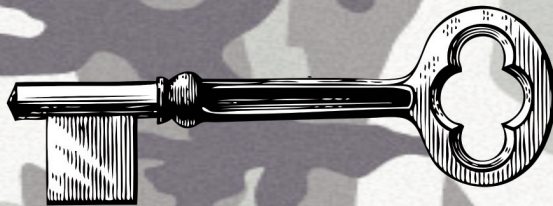


# Keyed Up

PIANO

## Self-Taught Piano System



# Survivor's Manual



by Joseph Pingel

# Self Taught Piano System

## Survivor's Manual

by Joseph Pingel



Please direct all inquiries regarding this book, distribution, affiliation, improvements, suggestions and anything of interest to Joseph Pingel.

The following links connect to the internet and may ask your permission before doing so. Click on "Allow" and let's connect online.

Blog: [KeyedUpPiano.blogspot.com](http://KeyedUpPiano.blogspot.com)

Websites: [KeyedUpPiano.com](http://KeyedUpPiano.com)

Facebook: [Keyed Up Piano](https://www.facebook.com/KeyedUpPiano)

Twitter: [KeyedUpPiano](https://twitter.com/KeyedUpPiano)

Youtube: [PianoLesson101](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

eMail: [info@keyeduppiano.com](mailto:info@keyeduppiano.com)



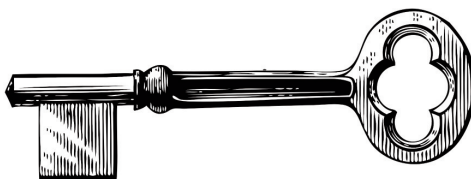
I wanted to be a rock star when I was a kid. I was good on the guitar at an early age and used guitar-chord knowledge to teach myself piano (after a couple years of lessons).

That changeover from one instrument to another drove home some music theory concepts that rocked my musical world. I made some unobvious discoveries; discoveries missed by most musicians out there. That's what this book is about.

No matter your musical skills, you will either acknowledge and recognize the rare insights I share here or aspire to understand them better.

Copyright 2013 by Keyed Up Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. You may not distribute this product, sell it or reprint any part of it without written consent from the author.

# Self-Taught Piano System



# Survivor's Manual



by Joseph Pingel

## Testimonials

“It is more than I expected but exactly what I had hoped for.” Cam V.

“Intriguing, fascinating and concise. Lots of information on the mathematical. Simple. Links stuff together.” Wendell F.

“The course made sense. I’m a guitar player and can cross over easier.”  
David S.

“It gives a broader picture -something bigger to strive for as opposed to repetition without understanding.” Jude C.

“Even more than I expected. I learned more and enjoyed the learning experience. Well done.” Gina C.

“It covered a lot of material I wasn’t aware of. I loved the whole thing!!”  
Dawn W.

“Could be habit forming.” Don R.

“Good concept. Exciting concept.” Steve. S

“Chord oriented. Combines well with info already known.” Maureen C.

“Not too hard. Easily structured to understand.” Tom F.

“Makes more sense than other theory. Answers questions.” Sandy M.

“Makes sense, the concept of building mathematically.” Scott O.

“Concise and organized. Logical sequence.” Hugh C.

“The ‘basics’ on how to play are taught so that one can learn quickly.”  
Sara Jane S.

“The course made sense. I’m a guitar player and can cross over easier.”  
David S.

“It’s more than I expected in music theory. I’ve learned an amazing amount.”  
Maureen H.

“I think you have a very unique way of teaching piano theory. You are very good Joe.” Chet W.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
What Is The Survivor's Manual?	1
Who Is This For?	1
Have You Got What It Takes?	1
My Love/Hate Relationship With Piano Lessons	2
How I Figured It Out	4
Magic and Discovery	4
<b>Chapter 1: The Greatest Composers Are Self Taught</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Unique Traits of Self-Taught Success</b>	<b>7</b>
How Big Is Your Ego?	7
The Mind Set of Excellence	7
The Obstacles Of Being Self Taught	8
<b>Chapter 3: Major New Discoveries In Music</b>	<b>11</b>
"It Ain't No Stinkin' Revolution"	11
My Discovery Dilemma	11
<b>Discovery #1:</b> You Can Learn to Play the Piano Just like You Learn the Guitar	12
<b>Discovery #2 - Command</b>	14
The Five Revelations of Conceptual Command	14
The Factual Side of Command	16
The Three Revelations of Factual Command	16
<b>Discovery #3 - The "Play By Ear" Discovery</b>	18
<b>Discovery #4 - The Infinite Universe</b>	21
<b>Chapter 4: How Do I Get Started?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter 5: The Self-Teaching Plan For Life</b>	<b>25</b>
Final Wrap Up	29
<b>Chapter 6: Back To The Basics</b>	<b>29</b>
How We Lost Our Way	29
How To Find Our Way Again	29
That's a Wrap	30
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>31</b>
Frequently Asked Questions	31
More Testimonials	32



“There was no one near to confuse me, so I was forced to become original.

Joseph Haydn

## Introduction

### What Is The Survivor's Manual?

This survivor's manual discusses life outside of piano lessons; what you learned; what you didn't and where to go from here. It reveals the path of the "self-taught musician" that has learned important lessons the hard way and gives you a seasoned view of excellence. Only the best musicians in the world know this information.

Many people find themselves in the same boat when their piano-lesson experience comes to an end. They inherently feel they have the skills to be good musicians, but in most cases don't know the next move or have any idea how to go about teaching themselves.

That's what this book is about. Taking the bull by the horns and teaching yourself.

### Who Is This For?

Whether you've taken piano lessons or are an astute beginner, this book takes a pragmatic stand that not all musicians are created equally. Some people are more adept to music with better ears, coordination and natural abilities than others. I'm not out to discourage anyone. There's room for all . . . but self-direction moves quickly and is for those that don't have much trouble keeping up.

A *fair* natural ability is common in most people in the beginning. Some initially have deficiencies with their ear or coordination issues, but most people can overcome those problems with practice.

Regardless of lessons, this book is for those that know they have potential talent and want to move quickly. Let's talk about how to gauge your musical potential.

