

# Diggin Erroll Garner

Erroll Garner (1921 –1977) was one of the great jazz pianists of the 20th century. A worldwide ambassador of jazz, Erroll was a true natural genius, had a full, rich and expressive piano style, and was an incarnation of joy and spontaneity at the keyboard. His playing is one of the most stylized in jazz piano history, but he was capable of wide musical changes and spur-of-the-moment musical decisions. Erroll Garner is a one-of-a-kind jazz giant whose playing, personality and style made a deep impact on American popular culture.

## Basic Erroll Style

RH blocked chorded melody, LH soft 4/bar with jagged, loud off-beat LH Roots and Pedal Points

## Elements of Style

Erroll had a distinctive, complete playing style that was a blend of various elements. Some of these elements include:

1. 4 to the bar soft-ish LH chord comping interrupted by loud off-beat LH notes/octaves (often the 5th of the chord, or chord tones)
  - a. LH chords blocked
  - b. LH chords doorknobs bottom up
  - c. LH chords windshield wipered
2. Every melody note supported by RH chord underneath – RH clusters are usually 3-4 note octave voicings, alternating between spread and close voicings. Common spread RH clusters include pure octave, 158, 1468, etc..Common RH close structures include 1348, 12468, etc...Tremolo used at end of phrase often, tremolos also used at highest note in phrase. Addition used to beef up the melody.
3. Two different time feels in each hand – LH generally steady, RH ahead or behind beat
4. Loud bursts at end of sections, before new (often softer) section
5. Introductions – sometimes in the style of the upcoming piece, sometimes in an opposite style
6. Fantastic use of dynamics for power, surprise, coolness, etc.
7. Tremendous control of hand separation. Each hand was capable of maintaining a different time feel, function and touch indefinitely.
8. Chord shaking for drama
9. Great RH improv 1/8th – 1/16th lines (sometime with blues influence) over soft LH comping chords

10. Two level LH – low octave/mid range voicing
11. Big 2-hand chords for power
12. RH slides, often 2 ½ steps approach to melody notes
13. Arranged outros
14. Classical quotes for humor and contrast
15. RH 1/8 note triplet figures used with clusters instead of 2 1/8th notes

## **Just One of Those Things**

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Intro 8 bars

Melody - octave voicings, LH 4/bar with off-beat strikes

Big Low octaves to end chorus

Blowing section – basic 1/8 flow RH, 4/bar in LH

Tremolo octaves, 2-level LH

Interlude –arranged 2 hand chord rhythmic pattern in each A section with an improvised

Bridge

Melody out last A section with tag

Latin outro

Tremolo end w/arpeg to top of piano

## **I'll Remember April**

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Contrary introduction – LH 5ths, RH clusters jagged

Melody “ERROLL STYLE” - soft w/RH clusters, LH 4/bar w/loud interrupting notes, often the 5th of the key

RH improv 1/8 note line vs. staggered LH – 1 Chorus

Big 2-layer LH w/RH high octaves – 8bars

Erroll style

2-layer LH w/RH high octaves – 8 measures

Erroll style

Melody in RH octaves vs. 5 pedal

Arranged outro quoting melody, up min 3rd, shaking chords for dramatic ending