

AUTHENTIC ROCK 'N' ROLL PIANO: JERRY LEE LEWIS & MORE
WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOIN' ON
HOW TO PLAY THE ICONIC INTRO

Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On, recorded at Sun Records 1957, was Jerry Lee Lewis's first big hit – bringing the piano to the fore of the rock 'n' roll movement and setting new standards for provocative & outrageous performance. This is the recording that I have transcribed and base this section of the course on.

The piano part that Jerry Lee Lewis plays on the 4 bar introduction sets up the part and feel for the whole song. Apart from the solo section, this is pretty much the part that is played throughout the song, with a few little variations.

Here it is:



The image shows a musical score for piano, labeled 'PNO.' on the left. It consists of two staves, a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom, both in 4/4 time. The treble staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, repeated four times. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords: C4, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, repeated four times. The notation is simple and rhythmic, capturing the iconic 'slap-back' feel of the original recording.

Have a listen to the recording and try to recreate the feel. On the recording, the piano is drenched in slap-back echo but have a listen out for:

- The feel: is it straight or swung?
- How heavy are the hands playing?
- How long or short or the notes in each hand?
- Is every note played consistently the same or are some notes accented?

Jerry Lee had used the same piano part in previous recordings. Check out this transcription what he plays on his 'Crazy Arms' that he recorded in 1956, and you can see the same piano part when the verse kicks in from bar 5, albeit in F and a different chord sequence. My demonstration on the video departs slightly from this but the main texture is the same:

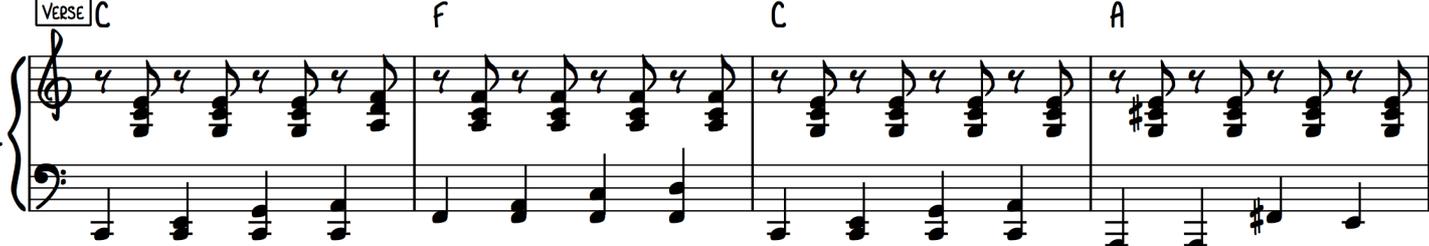


And then compare with his recording of 'End Of The Road', the B-side to 'Crazy Arms', it's exactly the same introduction as 'Whole Lotta Shakin' Going' On', again with different chord changes in the verse:

INTRODUCTION C



VERSE C F C A



D G7 C



PNP.