

Alka Setzer

SONG TITLE: ALKA SETZER

GENRE: ROCKABILLY

TEMPO: 150 BPM

KEY: G MAJOR

PATCHES: PIANO

FEATURES: SHUFFLE FEEL

COMPOSER: SIMON TROUP

ARRANGER: ALASTAIR GAVIN

PERSONNEL: KEITH AIREY (GTR)

HENRY THOMAS (BASS)

NOAM LEDERMAN (DRUMS)

ALASTAIR GAVIN (KEYS)

BACKGROUND INFO

It is sometimes forgotten that at the time that punk and reggae were at the height of their popularity in the late 1970s, there was also a rock 'n' roll revival that brought to the UK a number of American artists. One such was Brian Setzer, whose band The Stray Cats, had a number of important hits in the UK in the early 1980s. This tune is an imagining of how the 'Cats would sound if they had had a keyboard player.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Rockabilly, an early variant of rock 'n' roll that fused black music with white, southern, 'rebel' sounds ('hillbilly'), was pioneered by artists such as Carl Perkins. In the late 1970s it had mutated into a high energy form that borrowed punk rock's attack and sense of disgust at what was perceived to be the over-commercialised music of the time. Artists such as Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe, The Cramps and The Stray Cats looked back to the pioneers of rock 'n' roll for inspiration. In its more mainstream form, Welsh performer Shakin' Stevens had a string of rockabilly inspired hits in the early 1980s that made him one of the top selling artists in Europe at the time.

NOTES


Perhaps the most rebellious of the rockabilly pioneers was barnstorming 50s pianist Jerry Lee Lewis whose 'Whole Lotta Shakin' and 'Great Balls of Fire' set new standards for performance hysteria while his tempestuous personal life was virtually the model for every rock 'n' roller that followed him.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

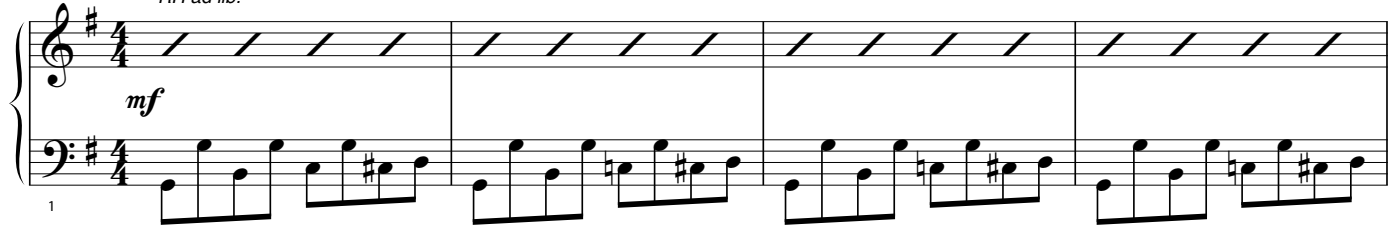
The Stray Cats singles, 'Runaway Boys', 'Rock This Town' and particularly 'Stray Cat Strut' were all released within 18 months of each other between 1980 and 1981. All can be found on their first UK album *Stray Cats* (1980). One of Setzer's best performances is of Gene Vincent's 'Double Talking Baby' from the *Best of* compilation album (2002).

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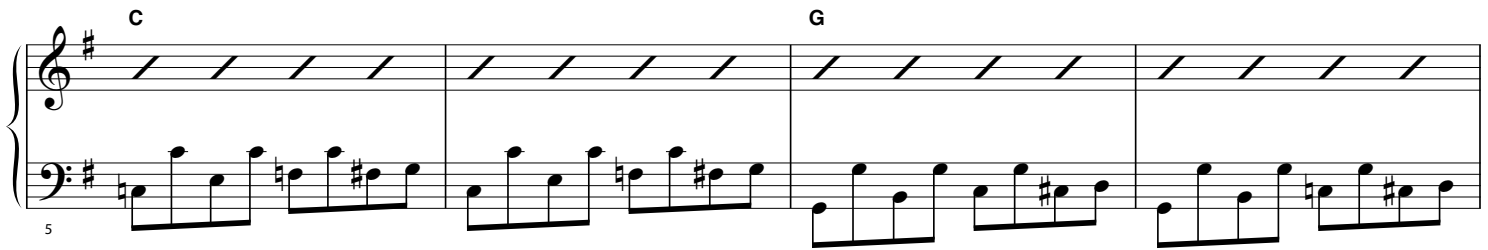
Simon Troup


