# The Piano

## Type of Instrument

The piano is a unique instrument. It plays both rhythm and melody in ensembles, big bands, orchestras and as a solo instrument. Not only is it a great solo instrument but it blends well in bands. It is also a prime composition tool. The piano is primarily a keyboard instrument, which belongs in the string family.

There are many types of piano’s, ranging from small upright piano’s, to electric pianos to upright piano’s to the king of all pianos’, the concert grand. It is derived from both the harpsichord and clavichord. The piano was invented so it could play both loud and soft. Since then it has changed and evolved taking many new forms. It is today still the most played instrument in the world as it plays a wide range of styles including baroque, classical, jazz and also today’s modern rock and pop.

###### Parts of a Piano

**The Strings-** Vibrate to make sound. The shorter stings are for the higher notes. They vary in thickness, tightness and length according to their pitch. The older piano’s used steel for the treble and brass for the bass. It evolved to use steel on all but the lower ones were wrapped. To make a full resonance there are 2 or 3 strings of the same length and thickness for every note.

**The Frame-** Stretched tight to give the correct pitch. They were originally made of wood and were very unreliable. They are now made of steel.

**The Hammers-** Originally made of wood and the head was covered with such things as cork, sponge, flannel, sheepskin and buckskin. Leather was most popular until felt was used by Henri Pape.

**The Soundboard-** amplifies the sound made by the strings. Made of wood and is placed below the strings of a grand and attached to the frame.

###### How it Works?

The piano is a highly mechanic instrument. The keys are pressed down and with a lever like action brings the hammer to hit the string. When the hammer hits the strings it rebounds off to make the sound more resonant. When the strings are hit the dampers rest on the strings momentarilly before they bounce off and dampens the sound.

**The Sustained Pedal-** Here the dampers are raised off the strings meaning the hammers hit the strings and the dampers don’t bounce off. The strings vibrate more creating a sustaining sound (held on sound).

**The Depressed Pedal (soft pedal)-** Here the hammers are shifted slightly to the right creating a softer sound as the hammers only hit 1 or 2 of the strings.



Timetable of The Piano

**1709-** Cristofori makes the first piano’s in Italy

**1730-** Silbermann shows J.S. Bach his piano

**1733-** Silbermann makes first German piano

**1760-** Zumpe makes piano’s in England. Especially square piano’s

**1768-** First piano concert on Zumpe’s piano’s by J.C Bach

**1774-** First piano made in America (John Brent)

**1777-** Broadwood, Erard and Stein become great piano makers in their repective countries

**1783-** First sustained pedal (Broadwood)

**1795-** Piano used instead of harpsichord in England

**1816-** Beethoven wrote ‘Hammerlavier’ Sonata on one of Broadwoods piano’s.

**1820-** First all metal frame

**1822-** Double escapement action (Erard)

**1840-** Piano made with full 7 octaves

### The First Piano’s

The first piano was built around 1709 by an Italian harpsichord maker, Bartholomew Cristofori. He called it the Gravicembalo Col Piano E Forte (Harpsichord with loud and soft). This not only changed the strings from being plucked like a harpsichord but instead hammers were put in to hit the strings. For the first time players were given the chance to play loud and soft by touch alone.

Apart from a quick excitement for the new instrument, the Italians soon became tired of the invention. Cristifori was the first and last great piano maker in Italy. An organ builder based a new design on the clavichord. Soon the invention to Germany. With some plans of Cristifori’s piano, Gottfried Silbermann, in 1730 built the first German piano. It took a wing-shaped design similar to Cristifori’s. 6 years later Johann Sebastian Bach inspected his handiwork. It had a heavy touch and the treble was too weak. At this stage the frame was wooden, had fewer and skinnier strings to today’s, and the hammers were lighter and harder. 11 years later Silbermann’s pianos changed considerably and soon Bach recognised his hard work.

The piano made its first public performance in Zumpe’s square on the 2nd of June 1768 in London by Johan Christian Bach and Carl Freidrich Abel. By 1972 the piano had dominance over the harpsichord and the clavichord. Piano makers such as Johann Andreas Stein are known for major developments of the piano in the late 18th century and early 19th century.