### Have You Got What It Takes?

Whether a complete beginner or an advanced player, you have the potential to learn this skill quickly with applied effort and direction. Those that find this kind of learning easy tend to have these traits:

#### **Current Or Past Piano-Lesson Experience**

Being comfortable, able to identify the keyboard and how to read music are definite pluses. When it comes to teaching yourself, previous training has its perks. The question is "Do you have a fire in your belly?"

### **A Natural Ear for Music**

Having a natural ear to sing in key, hear chord changes and plunk out a one-note melody line on the piano are skills that help you progress quickly. If you've got a great ear then, in my opinion you're half way there. If not, your ear can improve over time with practice and experience.

### **Goal Oriented**

Learning to play and build chords is a finite skill that can be learned in a short period of time provided that you view it as an unwavering goal. You'll reach it fast if you are willing to study and practice.

### **Self-Directed Focus**

You need to have the "self-taught gene" and a willingness to "stick to it" without a teacher present to keep you going. This is the type of can-do attitude that will make you a success. Commit to taking the helm forever and liberate yourself.

### **The X-Factor**

Some people have extraordinary natural talent for music and possess quick potential for greatness. If you've got the X-factor, learning chords will set off an explosive expansion of your abilities.

### **Guitar Players**

Guitarists are used to playing chords. Crossing over to piano is generally an easy transition for several reasons:

- They understand the role of chords and progressions in music
- They already know a lot of songs by heart
- They have good left and right-hand coordination
- They are used to figuring things out on their own.

## **My Love/Hate Relationship With Piano Lessons**

I'm not trying to upset the apple cart. I've got nothing against standard piano lessons but I think they could be greatly improved by updating their method to 21<sup>st</sup> century needs and desires.

People today want to learn how to play by ear, improvise and not have to rely on reading music to have fun. However, the music industry is so big, and so entrenched in teaching its own system that it resists change.

I have a love/hate relationship with it. To explain, consider these statements:

- I love freedom, but hate war as a means to defend it;
- I love you, but hate your sinful ways.

Both these love/hate statements let us reveal the insidiousness of a problem without blaming anyone. We can express deep love on one side and clearly show our contempt for the problem on the other. That's how I feel about piano lessons.

### Sight-Reading Holds You Back

**“I love piano lessons for the skills they teach, but hate them for the one skill they do not.”**

Too many people are chained to sight-reading as the only means to play music. They can play complicated classical music but can't rattle off Happy Birthday To You without the sheet music. This is true even for many advanced musicians.



The problem is people are so wrapped up *reading* what's written on a page that they never look down at their hands and figure out what the heck they're doing. You might have all the natural talent in the world but until you change your focus from what you're reading on paper to what your fingers are doing on the keyboard, you'll never see the light.

It is chords that teach independence, not sight reading. Learning chords is the first step self-taught musicians take to free themselves from bondage. Likewise, it's the first step you too must take to break free.

### No Goal Means Aimless Progress

**“I love piano lessons for their regimented system of learning, but hate them for their ‘no-end-in-sight’ approach.”**



Standard lessons perpetuate a myth that if you just “stay the course,” sooner or later you will figure things out but that's not the answer; that's the problem. It keeps you on a treadmill of wishing-and-hoping with no end in sight.

It's a promise that never delivers because *it doesn't set a clear path to a reachable goal* of learning to play the piano independently. NOT HAVING A GOAL is why people take piano lessons forever.

### How I Figured It Out

Like many of you, I took a couple years of lessons and did my time before quitting. I found myself at the crossroads of either giving up or teaching myself how to play piano independently. I had an advantage when it came to teaching myself. I was pretty good on the guitar and had lots of music to play.

Using my guitar-playing knowledge, I sat at the piano and transferred guitar chords to the keyboard. After learning 3 chords in 5 minutes, I pounded out a basic rhythm and Voila! Louie Louie.

Eureka! Learning chords on piano was just like on the guitar. That's when the lights turned on! By changing my focus to chords I felt certain I was on track.

I was in my teens and knew very little about theory. Yet there was something special about what I had learned on my own so quickly. I understood quite clearly that the next level of playing began by learning the basic chords. It seemed so simple, I had to share this information.

So at age 16, I wrote a book on how to learn all the basic chords in a month (that's how long it took me). It contained very defined exercises specific to fast progress and impressive results.

In my naive approach there was a simplicity of direction that most people

### Magic and Discovery

miss. To be able to figure things out on you own *you must be the right person*, with the right knowledge, in the right place at the right time.

***“Do you have what it takes to figure out  
the answers on your own?”***

Maybe, but probably not . . .

To find your way, it's easier to follow the path of a Self-Taught musician who understands the ropes. Otherwise you may never discover your true potential.

I'm very pleased to share this information with you and hope you find this book of great value.



## Chapter 1: The Greatest Composers Are Self Taught

Many of the greatest musicians and composers of all time base their success in being “self-taught.” Though many had formal training later on, it’s no coincidence they all attribute their skills and talent to self-taught insights.



Bach



Beethoven



Brahms



Haydn



Mozart



Chopin



Schumann



Mahler



Stravinsky



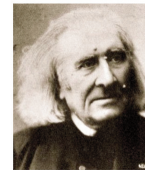
Wagner



Schubert



Debussy



Liszt



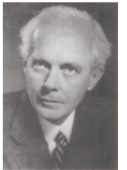
Mussorsky



Telemann



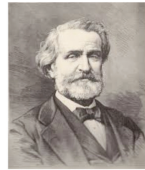
Holst



Bartok



Borodin



Verdi



Rimsky-Korsakov



Elgar



Rossini



Dvorak



Berlioz



Khachaturian

Self-taught musicians all have one thing in common that is the ultimate secret to freedom on the piano.

***They Teach Themselves To Build Chords  
From Scratch And Play Them As a Reflex***

This is a crucial step because learning chords is the key to understanding structure and the numbers side of music. Those two things set a solid foundation to build upon.



## Chapter 2: The Unique Traits of Self-Taught Success

Great musicians are everywhere in the world with untapped potential just waiting to come alive. Some people don't know they have it, while others with great talent don't find much interest in music. Some find happiness playing music with limited capacity while others give up playing forever.

Then there are those unique souls with an insatiable desire to play. That's you.

