

Goodbye, American Pie: The demise of happy car music

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I know there are huge problems in our politics and especially our economy right now, but sometimes it's enlightening to pay attention to the smaller things in our culture that slip under the radar.

One of these is car music. If you're below retirement age, you probably won't know what I'm talking about, but we used to have happy car music. It was broadcast across the land in both commercials and pop songs.

Seasoned citizens will remember Dinah Shore belting out "See the USA in your Chevrolet!" and the fellow who sang "Come away with me, Lucille, in our brand new Oldsmobile..." From about age nine to age 12, in Canada, I had this vision of America as a land teeming with happy people cruising down broad highways in big, shiny new cars.

Then the Beach Boys made their contribution to the teen car culture. Remember GTO and The Little Deuce Coupe?

Along came Hot Rod Lincoln. "Pappy said 'Son, you're gonna drive me to drinkin' if you don't stop drivin' that hot rod Lincoln'."

The Rip Chords got in on the act with "Hey Little Cobra" and who can forget Mustang Sally? If you're old enough, you can recall the Thunderbird, the Firebird, the Trans AM, and of course, the Mustang. It was the day of the muscle cars. We happily guzzled gas and turned up the radio. Car hops brought the burgers to your window and the fries were fried in real fat. It was carefree Muscle Car America. The surf was up, America was strong and the sun was shining on us.

Now Govmint Motors is introducing the Chevy Volt, an electric car pretty much dictated by the law school grads who are now acting as engineers at Govmint Motors. You're going to like the Volt. You really are. No, don't argue with me. YOU ARE GOING TO LIKE THE VOLT. Do you have the message now?

Anyway, on YouTube, there is a video featuring the new Volt song. It's a bit like hip hop and a little like a child's song but the lyrics are something else. They speak of all the virtues you will acquire with your Volt ownership. You need to understand that this is your duty as a citizen of the world. No emissions. Got that? Besides, it only costs \$41,000. Plus, the govmint will give you a \$7,500 credit for buying the, ah, vehicle.

My husband was convinced American culture began to die around 1954. We had a running argument - I thought it really tilted downhill in the mid 60s.

Singer/song writer Don McLean had it right when he chronicled the demise of many things in his hit tune, "American Pie."

"Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry. Them good ol' boys were drinking whisky and rye, the day the music died."

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