

Sports, Entertainment, Arts & Media News

Don McLean marks 55th anniversary of “American Pie” as the Surf Ballroom announces 2027 life size bronze statue honoring iconic singer and songwriter

CLEAR LAKE, Ia. (February 3, 2026) — Fifty five years after its release, Don McLean’s “American Pie” remains one of the most enduring anthems in American music — a sweeping, eight minute epic that captured a nation in transition and immortalized the phrase “the day the music died.” Today, as “American Pie” turns 55 (1971–2026), McLean is celebrating the milestone on tour while also helping propel a new chapter of preservation at the Surf Ballroom & Museum in Clear Lake, Iowa.

The Surf Ballroom — the National Historic Landmark where Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson performed on February 2, 1959 as part of the Winter Dance Party tour — announced that a life size bronze statue honoring McLean will be erected on-site in 2027. The statue will stand as a permanent tribute to the songwriter whose work helped carry the story of that night into global cultural memory, bridging generations of listeners, historians and music fans.

The new statue is inspired from an existing life size bronze portrait created by acclaimed sculptor Zenos Frudakis (Philadelphia). Originally completed in 1989, the portrait was featured on the cover of McLean’s album ‘Classics’. Frudakis, an acclaimed portrait sculptor and lifelong friend of McLean, is known the world over for his statues of Muhammad Ali, Nina Simone, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and many more. He is creating an entirely new statue for public display at the Surf, adding a new landmark for visitors to the historic ballroom and its adjacent museum experiences.

The announcement comes on February 3 on the heels of the 2026 Winter Dance Party at the Surf — the anniversary of the 1959 plane crash that claimed the lives of Holly, Valens and Richardson — a date forever intertwined with McLean’s songwriting. “The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation is thrilled that one of our most iconic ambassadors is being honored with a statue at The Surf Ballroom, the site of Buddy Holly’s final performance,” said Rick French, chairman of The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation and a



This statue will be installed at the legendary venue where Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson played their final show. (Photo/Courtesy: The Surf Ballroom)

national trustee of the famed Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. “While American Pie was famously inspired by the plane crash that claimed the lives of Buddy, Ritchie Valens and J.P. Richardson on February 3, 1959, it has stood for more than half a century as an anthem to the cultural shifts of our country and is as relevant today as it has ever been.”

The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation (TBHEF) works to extend musical education — including songwriting, production, arranging, orchestration and performance — to new generations regardless of income or learning levels. The Foundation also sup-

ports emerging artists through mentoring and songwriting retreats, and its Ambassadors receive a replica of Buddy Holly’s own Gibson J 45 to encourage new music in his memory. “To this day Don remains one of Maria Elena Holly’s closest friends and she was overjoyed to learn a statue is being cast in his honor,” added Peter Bradley, Jr., vice chairman of The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation, who is working closely with McLean, his management team and Jeff Nichols at the Surf Ballroom to plan a blockbuster unveiling of the statue upon completion. First opened in 1933 (and rebuilt

in 1948 after a fire), the Surf Ballroom continues to host concerts and special events year round and welcomes visitors to explore the site’s museum offerings. In recent years, the Surf expanded its educational mission with new immersive experiences honoring the artists and cultural moments that shaped early rock ‘n’ roll — ensuring that the ‘Winter Dance Party’ story is preserved not only as history, but as a living, visitable place.

DON McLEAN 2026 TOUR DATES (SUBJECT TO CHANGE):
Fri, Mar 20 — Seminole Casino Hotel Immokalee — Immokalee,

Fla.
Sat, Mar 21 — Maxwell C. King Center for the Performing Arts — Melbourne, Fla.
Sun, Mar 22 — Savannah Center — The Villages, Fla.
Mon, Mar 23 — Nancy and David Bilheimer Capitol Theatre — Clearwater, Fla.
Sat, May 16 — Honeywell Center — Wabash, Ind.
Fri, May 22 — Edmond Town Hall — Newton, Ct.
Thu, May 28 — Riviera Theatre — North Tonawanda, N.Y.
Fri, May 29 — Caesars Circus Maximus Theater — Atlantic City, N.J.
Sat, Jun 06 — Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino — Las Vegas, Nev.
Sat, Aug 01 — Murphy Theatre — Wilmington, Ohio
Sat, Aug 22 — Indiana State Fairgrounds & Event Center — Indianapolis, Ind.

For tickets and the latest updates, visit DonMcLean.com.