### How Big Is Your Ego?

We musicians have big egos. Not you of course . . . but I'll admit to it. It seems the longer we play the more we tend to think we've got it all figured out. We're just too hip, too much old dogs and too smart for our own good. Some resist critique regarding their music, and worry needlessly that learning more about theory will stifle their creativity.

#### Snobs

I stop short of saying that everyone who's gone through college-level music training are snobs because I know that's not true. However, I've met plenty of pompous know-it-alls that look down their nose at anyone who challenges their knowledge or authority. They're so smart, they think there is *nothing they don't know* about music that is of any significance.

I don't waste my time with snobs trying to gain their approval. I offer no apologies nor feel any embarrassment over the way I learned to play. It is because of my ignorance-to-enlightenment experience that I learned music so well. I'm happy with my skills and don't need anyone telling me that I'm not okay because I don't have a degree or play the type of music they like.

#### Fellowship

In my opinion, whether formally trained or not, all musicians are part of a fellowship of sorts. All are brothers and sisters that speak the same language. There is no room for rudeness and snobbery.

### The Mind Set of Excellence

#### #1 - Being Open To Learning Something New

No matter what degree of training you have, you must erase (or at least put aside for the moment) all the dogmas of your previous training. Let go of your baggage and allow yourself to see music from the eyes of a beginner. Have an attitude of openness and check your ego at the door. Allow yourself to be led down a path you've never been before.

### #2 - Being A Motivated Self-Starter Able To Learn On Your Own

Remember, this is the “Self-Taught Piano System.” You are in charge of teaching yourself and taking responsibility for your own progress. It’s going to take as long as it takes. You must maintain the motivation and desire to put forth the effort to figure things out.

### #3 - Recognizing That “Practicing” Is A State Of Mind

Practicing includes figuring things out which means you might have a revelation some morning sitting on the toilet. When it comes to fingering, you should be working on things you love and that diminishes the idea that “practice is work.”

### #4 - Being Pragmatic about Your Progress

This means you understand that the self-taught musician mind-set and chording skills don’t happen overnight. It takes a while for things to sink in and to get comfortable playing your own arrangements.

Don’t be in too big of a rush to become “great” too fast. I mean, it’s completely plausible for you to be in control within 3 months. That’s fast but don’t judge yourself too harshly based on your fledgling improvisational skills. When it comes to playing independently, you’ve just barely learned to walk.

## The Obstacles Of Being Self Taught

Five obstacles stand between you and success. The key is to keep going and not allow these things to frustrate you and dampen your spirits. You’re going to learn something really great in a short period of time. Keep pushing, stay motivated and keep going.

### Time

Not having enough time to do it is a weak excuse. When it comes to learning chords it only takes around 10 weeks to get jump started. If you are too busy and can’t devote a reasonable amount of time to learning chords, you’re not going to get very far.



Believe me, you’ll find the time to devote to this when you make a quantum leap. Jump-start your excitement by learning to master the key of C first. That’ll give you an immediate spark to get the fire burning. You’ll get pumped up real fast and find the inspiration to keep going.

## Effort

You have to make learning a priority and put forth your best effort to learning how to think differently about music than you ever have before. If you are truly interested in learning to play the piano well, you'll do whatever it takes.

## Patience

When it comes to chords, you learn an amazing skill of the mind. However, your fingers will take a little longer to catch up with your brain. You're going to realize significant advancement in some keys but other keys take longer to master. Just be patient and not too hard on yourself. You'll learn them all soon enough.

## Study

Only about 10% of COMMAND (knowing the basic major and minor chords and their inversions) has to do with your hands. The other 90% has to do with your mind. You must study to figure out answers to the questions in your head. The "[Self-Taught Piano System](#)" points out those questions and answers them. Everything you study is significant and puts you ahead of the pack.

## Practice

Again, I think the word "practice" has a negative quality to it when it comes to the piano. I don't really consider learning chords as "practice" because much of it takes place working on your favorites songs. When you work on a song you want to play, that is more "fun" than it is "practice".

Nothing is going to happen without you putting in the time it takes to get good enough to reach a level where you don't have to practice anymore. Try to play everyday and put yourself on a regular schedule to at least do something.



## Chapter 3: Major New Discoveries In Music

### “It Ain’t No Stinkin’ Revolution”

**Revolution:** *“A sudden, extreme, or complete change in the way people live, work, etc.”*

I hate the word “revolutionary” as a way of describing piano lessons. Just about every new piano course that comes out wears that claim like a cheap suit and comes it off as just a bunch of hype. Both, this “Survivors Manual” and the “Self-Taught Piano System” are extremely powerful yet still, I don’t make that “revolutionary” claim. Here’s why.

Learning chords and playing chord progressions are not revolutionary. The courses may be new but the concept of learning chords to play well has been around for centuries and there’s nothing “revolutionary” about it.

Beyond that, very few methods veer away from sight-reading as the means to teach chords. It’s hard to stake a claim of “revolution” when the subject and the teaching methodology are hundreds of years old. The only thing revolutionary about many courses is that they keep you spinning your wheels.

**Revelation:** *“Something that is revealed; especially an enlightening or astonishing disclosure”*

“Revelation” is a better way of describing new ways of thinking. Although some revelations may be discoveries within themselves, I like to view them as corollaries to much bigger discoveries I’ve made in music.

### My Discovery Dilemma

**Discovery:** *“The act of finding or learning something for the first time.”*

It took me a long time to publicly disclose I had made some major discoveries in music. I feared my claims would be exasperated because you see, I didn’t just make *one* discovery, I made *four* of them.

I felt my claims of “discovery” would be dismissed as just a bunch of hype. People tend to disbelieve that anything new can be borne out of a subject that has been around for hundreds of years. While it is true that music theory is a static factual science, the conceptual side of “discovery” as it relates to theory is still an open book. Yet, my greatest discovery is factual.

Making these claims puts me in a vulnerable position of having to defend myself. The way I see it, the apple had to fall on somebody's head and I'm the guy. I think I stumbled upon the biggest musical discoveries to happen in hundreds of years. *That's a pretty bold statement.*

Though your immediate reaction might be "Well, that's just your opinion", my question to you is *"What if it's true?"* You be the judge.

### **Ridicule and Scorn**

By claiming discovery I open myself up to ridicule and public scorn as a narcissistic crackpot that's full of himself. Yet, there is no other way, so I say let the chips fall where they may.

