

# THE BLUES

THE BLUES IS THE MOST WIDELY USED FORM IN JAZZ MUSIC. THE FORM OF THE BLUES, OR THE STRUCTURE OF A SINGLE CHORUS, IS TWELVE BARS IN LENGTH. THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS TO THE 12-BAR BLUES FORM, NOTABLY HERBIE HANCOCK'S WATERMELON MAN (16-BARS) AND LEE MORGAN'S SIDEWINDER (DOUBLE LENGTH 24-BARS). BOTH OF THESE TUNES ARE CONSIDERED BLUES EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE LONGER THAN 12-BARS.

IN IT'S MOST BASIC HARMONIC FORMAT, THE BLUES IS COMPRISED OF ENTIRELY OF DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS. THIS BASIC HARMONIC FORMAT, OR CHORD PROGRESSION, UTILIZES DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS BUILT ON THE I, IV AND V OF WHATEVER KEY WE ARE IN. THIS BASIC CHORD PROGRESSION FUNCTIONS AS FOLLOWS:

Diagram illustrating the basic 12-bar blues chord progression in C major. The progression is shown across three lines of music, each with four measures. The chords are labeled above and below the staff:

- Line 1: C7 (measures 1-3), F7 (measures 4-6), C7 (measures 7-9), C7 (measures 10-12)
- Line 2: F7 (measures 1-3), F7 (measures 4-6), C7 (measures 7-9), C7 (measures 10-12)
- Line 3: G7 (measures 1-3), F7 (measures 4-6), C7 (measures 7-9), C7 (measures 10-12)

ONE OF THE AMAZING THINGS ABOUT THE BLUES IS IT'S INCREDIBLE FLEXIBILITY. IT CAN BE TRADITIONAL AND MAJESTIC, AS PLAYED BY LOUIS ARMSTRONG. IT CAN BE HARMONICALLY SOPHISTICATED, AS PLAYED BY CHARLIE PARKER. IT CAN BE SOULFUL AND FUNKY, AS PLAYED BY HORACE SILVER. IT CAN BE A SPRING BOARD FOR AVANT-GARDE IDEAS, AS PLAYED BY JOHN COLTRANE. YOU CAN SHOUT LIKE JIMMY RUSHING OR WHISPER LIKE MILES DAVIS. IT CAN BE WHATEVER YOU, AS A SOLOIST, WANT IT TO BE FROM CHORUS TO CHORUS. LISTEN TO DIZZY GILLESPIE IN THE 1950'S AND YOU WILL HEAR HIM PLAY A CHORUS OF BEBOP THEN A CHORUS OF PURE BLUES (UTILIZING THE BLUES SCALE), ALTERNATING BETWEEN THE TWO APPROACHES.

THE UNIFYING SOUND OF THE BLUES IS REPRESENTED BY THE BLUES SCALE. THE BLUES SCALE FUNCTIONS OVER THE ENTIRE TWELVE BAR FORM AND ALL THREE DOMINANT SEVENTH CHORDS THAT MAKE UP THE BLUES PROGRESSION: I - IV - V. THE SCALE IS BUILT AS FOLLOWS: ROOT (1) - FLAT 3 - 4 - SHARP 4 - 5 - FLAT 7 - 8 (1)

# THE C BLUES SCALE

15

1 FLAT 3 4 #4 5 FLAT 7 1 FLAT 3 4 #4 5 FLAT 7 1

NOW, WE MUST GET COMFORTABLE WITH THE BLUES SCALE BY PRACTICING IT SWINGING OUT IN EIGHTH NOTES. THE SCALE SOUNDS BEAUTIFUL PLAYING IT IN A LINEAR WAY, JUST MOVING FROM NOTE TO NOTE. LET'S FIRST PLAY THE SCALE UP AND DOWN FROM EACH SCALE DEGREE, THEN DOWN AND UP FROM EACH SCALE DEGREE.

TONIC UP & DOWN

FLAT 3RD UP & DOWN

17

4TH UP & DOWN

SHARP 4TH UP & DOWN

21

5TH UP & DOWN

FLAT 7TH UP & DOWN

25

TONIC UP & DOWN

TONIC DOWN & UP

29

FLAT 7TH DOWN & UP

5TH DOWN & UP

33

SHARP 4TH DOWN & UP

4TH DOWN & UP

37

FLAT 3RD DOWN & UP

TONIC DOWN & UP

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled 'FLAT 3RD DOWN & UP', starts at measure 41 and shows a scale descending from the tonic to the flat third and then ascending back to the tonic. The second exercise, labeled 'TONIC DOWN & UP', starts at measure 45 and shows a scale descending from the tonic to the second degree and then ascending back to the tonic.

NOW LET'S PRACTICE PLAYING THE SCALE BY GOING UP ONE (1) SCALE DEGREE AND DOWN, THEN UP TWO (2) SCALE DEGREES AND DOWN, THEN UP THREE (3) SCALE DEGREES AND DOWN.

TONIC--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN

TONIC--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled 'TONIC--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN', starts at measure 45 and shows a scale ascending one degree from the tonic and then descending. The second exercise, labeled 'TONIC--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 49 and shows a scale ascending two degrees from the tonic and then descending.