#### The Square Piano

This invention, which is of a rectangular shape looking similar to a clavichord. The earliest square piano was made in 1742 made by German Johann Socher. The keys only filled up one end and when the lid closed resembled a block of furniture rather than a musical instrument. They were placed in many middle-class homes as they were an efficient use of space and relatively simple. They had a life till about 1830 until the upright piano arrived. In America they lasted till nearly 1900.

In Germany it was important for a square piano to look similar to a clavichord as they were considered a greater than harpsichords. This way the piano was seen as a superior clavichord rather than a bodgy harpsichord. They were very similar to a clavichord except for the hammer action, metal strings and a stronger frame.

Zumpe was one of the most famous makers of square pianos. He made very light pianos but didn’t have a high quality sound. Clementi and J.C. Bach were among the famous players who used Zumpe’s pianos.

John Broadwood soon took over Zumpe as a leading piano player. He built higher quality pianos after 1771. Performers such as Beethoven used his pianos. Soon square piano’s spread to America and France. Soon nearly all developments came from America. The best squares had a mellow sound between a piano and a harp. Soon composers headed back to the grand pianos as squares didn’t have large enough capacities to perform grand sounds.

The square piano, in sound and mechanism, could rival the standard grand in Europe but its days had well and truly finished by 1880.

#### The

#### Upright Piano

The first really good upright piano appeared in 1975 when an Englishman by the name of William Stodart successfully put the hammers upright in a piano. Its origins though go much further back to 1480 when the harpsichord was made in an upright position. They have remained in fashion through to today due to their practibility, and their ability not to use a huge amount of space.

There have been many forms over the years. ‘The giraffe piano’, which stood as tall as 7-foot tall, uprights decorated with a scroll, and enclosed ones with a rectangular cabinet. By 1813 Robert Wornum had got his piano to be less than 4 feet tall.

To ensure a smaller area great work had to be done to ensure quality. Strings had to be scientifically worked out to be the same length within a confined space. We see this today with upright piano’s finding their place in many homes around the world.

###### Famous Piano Makers

**Bartolomeo Cristifori (1965-1731)**

He was an Italian harpsichord and piano maker. In 1709 he invented the first piano. Made bigger and better pianos and was renown for his instruments being perfect for accompanying singers. Too small a sound to play in a church but was a solo and orchestral instrument. He invented knobs on the side to alter the position of the keyboard to make the sound softer.

**Gottifried Silbermann (1683-1734)**

He was a German organ and piano maker. Read about Crisifor’s piano’s and made one himself. Showed one to J.S Bach in 1730. Gave many of his piano’s away to the king of Prussia.

Andreas Stein

Learnt how to make pianos. Seasoned his soundboards in order to make them rougher in rain, hail and sunshine. He was a friend of Mozart and Beethoven.

Zumpe

Moved to England from Germany and was an instant success.Made square piano’s which were easily carried and cheaper. Delivered them himself until the demand was too high. Zumpe’s piano’s were popular in France and renown for his pianos being different.

John Broadwood

He was an English piano maker. Broadwood was the inventor of the sustained pedal, and a clearer richer sound. In 1794 made a 6 octave piano. He made piano’s for Chopin and Beethoven. His firm is the oldest remaining piano firm in the world.

Sebastien Erard

A French piano maker. Was an apprentice at 16. Square piano’s ranging to 5 octaves. He made the first French piano. Erards piano’s were such a popular design that Zumpe and Broadwood piano makers raided his workshop because of their popularity. Opened a shop in England while his brother worked in France. Invented the agraffe (metal plate with holes in it for the strings to pass through).

Heinrich Steinweg

He was the inventor of the famous Steinway American pianos. Came from Germany. Won a prize for his square pianos. Varied his woods used such as mahogany, walnut, sugar pine etc. Invented many new methods and heavily researched the piano.

#### The Grand Piano

The wing-shaped form of the grand piano originates from the harpsichord. The grand piano has its strings, keys and mechanics laid horizontally which has its advantages with tone and sound over its counterparts. It’s sound is not confined to a small space and with the opened lid creates a more dynamic range, and superior tonality.