In the end, the deciding factor was whether I considered these discoveries as legitimate facts versus my own personal opinion. I realized that the "personal opinion" side of the equation was more interpretive to *the strength of the impact of my findings*, than an arbitrary, "because I said so" type of statement.

I made four discoveries in music. The most significant one is both factual and conceptual. The other three are conceptual. I leave it to you to determine the truths of my "major" discoveries and weigh them accordingly.

Don't be too quick to dismiss the importance of what you are going to read. Many of the greatest discoveries in history were just simple observations that radically changed the way people think.

## **Discovery #1: You Can Learn to Play the Piano Just like You Learn the Guitar**

There is a lot more to this simple statement than what's on the surface. While this is not a "music theory" discovery per se, it is a conceptual discovery of the mind. It changes our perspective of what the piano is, and challenges our opinions about the "correct" way to go about learning to play it.

### **Our "Indoctrinated" Belief Of Difficulty**

Our belief is that the piano is an instrument that *takes years of study and practice* to learn and master. Over hundreds of years we've believed in thousands of teaching methods that teach the same "standard approach" to learning piano. Because things have been the same for so long, we have been "indoctrinated" to believe the piano is one of the most difficult instruments to play.

**However, this perception is totally out of context to the truth.** Let me explain.

## Our “Indoctrinated” Belief Of Simplicity

On the other hand, we have an indoctrinated belief that the guitar is an instrument that *takes only a short period of time* to learn and master. We perceive the guitar as easy to play despite the fact that – in the back of our minds– we know that playing *classical* guitar is very difficult.

However, most people are not interested in playing classical guitar and quickly rule out lessons as overkill. We want instant gratification to play a simple ballad, linked to our perceived notion that you only need to learn a few chords to get started. That *simplicity of thinking* started a “revolution” that made the guitar the dominant instrument of our era.

When it comes to guitar, we don’t scrutinize our degree of skill so harshly. Most people play it as an accompaniment instrument where you strum and sing along. Realistically, that’s as far as most people take it.

On a basic level, that degree of ability is enough to make you a star. You don’t have to be a great soloist, classical master or jazz guitarist to have fun and command the instrument. You only need to know how to play chords and strum.

## Adopting a Technology Of The Mind

Do you see how we view the piano and guitar differently when it comes to difficulty and application? Yet realistically, both instruments are chordal, stringed instruments the same and just as easy to learn.

You can have just as much fun playing the piano as you do the guitar. Likewise, playing accompaniments on the piano is as basic as the guitar and that degree of ability is enough to make you a star.

You don’t have to become a great soloist, classical pianist or jazz improvisationalist to have fun and command the instrument. You only need to know how to play chords and effectively . . . strum (or keep a basic rhythm with both hands).

As crazy as this may sound, when it comes to the piano, *only a small percentage of piano players can do this* (my guesstimate is less than 5%). The reason we can’t, is because we don’t teach chords as our primary focus when we learn the piano. Yet, like the guitar, chords are the path to freedom.

What’s even crazier . . . learning chords on the piano is much easier than learning them on the guitar. Head-to-head, the piano’s a lot easier to play and understand than the guitar. It’s only the “perception of difficulty” that holds us back.



## Discovery #2 - Command

**Command:** *“The ability to play and recognize the 24 major and minor chords (and all their inversions) on the keyboard.”*

### The Two Sides Of This Discovery

The **conceptual side** defines our mind set to attain an “end-goal.”

The **factual side** defines a system that makes it possible.

### The Conceptual Side of Command

Conceptual Command defines a level of ability and knowledge that sets a precedent of required skills to play piano independently. It represents a defined graduation “end-goal” proficiency requirement of basic piano lessons.

“End goal” means the level of ability required to get around *independently* on the piano without having to read music. It’s an ending point to lessons that is a clearly-defined reachable goal. Once attained, it gives students a choice to either continue taking classical lessons or to focus on another style of music.

## The Five Revelations of Conceptual Command

### Revelation #1 - Command Is The First Level Of Independence On The Piano

This benchmark of ability is the first step towards independence, playing by ear and improvisation. Command is a level of knowledge and ability that once attained, becomes a second nature. You learn to play chords naturally –as a reflex– without difficulty. Like riding a bike, they become something you learn once and never forget.

### Revelation #2 - By Defining Command, It Becomes A Reachable Goal

Never before have we ever defined the exact knowledge and minimum-proficiency requirements of playing independently. Because it can be quantified to 24 chords and their inversions (the *factual* side of the discovery), it can be broken down into segments and learned over a short period of time.

### Revelation #3 - You Will Never Play Independently Until You Reach This Goal

*Just knowing this powerful fact* puts you in control of your progress. There are few exceptions. Your degree of independence, and abilities to play by ear and improvise are totally dependent upon knowing chords. Chords are the structure and foundation you build upon to get better. There are no short-cuts to this realization.

### Revelation #4 - Knowing Chords Is The Great Equalizer

This revelation cuts to the core of the question “What is good?” A classical pianist may be able to play extremely difficult music. However, if they don’t know their chords, they cannot play by ear or improvise. On the other side a self-taught musician (with far less proficiency than the classical pianist) can play from a fake sheet or figure out their own arrangements of any song they want.

Which musician is better? The truth is, both long for the skills of the other and in this way, knowing chords is the great equalizer. When you know chords you can play with the giants without having to be a giant yourself.

### Revelation #5 - When You Reach Command, You’re Done Taking Lessons.

Command is a point where you understand what you are doing on the keyboard and realize that from that point on, it’s all up to you to get better. You don’t have to take any more lessons (if you don’t want to) because you already play better than most people. Hereafter, it’s more of a mental game where you start asking deeper questions and looking for answers.

### The Paradox of Command

Command is very inspiring because when you accomplish so much, so easily, in so little time, **you realize that you are good**. Not just *kind of* good, **very good** . . . but along with this realization comes an eye-opening paradox.

It becomes clear to you that – despite your new-found skills – you still have a long way to go. Compared to other musicians who are (also) in command and can play with style and experience, you realize ***you’re not very good at all!*** The gauge of “good” starts with Command, and then becomes a matter of degree.



