

“I Can Hear Music...”

By Rick Cogbill
April 2006

“THIS IS THE WAY...I ALWAYS DREAMED IT WOULD BE...”

“What in the world – OUCH!” Tooner rubbed the back of his head where he’d smacked it on the hood. “Who’s making that awful racket?”

“It’s Bean,” replied Quigley. “He’s practicing for the Beach Boys Competition next Friday.”

A high-pitched falsetto warbled over from the brake lathe, harmonizing to the sounds of grinding metal. “OH OH...WHEN YOU ARE HOLDING ME!”

“Give him a break, fellas,” I said, oiling my air ratchet. “Beanie’s a big fan of Brian Wilson. This is his first gig.”

“I CAN HEAR MUSIC...SWEET, SWEET MUSIC!”

“Yikes!” Quigley headed for the front office. “It could be his last.”

I went over and unplugged the earphones from Beanie’s mp3 player. He looked up in surprise. “What’s wrong, Boss?”

“How about ‘Little Deuce Coupe’ or ‘Surfin’ Safari’? We’re tired of that other tune.”

He cringed. “Sorry. It’s my song for the talent night, and it still needs work.”

“No argument there. Look, take a break and check out Ellie Brewster’s Hyundai; sometimes her radio won’t turn off.”

Beanie’s eyes lit up. Ellie was a young college girl who spent a lot of time at the gym, and it showed.

“Hey, if I fix her radio, maybe she’ll go out with me!”

I rolled my eyes; Beanie’s dating logic left a lot to be desired.



But his hopes of an impressive fix disappeared like a one-hit wonder. “What gives?” he complained during coffee break. “That radio works perfectly.”

Basil arranged his playing cards. “And therein lays the mystery. Ellie’s been in three times with this complaint, but so far she’s the only one who can ‘hear the music.’” He chuckled at his own pun.

“I can’t tell her she’s just imagining things,” wailed The Bean. “She’ll never go out with me then!”

“Give it up, Beanie,” said Tooner. “You can’t get there from here.” He inspected his hand and growled. “Who dealt this mess?”

Just then Ellie came through the front door, puffing slightly from her five-kilometer run. “Howdy, boys!” She removed a pink sweatband from her head and shook free her long blonde hair. “Is my car ready yet?”

We all looked at Beanie, who had a sudden case of stage fright. Ellie followed our collective gaze. “Well, Beanie, tell me. Did you hear the mystery music?”

“Yeah, Bean,” teased Tooner. “Sing Ellie your song!”

Beanie broke out in a cold sweat. “A-actually, Ellie,” he squeaked. “I couldn’t hear anything. M-maybe you’re just...”

“Harrumph.” Ellie dismissed him with a wave of her hand. “I’m not imagining this, Slim. It happens every time I leave the gym, yet by the time I get to your shop, it quits.” She grabbed her keys from the counter and stomped off in the direction of her car.

“That went well,” groaned our apprentice.

Basil reshuffled the deck of cards. “Beanie, it’s time to use your head for more than holding headphones apart. Think about it; if Ellie says she can’t hear the radio here, then neither will you. If you want to ‘hear the music’, then...”

Beanie snapped his fingers. “Then I have to go to where she *does* hear it!” In a flash he was out the door, chasing down Ellie’s car before she could leave the parking lot. Soon they were driving off towards the gym.

“Not exactly a date,” I observed. “But it’s a start.”

Ten minutes later Beanie was back, looking bleaker than the fine print in a record producer’s contract.

“Well, what happened?”

Our prospective American idol sighed heavily. “Ellie despises me more than ever.”

“Oh,” said Quigley. “No music at the gym either?”

“Actually, there was. It was coming from her gym bag in the back seat. Ellie works out with a portable radio and earphones, but sometimes she forgets to turn it off after a session.”

Tooner scratched his head. “Then how come we don’t hear it when the car’s in the shop?”

Beanie shrugged. “She listens to that local radio station from the next town. By the time she gets up to our place, the signal fades out.”

“Great! You solved the problem. So why the long face?”

Beanie grimaced. “Because it suits my big mouth! Ellie said that surely she would know if her radio wasn’t turned off, and I replied that everybody has a blonde moment now and then, so...”

“Yikes!” said Quigley for the second time. “Kid, you’ve got a lot to learn about women.”

But a week later a box of donuts appeared at our front counter, complete with a small toy radio inside.

“Not bad,” mumbled Tooner as he stuffed another chocolate cream into his mouth. “Looks like Beanie has been forgiven.”

“Not only that,” I said, reaching for a Long John. “It turns out that Ellie is a big-time Beach Boys fan. She even went with Beanie to his talent show.”

Basil raised his eyebrows. “That must have made his day.”

“Just listen,” I said, opening the door to the shop, where Beanie was once again harmonizing with the brake lathe.

“ROUND, ROUND, GET AROUND...I GET AROUND!”