TONIC--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN

FLAT 3RD--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled 'TONIC--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 49 and shows a scale ascending three degrees from the tonic and then descending. The second exercise, labeled 'FLAT 3RD--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN', starts at measure 53 and shows a scale ascending one degree from the flat third and then descending.

FLAT 3RD--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN

FLAT 3RD--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled 'FLAT 3RD--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 53 and shows a scale ascending two degrees from the flat third and then descending. The second exercise, labeled 'FLAT 3RD--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 57 and shows a scale ascending three degrees from the flat third and then descending.

4TH--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN

4TH--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled '4TH--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN', starts at measure 57 and shows a scale ascending one degree from the fourth and then descending. The second exercise, labeled '4TH--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 61 and shows a scale ascending two degrees from the fourth and then descending.

4TH--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN

SHARP 4TH--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled '4TH--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 61 and shows a scale ascending three degrees from the fourth and then descending. The second exercise, labeled 'SHARP 4TH--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN', starts at measure 65 and shows a scale ascending one degree from the sharp fourth and then descending.

SHARP 4TH--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN

SHARP 4TH--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN

Musical notation for two exercises. The first exercise, labeled 'SHARP 4TH--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 65 and shows a scale ascending two degrees from the sharp fourth and then descending. The second exercise, labeled 'SHARP 4TH--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN', starts at measure 69 and shows a scale ascending three degrees from the sharp fourth and then descending.

5TH--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN

5TH--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN

5TH--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN

FLAT 7TH--UP 1 DEGREE & DOWN

FLAT 7TH--UP 2 DEGREES & DOWN

FLAT 7TH--UP 3 DEGREES & DOWN

NOW LET'S PRACTICE THE BLUES SCALE DESCENDING IN EIGHTH NOTES TRIPLETS, WHICH IS THE TRUE RHYTHMIC ESSENCE OF THE BLUES. IF WE LISTEN TO THE GREAT BLUES PLAYERS, SAY FOR EXAMPLE CHARLIE PARKER, DIZZY GILLESPIE, CURTIS FULLER, CLIFFORD BROWN, SONNY ROLLINS, LEE MORGAN, WYNTON KELLY OR B.B. KING, THE USE OF THE BLUES SCALE IN EIGHTH NOTE TRIPLETS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THEIR IMPROVISATIONS.

Musical staff 94-96. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 94 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains three measures of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 97-99. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 97 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains three measures of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 100-102. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 100 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains three measures of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 103-105. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 103 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains three measures of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 106. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 106 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains one measure of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 107. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 107 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains one measure of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 108. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 108 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains one measure of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Musical staff 109. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 109 starts with a 5-fingered chord. The staff contains one measure of music with various notes and rests, ending with a double bar line.



RHYTHM IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF MUSIC. TO CREATE OUR OWN PHRASES WE MUST LISTEN TO THE MASTERS AND LEARN THEIR SOLOS IN ORDER TO GAIN A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RHYTHM OF THIS MUSIC. THE BLUES SCALE SWINGS ON IT'S OWN AND PLAYING IT IN A LINEAR FASHION JUST SOUNDS GOOD. NOW LET'S BUILD SOME PHRASES UTILIZING THE IDEAS WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON.



1231

1251

1281

1311

1331

1351

1371

1391

THE NEXT STEP IN DEVELOPING MELODIC MATERIAL ON THE BLUES IS INTERNALIZING THE RIFFS AND HEADS THAT MAKE UP THE FOUNDATION OF THE BLUES. LEARN THEM BY EAR. NOT ONLY THE NOTES, BUT THE EXACT PHRASING AND ARTICULATION USED BY THE MASTERS. YOU MAY FREELY QUOTE THESE RIFFS IN YOUR SOLOS. HERE IS A LIST OF ESSENTIAL BLUES HEADS TO LEARN:

- 1) TENOR MADNESS (JOHN COLTRANE) B-FLAT BLUES
- 2) SONNYMOON FOR TWO (SONNY ROLLINS) B-FLAT BLUES
- 3) NOW'S THE TIME (CHARLIE PARKER) F BLUES
- 4) STRAIGHT, NO CHASER (THELONIOUS MONK) B-FLAT BLUES \*\*MILES RECORDED THIS IN THE KEY OF F
- 5) THE BLUES WALK (SONNY STITT) B-FLAT BLUES
- 6) COOL BLUES (CHARLIE PARKER) C BLUES
- 7) SOFT WINDS (BENNY GOODMAN-CHARLIE CHRISTIAN) B-FLAT BLUES
- 8) BUZZY (CHARLIE PARKER) B-FLAT BLUES
- 9) BLUE SEVEN (SONNY ROLLINS) B-FLAT BLUES
- 10) BLUE MONK (THELONIOUS MONK) B-FLAT BLUES
- 11) BAG'S GROOVE (MILT JACKSON) F BLUES
- 12) BLUE & BOOGIE (DIZZY GILLESPIE) B-FLAT BLUES
- 13) FREDDIE THE FREELOADER (MILES DAVIS) B-FLAT BLUES
- 14) WEE DOT (J.J. JOHNSON) B-FLAT BLUES
- 15) BILLIE'S BOUNCE (CHARLIE PARKER) F-BLUES
- 16) WALKIN' (RICHARD CARPENTER) F-BLUES
- 17) AU PRIVAVE (CHARLIE PARKER) F-BLUES
- 18) BLUES FOR ALICE (CHARLIE PARKER) F-BLUES
- 19) THE BLUES MARCH (BENNY GOLSON) B-FLAT BLUES
- 20) DANCE OF THE INFIDELS (BUD POWELL) F-BLUES
- 21) CHERYL (CHARLIE PARKER) C BLUES
- 22) MOHAWK (CHARLIE PARKER) B-FLAT BLUES
- 23) DOWN (MILES DAVIS) F BLUES
- 24) SOLID (SONNY ROLLINS) B-FLAT BLUES
- 25) WATERMELON MAN (HERBIE HANCOCK) F-BLUES \*\*16-BAR FORM