## The Factual Side of Command

The factual side of Command gives you an *overview* of the chords you must learn, *and a plan* to learn them quickly. This side of Command is as powerful (or more powerful) than the conceptual side. Because, it's one thing to say "Just learn your chords and you'll be good," and quite another to actually do it. The factual side of Command spells out a solid plan!



In my opinion, this is where all chord methods fall short. They assume that the best way for you to learn is to spoon-feed chords and inversions over a long period of time. You start by learning roots, and then somewhere down the line learn inversions of those chords. The process is staggered and disjointed and just takes too long.

While that approach is better than no approach at all, what you really need to know is how to play the chords *and all their inversions* from the very start. You need to see the big picture NOW! Otherwise it becomes too difficult to comprehend and takes forever for you to put it all together.

The Self-Taught Piano System teaches all the chords and their inversions *together*, in 10 lessons, using a system that is sort of a *miraculous* function of music theory itself. It's like a machine where you learn to manufacture chords quickly, easily and completely.

## The Three Revelations of Factual Command

### Revelation #1 - Chords Can Be Quantified and Broken Down

I'm going to consolidate the breakdown of chords as succinctly as I can. There is no easier way for me to explain this so please, take the time to study what you see here and realize the immense power of this discovery. Let's start with the big picture . . .

**Each of the 24 chords has 3 fingering positions:  $3 \times 24 = \underline{72}$  total fingering positions**

Although 72 seems like a lot, most of those positions are the same; just on different parts of the keyboard. When broken down, only 33 fingering positions are required to play all 72 variations of the chords and their inversions (see table below). Stay with me here . . .

Table Of Chord Positions

Grouped Chords	Number of Positions	Number of Chords That Share Those Same Positions on Different Parts of the Keyboard
C Position	3	6 (C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am)
A Position	3	3 (A, D, E)
Cm Position	3	3 (Cm, Fm, Gm)
Ab Position	3	3 (Ab, Db, Eb)
C#m Position	3	3 (C#m, F#m, G#m)
Grouped Totals	(15)	(18)
<b>Ungrouped Chords</b>		
F#	3	1 (F#)
Ebm	3	1 (Ebm)
Bb	3	1 (Bb)
Bbm	3	1 (Bbm)
B	3	1 (B)
Bm	3	1 (Bm)
Ungrouped Totals	(18)	(6)
<b>Total Grouped &amp;</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>(24)</b>

I know what you're thinking . . . that 33 fingering positions still seems like a lot to have to learn but look closer and notice that . . .

- the “grouped” chords use only 15 positions to play 18 of the chords
- the “ungrouped” chords use 18 positions to play only 6 of the chords

What this reveals to you is truly a phenomenal miracle of music theory.

### Revelation #2:



*You can learn 3/4ths of all the chords  
you need to know by memorizing just  
15 different fingering positions!*

What's astounding is *you learn those 15 fingering positions in just 5 lessons.*

**DO YOU THINK YOU CAN LEARN 15 DIFFERENT  
FINGERING POSITIONS?**

### **Revelation #3 - The Grouped Chords Are The 1-4-5 Chords Of Their Specific Key**

This fact is what truly makes each set of grouped chords a miracle. The 1-4-5 chords are those that hold any key together. Therefore, the grouped chords are all a part of their own keys and are not isolated coincidences of unrelated chords. I think that's fascinating.

#### **“What About The Other Six Chords?”**

Here's the thing . . . While it's true that the “ungrouped” chords are important, compared to the grouped chords they are much easier to put on the back burner. The truth is, when you get through learning the grouped chords, you have a pretty good handle on things. At that point the last 6 chords make a lot more sense and are much easier for you to learn.

Further, even though the ungrouped chords do not share EXACT fingering to other chords, they are close mirror images of each other that are similar enough to be easy to figure out and master.

### **Discovery #3 - The “Play By Ear” Discovery**

Next to Command, this is the greatest discovery you will ever make in music. However, unlike the first two discoveries, it is the hardest to realize because it is hidden. *It is a discovery of the mind* that once brought into alignment, brings your entire musical universe into focus.

This phenomenon is discussed at length in my book [“The Play By Ear Discovery”](#) however, (outside of that book) I try to explain it in as many different ways as possible. I do this in hopes that at least one of my descriptions will “turn on the light” for you and push your understanding over the edge to realize its immense power.

So bear with me here and understand that what I am going to tell you *is not immediately evident*. This state of enlightenment is real but it is going to take some work on your part to bring it into focus. The greatest musicians in the world understand this state of mind, but this is probably the only time you will ever hear about it or have it explained. Let me give you the big picture first.

**The Discovery is based on the  
8-note order of the major scale**

Quoting from my own book . . . [“The Play By Ear Discovery”](#)

## “ What Is It You Are Trying To Discover?

You are seeking an encompassing realization of “basic” music theory that is far beyond a “basic” understanding. That within this simple fact lies an undeniable truth and enlightenment that few musicians realize:

### The Major Scale Numerical Order Controls Everything in Music

(Except Rhythm and Tempo)

There, you can have the answer placed right before you and still not understand the infinite scope of that concept. Let's refine it even more.

### If All 12 Keys Are Based on One 8-Note Order, That Represents a 12:1 Ratio Reduction That Puts You in Control of Any Key at Any Time

That hidden fact alone should set your mind reeling. If it doesn't, it will. However, you must gaze beyond the basic 12:1 ratio enlightenment. You only play a song in one key at a time but –numerically– you are playing in all 12 keys at the same time. There is no sharp or flat. If it applies to one key, it applies to them all.

Our minds are not able to quickly comprehend the immense control that kind of knowledge gives us. However, it answers all these major questions that musicians muse over. Have you ever wondered about these things?

- How do you manage and control music?
- How do you keep track of each key without any reference?
- How do you create any chord you need without any reference?
- How do you transpose any song to any key easily?
- How do you figure out the basic chords of any key immediately?
- What is the basis of “playing by ear”?
- What is the basis of improvisation?
- How do you teach yourself to play better on your own?

The answers to those questions have always been learned over a long period of time with blood, sweat and experience. Any one of them might take you years to figure out on your own. However, when you comprehend the concept being explained here, every one of those questions is answered. ”

There is a lot more to chord theory than what is laying on the surface. In the process of learning the numbers of chords you run into quite a bit of confusion figuring out the numbers system. You can read about it and even *think that you understand* what's going on, but not truly comprehend the insights, applications and power behind the system.

