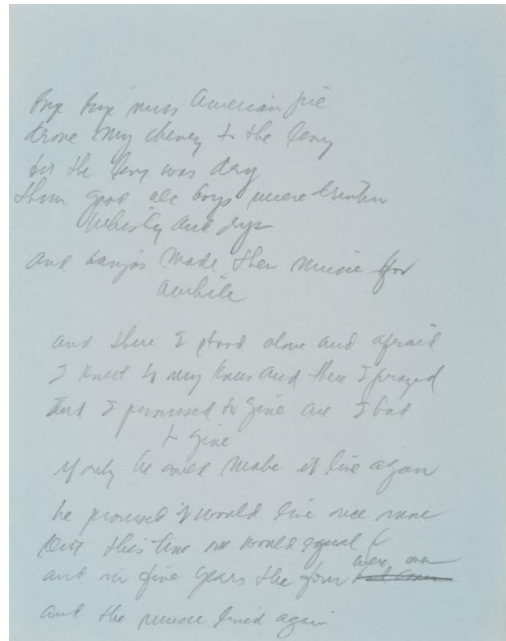


# CHRISTIE'S

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## DON MCLEAN'S ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT FOR "AMERICAN PIE"

TO BE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK, 7 APRIL 2015



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“IT IS AN AMERICAN DREAM. IT IS AN ALLEGORY. AND IT HAS BECOME AN ANTHEM.” – Don McLean

**New York** – On April 7, Christie’s New York will auction the original manuscript and notes to Don McLean’s “American Pie,” sold by the singer-songwriter. Arguably the most iconic and recognizable American song of the Twentieth Century, the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Endowment for the Arts named it a “Song of the Century.” Its power remains as potent and as vital as when it was first released in 1971. This masterpiece of American arts and letters is estimated at \$1 to \$1.5 million. The original working manuscript and typed drafts for the song comprise of 16 pages, containing 237 lines of manuscript and 26 lines of typed text.

Since debuting on the airwaves in 1971, Don McLean’s “American Pie” has stood as one of the most important icons of twentieth-century American music. Alternately wistful, buoyant, and enigmatic, the singer-songwriter’s masterpiece became the anthem of McLean’s own “generation lost in space,” and continues to resonate in the present day. In the span of just six verses, McLean managed to depict with poetic authority the turbulent upheavals of the latter half of the twentieth century. In doing so, he created an emblem that stands alongside the work of post-war figures such as Andy Warhol, J.D. Salinger, and Bob Dylan in its importance to the American cultural canon. For the musician himself, the writing of “American Pie” was a means of capturing and examining the American zeitgeist; it was, McLean stated, “part of my process of self-awakening; a mystical trip into my past.”

## AN ENDURING ENIGMA

“American Pie” has been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame and was named a “Song of the Century” by the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Endowment for the Arts. An inductee into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and winner of the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards Lifetime Achievement Award, McLean followed the success of *American Pie* with a tremendously prolific career as a singer-songwriter. Yet he has remained decidedly enigmatic about the meaning and messages hidden in his masterpiece; like any great work of art, the song remains open to interpretation, informed by the histories and experiences of all those who encounter it. An icon of twentieth-century culture, “American Pie” is also an enduring chorale of symbolism and songwriting in the twenty-first.

## THE MAKINGS OF A TROUBADOUR

Don McLean possessed a childhood interest in music that would come to inform his early years as a singer-songwriter. During his youth in New Rochelle, New York, McLean excelled at singing and guitar, and performed regularly for family and friends. “By the time I was twelve years old,” he said, “I knew hundreds of pop songs and was excited by many diverse rock, pop, and folk artists.” The young musician was drawn not only to the energetic sound of recording artists such as Little Richard and Buddy Holly, but also to American folk artists such as the Weavers, a socially conscious quartet McLean described as “unlike any musical group that has ever been, or ever will be.” He became fixated on the idea that there was a life to be made as a performer: “I knew I was going to make a living at music,” McLean remembered, “for the simple reason that I didn’t want to have to wear a suit or take a day job.”

By 1964, the young troubadour had left his studies at Villanova University for the creative vibrancy of New York City. The epicenter of the 1960s folk music community, it was in New York that McLean encountered contemporaries such as Bob Dylan performing in Washington Square Park, and where he fostered relationships with some of the most influential producers and musicians of the period. McLean honed his signature performance style at venues such as the Gaslight Café and the Bitter End in New York, the Cellar Door in Washington, D.C., and at the Newport Folk Festival. From the mid-1960s, McLean found himself in demand across the Northeast, performing along the Hudson River Valley with the New York State Council on the Arts as well as with musicians such as the Weavers’ Pete Seeger. McLean’s first album, *Tapestry*, was released in 1970, and included songs such as “Castles in the Air,” “And I Love You So,” and “Magdalene Lane.” The *New York Times* described the tracks as “nearly perfect marriages of music, lyrics, and ideas,” foreshadowing the characteristics that would make “American Pie” a remarkable achievement in songwriting.

## “...A LONG, LONG TIME AGO...”

The phenomenal success of Don McLean’s second album, *American Pie*, earned the musician recognition as one of the greatest singer-songwriters of his generation. The album’s eponymous single, composed in Pennsylvania and at McLean’s Victorian cottage in Cold Spring, New York, was recorded in May 1971. By the time *American Pie* was released in October, radio interest in its title track sent the album rocketing up the charts: the single “American Pie” achieved number-one status in January 1972, and remains the longest track to ever hold such a distinction. In the United States, Europe, and beyond, a rapt, inquisitive international audience vaulted Don McLean and “American Pie” into the annals of music history. “‘American Pie,’ wrote critic David Browne in the *New York Times*,

“took over the airwaves and the consciousness in a way that few records had done before or since.... Here was a pop phenomenon that grabbed the public’s attention not so much with chords as with words.” Along with songs like "Castles in the Air," "And I Love You So," "Vincent (Starry Starry Night)," "Tapestry" and many others, Don McLean has established himself as one of the greatest songwriters of *any* generation.

**Auction date:** April 7, 10 a.m.

**On public exhibition:** Christie’s, 20 Rockefeller Center, April 2-6, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., (Closed for the Easter Holiday on April 5)

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer’s premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer’s premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer’s or seller’s credits.*

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