



The Entertainer

Billy Joel

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THE ENTERTAINER

Words and Music by Billy Joel

In “The Entertainer,” Joel tells of the highs and lows of being in show business. He traces the steps in rising to fame, but leads to the fact that without a hit, you can quickly disappear. No matter what the genre or decade, the sentiments Joel expresses ring true in an increasingly corporate game that often depends on expendable artists and ever-changing trends. The song’s epic feel and complex arrangements seem to defy the corporate music scene.

Figure 8—Intro

“The Entertainer” begins with this bright, syncopated melodic statement played on synth above a sprightly strummed acoustic guitar part. The piano plays a closely related part with simple harmonies in G. The synth is played with a slight portamento or “glide” setting to make each note slide into the next.

Fig. 8

11

Full Band

12

Slow Demo:
Synth & Piano
meas. 1-6

Intro
Fast Rock ♩ = 206
N.C. (G)

1 Synth

2 Piano

4 1. (Am) (G/B) 2. (Am) (G/B)

Figure 9—Verse 3 and Interlude

Joel accompanies his voice on piano only in certain verses. The third verse is the first and simplest appearance of piano accompaniment—just full chords hit on the syncopated changes. The verse’s construction begins with three symmetrical four-measure phrases, then a five-measure phrase added at the end, making a total of seventeen measures per verse (instead of the anticipated sixteen). The interlude is a synth/piano riff reminiscent of the intro.