

## **Pianoman Tutorial**

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Pianoman by Billy Joel is hands down the most requested piano bar song of all time. During my over 19 months of piano bar work on cruise ships, I played this song at least 2-3 times PER NIGHT. Billy Joel based this song on his own experiences as a piano bar entertainer and created an iconic “favorite” song for millions.

Pianoman is a peculiar song; it sounds like a carnival-style waltz and yet it gets played on rock radio all the time.

In this tutorial, we follow the usual four step protocol for learning to sing and play songs.

- Step #1:** Learn the chords
- Step #2:** Learn the groove
- Step #3:** Learn the hook
- Step #4:** Put it all together.

***Let's go!***

**Step #1:** Learn the chords (see lyrics and chords on the next two pages)

For our first step, you can simply learn the chords in root position. Watch the video and I'll take you through it.

## Pianoman - Billy Joel

[Intro]

**C G F C F C D7 G C G F C F G C G**

[Verse 1]

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
It's nine o'clock on a Saturday  
**F C/E D7 G**  
The regular crowd shuffles in  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
There's an old man sitting next to me  
**F G C G**  
Making love to his tonic and gin

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
He says, "Son, can you play me a memory  
**F C/E D7 G**  
I'm not really sure how it goes  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
But it's sad and it's sweet and I knew it complete  
**F G C**  
When I wore a younger man's clothes."

[Interlude]

**Am Am/G D7/F#**  
la la la, di da da  
**Am Am/G D7/F# G G/A G/Bb G/B**  
La la, di di da da dum

[Chorus]

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Sing us a song, you're the piano man  
**F C D7 G**  
Sing us a song tonight  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Well, we're all in the mood for a melody  
**F G C G**  
And you've got us all feeling alright

[Verse 2]

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Now John at the bar is a friend of mine  
**F C D7 G**  
He gets me my drinks for free  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
And he's quick with a joke and he'll light up your smoke  
**F G C G**  
But there's some place that he'd rather be

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
He says, "Bill, I believe this is killing me."  
**F C D7 G**  
As the smile ran away from his face  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
"Well I'm sure that I could be a movie star  
**F G C**  
If I could get out of this place"

[Interlude]

**Am Am/G D7/F#**  
la la la, di da da  
**Am Am/G D7/F# G G/A G/Bb G/B**  
La la, di di da da dum

[Verse 3]

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Now Paul is a real estate novelist  
**F C D7 G**  
Who never had time for a wife  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
And he's talking with Davy, who's still in the Navy  
**F G C G**  
And probably will be for life

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
And the waitress is practicing politics  
**F C D7 G**  
As the businessman slowly gets stoned  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Yes, they're sharing a drink they call loneliness  
**F G C G**  
But it's better than drinking alone

[Chorus]

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Sing us a song, you're the piano man  
**F C D7 G**  
Sing us a song tonight  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
Well, we're all in the mood for a melody  
**F G C G**  
And you've got us all feeling alright

[Verse 4]

**C G/B F/A C/G**  
It's a pretty good crowd for a Saturday  
**F C D7 G**  
And the manager gives me a smile  
**C G/B F/A C/G**  
'Cause he knows that it's me they've been coming to see  
**F G C G**

To forget about life for a while

**C G/B F/A C/G**

And the piano, it sounds like a carnival

**F C D7 G**

And the microphone smells like a beer

**C G/B F/A C/G**

And they sit at the bar and put bread in my jar

**F G C G**

And say, "Man, what are you doing here?"

[Interlude]

**Am Am/G D7/F#**

la la la, di da da

**Am Am/G D7/F# G G/A G/Bb G/B**

La la, di di da da dum

[Chorus]

**C G/B F/A C/G**

Sing us a song, you're the piano man

**F C D7 G**

Sing us a song tonight

**C G/B F/A C/G**

Well, we're all in the mood for a melody

**F G C**

And you've got us all feeling alright

I have taken the liberty of notating the chord inversions I used in this tutorial.

### Verse:

Chord progression for the first system of the Verse:

Measure	Chord
1	C
2	G/B
3	E/A
4	C/G
5	F
6	C/E
7	D7
8	G

Chord progression for the second system of the Verse:

Measure	Chord
1	C
2	G/B
3	E/A
4	C/G
5	F
6	G
7	C
8	C

### Interlude (La-da-diddy-da part)

#### Steps #2:

The groove of this song is a traditional "Oom Pa Pa" Waltz.

The musical score is written in 3/4 time. The first system consists of two measures. The right hand plays two C major chords, each labeled 'chord'. The left hand plays a single note labeled 'Root'. The second system also consists of two measures. The right hand plays two C major chords, each labeled 'pa'. The left hand plays a single note labeled 'Oom'. The third system consists of one measure. The right hand plays Am and G chords. The left hand plays a single note. The second system of the score shows a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both starting with an F# note.

Here is what it looks like over the song.

**Step 3: Learn the Introduction**

Notice in the introduction, the LH takes over the Oom Pa Pa rhythm, while the RH takes the melodic role. This is an approximation of what Billy Joel plays, since the melody line is actually played on harmonica.

Can't play this on the piano? Just play the regular Oom Pa Pa and sing the melodic line of the intro - or play it on Kazoo!

The image displays a musical score for piano and voice, organized into four systems. Each system consists of three parts: a vocal line in treble clef, a piano accompaniment in bass clef, and a simplified piano accompaniment on the right. The first system features chords C, G/B, E/A, and C/G. The second system features chords F, G, and C. The third system features chords C, E/A, G/C, E/C, C, and Dm7/C. The fourth system features chords C, E/A, G/C, E/C, C, and Dm7/C.

**Step #4: Put it all together.**

Remember that you can (and should!) customize this to fit your skill level. If the chord inversions are too challenging for you, then play them all root positioning. If you want to level it up, try altering the groove or adding some solo fills.

Try to avoid getting stuck in the little details! The goal is for you to learn to sing and play more songs - not drown in a pool of perfectionism. Have fun - it's only music!