There are many types of grand pianos:

1. **The Baby Grand**- often found in houses of upper class families or in my case a father’s 21st birthday present instead of a car. That’s how expensive they are! Between $10 000 (second hand) and $80 000. Approximately 252 kg and 1.55m long. Has slowly been less found around average homes and more in clubs, restaurants and hotels.
2. **Concert Grand**- Approximately 18% of all grand pianos. The king of the piano kingdom rarely used in middle classed families. Elton John used one at Lady Diana’s funeral. Between $100 00 and $200 000.
3. **Twin Grand**- two ends to the piano.

**What is a Grand Piano Made Of?**

**Frame:** Cast Iron

**Case:** Laminated mahogany or maple

**White keys:** Now plastic (used to be ivory)

**Black keys:** Now stained pear wood (used to be ebony)

**Hambers (outer):** Lamb wool

**Hammers (inner):** Mahogany

**Strings (upper):** Steel

**Strings (lower):** Steel, wrapped in copper

**Mechanism:** Steel, copper, wood, leather

**Sound boards:** Different woods (aged at least 70 years old) and glue

**Finished:** High Gloss

**Average Weight:** 480kg

**Average Length:** 2.74m

**Height:** 0.96m (without top)

# Singer/Songwriters

**There are many different types of songwriters**. They include:

1. **Lyricists**- who write just lyrics
2. **Collaborators-** who write music to lyrics
3. **Co-writers**-, which is someone who writes a section of a song. They may write some of the lyrics and a bit of the music but someone else helps with a section
4. **Songwriters**, which is someone who writes both the words and the lyrics.

**A singer/songwriter is someone who performs his or her own songs**! A Singer/songwriters may be a collaborator, lyricist or a songwriter.

Singer/songwriters fit into many styles including pop, rock, country and any modern music where there is a singer.

**Characteristics of a singer/songwriter include:**

1. **The songwriter performs their own songs**
2. **The lyrics are often personal and relates to the writer’s feelings, emotions, political views or personal issues**. This means that many people can relate to their songs.
3. **The music often accompanies the words** meaning the words are often the main focus. The instruments may play a solo role in a section but the focus is usually on the melody.
4. **The music is often simple** as the performer is often singing at the same time.
5. **Solos often show off the performers skill on their instrument**
6. **Each performer has an individual style or type of music**. Although some performers may perform a song, which fits into styles, the great singer/songwriters have been different to those before and have an original flare.

##### Repertoire

The piano has been a used instrument throughout time. If you include the harpsichord as a piano you can say that the piano has been involved in the complete classical revolution. The piano, as such, was invented right at the end of the baroque period. As it developed it saw the harpsichord and clavichord slowly outdated by their father of instruments, the piano. Right through to today it remains the most popular instrument in the world. With an emergence of 20th Century music we have seen it change remarkably.

Today we see the piano used in all forms of music. From classical, with composers such as Peter Sculthorpe (Australian) and Bela Bartok, and jazz composers such as Thelonius Monk, Fats Waller, George Gershwin and Dave Brubek. Pop and Rock uses piano in a lot of it’s music. With the invention of a keyboard we see the roll of the piano in rock used as a synthesizer, creating many weird and wonderful sounds.

With the invention of singer songwriters we have seen the emergence of many piano players who also write their own songs. Elton John, Billy Joel and Stevie Wonder dominated the pop scenes in the 1960’s, 70’s, the 80’s and also the 90’s. Peter Allen also reached the top of the charts in the 80’s.

Today’s piano players perform a variety of styles ranging from jazz (Harry Connick Jr) to mainstream pop (The Whitlams, Tim Friedman and Joshua Kadison) to a mixture of just about every style (Ben Folds). The variety of this new breed of piano player and the different types of performers proves the versatility of this marvellous instrument. It continues to find new ways and new styles in which it can be played.

Styles and Piano’s Role

**Baroque**

During the baroque period the harpsichord was still the major keyboard instrument. Piano composers of this early stage in the history of the piano include:

J.S.Bach, Scarlatti and Handel. Piano music at this time was still just developing and there wasn’t a huge amount of dynamics and they all followed similar forms. Ornaments were added but not written down. It showed off the composers individuality and ability.

**Classical**

The classical period saw a change in structure. There was more emphasis on the sonata, and concerto forms and formal structured phrases. We see composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven break away from Baroque traditions.

