



New York State Of Mind

Billy Joel

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NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Words and Music by Billy Joel

Billy Joel is a New Yorker to the end, and with “New York State of Mind,” he has written an unofficial anthem for NYC and its millions of citizens. In the song, Joel tells us that although he has traveled the country from coast to coast, there’s no place like home. In fact, Joel is happy with any reminder of the city, such as the New York Times or the Daily News, and whether supping in Chinatown or driving down Riverside Drive, it’s all fine with him. His performance of “New York State of Mind” at the September 11th Memorial Concert further cemented this song’s symbolic resonance with the city.

Figure 18—Intro

“New York State of Mind” begins with an eight-measure intro in Joel’s piano-bar style, played freely. Though he starts off clearly in C, he surprises us in measure 4 with the $A\flat\text{maj}7/B\flat$ —basically a $\flat\text{VII}$ chord borrowed from C minor. The rest of the intro outlines a ii–V movement, in which the F/G functions as the V.

Fig. 18

Intro

Freely
N.C.

mf

mp

mf

8vb

28 Solo Piano

Figure 19—Instrumental Verse

This section acts as a second intro. Here Joel lays out the basic theme of the song: A beautiful, bluesy melody over what could be called an 18-bar blues. (Compare this progression to Ray Charles’s “Hard Times.”) Joel uses secondary dominants throughout, as many of the diatonic chords (Am, F, and Dm, for example) are preceded by their dominants (E7#5, C7, and A7#5, respectively). The $B\flat 9$ is the $\flat\text{VII}$ chord (borrowed from C minor, and recalled from the intro); this chord contains the notes of an F minor chord (F $A\flat$ C) and works great in sentimental settings like this one.