

THE LETTER

(Wayne Thompson)

Shadows: December 1967 LP *From Hank, Bruce, Brian And John*

Ventures: May 1969 LP *Hawaii Five-O* (US No.11)



The Shadows' rendition of 'San Francisco' was nothing to write home about (see on [37]). They made a much better job of the vocals of 'The Letter' with some effort made to emulate the grittiness and snappiness of The Box Tops' model, Hank working in some nifty guitar work for good measure. The Ventures' 1969 album, though hardly in the top league of American music-making, has been somewhat undervalued by the reviewers. Even so, the strident duelling between Gerry's lead guitar and the concentration of strenuously deployed brass instruments has certainly been taken to extremes in this particular instance, the closing twenty seconds or so being especially ear-piercing: one of the truly great songs of the glorious 60s vandalised. There is a snatch of the number in the course of a diverting Bob Bogle-led medley on the 1993 CD *In Japan '93*: "Who could resist that tremeloed Jazzmaster early sixties tone on such an unlikely animal as the 'blue-eyed soul' of The Letter?" John Beddington in *Pipeline* 23 [1994] 60.

Listen to the Medley on:
1998 2CD (UK) *Stars On Guitars*