♩ = 150 *Rockabilly*

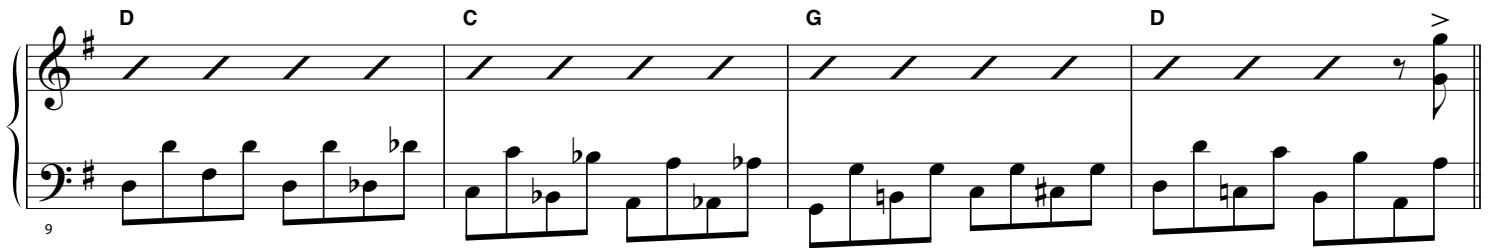
G
Patch: Piano
RH ad lib.



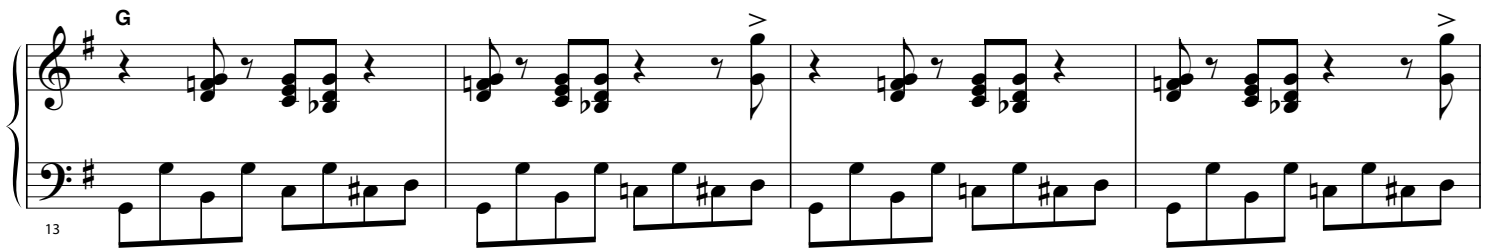
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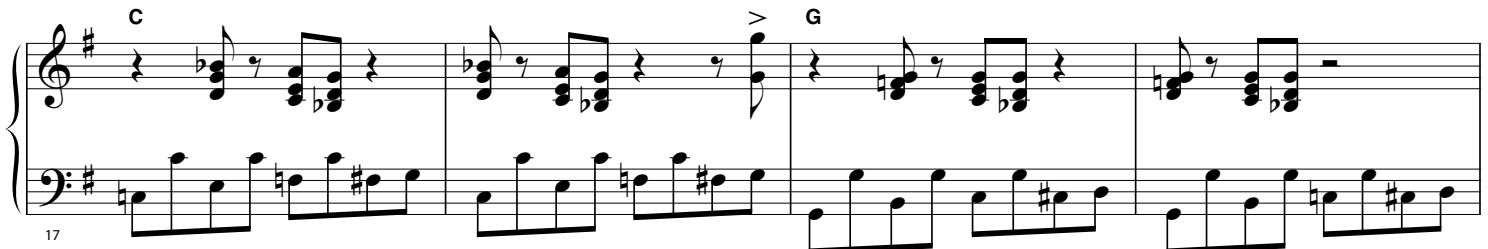
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9



