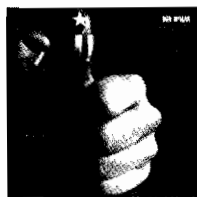


American Pie

Words and music by Don McLean



At over eight and a half minutes long, "American Pie" is an unlikely single, but its sweeping tale of rock history and tragedy along with its infectiously singable chorus made it Don McLean's defining song.

The version of this song on *American Pie* starts with solo piano accompaniment, the guitar enters on the first chorus, and a full band kicks in with verse two. At the sixth verse, the band drops out, leaving the piano as the sole backdrop again. The guitar layers in on the following chorus, and the tune ends with its signature sing-along. In the transcription below, the sections played solely by piano are adapted to guitar. For

these slower sections, like the first verse, simply strum through each chord once to get the same feel as the piano on the recording. Once the guitar enters, an eighth-note strum pattern like the one shown here will work fine. Note that the first and sixth verses (played on solo piano on the recording) follow a slightly different chord progression from the other verses (which were recorded with a full band); while it might look like there are a lot of differences between the two progressions, they still sound similar in length and phrasing. McLean often embellishes his D and D7 chords with suspended fourths and seconds. He also uses A7 and A chords interchangeably throughout the choruses, so go with whichever sound you prefer.

—ANDREW DuBROCK

Chords

G 320004	D/F# 10023x	Em 012000	Am x02310	C 342010
Dsus4 xx0134	D xx0132	Dsus2 xx0130	G/B x2000x	
A x01230	D7 xx0213	D9 xx0210	D7sus4 xx0214	

Strum Pattern

* ◻ = down; ▽ = up

<p>1. 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 made me shiver with every paper I'd deliver Bad news on the doorstep, I couldn't take one more step I can't remember if I cried when I read about his widowed bride But something touched me deep inside the day the music died, so</p> <p><i>Chorus</i> Bye, bye, Miss American Pie Drove my Chevy to the levee, but the levee was dry And them good old boys were drinkin' whiskey and rye Singin' "this'll be the day that I die,</p>	<p>This'll be the day that I die"</p> <p>2. Did you write the book of love and do you have faith in God above If the Bible tells you so? Do you believe in rock 'n' roll? Can music save your mortal soul? And can you teach me how to dance real slow? Well I know that you're in love with him 'cause I saw you dancin' in the gym You both kicked off your shoes, man I dig those rhythm and blues I was a lonely teenage broncin' buck with a pink carnation and a pickup truck But I knew I was out of luck the day the music died I started singin'...</p>
---	--

Repeat Chorus

© 1971, 1977 BENNY B. RO. CO. COPYRIGHT RENEWED. ALL RIGHTS CONTROLLED AND ADMINISTERED BY SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. USED BY PERMISSION. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF HAL LEONARD CORP.

3. Now for 10 years we've been on our own and moss

grows fat on a rollin' stone

But that's not how it used to be

When the jester sang for the king and queen in a coat

he borrowed from James Dean

And a voice that came from you and me

Oh, and while the king was looking down, the jester

stole his thorny crown

The courtroom was adjourned, no verdict was returned

And while Lenin read a book of Marx a quartet practiced in the park

And we sang dirges in the dark the day the music died

We were singin' . . .

Repeat Chorus

4. Helter skelter in a summer swelter, the birds flew off

with a fallout shelter

Eight miles high and fallin' fast

It landed foul on the grass, the players tried for a forward pass

With the jester on the sidelines in a cast

Now the half-time air was sweet perfume while the sergeants

played a marching tune

We all got up to dance, oh, but we never got the chance

'Cause the players tried to take the field, the marching

band refused to yield

Do you recall what was revealed the day the music died?

We started singin' . . .

Repeat Chorus

5. Oh, and there 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

sat on a candlestick

'Cause fire is the devil's only friend

Oh, and as I watched him on the stage my hands were

clenched in fists of rage

No angel born in hell could break that Satan's spell

And as the flames climbed high into the night to light the sacrificial rite

I saw Satan laughing with delight the day the music died

We were singin' . . .

Repeat Chorus

6. I met a girl who sang the blues and I asked her for some happy news

But she just smiled and turned away

I went down the sacred store where I'd heard the music years before

But the man there said the music wouldn't play

And in the streets the children screamed, the lovers

cried, and the poets dreamed

But not a word was spoken, the church bells all were broken

And the three men I admire most: the father, son, and the holy ghost

They caught the last train for the coast the day the music died

And they were singin' . . .

Repeat Chorus (two times)

. . . Singin' "This'll be the day that I die"