

POUR ON THE HEAT
(Based on "Caprice Rag," by James P. Johnson)
Music, James P. Johnson/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

*Writing a song about stride piano
Isn't all that easy to do.
You gotta dive in,
But where to begin?
The mere idea might frighten you.
Writing lyrics to stride music,
You're in trouble right away.
It's fast and busy,
It'll make you dizzy,
Spitting out what you need to say,

But I'm smitten with stride piano.
I believe I'll give it a go.
Start with something informational,
Educational! Like so:*

*The term "stride piano" came from the way in which the pianist's left hand
would "stride" up and down the keyboard.*

*It was hot,
Took some chops.
Whole new sound.
Granny, getcha little chin off the ground!
Let's all jive!*

*The record companies shied away from early jazz.
They called it
"Race music."
Soon they caved,
Madly raved
With the rest.
They'd invest
In a few young lions,
Make the whole world wise about the key guys
Who were pourin' on the heat.*

*Nowadays, you got a few girls pourin' on the heat. Well ... not that many. Stephanie. How many,
would you say? Stephanie? She's busy. I'll ask her later.*

*"The Viper's Drag,"
"Tiger Rag,"
"Sister Kate ..."
Tunes that got ya goin' out of the gate.
No debate,*

There was living lightning
In the dazzling runs
Of all the young guns
Who were pourin' on the heat.

Writing a song about stride piano
Isn't really a breeze to do.
Slow going, but
You know what?
Soon I had a thought or two.
Maybe talk about how you do it—
Startin' out with a lower C,
Up an octave, C-E-G,
Then the G to the right of the initial C.

C, C, E, G,
Pinky on the low G, *then C!*
Four beat, repeat,
Baby, you're home free!
Soon you'll try picking up some speed,
And the neighbors
May pound until their knuckles bleed.
They'll holler "Pleeeeeease,
Stop that infernal racket!"
As you miss the notes time after time.
"Hey, I'm learning, man, is that such a crime?"

Now come on fingers, do your stuff,
Get it movin'!
Although it's punishingly tough,
You're improvin',
Slowly, slowly,
Then late one night, you get it right,
It comes together and *suddenly you're all:*

Da-n-da-n-da-n-da-n-da-ya-n-da-ya [etc.]

Now you know you can play stride,
Even though you about died,
And my song is about you,
And the torture you went through.
Head on down to the piano bar,
Start off with "All the Things You Are,"
Then a little ditty by James P,
Show 'em you can pour on the heat.

You're steamin'!
Ev'ry barfly screamin'!

You're a virtuoso!
In a year the whole darn world will know so!

That's my song about stride piano:

Part 1) The basics

Part 2) The crucible

Part 3) The victory!

Might put a few words on the off-beats,
Just to show I can,
And then I'll "bring it"
Every time I sing it.
Bring it home!
Four beat!
Repeat!
Show 'em you can pour on the heat!

BAT BOOGIE

(Based on "Mule Walk," by James P. Johnson)
Music, James P. Johnson/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

I got a tip for when you visit Houston,
Something you definitely need to see.
Down around a little bridge in Houston,
They got a bat colony.

Make way for the Mexican Freetails,
A quarter million every night,
Whirling, swirling,
Pretty crazy sight.

Most bats don't linger stateside
When they feel that winter hit.
Houston weather's on the great side.
These guys don't need to split.

Ooh, look at 'em all, Aunt Avice!
Don't you love 'em, Uncle Tyce?
I dig their act; I'm fully gobsmacked
By these "flying mice."

From Missouri to Milano,
The bat boogie's all the rage.
Jump back and dodge the guano
When they take center stage.

From the monsters to the midgets,
They got it down, all right,

Flappin' their spindly digits,
Doin' the bat boogie by fading light.

Did you know that they're fastidious?
Clean themselves like little cats?
I have never thought them hideous.
I'm a diehard fan of bats.

Once I found a baby, squeaking,
Bent down to stroke its tiny wing.
Still can hear my mother shrieking.
"Jeez, Louise, don't touch that thing!"

Bats, it isn't widely known, are
Ancient as the dinosaurs,
Gifted with an awesome sonar—
Commonly insectivores.

Seem to 'specially love mosquitoes,
So when bugs are buggin' me,
My bats eat 'em up like Cheetos.
Now that's efficiency!