As you get into it further, your questions become deeper and more introspective to the hows and whys of building. This is a natural state of learning the system. NOBODY can teach you exactly what I am trying to explain. It is an enlightenment that you must discover on your own.

### **What Bubbles Under the Surface Is Much Greater Than Any Stark Explanation Can Describe**

Chords are not as cut-and-dried as most people think. After turning over a lot of rocks, analyzing the numbers system by comparing it to the various key signatures, the self-taught musician uncovers the ruling concept to chords **THAT RULES ALL OF MUSIC THEORY** as well.

### **When It Hits You, It Is Truly a Life-Changing “Aha” Moment**

While this may seem doubtful (or perhaps even unbelievable), the discovery is so profound that when it appears, it will hit you “like 10 tons of bricks.” You’ll immediately wonder if others that supposedly “understand” music theory really comprehend the alternate universe that you have just uncovered.

#### **Not a chance . . .**

There is nowhere else that you will read about this phenomenon. No theory books ever acknowledge or explain it because they only deal with flat musical facts –unto themselves– out of context to their applications. They never explain WHY certain theories are important or how they fit into the big picture that makes you a better musician.

Because you see, theory is not just a mish-mash of chords, numbers, notes, time signatures or other single-fact minutia you pick up here and there. It's the BIG PICTURE of music theory that elevates you above, looking down upon an infinite art form that you can easily control by knowing how to manipulate those 8 little numbers in a row.

It is at that point that YOU ARE FREE!

## THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY YOU WILL EVER MAKE THIS DISCOVERY

You must constantly be on the lookout for it. If you study what I just mentioned hard enough, you will make this discovery within a month or so of learning chords. Chords are the starting point that get you thinking in the right direction.

However, DO NOT BE LULLED into thinking you've made this discovery before it appears. Take note that it "hits you like 10 tons of bricks" and is so obvious, you *can't believe* you've missed it all this time. Believe me, when it happens you'll know it.

### Discovery #4 - The Infinite Universe

This discovery into music takes you into the deepest recesses of musical expression. It is nearly impossible to realize fully without first making the "[Play By Ear Discovery](#)" however, it reveals glimpses of itself to those that are looking. It's greatest impact on your playing applies to the areas of playing by ear and improvisation.

The underlying principle of the discovery is that

**"The mathematical and creative variations of music are endless"**

Although that is a known fact, we really never define how "infinity" affects music on a basic level. Yet it does in ways you might not expect. It's a discovery of simplicity and freedom. The best way to explain it is to give you some examples of how it works. There are many more not discussed here.

#### **Music Is Repetitive And Totally Predictable**

Music continually recycles itself to create endless combinations of beats and melodies within a totally predictable structure. Predictability is the quintessential element, but a real play-by-ear master understands that playing by ear is at least half-based on the science of numbers.

The significance of this understanding is the core of playing by ear and composition. "New" songs use the same beats, same rhythms, same progressions and same bass patterns, over and over again. Every song is mostly the same old boring stuff, regurgitated anew into an infinite number of exciting tunes and rhythms.

### **We Will Never Exhaust The Creative Possibilities Of Original Music**

Despite that music is structurally so predictable, there are so many variables to the creative elements in pitch-combined-with-rhythm-and-meter that we will never run out of melodies. It's an endless art form.

This is truly amazing considering such infinity is based on the simplest of structures. We're only talking about the 8 notes of the scale; 3 tiers of counting beats and a handful of typical time signatures. Comparing simple structure to the infinite expression it yields, it is mind-boggling.

### **Any One Song Can Be Played An Infinite Number of Ways**

Ask ten good musicians to play "Mary Had a Little Lamb" creatively and none of them will play it the same way. They'll use different chords, rhythms, tempos, keys and any number of things that will make their expression of that song unique. Ask a thousand musicians to play it *creatively* and likewise, there will be no duplication. Ask an infinite number . . .

### **There Is Infinity In The Number 8**

***Pitch:*** When it comes to the pitches of melody (without rhythm), 8 tones are enough to create an infinite number of combinations. So without any other facets of music involved, pitch alone is an infinite element of music.

***Rhythm:*** Rhythm is far more limited than pitch. Although durations between notes are unlimited, in reality the repeating rhythms of music are more static. Technically, there are an infinite number of rhythms but in application, just few dozen (or so) make up the brunt of rhythmical expression.

Stay with me here . . . If you can express infinity of pitches with just 8 notes, imagine the infinity created by combining pitch *and* rhythm. Staggering.

***Riffs:*** Similarly, if there is infinity in 8 pitches, then there is also infinity in 8 riffs (or phrases). This should give you some context as to what improvisation is and how you can use infinity as a controlling factor in performing.

***Improvisation:*** A master improvisationalist is one that can hear a riff once and then file it away in their head to use later. Just like some people collect records, stamps, baseball cards, etc... improv-experts "collect" riffs.

Over time, they may have hundreds of riffs up their sleeve from which to draw. In that number there is an amazing infinite universe of creativity.

## Chapter 4: How Do I Get Started?

I wish there was just one encompassing answer to this question but there's not. The most important thing in the beginning is to take responsibility and decide that it's time for a change. Take stock in what you already know and use that as a springboard in your quest to learn chords.

Make a conscious effort to stop reading music for a while and start concentrating solely on learning chords. Don't throw reading away . . . just put it on the back burner for a couple months. Get focused on your priorities and excited about learning something new. This is going to change your life.

### Consume Mass Quantities Of Music

The way you stoke the "fire in your belly" to learn independence on the piano is to play a ton of songs. This means you must have access to a lot of songbooks and sheet music, **and I mean A LOT**. Your goal is to amass a *huge number of songs* you want to play.

Within a large collection it is easier to find songs in the keys you need to practice. Concentrate on the keys of C, F and G first to get comfortable playing in the easiest keys. The easiest keys are fun and give you the confidence of success. Success is the fuel that keeps you inspired and excited to keep going.

I don't advocate breaking copyright laws when copying and downloading music. I leave it to you to evaluate the sources where you acquire music and act according to your conscience.

There are many online sites where you can find lyrics with chords written above them. These are ideal because –provided you know the song– all you need are the chords and the words to sing along. Fake sheets and songbooks that include the chords are good too.

