

Listen To The Music

"American Pie"

Most of us are aware of the influence a given culture has on its various forms of artistic expression, and music is no exception. Music truly is a reflection of the times just as the times themselves are reflected in the music. A most recent example of this may be seen in Don McLean's "American Pie."

McLean's smash hit may not achieve the success of something as sensational as the rock opera "Jesus Christ: Superstar," but it certainly is creating a stir throughout North America. The actual meaning of the lyrics can only be speculative and agreement as to the theme has not and probably will never be reached. McLean as the writer-singer-poet is for the most part exercising his privilege of "poetic license" and remaining silent. The song itself seems to tell of the late pop-singer Buddy Holly, who was tragically killed in a 1959 plane crash along with several other rock performers. If this interpretation is correct, the song would appear to be a kind of tribute to Holly's music and memory. With the permission of station WWWW, (106 fm), we are running a copy of their interpretation. What do YOU think?

A long, long time ago
I can still remember
How that music used to make me smile
And I knew if I had my chance
That I could make those people dance
And maybe they'd be happy for a while
But February(1) made me shiver
With every paper I'd deliver
Bad news on the doorstep(2)
I couldn't take one more step
I can't remember if I cried
When I read about his(3) widowed bride
But something touched me deep inside
The day the music died(4)

(CHORUS)

So bye bye Miss American pie
Drove my chevy to the levee
But the levee was dry
And them good old boys
Were drinking whiskey and rye
Singing, this'll be the day that I die
Singing, this'll be the day that I die

Did you write the book of love(5)
And do you have faith in God above
If the bible tells you so(5)
Now do you believe in rock and roll
Can music save your mortal soul
And can you teach me how to dance real slow?(6)
Well I know that you're in love with him
Cause I saw you dancing in the gym
You both kicked off your shoes
Then I dig them rythm and blues
I was a lonely teenage bronkin' buck
With a pink carnation and a pickup truck
But I knew I was out of luck(7)
The day the music died...

(CHORUS)

Now for ten years we've been on our own
And moss grows fat on a rolling stone(8)
But that's not how it used to be
When the jester sang for the king and queen(9)
In a coat he borrowed from
James Dean
In a voice that came from you and me
Oh and while the king was looking down(10)
The Jester stole his thorny crown
The court room was adjourned
No verdict was returned
And while Lennon read
A book on Marx(11)
The quartet practiced in the park
And we sang dirges(12) in the dark
The day the music died we were singing...

(CHORUS)

Helter, skelter, in a summer swelter(13)
The Byrds flew off(14)
For a fallout shelter
Eight miles high and falling fast
They landed foul on the grass

The players tried(15)
For a forward pass
With the jester on the sidelines
In a cast(16)
Now the half-time air
Was sweet perfume(17)
While the sergeants(18)
Played a marching tune
We all got up to dance(19)
Oh but we never got the chance
Cause the players
Tried to take the field(20)
The marching band(21)
refused to yield.
Do you recall
What was revealed
The day the music died...

(CHORUS)

Oh in there(22)
We were all in one place
A generation lost in space
With no time left to start again
So come on
Jack be nimble
Jack be quick
Jack Flash(23) sat on a candle stick
Cause fire is
The devil's only friend
Oh as I watched him
On the stage(24)
My hands were clenched
In fists of rage
No angel born in hell(25)
Could break that Satan's spell
And as flames climbed high(26)
Into the night
To light
The sacrificial right(27)
I saw Satan laughing with delight
The day the music died...

(CHORUS)

I met a girl(28)
Who sang the blues
And I asked her
For some happy news
She just smiled
And turned away(29)
I went down
To the sacred store(30)
Where I'd heard the music
Years before
But the man there said
The music wouldn't play(31)
And in the streets
The children screamed(32)
The lovers cried
And the poets dreamed
Not a word was spoken
The church bells all were broken(33)
And the three men I admired most
The father, son and holy ghost
They caught the last train for the coast(34)

(1)February '59 Buddy Holly,
Richie Valens, The Big
Bopper die in a plane crash
(2)The plane crash
(3)Buddy Holly
(4)The death of the American
spirit
(5)Early rock hits
(6)The balance of this stanza
is a nostalgic remembrance
of McLean's High School days
(7)The carefree High School
era was over
(8)The rolling stones popularity
brings them "moss" money
America had become complacent
and was awakening from the
American Dream
(9)The "jester" is Bob Dylan.
The "king" is Elvis
(10)In the early '60's while Elvis
was making movies, Dylan stole
his popularity. The "thorny
crown" was the responsibility
of success
(11)The Beatles were changing
their style
(12)Funeral dirges for our
assassinated leaders
(13)Summer of '67-riots and
Haight-Ashbury
(14)The Byrds helped bring
underground above ground.
With such songs as "8 Miles
High." America realized
that she had real trouble.
(15)The players were the young
people who came to Chicago
during the convention
(16)Referring to Dylan's motorcycle
accident
(17)Tear gas
(18)The National Guard was
marched in
(19)We prepared to celebrate a
change
(20)The march to Wrigley field
(21)Police and National Guard
(22)Altamont Speedway
(23)Mick Jagger
(24)At altamont
(25)Hell's Angel
(26)Bonfires at Altamont
(27)The killing of
Meredith Hunter
(at Altamont)
(28)Janis Joplin
(29)Her death
(30)Filmore West
(31)The Filmore had closed
(32)The My Lai Massacre
(33)American lost its religious
influence
(34)Possibly meaning that the
church went commercial. Could
also refer to the loss of the
Kennedy brothers and Martin
Luther King.

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