About Don McLean:
Don McLean is an iconic American singer songwriter whose body of work includes the timeless classics “American Pie,” “Vincent (Starry, Starry Night),” “And I Love You So,” and “Crying.” Born in New Rochelle, New York, McLean emerged from the 1960s folk circuit, served as New York State’s “Hudson River Troubadour,” and performed as part of the first crew of Pete Seeger’s Sloop Clearwater before breaking through globally with the 1971 release of “American Pie.” McLean is a Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee and a BBC Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. “American Pie” has been recognized among the top songs of the 20th century and is preserved in the Library of Congress’ National Recording Registry. McLean continues to record and tour, bringing his catalog to new audiences while honoring the artists and traditions that shaped American popular music.

For more information, visit DonMcLean.com.

About The Surf Ballroom & Museum:
Located at 460 North Shore Drive in Clear Lake, Iowa, the Surf Ballroom is one of the most storied venues in American

music history. The Surf is best known as the final stage for Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson on February 2, 1959. It was later designated a National Historic Landmark for its enduring cultural significance, and it remains a working concert venue as well as a museum and educational destination.

The Surf hosts the annual Winter Dance Party tribute each February and welcomes visitors year round. Next door, the Surf’s immersive museum experiences and educational programming deepen the story for new generations of fans — connecting the music of the past with the artists of the present. For more information, visit SurfBallroom.com.

About Zenos Frudakis:

Zenos Frudakis is a celebrated American sculptor known for expressive figurative bronze works installed in public spaces and collections worldwide. Based in the Philadelphia area, Frudakis has created numerous landmark commissions — including the monumental Freedom sculpture in Philadelphia — and has spent decades building a studio practice dedicated to craft, storytelling and timeless form. For more information, visit ZenosFrudakis.com.

About The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation (TBHEF):
The Buddy Holly Educational Foundation honors Buddy Holly’s legacy while advancing Buddy and Maria Elena Holly’s dream of extending musical education to new generations. TBHEF supports songwriting, production and performance education; sponsors mentoring programs and songwriting retreats; and preserves rare memorabilia for public exhibition. The Foundation’s Ambassadors program also enrolls contemporary legends who continue to celebrate Buddy Holly’s ideals through new music. For more information, visit TBHEF.org.

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See The Day The Music Died: American Pie | Official Trailer | Paramount+

The Overground RR selects EPI Media forging alliance to grow visibility and impact of Black-owned businesses

Atlanta, GA — February 9, 2026 — The Overground RR!! has selected EPI Media Group, a powerhouse public relations and business marketing firm, as their PR team. This alliance marks a purposeful step toward advancing the growth, visibility, and economic impact of Black-owned businesses and the au-

Black Economic History Spotlight

diencies they serve. The Overground RR!! is a movement born from the organization ‘Atlanta Black Agenda Business Resource Center Inc’. Its mission is to change the economic landscape of the black community. It is centered on the economic freedom of the Black community. At its core, the Overground RR!! seeks to empower Black individuals, families, and businesses by increasing the proportion of the Black economy that is owned, managed, and controlled by Black people, fostering financial

ECONOMIC MOVEMENT
A for-profit initiative advancing Black economic power by keeping dollars circulating within Black-owned communities.

BLACK BUSINESS DIRECTORY
A modern directory connecting consumers to verified, majority Black-owned businesses held to quality and accountability standards.

NON-PARTISAN MISSION
Unapologetically focused on Black economic advancement without political affiliation or DEI-based framing.

SCALABLE NATIONAL PLATFORM
Built as a movement powered by media, events, and sponsorships for long-term growth and impact.

FOR SPEAKER AND MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT
PRTEAM@EPIMEDIAGROUP.COM

independence, generational wealth, and community resilience. The Overground RR!! connects consumers with black owned businesses through churches and communities and organizations This Partnership with EPI Media Group will assist The Overground RR!! is expanding its community outreach by serving as a comprehensive resource for the Black community, helping individuals and businesses connect with services and providers they can trust to be Black-owned and operated. EPI Media Group will leverage strategic public relations and marketing expertise, and amplify awareness of the Overground RR!!’s initiatives, and position the Overground RR!! as a leading voice in economic empowerment for highlighting Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. EPI Media will drive community engagement through targeted campaigns, social media, and events, while also promoting the Overground

RR!!’s directory of trusted Black-owned services. Additionally, EPI Media will help forge strategic partnerships, expand networking opportunities, and support initiatives that foster financial independence, generational wealth, and long-term resilience within the Black community.

About The Overground RR The Overground RR!! is a movement dedicated to increasing the share of the Black economy that is owned, managed, and controlled by Black individuals and businesses. Through partnerships with churches, community organizations, and local networks, the Overground RR!! connects consumers with trusted Black-owned businesses, ensuring that economic opportunities remain within and benefit the community. This movement fosters financial independence, generational wealth, and community resilience, the Over-

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