**Romantic**

The piano took a turn to be pushed to the limits. Dynamics, range, passion was pushed as far as it could go. The structure was less formal and the emphasis more on emotion. Composers of this period include: Mendelssohn, Shumann, Debussy, Rachmanninof, Chopin and Listz. Forms such as Nocturne,Prlude, Rhapsody and Scherzo were popular in this period.

**20th Century**

Piano took a huge change. 20th Century composers have little structure and a huge range of styles. As a solo instrument there is little structure and emphasis on complete emotion and the player’s interpretation. Composers of this era include

Jazz Rhythm and Blues

The piano often plays a rhythmic role although sometimes used as a solo instrument. The beginning of jazz was ragtime where Scott Joplin became the most renown piano composer. In jazz we saw composers such as Duke Ellington, Dave Bruebek and Fatz Waller play their respective styles. As jazz and blues is based on improvisation the piano is very different for each composers. Styles of jazz in which the piano had a large prominace in include Boogie Woogie and early rock’n’roll.

**Showtime**

The piano has been used all throughout Broadway history. Probably the most famous of all showtime writers were Ira and George Gershwin and Irvin Berlin. Throughout the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s were very popular in movies and Broadway. Their cheery tunes with a jazzy crossover make especially the 50’s music memorable of that period.

**Rock and Pop**

Throughout the rock revolution the piano has been used in many forms. Either as it’s rawest form as a piano or in the shape of a keyboard or synthesizer. Throughout the 60’s and 70’s it was used as an alternate instrument instead of the guitar by such bands as the Beatles (Let it Be), Simon and Garfunkel (Bridge Over Troubled Waters) and other artists including Bruce Springsteen.

In the 80’s the synthesized sound became popular because of it’s earyness and and rawness. In the 90’s it was still used in many alternative bands (Nirvana sometimes, Pennywize and the Smashing Pumpkins just to name a few), some pop songs (Drops of Jupiter, Bohemian Rhapsody, November Rain, All my life etc.) As we head into the new millennium it will continue to play an alternative role as a substitute instrument for the guitar. It will also be used for softer songs and even louder ones. Many rock bands (Limp Bizkit, Linkin Park, Matchbox 20, Superheist) use D.J’s or synthesizers to make their sound original. Techno is based around synthesizers. With the computers playing a larger role in music the keyboard will become more important. The piano will always be used as a composition tool.

The singer/songwriter evolution began in the 1960’s with artists such as:

* **Buddy Holly**
* **Paul McCartney** **and John Lennon** who were of course the Beatles
* **Mick Jagger** who was The Rolling Stones and
* **Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel** from Simon and Garfunkel

**They began writing original songs of love, life and personal experiences**.

**Bob Dylan** took the art further when he tried to put poetry to a melody. He focused on making great lyrics. His idea proved successful and as well as his political view points, he became the first great singer/songwriter. His sound was never huge but he tried something new and set the trend for those to follow. He sounds best strumming his acoustic guitar and sending his messages through the power of his words.

**Songwriting is an art** in itself and for many a lifestyle. When done properly, even by those who might not be making huge amounts of money, carefully craft each song so to the songwriter each song is a personal masterpiece. Throughout singer/songwriters careers we have seen some develop not just as performers but as songwriters as well. John Lennon and Paul McCartney were good examples where their later material such as Eleanor Rigby was in itself a great poem. By the time of their solo careers they also used very imaginative modern chords such as in John Lennon’s, song of the century, Imagine.

As we come around in the second generation of Songwriting we can be educated on Songwriting. Today’s songwriters often have a theory background, many influences and are accomplished lyric writers. Songwriters of today often have a much fuller sound with many more layers. They also have to learn the art of composition.

