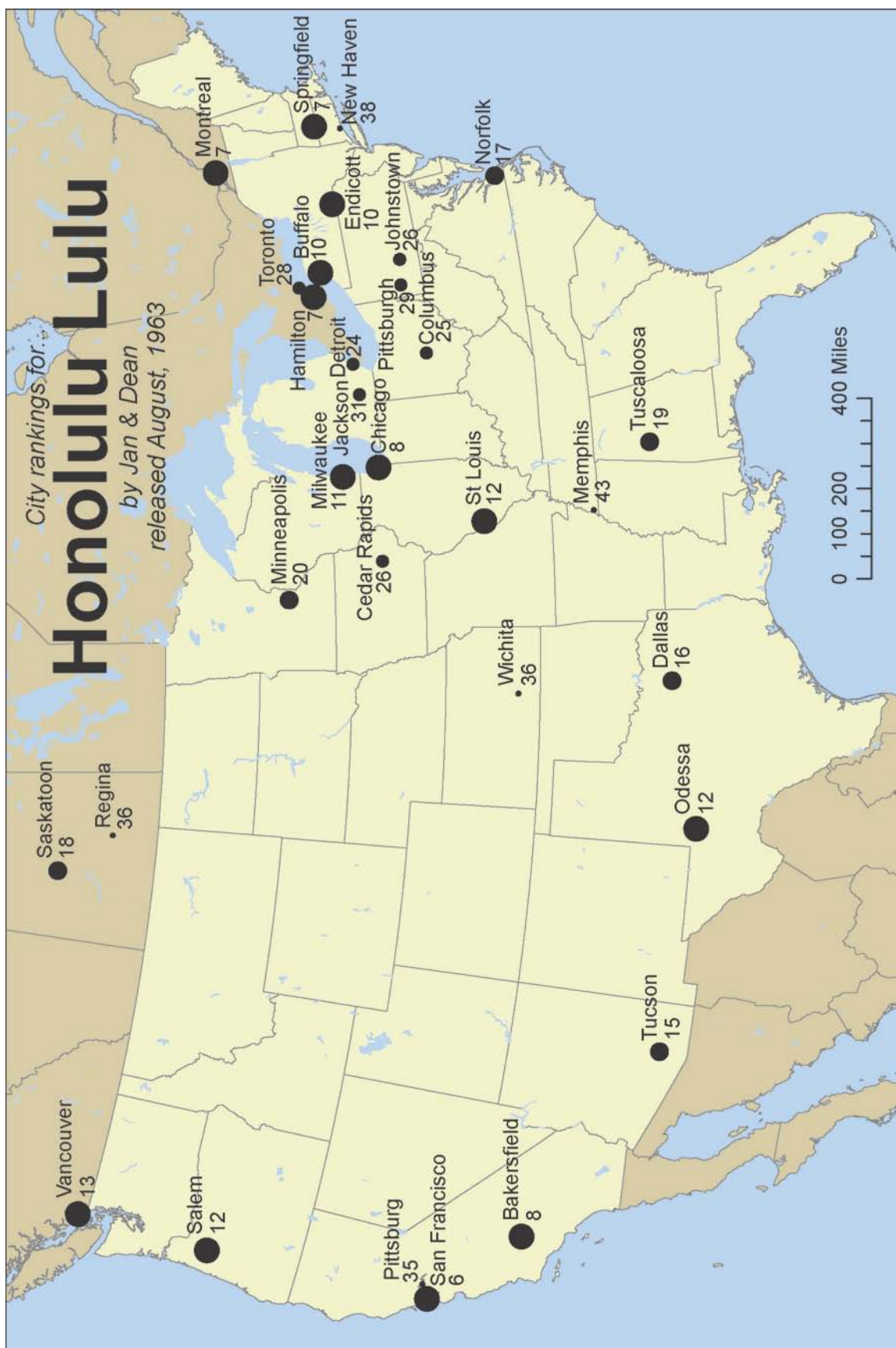


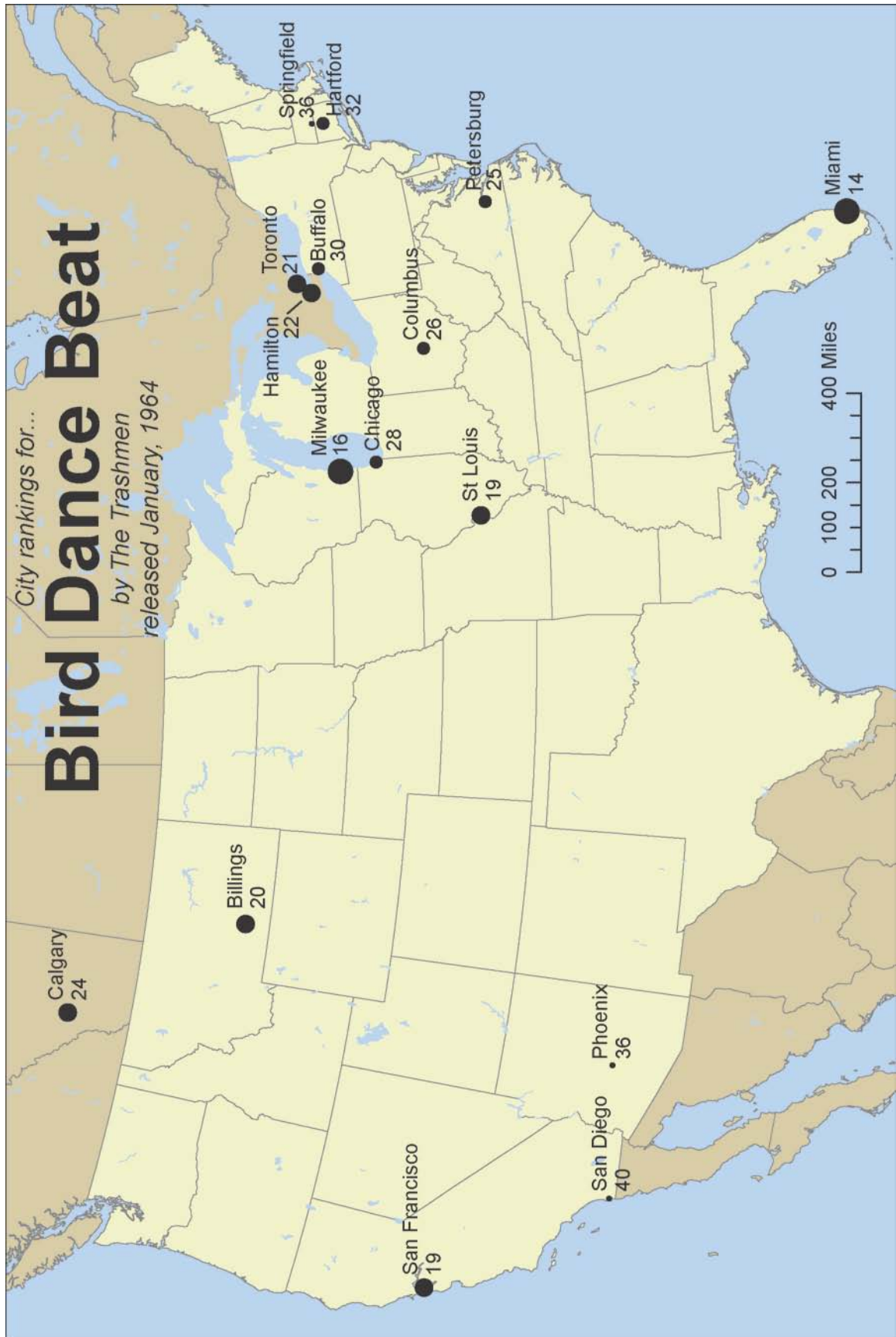




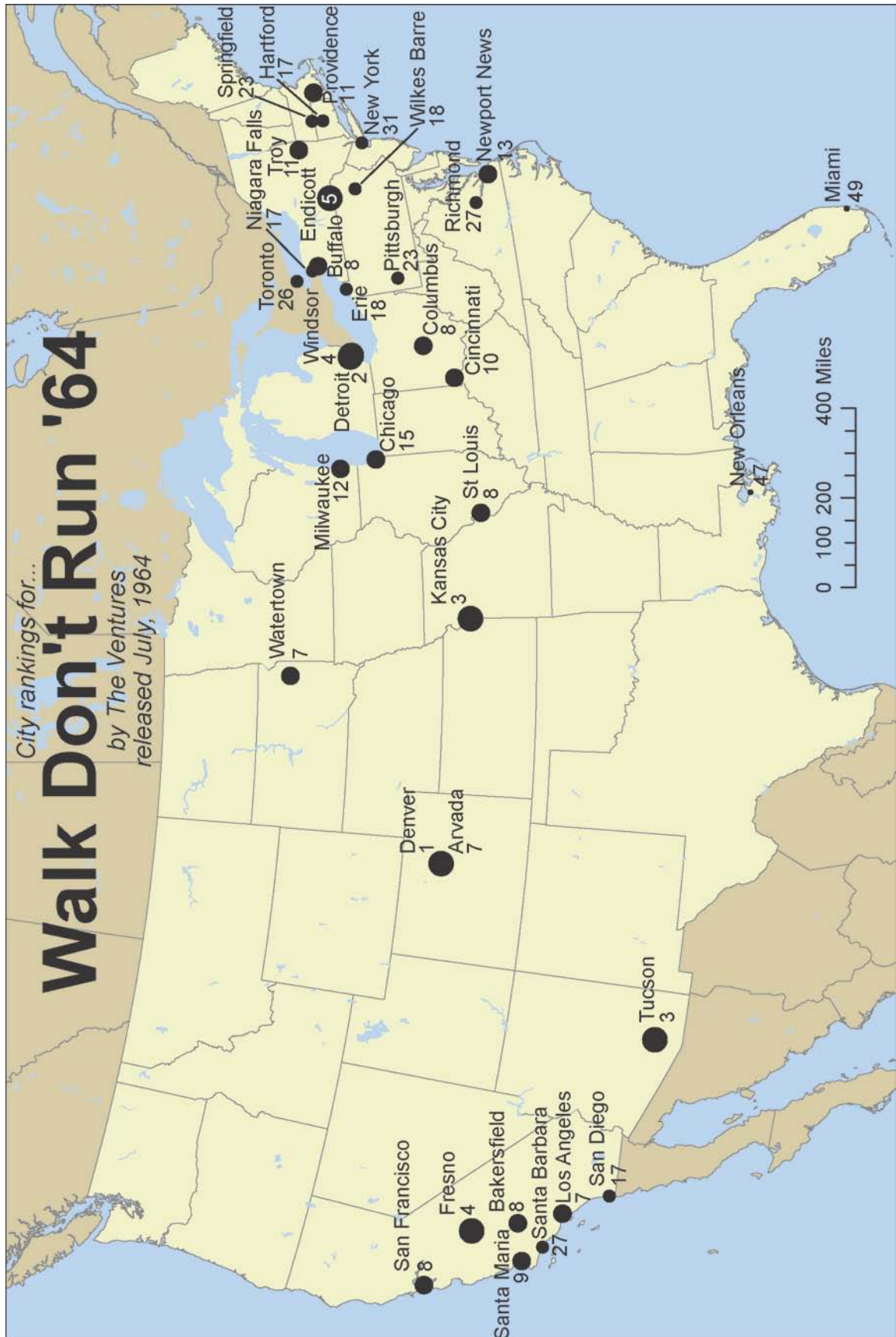








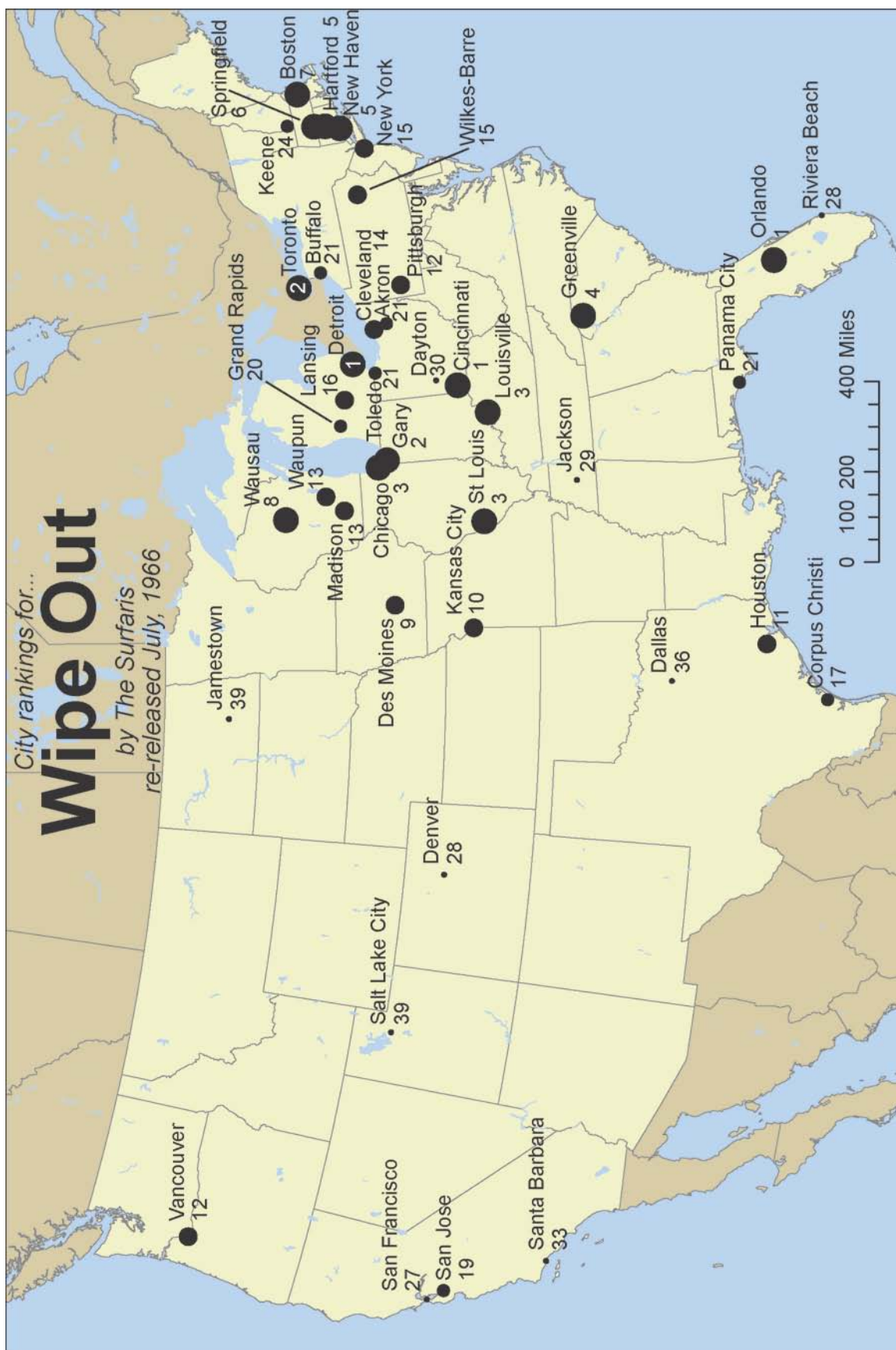












## Conclusions

Surf music started in Orange County, California in 1961 and spread quickly to the rest of the United States. Its sound was something new, unique, and interesting. It was perceived as something cool, whether you surfed or not, a style that could and was enjoyed by people in places that were as far removed from surfing spots as possible. Besides California, it was well received in the Midwest and Northeast. Mediums that helped popularize the surf culture and the music that served as its soundtrack included movies, television, and print. These mediums also sparked vacations to Southern California's beaches which helped surf music's popularity via first-hand contact with the surf culture and its music.

