INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Blues Piano*. If you've always wanted to "play the blues," but weren't quite sure how, then you've come to the right place! Whatever your playing level, this book will help you sound more authentic in your blues piano stylings.

After reviewing some essential chords and scales, we'll dig into the left- and right-hand techniques that are vital for the blues pianist. We'll focus on "comping" (or accompaniment) patterns as well as "solo" passages and fills. This will all help you to create your own piano parts on a variety of blues tunes and progressions!

We'll also spotlight the playing techniques and styles used by some of the major blues pianists of the 20th century, so that you can incorporate this essential vocabulary into your own music. Tunes in various blues styles (such as boogie woogie, Chicago blues, jump blues, New Orleans style, etc.) are all featured in the "Style File" chapter at the end of the book, and on the accompanying CD.

Good luck with your blues piano!

—Mark Harrison

About the CD

On the accompanying CD, you'll find demonstrations of nearly all of the music examples in this book. Solo examples feature the left-hand piano part on the left channel, and the right-hand piano part on the right channel, to facilitate easy "hands separate" practice. Most of the recordings in Chapter 6 ("Style File") include a rhythm section as well as piano. For these tunes, the rhythm section is on the left channel, with the piano on the right channel. To play along with the rhythm section, simply turn down the right channel.

About the Author

Mark Harrison is a *Keyboard Magazine* columnist and an educational author whose books are used by thousands of musicians worldwide. His TV credits include *Saturday Night Live, American Justice, Celebrity Profiles,* and many other shows and commercials. As a working keyboardist in the Los Angeles area, Mark performs regularly with the top-flight Steely Dan tribute band Doctor Wu, as well as the critically-acclaimed Mark Harrison Quintet. He has also shared the stage with top musicians such as John Molo (Bruce Hornsby band) and Jimmy Haslip (Yellowjackets), and is currently co-writing an R&B/pop project with the Grammy-winning songwriter Ron Dunbar. For further information on Mark's musical activities and education products, please visit *www.harrisonmusic.com.*

CONTENTS

WHAT IS THE BLUES?

Blues is an indigenous American music that emerged in the late 19th century, flourished and developed in the 20th century, and laid the foundations for modern-day R&B and rock 'n' roll styles. The blues also has strong connections to other music styles besides R&B and rock—notably gospel, country, and jazz. Many blues singers received their vocal training in church, and some early blues artists performed both blues and gospel tunes. The heartfelt emotions in traditional country lyrics form a strong link to the blues, and more contemporary country music connects to the blues through the similarities to rock 'n' roll styles. Jazz and blues have always been intertwined, and although jazz is noted for its improvisation and experimentation, the blues is a huge influence on the compositions and instrumental stylings of both "classic" and contemporary jazz music.

Much has been written about the origins and early development of the blues. The first blues was vocal music, consisting of "field hollers," spirituals, and work songs. The rhythms at this time were mostly unstructured, and the lyrics were an expression of the problems experienced by the rural African-American population of the time. Then in the early 20th century, a more urban, rhythmically structured blues emerged, with the piano playing an important role. The "boogie woogie" or "barrelhouse" blues styles of this period were a forerunner of the other regional blues styles to emerge.

Boogie Woogie

Boogie woogies piano styles feature fast tempos and "driving" left-hand figures. The style is very percussive, and the right hand is called upon to play combinations of single-note motifs and chordal "punches" or syncopations. Noted boogie woogie pianists from this period include Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis, and Cow-Cow Davenport. Boogie woogie (in particular the driving left-hand patterns) influenced many later blues subgenres, and the careers of pianists such as Roosevelt Sykes and Big Maceo Merriweather spanned the period from early piano blues and boogie woogie through to the Chicago blues era.

Jump Blues

Jump blues was a boisterous, jazz-influenced style that thrived in the late '40s and early '50s, and was a precursor of R&B and rock 'n' roll styles. As well as piano, it featured driving rhythms and energetic horn sections and vocals. Noted jump blues pianists include Big Joe Turner, Amos Milburn, and Floyd Dixon.

Other regional blues styles emerged as follows:

Chicago Blues

This is probably the best-known and recognized blues form. Personified by the Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf bands of the late '40s and early '50s, this style amplified the blues and created the now-classic small-band lineup of guitar, piano, bass, drums, harmonica, and (sometimes) saxophone. Noted piano players in Chicago blues include Otis Spann (a pivotal member of Muddy Waters's band), Lafayette Leake, and Memphis Slim, to name a few.