To analyse singer/songwriters you must look at:

1. **The lyrics**- what they mean, structure
2. **The chord progression-** what type and what chords are they
3. **Accompaniment** (layers, counter melodies, harmonies, rhythm etc)
4. **The melody**
5. **The performance**- how the singer/songwriter performs
6. **The recording**- the quality of how it is recorded

Piano Singer/songwriters

* **Use interesting chords** i.e. major 6ths, suspended 4ths, Major 7ths, Minor 7ths, Dominant 7ths and add 9 chords
* **Piano often used as a composition tool** even for guitar playing singer/songwriters.
* Piano singer/songwriters often have catchy **interesting melodies** and **interesting voices**
* **The piano often accompanies words**

The piano has been used as a choice for singer/songwriters since the 1960’s as it is a very personal instrument and is very versatile. Billy Joel and Elton John started the piano revival in the late 1960’s and 70’s, dominating the pop world. Peter Allan wrote songs as both a singer/songwriter and a songwriter with some top 10 hits in the 80’s. Performers such as Ben Folds, Tim Freedman (from the Whitlams), Joshua Kadison and Harry Connick Jr have continued the piano’s statement in the pop scene in the 90’s. The piano will continue to grow and songwriters will develop as we head into new millennium.

Piano playing singer/songwriters all vary in sound due to their influences, style, personality and voice. They may play similar things on the piano but are all completely different. We see piano playing singer/songwriters vary in styles ranging from ballads to jazz to pop are amongst the most famous of this style. The piano is a popular choice for singer/songwriters because it is a very personal instrument.

Many piano playing singer/songwriting performers only write half of a whole song whether writing the music or the lyrics. They may work with a collaborator or have a co-writer. For example Tim Freedman’s (The Whitlams) hit ‘Blow up the Pokies’ was co-written by Greta Gertler. Elton John co-wrote the musical movie ‘The Lion king’ with lyricist Tim Rice. Some piano-playing singer/songwriters are listed below:

**Billy Joel**

**Billy Joel** writes both music and lyrics for most of his songs. As a singer/songwriter he has been a dynamic performer and his lyrics and music are very original. His songs are based around personal experience and have well-constructed lyrics. His chord progressions are imaginative but chords tend to play an accompaniment role. Many other layers combine to make a rich sound in his later songs. His piano solos often take a slightly jazzy sound and are normally fast and very technically accurate as he is a classically trained pianist. His sound varies from pop to Latin, to ballads and many other sounds from around the world. His first hit was in 1973 with *The Piano Man*. Other hits include *Uptown Girl*, which has been covered this year, *We Didn’t Start The Fire* and *River of Dreams*. Both of the last 2 reached number 1. He has also written songs for movies such as *A League of Their Own*. He is a member of the Rock and roll Hall of Fame as well as the Songwriter’s Hall of Fame, selling over 100 million units. This ranks him with the Beetles with the most multi-platinum albums of all time.

**Other Names:** Born William Martin Joel. He also changed to Bill Martin because he had to move to the west coast in 1973 due to financial and legal problems in his clubbing days.

**Influences:** Ray Charles, The Beetles, Dave Bruebek, Sam Cooke, The Rolling Stones, Otis Redding.

**Instruments:** Piano, harmonica, voice, songwriter

**Style:** Classically trained pianist singer/songwriter. Fits into many styles. Ranges from piano ballads to upbeat Latin rhythms and rock and roll. He has always toured heavily and is one of the great songwriters and performers. As a singer/songwriter his music is unique in that he has an original voice and his piano playing is different. His lyrics are well written and his chordal progressions simple yet often interesting. His style vary greatly but his piano playing is always an accompanier and is never hugely fancy. His arrangements go into much detail. He is a bright and interesting performer who’s recordings and shows have made him one of rock’s greats.

**Early life:** Began playing the piano at 4. Parents divorced. Mother struggling to meet ends meet. Had a music job at night to help with the family income and consequently was too tired for school. His grades were fine but he was unable to graduate because there was too many absences. “Straight jobs” such as writing rock criticism for magazine “Changes”. Worked in a factory, painted an recorded a commercial. He saw the Beatles play when he was 11 and made a promise to be a professional musician.

**First Bands:** The Echoes (14). Later known as the Lost Souls. Joined The Hassels (well known Long Island band)- 2 albums. Joined heavy metal duo Atilia, which recorded 1 record with Epic Records. Signed his first solo contract in 1972.