Technological innovations, such as using foam for surfboards, helped popularize and accessibilize surf culture by making surfboards more affordable, lighter, and easier to maneuver. The collaboration that took place between Dick Dale and Leo Fender resulted in the creation of the Dual Showman Amp, which was finally a guitar amplifier that could produce the volume necessary to tap through a drum set playing in a large auditorium and was loud enough for the dancing audience to "feel" the energy of the music. Furthermore, the Reverb Unit, which created a "wet sound," and the Stratocaster and Jaguar guitars that Fender produced, were widely utilized by surf musicians and it helped create a surf sound that was unique and interesting.

The 1959 release of *Gidget* sensationalized surfing on the beaches of Southern California and it created an explosion in the sport. Numerous beach-themed movies followed in *Gidget's* footsteps and helped bring the beach and its rapidly growing culture



to every corner of the United States and everywhere in-between. For some people that lived too far away from the beach to go surfing, they could still participate in the ideal lifestyle by bolting surfboards to the tops of their cars. And for the many people that felt that that was a bit too extreme, they could still participate through beach-themed movies; fashion; dance; and most notably, through music. As the surfing documentary *Endless Summer* proved through its box office success in cities far removed from the beach, people didn't need to be surfers to enjoy watching other people surf and the seemingly carefree lifestyle that the surfers led. In the same way, people didn't need to be surfers to enjoy listening and dancing to surf music; they also didn't need to be surfers to play surf music in a band, as illustrated by the most successful surf band of all time, The Beach Boys, where four out of five of the members did not surf.

According to the release dates from the surf records in the study, a little bit more than half of the surf music in the five-year period from 1962-1966 were released in 1963, making that the peak year in surf music production, which is arguably the same year as surf music's peak in popularity. Taking a closer look at the volume of surf music releases included in the study (n=363), it was found that 10% (38) were from 1962; 53% (193) from 1963; 24% (88) from 1964; 8% (29) from 1965; and only 4% (15) from 1966. So since the genre's creation in 1961 by its main architect Dick Dale, it only took two years to reach its peak in productivity in 1963; then the following year of 1964, its productivity decreased by more than half, and then again decreased by more than half in 1965, and again nearly half in 1966.

While the majority of surf music was being released by bands from Southern California, the mean location of surf music releases in the study was slowly shifting

towards the east. According to the yearly location means, in 1962, it was in Orange County; by 1963, it reached the northwest portion of Arizona; by 1964, it had reached the southeast corner of Utah; in 1965, it receded a little ways back to the northeast part of Arizona; and in 1966, it was in the northern part of New Mexico. According to the six-month location means, a large shift occurred between the first half of 1963 and the second half of 1963, where it shifted approximately 340 miles from Southern California to Northern Arizona. There was virtually no difference between location means between the first half of 1964 and the second half of 1964, where it stayed in the southeast corner of Utah. It is interesting to note that the large shift in location mean that took place in-between the first half of 1963 and the second half of 1963 coincides with the most popular year for surf music. In other words, as the releases in surf music increased, the percentage of that surf music being released outside of Southern California also increased. The majority of the music was still being released in Southern California, but a shift was taking place, and the quicker the popularity, the more dramatic the shift. With the slowing of releases in 1964, the shift came to a standstill where the location mean stood still in the southeast corner of Utah during both the first half and the second half of 1964.

When 'Let's Go Trippin'' was released by Dick Dale & His Deltones in September 1961, it became the first surf song to make it onto the Billboard Hot 100. According to top chart favorites from radio stations, the song fared noticeably better in Los Angeles with a ranking of number four. A distance decay effect took place where the song ranked 18 in San Francisco, California; 19 in Chicago, Illinois; 29 in Toronto, Ontario; 29 in New Haven, Connecticut; and 44 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Four

