

## NOVICE MIND

A GUIDE TO CREATIVE RESURRECTION



When I started making music, I knew nothing about making music. I didn't know any music theory; I didn't know where C was on the piano. Since then, I've studied music. I've become a Hollywood soundtrack composer, writing music for eighty-piece orchestras. But as soon as I started learning, in 1997, something in me changed. I used my new knowledge to create *Wu-Tang Forever*, but it's not as critically acclaimed. What does that tell you? To me, it tells you to cultivate the novice inside you. Attack each chamber as a novice.

It's important to try new things, things you don't know how to do. With chess, I feel like I might have been better *before* I started studying. I realize that studying has given me a pattern. Before I started studying, I had no pattern—you never knew what I'd do. When I was practicing with a computer recently, I got up to 1650, that's pretty good. That means I have only 350 to go to get to the master level. But I got some advice to study a certain

opening—I studied it for a whole year. It was Josh Waitzkin. He’s a master, he told me to study this certain opening, and I did for a year. But all of a sudden it seems that I’m using that opening and I’m losing with it. Bad opponents, I wipe ‘em out. But good opponents sometimes they’ll beat me with that opening.

The opening is called the King’s Indian Attack. I know it by heart. I used it against a Sicilian. It goes: 1) E4, the opponent responds C5, white moves; 2) D3, the opponent moves E6; 3) white moves knight F3, opponent responds knight C6; 4) white moves G3, opponent moves G6; 5) white moves bishop G2, opponent responds bishop G7; 6) white castles, opponent responds knight F6; 7) white moves knight C2, opponent castles; then 8) white goes rook E1.

That’s the position. The opening I described would be best against the French opening, which is used by many masters. But most club players play Sicilian, which is why I put it in that order. Sometimes it’s wise to do an early queen E2, which is a very protective move.

Too many people coast through life, doing only what they know how to do. I always go back to the basics. After Wu-Tang won a Grammy, I began to formally study music—learning theory, how to read music, how to play guitar and piano. But now I try to erase what I know to increase myself. A new piano book I have is called *Beginning Keyboard: Grade One*. A new chess book I’m reading is titled *My First Chess Opening*. It’s for kids.