**Hobbies:** (besides music) boats- lifelong passion. Formed the Long Island Boat Company.

**His Career:** - Captain Jack his first underground hit.

* 1973 Columbia Record signed him for his first top 20 hit “The Piano Man
* 1974 recorded the album Streetlife Serenade with the hit “The Entertainer”. Was rewarded “Best New Male Vocalist”, and “Record of the Year” (The Piano Man) in the crop music awards. Also has his first sell out performances.
* 1975- recorded Turnstyles with a new band. First major concert tour.
* 1977- Recorded Columbia records number 1 selling hit album with the Stranger. A record, which lasted till 1985.
* 1978- 52nd Street became Billy Joel’s first number 1 album
* 1979- “The Way You Were” gained ‘record of the year’ and ‘song of the year’ (Grammy’s)
* 52nd Street and The Stranger reaching 9 million sales
* 1980- Glass House is released reached number one and remained there for 6 weeks. “It’s Still Rock and Roll to Me became Billy’s first number 1 single.
* 2 more Grammy’s for 52nd Street. 1 for Glass Houses in 1981.
* 1982- serious bike accident. Nylon Curtain Tour. Writes ‘Innocent man’.
* Creates a Motown group and writes hits “Uptown girl (#3) and “Tell Her About It”. Innocent Man record (reached #4). 6 top 40 songs in the record.
* 1983- Billy’s 1st solo album ‘Cold Spring Harbour’
* 1984- Greatest Hits Volume 1 and 2 (7th consecutive top 10 album) Recorded Baby Grand with Ray Charles. Also wrote for motion picture “Ruthless People”. Wrote for hit television show “Moonlighting”
* 1987 the 1st U.S. pop star to go to the Soviet Union. A cultural break through and a huge event.
* 1989- Changed group and worked with overseas producer. Album and single “We Didn’t Start The Fire” both reached #1. Storm Front tour started with Billy’s first concert in Mexico City. Reached 4.3 million fans, 174 shows and 16 countries.
* 1990- Received a humanitarium award and the Grammy ‘Legend Award’.
* 1991 worked with Garth Brooks to record #1 hit “Shameless”.
* 1992- Recorded 2 Elvis classics and a song from the soundtrack “A League of their Own”. River of Dreams spent 12 weeks at #1
* 1994- Tied with the Beetles for the most multi-platinum albums with “Songs in the Attic” and “The Nylon Cutain” (2 million copies)
* 1995- Toured Japan. Was in the Kobe earthquake. Returned to U.S with the to do the Face to Face tour with Elton John.
* 1996- hit the college lecture circuit with “An evening of questions… and a little music.”
* Joined Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney and other legends into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
* 1999- Reached sales of 100 million units.
* 2000- Sell out millennium concert. Sang national anthem at a New York Yankees World Series game. Inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame

Ben Folds

**Ben Folds** is today’s piano king of pop. He has recently left Ben Folds 5 to perform a solo career in which he plays most of the instruments. As a singer/songwriter unlike most of his other contempories he has not really developed as a songwriter. His lyrics at times can be special while at others can be ordinary. His humor always shines through. His chord progression and style range from very jazzy with many dominant and minor 7th chords to very poppy simple chords, which sound like they are ballads. His voice is in a high range for a male. The piano in many instances is a counter melody to his original voice and he sings many 1970’s style surf rock harmonies. He often plays jazz sounding chords with interesting synthesized sounds. Sometimes he adds orchestral instruments as well. In each song he mixes a touch of jazz in with modern pop. Together the complete sound is unlike any other. His hits include ‘Brick’, ‘Army’ and ‘Rockin’ The Suburbs.’

Born Benjamin Scott Folds September 12 1966

**Bands:** Majosha (won Duke University’s Battle of the Bands. Began playing bass and later onto the drums in different bands. Took up piano as a composition tool. Is on Barry Black’s debut album as either piano player or drums and on Fleming and Johns debut album “Delusions of Grandeur.” Is on the video “I’m not afraid. He also appears on Whiskeytown’s album and Bus Stop’s album. He is also working on an instrumental album “Fear of Pop”. Started Ben Folds Five in 1995

**Instruments:** Piano, drums, bass, keyboard, voice, producer, songwriter

**Style:** His music ranges from mainstream pop to serene, 1950’s jazzy style. His harmonies are similar to 1960’s surf rock. He plays ballads as well as mainstream pop and other rock numbers. He is a unique performer with his fun humour and his lyrics relate to many people growing up. His lyrics are sometimes corny but his chordal progressions very well constructed. His arrangements and harmonies are also original and interesting. His followers continue to rock up because of musical talent and weird sense of humour with imitations of famous people. Noted as a ‘post-modern piano man’.