### Determine a Primary Goal

I recommend getting a song folio of your favorite record and set your sites to learning every track on the album. Having that kind of goal is inspiring and stretches you outside your comfort zone.



## Chapter 5: The Self-Teaching Plan For Life

### Liberation

The act of self-teaching is very liberating because nobody's there to push you but you. Having an unwaivering plan and knowing exactly what you must do helps quite a bit to keep you from spinning your wheels.

Your primary focus to becoming the musician you hope to be involves learning Command and getting comfortable playing chords. When you start down that path, a lot of answers fall right into place and you start to get a better perspective of what it means to be an independent musician.

This chapter is dedicated to really nailing down the things you must work on to find your way. The pursuit of independence is not an elusive one. You can do it if you just follow the path of the self-taught musician.

### Play Piano Like Guitar

Applying the guitar player mind-set is very important because you see, nobody holds a guitar player's hand when they learn to play. They immerse themselves into practicing chords and singing songs and they don't overthink the process.

THAT'S EXACTLY HOW IT IS ON THE PIANO.

Nonetheless, even guitar players get a little direction before someone pats them on the butt and sends them on their way. Piano players deserve the same so here goes:

### Drill The Chord Exercises Over and Over

The "Self-Taught Piano System - 24 Chords In 10 Lessons" uses a 1-4-1-5 progression that teaches you the reflexes of the various keys. You want to add those exercises to your daily routine as well as others in the [Self-Taught Piano System](#) that help you to memorize chords quickly.

Don't get distracted from your goal. The brass ring is to memorize the chords as quickly as possible and these exercises are proven winners for doing just that. Every time you sit down at the piano, go through the routines. They only take a minute to perform. After that, get on to playing the songs you want to work on.



## Flip Through a LOT of Pages and TRY Playing a LOT of Songs

“*TRYING*” is really the key to getting good fast. You’ve got to have a “Take no prisoners” attitude when it comes to tackling songs. “Trying” makes you think, and when you’re thinking, you’re learning. You’ll quickly get motivated and start reveling in your own quick progress. There is nothing like the feeling of satisfaction you get from figuring out a song on your own.

Again, the key is having lots of songs to work on. If you play the guitar, think about all the songs you already know by heart. Transfer those to the piano. The key is to play LOTS and LOTS of songs and don’t get too bogged down practicing any ONE for too long.

## Don’t Worry About Two-Handed Rhythm In The Beginning

That’ll come in due time. If you don’t have natural rhythm, then just play the root note in the bass and concentrate on the right hand. The right hand’s where it’s at in the beginning.

## Just Pound Out Chord Progressions

Read the guitar chords above the staff and do the best you can. You’ll have to make some decisions about which inversions of chords to use. Try to make the inversions flow together but really, it doesn’t matter what inversion you start with. When you decide, stick with your decisions and practice those chord combinations until you can play the song. Isn’t this fun???

## Get Good in the Key of C First

This key is the easiest since all the basic major and minor chords have the same fingering. Just learn three fingering positions and master the six (6) chords that hold that key together.

- It’s the easiest key to play
- It’s the easiest key to figure out songs by ear
- It’s the key that gives you confidence and a sense of progress
- It’s the key that gets you hooked

## Concentrate On Your Right Hand

Conventional teachings tell you to *play chords with your left hand* and *play the melody line* with your right. Fine and dandy . . . that’s an effective approach for simple songs and improvisation as well. Realize that it’s just one approach that is very limited in its scope. You’ve got plenty of time to do that later.

Learning chords with your right hand first is preferable for a number of reasons:

- Most people are right handed and wired to be more coordinated on their dominant side. It's just a lot easier to coordinate your right hand than your left.
- Music written on the staff is chorded for the right hand (treble clef) with the usual bass pattern being a single note (or simple combination of notes) that support the right hand. Knowing chords with your right hand also make it easier to sight-read later on.
- Chords on your right hand give you a better cognitive understanding when it comes to playing by ear. The play-by-ear process interweaves the melody line into a chord progression being played with your right hand.
- Learning chords with your right hand first makes it easier to transfer them to your left hand when you need to. I'm not talking about just playing a block chord to improvise to (as explained above). This is important because to play a good bass line often incorporates the tones of the basic chord one at a time.

### **Make your own arrangements**

Sometimes I steal bits and pieces from sheet music that improve my arrangements. It might be the hook or a chord voicing but generally I play chordal arrangements any old way I feel like it.

As you progress further into Command, start working on improving your arrangements. Change the bass pattern or add the hook that you hear on the record. Maybe try to incorporate the melody and experiment with your fledgling play-by-ear skills.

### **Live Up To Others' Expectations**

Nothing is so inspiring and immediately gratifying than playing with other musicians. Playing in a band forces you to conform to the key, speed and execution of the song.

When you play alongside of others, music takes on a whole different meaning. You're not the only one involved to make things sound good. That provides a lot of relief from being under-the-gun to perform perfectly. Nonetheless, you're the piano player so many people will look to you for direction. This is how you get good.

### **Start Playing By Ear NOW**

Playing by ear is a building process that takes time to cultivate. As you gain experience and play a lot of songs, you begin to realize how simple music actually is. The melodies change but the chord structures of most songs. . . dare I say . . . can be downright boring. When you truly realize this, a major light goes on in your head.

You literally will start getting an ear for different chord changes and discover you have a lot more ability to play by ear than you ever thought. Keep an eye out for the progressions that appear over and over in different songs. It is the boring and repetitive nature of these chord changes that makes playing by ear so predictable.

### **Learn Music Theory**

The self-taught process is to learn chords first and then concentrate more on learning theory later. This isn't exactly how it always works out because learning theory is somewhat of an "as you go" type of thing. So pick up as much as you can along the way to mastering chords.

However, note that your REAL understanding of music theory comes only after you are no longer preoccupied with learning your chords. Theory then becomes more important in your desire to play by ear, improvise or sight-read music better. It takes on a life of its own and becomes more than just a bunch of unrelated facts. Music theory turns into something that lets you see and control "movement" of all the components of music.

The true application of music theory is to manipulate numbers to control music and recognize the symmetry of all keys. This particular facet of music (numbers) is the road-map you follow to keep track of where you are and where you are going. Ever wonder how play-by-ear musicians can do this? They follow the road-map of numbers.