Bats don't lay any eggies.
They spawn like monkeys do.
Sleep hanging by their leggies.
For them, it's easier to.

Hear they come, watch out now, Binky!
Aren't they darling, Cousin Claire?
I'm dead gone, awful sweet on
These captains of the air.

From Lorraine to Transylvania,
The bats boogie, boogie hard.
Build 'em a house, they'll entertain ya,
Right in your own backyard.

From their cozy caves they hurry,
Black and orange, brown and white,
Pointy-toothed and fully furry,
To do the bat boogie by moonlight.

One of 'em's not done dancin' yet,
Though it's half past three.
He's in front of the moon in silhouette.
That's what I call lovely.

NEW YORK CITY DRAG
(Based on "Clothesline Ballet," by Fats Waller)
Music, Fats Waller/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Climbin' the five long flights
Has grown to be a New York City drag.
Why did you hightail it out of town?
Bitter December nights
Are definitely a New York City drag.
Lights and music only drag me down.

The last leaf drops from a maple tree;
The saxophone in Apartment 3
Describes the word "lonely."

Your pocket change,
Your scribbled reminder,
Tug at my heart again.
New York is strange,
A little unkind.
It wore your smile, back then,
Back then when

We strolled the sidewalks,
We sailed the Hudson,
An unashamed cliché.
More than the splendor of the skyline,
You took my breath away.

Sleepin' without you,
Dreamin' about you,
Startin' to doubt you ever loved me,
Is gettin' to be
A New York City drag.
Deeply blue
From lack of you,
I'm turnin' into
A New York City drag.

A sharp wind rattles the maple tree.
Some guy yells up at Apartment 3,
"Melancholy Baby'!"

Climbin' the five long flights
Has grown to be a New York City,
New York City drag.

RULES OF THE PARK
(Based on "Keep Off the Grass," by James P. Johnson)
Music, James P. Johnson/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

No loose pets,
No cigarettes.
This place is fun for everyone,
But scoot on outa here before it's dark.
No sign posting, chestnut roasting.
Boys and girls, don't scare the squirrels.
These are the rules of the park.

No off-roading, trash unloading;
Don't be handing out any fliers,
Or powering up those amplifiers.
We don't give two hoots whether
You got two sticks to rub together,
But don't do it here and risk a spark.
These are the rules of the park.

As the ranger noticed
After taking a brief nap,
All H-E-Double-Hockey-Sticks will break loose in a snap.

Pick up your litter, folks.
None of your nasty jokes.
Keeping it clean is our motto!

It really piques the park officials
To see a tree trunk sporting initials.
Leave the oaks au naturel, folks.
No reason to mark the bark.
Don't mean to be mean,
But we love our patch of green,
So don't screw up our scene.
That's the real rule of the park.

No weight-lifting, no shape-shifting.
Nothing against you vampires,
But keep your sick habits at home, okay?
Don't play slots, roulette or Keno.
No bad impressions of Al Pacino.
You need a permit to build an ark.
These are the rules of the park.

Don't take off too many of your clothes.
Don't rendezvous with UFOs.
No whiskey stills, no wacky-pills;

That little old lady is the local narc.
No casual waving of power tools.
No installation of swimming pools.
We're spelling it out for all you fools:
Please obey the rules of the park.

VIVE LE BOOGIE WOOGIE

Music, Stephanie Trick/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

There's a little joint
Out on Paris Point
Where the air is dank,
The décor is rank.
They got lousy food.
The staff is rude,
The beer is flat,
But see, none of that
Is its claim to fame,
And its name is
Vive Le Boogie Woogie.

The piano men
Get to work at ten,
Wrap it up at four.
We still scream for more
Of that '30s thing.
We stomp, we swing,
Put 'em together for the
New guy with the crazy eye
At Vive Le Boogie Woogie.

Don't need no drums,
Need no bass,
No guitar,
To rock this place.
Let's all do the count-off,
One, two,, three.
Vive le boogie woogie!
C'est bien, bay-bee.

It's wicked sweet
When they play "Roll 'Em, Pete."
I heard there's this chick
Who cops every lick.
Oh man, we gotta meet up at
Vive Le Boogie Woogie.