Career: **- 1995-** got together Ben Folds Five from North Carolina.

* **1996-** Ben folds five releases it’s self titled album for Caroline Records about sucky jobs, one night stands etc.
* **1996-** Whatever and Ever Amen including top 10 hit “Brick”
* **2000-** The Unortharized Biography of Reinhold Messner including the hit “Army
* **2001-** Moved to Adelaide to record his first solo album “Rocking the Suburbs” and the top 10 hit “Rocking the Subburbs”. Plays nearly all instruments in nearly all the tracks.

**Elton John**

**Elton John** is a collaborator and works primarily with lyricist Bernie Taupin and occasionally with world-renowned lyricist Tim Rice. As a singer/songwriter he is a flamboyant performer known for extraordinary fashion statements, ballads and love songs. His chord progressions are simple and accompany the words. A numbers of layers often sound over the piano or sometimes the piano is the solo instrument with the voice. His music takes a relaxed tone. He is famous for many songs including *Crocodile Rock* and *Song For Guy*. *Candle in the Wind*, which was played at Princess Diana’s funeral, became one of his biggest hits. Along with the B-side *Something About the Way You Look Tonight*, which also reached number 1, it became the highest selling single of all time. Elton John also holds the record for the most number of years of creating a top 40 hit each year and gives a lot of his money away to charity. He is also a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

**Other names:** Born Reginald Kenneth Dwight

**Early influences:** Elvis Presley and Buddy holly

**Influences:** The Beach Boys, The Beatles, The Rolling StonesAretha Franklin, Joni Mitchell, Dusty Springfield, Motown acts, Randy Newman, Jackson Browne, Sting, Ray Charles, Chopin, Bach, Brahms, Handel, Tchaikovsky, Oasis, Blur, Collective Soul, Smashing Pumpkins, R.E.M, Jewel, Moby.

**Instruments:** Piano, organ, keyboard, harmonium, guitar (sort of), voice and songwriter (music mainly)

**Style:** Elton is best described as pop as he has shaped much of the world pop music. His songs range from love ballads, to up beat Motown numbers, to string backing songs and catchy melodies. He often works with lyricists such as Tim

Rice and Bernie Taupin. His arrangements are always full and his piano parts always very interesting. He is a on stage an extravert and wears weird and wonderful clothes.

**Early Life:** Brought up in England where his parents divorced when he was 14. He was an excellent piano player at an early age and won a scholarship when he was 11. He attended that school until he was 15. Elton used to perform at dinner parties and perform until late so he had to sleep the next day. His father forbidded him to play and listen to new American music but he and his mother listened to records behind his back. At 13 he wanted to be just like Buddy Holly. He copied his look by wearing glasses and within a year or 2 he actually needed to wear glasses.

**Early Bands:** The Corvettes (Later called Bluesology) in 1960 with his friends. Performed with more serious singers as back up vocals. Wrote 2 early songs “Come Back Baby” and “Mr Frantic”

**Hobbies:** Shopping, tennis, buying expensive gifts, owning dogs, charities, restaurants. He is known to have tantrums at people, kicking keyboards over, and storming off. He is known as stubborn, competitive, impatient, emotional, flamboyant, funny and a perfectionist.

**Career:** - **1960-** Left Bluesology to team up with Lyracist Bernie Taupin

* **1970-** First Album “The Empty Sky. First hit “Your song” from the album “Elton John”. American concert debut.
* **1975-** Walk of Fame at Holliwood
* **1984-** married sound engineer Renate Blauel on valentines day in Sydney (St Marks Anglican Church)
* **1988-** Divorced Renate Blauel
* **1990-** Checked into a drug and alcohol rehab center and got off cocaine and alcohol.
* **1992-** formed the Elton john Aids Association
* **1994-** inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
* **1993-** Meets partner David Furnish. Runs film company Rocket Pictures.
* **1997** Sang “Candle in the Wind” and Princess Diana’s funeral a song he and Bernie had written for her. Something About the Way You Look Tonight the B side is now the all-time selling single in history
* **1998** Given the knight hood “Sir Elton john”.
* **1999-** Teamed with tim rice released the soundtrack to Disney musical Aida.

