Boogie Woogie
MADE EASY
(A COMPLETE COURSE IN BOOGIE WOOGIE)

BY
EDDY BALLANTINE

FOURTEEN DISTINCTIVE BOOGIE-WOOGIE PATTERNS
RIGHT-HAND CHORD CLUSTERS
SINGLE NOTE BOOGIE LICKS
HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN BOOGIE ARRANGEMENTS
HOW TO MAKE UP YOUR OWN BOOGIE PIECES
THE SOLID, ROLL, AND WALKING BASS

PRICE 50¢

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BACKGROUND

Many performers claim to have originated Boogie-Woogie, but no single pianist deserves all the credit. Just as the Blues were a natural outgrowth of Negro Spirituals, so is Boogie-Woogie the logical successor of the Blues. There are as many styles of Boogie-Woogie as there are performers, but on one point all seem agreed. Unless a continuous bass pattern (or figuration) is established and repeated over and over throughout the piece, it is not real Boogie.

Some of the more passionate devotees have generously credited Johann Sebastian Bach with laying the foundations in his organ pieces with a ground (or ostinato) bass. However true or false this assumption may be, some form of Boogie-Woogie has existed since the advent of ragtime as anyone who remembers the old nickel-pianos can testify.

Recently this style of piano playing has become tremendously popular, and no modern pianist can overlook the importance of this branch of his art. The purpose of this folio is to thoroughly acquaint the pianist with the various styles and the fundamentals of playing and improvising in the true Boogie-Woogie idiom. Basically it is quite simple, and by following the suggestions offered and practicing the exercises as directed, this most fascinating art may be quickly mastered. The course is graded and contains an advanced section utilizing all the material.
"EASY" BOOGIE

As the bass or left-hand part is most important in Boogie-Woogie, the various patterns will be presented first and a right-hand part added later. The first and simplest figuration (Easy Bass) is given below. Practice slowly and evenly in strict rhythm until the left hand becomes automatic, then gradually increase the speed.

"EASY" BASS

See explanation — page 25 (Press Notes)
Now combine both parts — slowly at first. The perfect synchronization of both hands is the real secret of good Boogie-Woogie technique. The faster this piece is played in strict "eight to the bar" style, the more it will sound like real Boogie.

"EASY" BOOGIE
Next in ease of execution is the “Solid” Bass which constitutes the left-hand part of many Boogie-Woogie pieces. Practice until considerable speed is attained.

In general, the more complex the left-hand figuration the simpler the right-hand part should be. The first of the Chord Clusters is given below. For improvisation purposes it should be noted that the sixth has been added to the major triads (chords) and the ninth has been added to the seventh chord. These added tones lend color and appear in all modern Boogie-Woogie works.
As these two parts are combined, it is well to remember that "fast" or "real" Boogie is played exactly as written; that is, even eighth notes. "Solid" Boogie is a typical example of the most popular form of Boogie piece. Note that it contains only twelve measures with an optional repeat.

"SOLID" BOOGIE
The basic harmonic and melodic patterns are the same for both slow and fast Boogie, but the rhythmical interpretation is quite different. Slow Boogie sounds stilted if played in straight “eight to the bar” style so most performers play it in triplet form. The following exercise is the same as “Solid” Boogie but the notation has been changed.
Inasmuch as most printed music will not appear in the triplet notation used on page six, an explanation is necessary. Some writers have used the dotted eighth and sixteenth note figuration to indicate the peculiar jumping rhythm of Slow or Moderate Boogie. (See Rushin' Around On Rush Street, page twenty-seven.) This seems to be the most practical method, but looks quite complicated, especially when a triplet appears in the melodic line. To avoid this confusion, the beginner need only remember that all Slow Boogie, regardless of how it is written, is played as if it were written in triplets as on page six. Fast or Real Boogie is usually played as a series of even eighth notes.

It is evident to anyone who has progressed thus far in this course that further progress is impossible without a sturdy left hand. To become adept at Boogie-Woogie playing requires more than average left-hand development. Continued daily practice of the bass patterns, however, will definitely strengthen the necessary muscles.