WE MUST ALSO LEARN THE SOLOS OF THE GREAT MASTERS, BY EAR OFF OF THE RECORDINGS, NOT FROM BOOKS. THE GREATEST BLUES PLAYERS IN THE HISTORY OF THIS MUSIC ARE LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND CHARLIE PARKER. OTHER MASTERS OF THE BLUES INCLUDE LESTER YOUNG, SONNY ROLLINS, JOHN COLTRANE, JACKIE MCLEAN, CANNONBALL ADDERLEY, DEXTER GORDON, SONNY STITT, PEPPER ADAMS, JOE HENDERSON, ROY ELDRIDGE, DIZZY GILLESPIE, MILES DAVIS, FATS NAVARRO, KENNY DORHAM, CLIFFORD BROWN, FREDDIE HUBBARD, LEE MORGAN, J.J. JOHNSON, CURTIS FULLER, SLIDE HAMPTON, FRANK ROSOLINO, CARL FONTANA, CHARLIE CHRISTIAN, WES MONTGOMERY, GRANT GREEN, GEORGE BENSON, JIMMY SMITH, JACK MCDUFF, BUD POWELL, THELONIOUS MONK, HORACE SILVER, RED GARLAND, WYNTON KELLY, HAMPTON HAWES, BOBBY TIMMONS, OSCAR PETERSON, HERBIE HANCOCK, MCCOY TYNER, JIMMY RUSHING, BILLIE HOLIDAY, JOE WILLIAMS AND DINAH WASHINGTON.



# THE BLUES & BREAKING DOWN THE CHANGES

WE HAVE PRACTICED IMPROVISING ON THE BLUES USING THE BLUES SCALE IN EIGHTH NOTES AND EIGHTH NOTE TRIPLETS WITH PICKUPS OVER THE BARLINE AS WELL AS CREATING OUR OWN PHRASES.

WE HAVE ALSO PRACTICED QUOTING BLUES HEADS AND BLUES RIFFS AS MELODIC MATERIAL IN OUR SOLOS.

THE NEXT STEP IS TO "BREAK DOWN THE CHANGES" AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE THREE DOMINANT 7TH SCALES AND CHORDS THAT MAKE UP THE CHORD PROGRESSION ON THE BLUES.

THE BLUES, IN IT'S MOST BASIC FORMAT, IS BUILT ON THREE DOMINANT 7TH CHORDS.

THOSE CHORDS ARE BUILT ON THE I, IV AND V OF WHATEVER KEY THE BLUES IS IN.

IN IT'S MOST BASIC FORMAT, WE ARBITRARILY MAKE ALL 3 CHORDS (I, IV, AND V) DOMINANT 7TH IN QUALITY.

LET'S LOOK AT THE BLUES IN B-FLAT CONCERT (C BLUES FOR TRUMPET, TENOR SAXOPHOINE AND CLARINET).

THE I CHORD = C7, THE IV = F7 AND THE V CHORD = G7.

NOW LET'S OUTLINE THE DOMINANT 7TH CHORDS AND SCALES OVER THE 12-BAR FORM.

AFTER OUTLINING THE SCALES AND CHORDS, WE WILL THEN MOVE ONTO DOMINANT 7TH RIFFS AND PHRASES.

IT IS THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE BLUES PHRASES AND DOMINANT 7TH PHRASES (AND EVENTUALLY LINEAR BEBOP PHRASES) THAT GIVES YOUR IMPROVISATIONS GREAT MELODIC VARIETY.

LISTEN TO DIZZY GILLESPIE ON THE RECORDING "COOL BREEZE" FROM "DIZZY AT NEWPORT" (VERVE 1957)

The musical notation shows a 12-bar blues progression in C major. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with chords C7, F7, C7, and C7. The second staff contains measures 5-8 with chords F7, F7, C7, and C7. The third staff contains measures 9-12 with chords G7, F7, C7, and C7. The melody consists of eighth notes and eighth note triplets, often starting with a pickup note over the barline.

B-FLAT

# THE BLUES AND BREAKING DOWN THE CHANGES

DAN MILLER

C7

F7

G7