Dun dun dun dun da da da,

Dun dun dun dun da da da,
Dun dun dun dun da da da,
Dun dun dun dun da da da

There's a little joint
Out on Paris Point.
Every table slants.
There's no room to dance.
Seedy crowd,
Way too loud.
Guy named Guy
Is the maitre d'.
Soon you're gonna see
Why they named it
Vive Le Boogie Woogie.

It's a sultry night,
Stars insanely bright,
Time to bag my blues,
Put on sexy shoes,
Retro skirt.
I'll work my flirt.
Cutest guys in town
Lay it down at
Vive Le Boogie Woogie.

Don't need no drums,
Need no bass,
No guitar,
To rock this place.
Let's all do the count-off,
One, two three.
Vive le boogie woogie!
C'est bien, bay-bee.

DREAMILY

(Based on "4th Street Drag," by John Novacek)
Music, John Novacek/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Wandering road, watering hole,
Warble of a nightingale that pierces my soul,
Reddening leaves on October trees,
Soon to take flight,
Weightless as light.
Mackerel sky
Drifting above,
You and I lie motionless,
You tell me that you love me,

As the harvest moon comes creeping over the mountain,
Dreamily.

I've waited a lifetime to finally draw you near.
Are we really here?
Life could hold no more.

Restless of mind, troubled of heart,
Thinking, as I did, we'd be forever apart ...
Sorrowful thoughts born of solitude,
Came to an end,
Darling, my friend.
Seeing you smile,
Hearing you speak,
Something indefinable that
Always leaves me weak,
Is in the autumn air,
Is everywhere that I find you,
Dreamily.

We talk of the future, and all that we long to do,
Now that we are two,
Wondering dreamily if such dreams come true.

LET'S DO THIS

(Based on "Greased Limelight," by Robin Frost)
Music, Robin Frost/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

*I woke up an hour previous to the break of day.
There was a peppy little voice inside my head,
And I could hear it say, "Let's do this."
I'm not the sort who goes for life-affirming chat,
But I "went there" fast, and that was that,
Jumped up and yelled to the cat, "Let's do this!"*

Systems blazing, crank it to the max.
Let's find the diamond ring inside that
Cosmic box of Cracker Jacks.
I could dance on the ceiling!
Think I'll ride this feeling
Right to the bright blue sky.

I don't care if life and love are less than utter bliss.
I don't care if winter's long,
Or if there's another song called "Let's Do This."
Customarily, I'm miserable as sin.
Today, I'm Pollyanna's twin.

Boldly I'll attack what needs attacking most of all.
My problems are a pile of eggs,
And I've got a bowling ball.
Tee-hee-hee and tweedle-eedle-eet,
My roommate says I'm "frighteningly upbeat."
Shocks her a smidge
To see me Turtle-Wax the fridge.

Begone, you crumpled-up receipts from 1993!
En garde, *Napoleon recipe:*
I plan to best you easily!
And you know that woman down at the flower shop?
The one I had that big fight with?
I'm takin' her out for coffee;
We're gonna straighten this whole thing out.
Hey, Cecelia, c'mere man.
Let's take a walk. We gotta talk,
Because you see, I'm reasonably certain it was all because of me.
(This day is crazy!)

The bathroom's been repapered.
I've made ten desserts, including pie.
Seems the briefest instant
Since I heard the battle cry, "*Let's do this!*"

I'll bid a fond farewell to super-powered me.
Tomorrow, frozen pizzas *and reality TV.*

Nevertheless, I really rocked,
And I'll admit I'm kinda shocked,
Still ridin' on the buzz of what a dynamo I was.

Night-night, dear kitty.
Your new sweater's pretty.
I haven't been this tired since I don't remember when.
And as for you, peppy little voice ...
I think I'm done, but it's been fun.
Let's do this again.

PRETZEL MAN
(THE CONTORTIONIST)
(Based on "Pastime Rag #4," by Artie Matthews)
Music, Artie Matthews/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

I wandered out to the tent.
He was gazing at me.
His feet were facing away;

Tell me, how could that be?
His head could swivel with ease,
More than a hundred degrees,
Around, and around, and ...
Amazing isn't it?

Soon I was listening for,
Then beginning to sing,
The strange and sinuous tune
That meant he'd entered the ring.
Pretzel man, you've got my heart
Twisted in two.