The characteristic treatment of the right-hand parts in Boogie-Woogie is a crisp, staccato attack. The pedal is rarely used, and some of the more ardent fans prefer the piano slightly out of tune as they contend it adds to the "Honky-Tonk" effect.
"WESTERN" BOOGIE

The songs of the West always sound well when accompanied by a steady rolling rhythm. When played slowly the "Western" Bass should be played smoothly in triplet form.

Slow

When speeded up, however, the "eight to the bar" treatment is best; that is, play the notes exactly as written below.

"WESTERN" (Rolling) BASS

The first of the "Single Note Boogie Licks" appears below. Western Treble should be practiced thoroughly before trying to fit it to the bass.

"WESTERN" TREBLE

(Chord Chester)
"Western" Bass and Treble sound equally well in both fast and slow tempos. The combination of the two results in "Western" Boogie.

"WESTERN" BOOGIE
A variation of Slow Boogie which is always interpreted in the triplet form is given below. It is a most interesting and characteristic pattern and one which should be in every Boogie-Woogie performer's repertoire.

"COMBINATION" BASS

"COMBINATION" TREBLE
The bass figuration of "Roll" Boogie looks more complicated than it really is. Some of the exponents of Fast Boogie are able to play this pattern very rapidly in several keys. "Roll" Boogie is almost always played in straight "eight to the bar" even eighth note style. Note that measure ten is not an exact repetition of measure nine but has been altered to prepare the hand for measure eleven.

"ROLL" BASS

The following right-hand part takes the form of "Jump" Boogie (see page thirty-two). It is not melodic but accentuates the left-hand rhythm.
“WALKING” BOOGIE

The “Walking” Bass is one of the most used and earliest forms of Boogie-Woogie. It requires considerable practice to master, but is an absolute essential to a thoroughly rounded Boogie technique. It does not always conform to the pattern given below, but may move scalewise, chromatically, or up and down the notes of a chord. Play even eighth notes exactly as written.

“WALKING” BASS

SUSTAINED (Jump) TREBLE
"WALKING" BOOGIE
"Lazy" Boogie is "Walking" Boogie in triple rhythm. There is little doubt that the lilting rhythm of "Lazy" Boogie evolved from careless playing of dotted eighth and sixteenth note figurations. Nevertheless, we are indebted to the carefree spirits that helped develop one of the most charming of all Boogie-Woogie styles.
Still another variation of Slow Boogie is built upon the single notes of the left hand chord. It takes many forms but follows the rhythmic pattern given below.

"SPECIAL" BASS

"SPECIAL" TREBLE
"SPECIAL" BOOGIE

BOOGIEWOOGIE.RU
“HONKY-TONK” BOOGIE

“Honky-Tonk” immediately suggests a rough, noisy, clattering style. It takes its name from the “dives” and “river joints” where it no doubt originated. It is one of the most tiring of Boogie styles, requiring exceptional strength in the left-hand which can only be acquired by hours of performance or practice. It is such a distinctive form that it is easily recognized and appreciated by all Boogie addicts. The rhythmical peculiarity of “Honky-Tonk” is that it is neither strict “eight to the bar” or triplet style, but seems to combine some of both. For convenience it will be written as straight eighths.

“HONKY-TONK” BASS

“HONKY-TONK” TREBLE
As fast as possible
“WALTZ” BOOGIE

“Waltz” Boogie is the least known of Boogie styles. It assumes many forms, but invariably accents the first beat of each three-four measure. Rhythmically the eighth notes are played exactly as in fast Boogie.