**Joshua Kaddison**

**Influences:** Miles Davis, Mozart, Stravinsky, Puccini, Gershwin, and Ellington

**Instruments:** piano, keyboard, voice, songwriter, novel writer

Style: Originally mainstream pop, moved onto gospel and soul searching music. Blues touch and R&B. His lyrics are absolutely fantastic with a strong emphasis on story telling especially telling of his political viewpoints and his life experiences. His piano playing is rather simple yet varies greatly in style. He is possessed with an original voice. His melodies are not huge but rather tells a story. His arrangements are well constructed with his many influences shining through.

**Career:** - 1993 Released debut album with top 10 hit “Jessie” and top 40 hit “Beautiful in your eyes”. Blonde hair image with denim.

* Disappeared from the music scene. “the world at my feet but wasn’t what my soul wanted.”
* Concentrated on studying classical music and jazz. Mozart, Stravinsky and Puccini, Gershwin and Ellington. All giants in the field of harmony and composition. Miles Davis left an impression on Kaddison
* Dropped from record company for second album “Deliah Blue” which was radically different with soul searching songs and a gospel feel. Shaved haired image with a goatee beard was never going to be as popular.
* 1998 wrote a novel “17 Ways to Eat a Mango” which was translated into several languages.
* 3rd Album “Vanishing America pointing out the loss of America’s innocence. Calm and at ease tone. Ballads in the style of Elton John and Billy Joel. Inspired by his dreams, which have their own reality to him.

**Harry Connick Jr**

**Other names:** The Big Easy

**Influences:** Frank Sinatra

**Style:** Jazz. Harry Connick plays many different styles including Contemporary New Orleans Jazz, Stride Piano, Big Band, Swing with a stylish smooth pop voice. His melodies are very smooth and his backing extremely exiting. At times he can drift into a smooth jazz ballad as well. His piano playing is very interesting with extensive solo’s and interesting lines. It plays an interesting role in that it is both a solo and s rhythm instrument. His voice adds to the smoothness and his of the arrangements with interesting chordal progressions and a large focus on brass and the jazz band. The lyrics aren’t written by him but fit in well with the music.

**Early Life:** Brought up in New Orleans to 2 lawyers. He attended a creative arts school in New Orleans before going to a music school in New York. He started the piano at 3 and performed publicly when he was 6. He recorded with a jazz band when he was just 10 and performed gigs with many bands in clubs.

**Career:**  **- 1987**- Self titled album, mostly unaccompanied. He was praized for his musical maturity and performed in New York hotspots.

* **1988-** ‘Named for his Age’ album is released with him a the feature.
* **1989-** appeared on the “When Harry Met Sally” soundtrack with several Sinatra standards “It Had to be you” and some other big band tracks. World Tour and reached double platinum.
* **1990-** Released the instrumental album ‘Memphis Belle’ and ‘We are in Love’ album which reached double platinum
* **1991-** ‘Blue Light, Red Light’ album is released with a big band sound. He did extensive touring that year.
* **1992-** the Album ‘25’ which went platinum
* **1993-** Christmas album, ‘When my heart Finds Christmas’
* **1994-** Continued the pop jazz band with the ‘She’ album is released with the hit “I Only Whispered Your Name.”
* **1995-** Stared in the movie Copycat as a serial killer. Married actress Jill Goodacre
* **1996-** appered in the blosckbuster movie ‘Independence Day
* **1997-** Released the album ‘Star Turtle’
* **1999-** Released the album ‘come by Me’ and returned back to the big band style.
* **2001-** Released the album 30 and Songs I heard.

As you can see the piano plays many different roles in the singer/songwriter world. Often the piano players use more interesting chords than guitar singer/songwriters such as major 6th chords, suspended 4ths, major 7th chords, minor 7th chords etc. For this reason even singer/songwriters who play guitar, such as Rob Thomas from Matchbox 20, often use the piano as a composition tool. The singer/songwriters mentioned above all share interesting chord progressions and there are some similarities such as the use of 3 4 waltz kind of time signatures in some songs and interesting often-catchy melodies. These songwriters have become famous as their lyrics relate to many people and the music is often easy to listen to.

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