



# JUST FOR THE RECORD

by Dennis Barker



## Don McLean: *American Pie*

*A long, long time ago, I can still remember.* With this phrase, musician & wordsmith Don McLean would take American youth on an abstract excursion through his perception of American pop culture. From the tragic 1959 plane crash death of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens & the Big Bopper (the day the music died), Don McLean's "American Pie" would Chronicle the evolution of popular music from the idealized dance tunes of the 1950's through the turbulent culture of the 60's.

In "American Pie" McLean laments the loss of the America of his youth, continually juxtaposing those times against the more tumultuous 1960's. As American values changed, so would its music. Rock & Roll shifted from the simplistic dance music of the 50's, to more idealistic, radical and political music in the 1960's. McLean Extols the virtues of early Rock & Roll, while mourning the loss of innocence with the refrain, "*bye bye miss American pie*".

Through a succession of verses, "American Pie" cryptically comments on the defining musical figures of the decade. Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, the Beatles, The Byrds, The Rolling Stones and Janis Joplin, along with Fillmore West, Woodstock, Hells Angels and the Stone's Altamont concert disaster all take part in McLean's elegy. McLean's "American Pie" is perhaps the definitive American narrative of early Rock & Roll.

Released in 1971, "American Pie" is a well crafted record, which has kept Rock & Roll aficionado's guessing for almost 40 years. Even at 8 ½ minutes, the cryptic lyrics and catchy tune hold your interest. The kids on Dick Clark would have given it an 8, it sounds great, and you can dance to it.

*"Do you believe in Rock'n Roll, can music save your mortal soul and can you teach me how to dance real slow?"* You betcha.

PS. Beware, the Madonna Version of this song is cheesecake, not pie.

**DON McLEAN, *American Pie***  
UNITED ARTISTS LABEL .... #50856 (RELEASED OCTOBER 1971)

Goldmine price guide to 45 rpm records, Values original copies of American Pie,

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