When he was only a tot,
He scared his parents to bits.
He'd walk around on his hands,
Practice doing the splits,
Then bend back over a ball,
Start to roll down the hall,
Around, and around, and ...
"Amanda, stop him!"

He's got the dreamiest eyes,
And the dimples of life.
We're quite an item, and soon
He's going to make me his wife!
Pretzel man, you've got my heart
Twisted in two.

"Showtime!" they cry.
Where's my whip?
Where's my chair?
I'm half there.
So lovesick am I,
Can't think straight,
When he forms his figure eight.

Rubes yell for more.
I dance on,
Take my place,
Arrange my face.
My tigers both roar,
Seem less tame,
Sensing I am off my game.

I need to focus now, and not be killed,
Although my girlish heart is filled with
Wedding dreams.

I smile as a bridesmaid screams.
She's caught the bouquet.
It's Lizzie, the Living Lizard Girl! (Well ...
They called her that back in the day,
Before it was considered déclassé.)

I hum "Here Comes the Bride."
That blushing bride is me.
I'm happy as can be.

I'll toast our future with my limber love,
And then the sweetest chapter of our life begins.
Two children, I'm thinking twins,
A riotous pair ... *and when they play Hide and Seek,*
They'll curl up in the jelly jars,
Amanda and Henri, my future stars.
We'll share a perfect paradise, yes, that's the plan,
We three and Pretzel Man.

IMAGINARY GUY

(Based on "Dancers In Love," by Duke Ellington)
Music, Duke Ellington/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

She is alone but never lonely.
She's made up a one and only.
She's in love with an imaginary guy.
Surpassing any actuality,
There's nothin' half as nice as bein'
Home with her imaginary guy.

He's always curious to hear about her day,
And deeply interested in what she has to say.
He makes a heck of a martini.
He's a hunk and he's a genius,
A fabulous imaginary guy.

When each new romance came to grief,
She cast about for some relief.
The world of dating filled her with despair.
"Hey I love ya baby, see ya."
Married, whiny, mean or dim,
Another one who wasn't him.
A few bad years and it grew hard to care,
Then she got the bright idea,

And she hooked up with the creation
Of her keen imagination,
Her adorable imaginary guy.

No need to rattle off her history
To yet another mister,
She could hang with her imaginary guy.

He makes her laugh
Until she's rolling on the floor,
He makes her moan
The way she never did before,
And he can do the Macarena,
Fly most any type of plane, a
Truly Renaissance imaginary guy.

Got a great big heart,
And a small tattoo,
Just her name in blue.
He's a thoughtful sort,
Fond of books and art,
With a high IQ,
And a cute butt too.

He knows the way
She needs to feel.
Don't ever say
He isn't real.
Look at her glow—
She loves him so.
"Sorry ladies, I've got to miss happy hour."

Got a sense of style,
Yet he doesn't preen.
Sports a drop-dead smile,
Keeps the kitchen clean (*very nice*)!

He's a tender soul,
Kind to kids and cats,
Seldom holds a grudge
After minor spats,

Better by half
Than men she knew.
I wouldn't laugh,
If I were you.
Look in her eyes
As she replies,
"No I don't want to meet that podiatrist,
No, no, no, no, no, no."

She is alone but never lonely.

She's made up a one and only.
Though it is a bit extraordinary,
I can tell the girl is very
Sure of whom she ought to marry:
It's her own imaginary guy.

THE TANGO LESSON
(Based on "Spanish Rag," by Willie "The Lion" Smith)
Music, Willie "The Lion" Smith/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Out of a doorway on Ocean Street
Floated a sultry Argentinian beat.
My bag of apples fell to my feet.
Shaken to the core was I.

The scene I witnessed appeared mundane,
The teacher elderly, his student plain,
But when they tangoed, my fevered brain
Started going "ai yi yi."

I watched them slink across the floorboards,
Joined in mutual surrender.
They grew more sinewy and slender
With each passing bar.
I was giddy as a schoolgirl
From the rapture I was feeling.
I turned away, my senses reeling,
Stumbled to my car.

I was astounded, I was aghast,
At how I'd ever borne my boring past,
Now that my purpose was clear at last:
Tango was my only goal.

I'd cash my paycheck, blow off my bills,
Spend every cent on terpsichorean thrills—
Red dress of Lycra with satin frills,
Music that would sate my soul.