months later in January 1962, 'Surfer's Stomp' by The Marketts was released. A similar distance decay effect took place where it by far ranked the best in Los Angeles at number two; followed by San Francisco at number seven. Going north it was 23 in Boise, Idaho and 25 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Traveling east, it ranked 21 in St Louis, Missouri; 33 in Chicago; 39 in Springfield, Massachusetts; and 44 in Lakeland, Florida. When 'Surfin' Safari' was released by The Beach Boys in June 1962, the distance a city was from Los Angeles no longer affected how high of a ranking the song did - the distance decay effect vanished and surf songs were as big of a hit or bigger in cities thousands of miles away from the waves of Orange County. Culture played a part in its receptivity, as can be seen by how much better it was received in Buffalo, New York versus 60 miles away in Toronto, Ontario, and how much less received it was in New York, New York versus the smaller and less bustling cities nearby in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Ford (1971, 455) wrote, "Music has certainly played a very big part in the images many people have of such places as New Orleans and Liverpool, and it would be interesting to know what impact the 'California surf' sound of the early 1960s had on the migration of young people to that state." Surf music definitely played a big part on people's perception of what Southern California was like, and while surf music's influence on migration may still be unknown, we now have a clearer understanding of surf music's spatial and temporal aspects.

While many music styles tend to diffuse from the periphery to the core, surf music contradicts this by diffusing from the core (Southern California) to the periphery (Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, etc...). Unlike many other styles of music, such as

jazz and blues that diffused relatively slowly, surf music diffused relatively quickly.

Could it be that the reason it was accepted relatively quickly across the United States is that it did originate from the core, whereas jazz and blues, both from the South, originated from the periphery? This would have placed surf music on the center stage of American culture from the beginning, whereas jazz and blues existed and evolved for decades before being accepted in the core of American culture. Or is it because technological advancements helped speed the process of sharing cultural ideas?

Advancements and popularity in movies, television, radio, and transportation/traveling could help spread ideas much quicker in the early 1960s compared to fifty years earlier, enabling shifts in national taste to occur practically overnight. Furthermore, is the quickness that surf music *faded* from popularity directly related to the quickness that it *climbed* to popularity? Did the same technological advancements that helped speed up its national popularity, help replace it with the British invasion groups?

1963 and 1964 were by far the busiest years for surf music, with 77% of the vinyl in the study being released during those two years, but it would not be long before the genre faded away. In 1964, The Beach Boys and The Surfaris had a successful tour in Australia and in 1965 it was supposed to be The Hondells turn to play their surf music down under. The Hondells were booked for the Australian Surfside '65 Tour which was due to start in January 1965, but in November 1964, the Australian promoters decided to cancel it because they realized that surf music wasn't as popular as the emerging British invasion. The tour was reinvented for the times and renamed to The Big Beat Show, and featured the British rockers, The Rolling Stones (Burt 1986). And in June 1967, The Beach Boys cancelled their appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival because Brian



Wilson thought they were out of step with the times and would be ridiculed (Wood 1995). According to John Zambetti of The Malibooz, “With the popularity of the Beatles and Bob Dylan and psychedelia, interest in surf music kind of fell by the wayside. Everyone just sort of melded into psychedelic-rock bands...We all changed our names and sort of moved on from what we had been doing before with surf music” (Chidester and Priore 2008, 193).

Although surf music faded away in the mid 1960s in the wake of the British Invasion groups, it never completely died. Surf music revivals have occurred over the decades and numerous surf bands have emerged as a result. Besides new bands emerging, several of the bands from the early 1960s still perform to this day including Dick Dale, The Beach Boys, The Surfaris, The Chantays, and The Trashmen. As Dal Winslow relates in 2011: “Over the past three years we have done several tours in Europe...No surf but the music is really well received. There are several surf groups and surf festivals that occur in the middle of Spain, France, and Italy...Some call it Surf/Punk or Garage, but it’s still the same old stuff...” (McCarter 2011). With or without surf, the music that was born from that culture will continue to be performed and enjoyed by audiences around the world. As Blair (1996, 11) succinctly notes: “Popular music has never captured the same sense of youthful vitality and spirit, the celebration of life, quite the way that surf music did. Certainly the innocence of the music, accompanied by its inherent fun-in-the-sun message, was one of its most endearing qualities.”

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