“WALTZ” BASS

“WALTZ” TREBLE
The term chord cluster means the addition of notes foreign to the chord struck with the chord creating a sharp dissonance. Accentuation of the out-of-tune effect in Boogie-Woogie is accomplished in this way. The first of these effects appears in the first ending of "Western" Boogie. (Page nine). The next appears in "Roll" Boogie. (Page twelve). The following example of a modulation from the key of G to the key of Eb (taken from the printed orchestra arrangement of Rushin' Around On Rush Street) illustrates both Chord Clusters and Single Note Boogie Licks (explained on next page).
Single Note Boogie Licks

To the above classification belong all the right-hand figurations that are not chords. "Western" Boogie (page nine) is a good example as is the modulation on the preceding page.

Press Notes

When the finger slides off a black key to a white one as in the first ending of "Easy" Boogie (page two), the effect is called a Press Note. Many Boogie licks are impossible of execution without this peculiar form of fingering.

How to Make Your Own Boogie Arrangements

The various Bass and Treble patterns may be interchanged one with the other and applied to popular pieces. The simpler the harmonic content of a piece, the easier it will be to make a Boogie arrangement of it. For this reason, folk-tunes are admirable for Boogie treatment. All the Blues tunes are good as they follow the harmonic pattern explained on the next page.

The bass part must be continuous as in all the examples, but does not necessarily have to conform to a single pattern throughout the whole arrangement. In other words, if the "Solid" Bass won't work after several measures, change to "Walking" Bass or some other pattern. Simplify the right-hand part as much as possible and remember to keep it in a high register as Boogie-Woogie sounds more transparent when the right and left-hand parts are considerably far apart. Since the piano lacks sustaining power, insert "Single Note Boogie Licks" at the ends of phrases or fill in whole notes in the melody.
How to Make Up Your Own Boogie Pieces

In order to make up your own Boogie-Woogie pieces and improvise in the accepted style, it is necessary to understand enough harmony to be able to analyze the fundamental harmonic progressions. A careful examination of the preceding illustrations will reveal the following basic harmonic pattern:

- Two measures of C Chord (C, E, G with A added)
- Two measures of C Seventh (C, E, G, Bb)
- Two measures of F Chord or F Ninth (F, A, C, or F, A, C, Eb, G)
- Two measures of C Chord
- One measure of G Ninth (G, B, D, F, A)
- One measure of F Ninth (F, A, C, Eb, G)
- Two measures of C Chord

The third measure from the end is sometimes a repetition of G Ninth. To anyone who has played the Blues, this is immediately recognizable as merely an ornamented Blues pattern. It should also be noticed that the form finishes in twelve measures. The cadential sequence from G Ninth to F Ninth to C is characteristically Boogie-Woogie, and, while it may shock the harmonic purists, is a most effective ending.

There is no hard and fast rule that restricts the Boogie composer to this rather limited means, but the connoisseurs seem to prefer a virtuoso treatment of this basic pattern to any innovations that might disturb the tradition.

Advanced Section

The remaining three numbers represent a combination of the various patterns in more difficult arrangements, but should offer no difficulty to the pianist who has assiduously practiced the various Bass and Treble exercises. Boogie-Woogie is not necessarily restricted to the Key of C as the examples might intimate, but is quite practical in many keys.
RUSHIN' AROUND ON RUSH STREET

Boogie Woogie Tempo

(Loosely but with a swing)

Verse

There's a rhythm you ought to know, a crazy rhythm

Come on let's go...

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CHORUS

Rush-in' a-round on Rush Street,

Look what I found on Rush Street, Rhythm that's bound to

send you, Send you a jiv-in' round the

town. Rush-in' a-round on Rush Street,

Rushin' Around on Rush Street 4-2
Hearin' 'em pound........ that off beat, E - nough of that sound........ will

send you, Send you a jiv - in' on down........

Rock it!....... Each spot you go they rock it.....

You get hepped up each time they rock it,........ You can't be an ick - ie

gva basso ........................................

Rushin' Around on Rush Street 4-3
wick-ie, Each time they do the Boogie-Woogie, When you're Rushin' a-round on
Rush Street, Burn-in' the ground on Rush Street,
Rhythm that's bound to send you,
Send you a jiv-in' on down.
“JUMP” BOOGIE

Very fast

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