## Chapter 6: Back To The Basics

Guido of Arezzo, a Benedictine monk, invented the music system (we use today) back in the 11th century. His discovery was a system of numbers and alphabetic tones. In its simplicity, his system explains music as a *limited science* that is both “**easy to understand**” and “**complete.**” Arezzo was the first “Self-Taught” Musician.

### How We Lost Our Way

Arezzo used his technology to write out simple chants but the system he developed was also capable of handling the most complex classical music ever written. *Over hundreds of years*, as classical music evolved *it distorted Arezzo's original science.*

Music became “**hard to understand**” and “**never complete.**”

### Theory Became an Elitist “Scholarly Science” As Opposed To Arezzo’s “Simple Science”

Great Universities were spawned. The classical elitists took over and the standard piano method evolved into what it is today. There's only one problem. Today, most people don't want to play classical music. Our modern styles of music are chord-based and much easier.

### The Runaway Train

Just like we don't take classical guitar lessons to play rock, in our modern society *classical piano lessons* are overkill as well for most people. I'm not being critical; that's just the way it is.

People will continue to think that standard lessons are the only way to learn whether it serves them or not. Nothings going to change. There's no slowing a train that's been running full throttle for hundreds of years. C'est la vie.

### How To Find Our Way Again

Arezzo invented music with simplicity in mind. The Self-Taught Piano System teaches theory the way he intended it through [The Science of Music](#). This book shows you the complete puzzle and gives context to your knowledge. It's concise and presents theory in an exploded view, presents all the facts and doesn't rob you of important information. It shows the numbers side of music.

## **Become The Smartest Musician You Know**

Understanding numbers is the way the greatest self-taught musicians and composers of all time master their craft. When you embrace numbers as your primary understanding, you'll discover a command of music that *towers above* other musicians. Chances are good you'll be able to give your music teachers a lesson.

## **Did You Learn Something New?**

If you enjoyed what you read here, then allow me to lead you on your new journey towards independence. To learn more and understand even greater insights into music, [follow me on Facebook](#) and be sure to get on my mailing lists to get the most updated information. I hate spam and don't share your information with anyone else.

## **That's a Wrap**

I've made it clear throughout this book that if you want to learn to play well, you're on your own. Still, this is a difficult concept for many people to adopt because we're not used to being self-starters on the piano. My advice is to just focus on ONE THING; learning chords. It doesn't take forever to learn them and before you know it, you'll be over that hump.

## **Thinking Conceptually**

The greatest challenge you face is learning how to think conceptually. Without specific direction you will spend a great amount of time scouring books and online sources to find information you'll come to discover *just isn't there*. The [Self-Taught Piano System](#) leads you in the right direction and shows you how to put more *mental* in your game. You tap a wealth of information that otherwise will take you a lifetime to figure out on your own (if ever).

## **That's It!**

Finally, it takes a long time for a master musician to put together the theory puzzle. When it is fully assembled, the master musician looks at it and says to himself "Hmm, that's it." It seems so obvious, he reassesses and questions his findings again . . . "That's it???" You can be assured that eventually you will come to the same conclusion. "That's it!"

## Appendix

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **How do I know this isn't just another gimmicky method?**

The Self-Taught Piano System teaches an inside view of theory and proficiency which are the tools of the self-taught musician. There is nothing “gimmicky” about those facts.

#### **I don't believe anyone can learn to play well that quickly.**

The only thing that will hold you back is your own thinking, poor coordination or not devoting enough time to practice. This is a self-teaching method where you can learn as fast as you want.

#### **Let's be realistic. Exactly how long will it take to get minimally proficient if I practice a couple hours a week?**

Your outcome will be equal to the time and effort you put forth. In that regard, minimum proficiency –as a goal– takes as long as it takes. If by “a couple hours a week” you mean you practice 15 to 20 minutes everyday, then you can reach minimum proficiency within 30 - 45 days. Otherwise, cramming your practice into a single, two-hour session once a week will probably not return the results you are hoping for.

#### **I want to learn how to improvise and your course doesn't look like that's what you teach.**

Improvisation is an advanced concept that builds upon itself. That's not what this is about. Without reservation I concede there are others that teach improvisation much better than I ever could. However, The Self-Taught Piano System teaches the underlying concepts of improvisation through Command. When you learn Command first, improvisation is a lot easier to master.

#### **I'd be happy just knowing how to play one song at a time and there are some courses out there that teach just that. Why should I waste my time learning minimum proficiency when these other courses look much easier?**

It all comes down to what kind of musician you really want to be. The Self-Taught Piano System is for people that want to take their skills to the next level. If learning one song makes you happy then I'm good with that. It's a start, and someday you might want more out of music and will be back. Until then, I endorse anything that is going to keep you motivated to learn.

**Other methods stress that the way to quick success is learning patterns and improvisation first. Are they wrong?**

Technically there is no “right” or “wrong” with the way people learn to play. I love and endorse the idea of playing patterns as that is the crux of chordal accompaniment. I’m not against them, but like any other stylistic or improvisational training, my belief is that people are better off learning Command first before going on to the next level.

I want to be clear here. I love some of those courses because the content is geared to my advanced skill level. Just show me the tricks and I’m on my way. However, despite their great content and production, many of those courses are not anywhere as simple as they look on the surface. You get a lot more out of them once you have a solid foundation by attaining Command first.

## More Testimonials

“I was not exactly sure what to expect but I am certainly satisfied! The knowledge gain in the area of music and in the piano, specifically, has been tremendous. If there is one thing alone I learned from Keyed Up Piano, it would be that understanding music and playing the piano are not these vast complicated skills that take a lifetime to master. Through the application of your simplified concepts I now have the freedom to take my new found abilities as far as I want. I fully recommend this course to anyone interested in music.” Jeff A.

“Your techniques, including tricks for fingering difficult chords and how to pick out well known progressions, are all methods that most piano students only learn following years of lessons, if ever. Your book, Keyed Up Piano, will undoubtedly give many people the opportunity to play the piano without being forced to take the lengthy traditional music lessons approach.” Gregory B.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you! I no longer suffer through practice on the piano. I enjoy playing with a new light on music and a more intelligent ear.” Annette S.