13



17

Walkthrough

This piece is based around the twelve bar blues so spend a little time familiarising yourself with the basic chord progression. It is also in three distinct sections. The A section (bars 1–36) is the intro and main riff. The B section (bars 37–60) is the stabs for the band solos, and the repeated A section (bars 61–84) is where the initial groove is developed to make a powerful ending. Each section needs practising separately for a sense of style and specific technical requirements, but make sure you can connect these sections for a fluent and convincing reading.

Bars 1–12:

This is the intro part of the song and the left hand needs to be kept solid and be evenly articulated. Watch that you set a balanced swing rhythm. It is important that the lower notes clearly define the musical phrase so practise by keeping the thumb silent when you get to it. Next, practise the 5th finger movement from bars 4–5, 6–7, 8–9 separately so you are able to get the changes smoothly.

The right hand can be developed as either a solo as on the recording or as a simpler rhythmic idea. The recording is only a guide and the important thing is that it has shape and harmonic accuracy

Bar 17 – Alternative fingerings

Bars 13–26:

Make sure that the hands are together here as the tempo is fast and it is easy to get them slightly out. Try playing just the right hand thumb Gs with the left hand pattern. Then

work on the chords. These are played in two ways. One is where the lower notes move and need to be emphasised (bars 13–16), and the other is where the upper notes need defining (bars 17–18). Ensure that the last eighth note in the bar is accurate and coordinated. Make sure you can hear the movement and harmonic changes clearly. Fingering is important here so make sure you use fingers that keep the chords as smooth as possible. In bar 24 a grace note is fitted into the line. This needs to be smooth and balanced and not stick out, so again, fingering is key.

Bars 27–36:

The triplets in the right hand need to be even and controlled. Make sure that the left hand pattern is steadily maintained and that the fingering in the right hand allows the held note in bar 28 to be clear. Try practising this pattern using your knees or a surface such as a table. It is very important that the hands are co-ordinated at this tempo. The shape of bar 28 is repeated with different notes in bar 32. Here there is an added grace note. This needs to be delicate and balance in tone and sound like an ornamented counter melody line. Again, fingering is important.

Bars 36–60:

These bars look to be the easiest as there are few notes and lots of rests. Actually, they are far from easy. You need to make sure that you are clear which chords come on the off-beat and the ones that are on the beat. Listen very closely to the backing track without playing so you are clear. You also need to be clear on the length of the chords and also whether you are going to play them legato (joined) or non legato (a small gap between them). Again, listen to the backing track. When you have decided this, counting is vital to make sure you do not come in before the rest of the band. Try practising these chords on your knees along with the backing track. A good way of ensuring these are spot on is by moving to the chords in the rests and preparing them. This way there is not a rush to find them and come in early.

Bars 61–84:

This groove is a development of the groove you played at the opening. There are still quite a few bars to go so don't make the mistake of adding too much to the right hand part. Try using inversions of the chords and work rhythmically with the backing track. From bar 73 consider moving up in register to give a sense of climax and try adding some stylistic tremolos. Finally, there are some large chord patterns in the final two bars. Make sure these are accurate.

Marking Schemes

GRADE EXAMS | GRADES 1–5

ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Technical Exercises	9–10 out of 15	11–12 out of 15	13+ out of 15
Sight Reading <i>or</i> Improvisation & Interpretation	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
Ear Tests	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9+ out of 10
General Musicianship Questions	3 out of 5	4 out of 5	5 out of 5
TOTAL MARKS	60%+	74%+	90%+

PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES | DEBUT TO GRADE 5

ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 4	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 5	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
TOTAL MARKS	60%+	75%+	90%+