*Oh Señor Castillo,
Your hair is so silver,
Your eyes are so black,
Your hand feels so right in the small of my back.*

Ai yi yi yi
Have you been teaching long?
Goodness, your grip is strong!
Don't let this lesson end!

Ai yi yi yi ...
I am as graceful as a wave!
I feel magnificent and brave!

It's the music or
Him that I adore,
Or they're one and the same.
This is my destiny,
Where I was born to be.
We are a perfect flame.

THE RIDE
(Based on "Intoxication," by John Novacek)
Music, John Novacek/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

Nice morning for an interesting trip.
Did I think to say "Thanks for the ride?"
Great fun with every rise, every dip.
I flew off in a flash, and the
Thrill of it'll never be denied.

Not certain what I thought, what I felt.
Only word to describe it is "Whee!"
You spoke, I saw the scenery melt.
I was heaven-bound instantly,
At the very thought of you and me.

Since I met you, my left hand
Doesn't know what my right hand is doing.
I'm in a wild state,
Frequently elated, twitter-pated.
I try not to act an idiot,
But it's always a little too late.

Now I get those Great American Songbook lyrics
About being in a spin,
Babies on swings,
Hearts having wings,
Or standing stony still,
As love does what it will.

Bright morning, then you smiled like you do.
As the phrase goes, "I like to have died."
Hope can climb, then go splat,
But hey, I'm down with that,
Cause with all said and done,
I'm excited to be going on the ride.

One "I love you" puts one out there, it's true.
There's a chance you won't get that return "I love you too,"
So I'm mute as a clam,
Happy where I am,
In the clouds, way up high in
My private sky.

Some will call me madder than Ophelia—*ha ha ha!*
Rambling insanely ...
I can see it plainly.
People sell their souls for inspiration, see, but
Lucky me! It seems I get it for free
When you walk in the room.
I hear this
"Boom boom boom boom boom
Boom boom boom boom boom boom boom boom,"
As on your sweetness I fly,
On your bewitching air I glide,
And baby, all I can say is,
"Thanks for the ride."

TIMELESS RAG

(Based on "Viper's Drag," by Fats Waller)
Music, Fats Waller/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

She walked in wearing a timeless rag.
The band was playing "The Viper's Drag."
I looked at her and she looked through me,
Lost in her own unreality.

Although she slowly reconnected,
Everyone at the bar suspected
Her backlit golden eyes reflected
The sight of endless night.

Lately, by ten she'd be in the bag, in the bag,
Shaking her hips to "The Viper's Drag."

She tore the hem of her timeless rag.
The band was wailing. "The Viper's Drag"
Blew through the atmosphere;
She was gone, that was clear.
She looked a lot like she did in school.
I said so; she said, "Now don't be cruel ... don't you be cruel."

The place was jammed, the crowd unruly.
Somebody swore to love her truly.

She tried to make like she was duly impressed.
She did her best.

Those eyes grew dark as the midnight sky,
As she waved bye-bye,
Bye-bye.

CALIFORNIA STREET
(Based on "Bond Street," by Fats Waller)
Music, Fats Waller/Lyrics, Lorraine Feather

The shore was right on the brink of night.
The pier was decked in electric light.
We laughed and chattered,
Our faces bright from the heat.
We pulled our shoes off, shook out the sand.
We headed east and you grabbed my hand.
My mood was reckless, your smile was sweet,
As we slowly ambled up to California Street.

Set free, school was done and gone,
And we counted on
The time till September
To hold us forever.

We planned our moves, pictured how we'd dress,
To crash the party they called Success,
A fragile vision still incomplete,
As you wrapped me in your arms on California Street.

The Santa Anas were gusting;
The long tall trees
Were listing at a graceful 45 degrees.
A local band began to shine
On songs from circa 1969.

The amber sun had tumbled
To meet the sea,
Spilled over the horizon
Like a cup of tea.
We couldn't find one reason why
Our future wasn't golden as the sky.

You murmured words no one else could hear,
Tucked a hibiscus behind my ear.
Bring on tomorrow, we had it beat,
By the promise that we made on California Street.

From heart to heart, we felt our lives begin,
As every dream we ever knew, came rushing in.
Whatever happened would happen soon,
Our future full of mystery as the moon.