St. Louis Blues

This is an urban variation on jump blues, featuring either a solo vocalist or a piano player with a small or large band. Noted piano players in St. Louis blues include Roosevelt Sykes (who began his career in St. Louis before becoming a fixture on the Chicago blues scene) and Peetie Wheatstraw.

Kansas City Blues

This is an energetic, jazz and swing influenced blues genre, characterized by driving rhythms and often a "shouted" vocal style. Noted Kansas City performers include Count Basie, as well as pianists Jay McShann and the above- mentioned Pete Johnson. (Jay McShann's orchestra also featured the young saxophonist Charlie Parker.)

Texas Blues

Early Texas blues (during the 1920s) had a relaxed, swinging feel and featured acoustic guitar. By the 1950s, Texas blues had evolved into an electric style (personified by guitarist T-Bone Walker) featuring jazz-influenced soloing with horn sections. The genre then further evolved using smaller lineups similar to Chicago electric blues, and prominently featuring the lead guitar. Noted pianists in Texas blues include Doctor Hepcat, Joe Pullum, and Dave Alexander.

New Orleans Blues

This blues style is a melting pot of different influences, characterized by African and Carribean rhythms and syncopation, variations on the traditional 12-bar blues form, colorful pianistic embellishments, and a "laid back" yet danceable feel. The career of Fats Domino spanned the period from New Orleans blues and R&B to rock 'n' roll, and his lolling 12/8 triplet-style piano became a stylistic trademark. Other noted New Orleans pianists, featuring the characteristic Latin- and rhumba-tinged rhythms and elaborate right-hand ornamentations, include Professor Longhair, Huey "Piano" Smith, Allen Toussaint, and more recently Dr. John (Mac Rebennack).

West Coast Blues

This term refers to a smoother, more jazz-influenced variation on jump blues. Indeed, as the West Coast (and in particular Los Angeles) was a hotbed of jump blues in the 1940s, the terms West Coast blues and jump blues are sometimes used interchangeably. Also, some West Coast blues pianists veered towards a more gospel-influenced R&B ballad style, notably Charles Brown, Percy Mayfield, and the young Ray Charles.

Modern Electric Blues

This generally refers to the period after the "blues revival" of the 1960s, personified by artists such as Buddy Guy, B.B. King, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. This style has essentially blended Chicago- and Texas-style blues with more contemporary rock and soul influences. Some adult-oriented rock artists (such as Eric Clapton and Bonnie Raitt) keep a strong thread of blues in their music, while also venturing into other stylistic areas.

Arguably the most noted blues pianists of the contemporary era are sidemen working with major artists. These pianists will often function well in other styles as well as the blues. Among today's pianists keeping the blues flame alive are Chuck Leavell (Rolling Stones, Allman Brothers), Jools Holland (Squeeze), Reese Wynans (Stevie Ray Vaughan) and Al Kooper, to name a few.

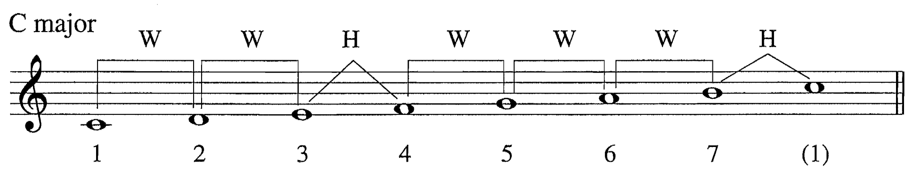
There are some key stylistic ingredients necessary for creating the blues. Most blues music since the early vocal blues has a pronounced rhythm or "beat" to it, reflecting its dance music origins. Also, the instrumentation or lineup of guitar(s), harmonica, bass, and drums—often with piano and/or horn—has been a mainstay of the blues scene since the late 1940s. The blues primarily features a twelve-measure form (i.e., each chorus lasts for twelve bars or measures), with some styles such as New Orleans blues varying this by using different lengths (i.e., eight measures). See Chapter 3 for more information on "blues form."

Now we'll see how chords and scales are used in the blues (in Chapter 2), before focusing on blues progressions and piano techniques (starting in Chapter 3). On with the show!

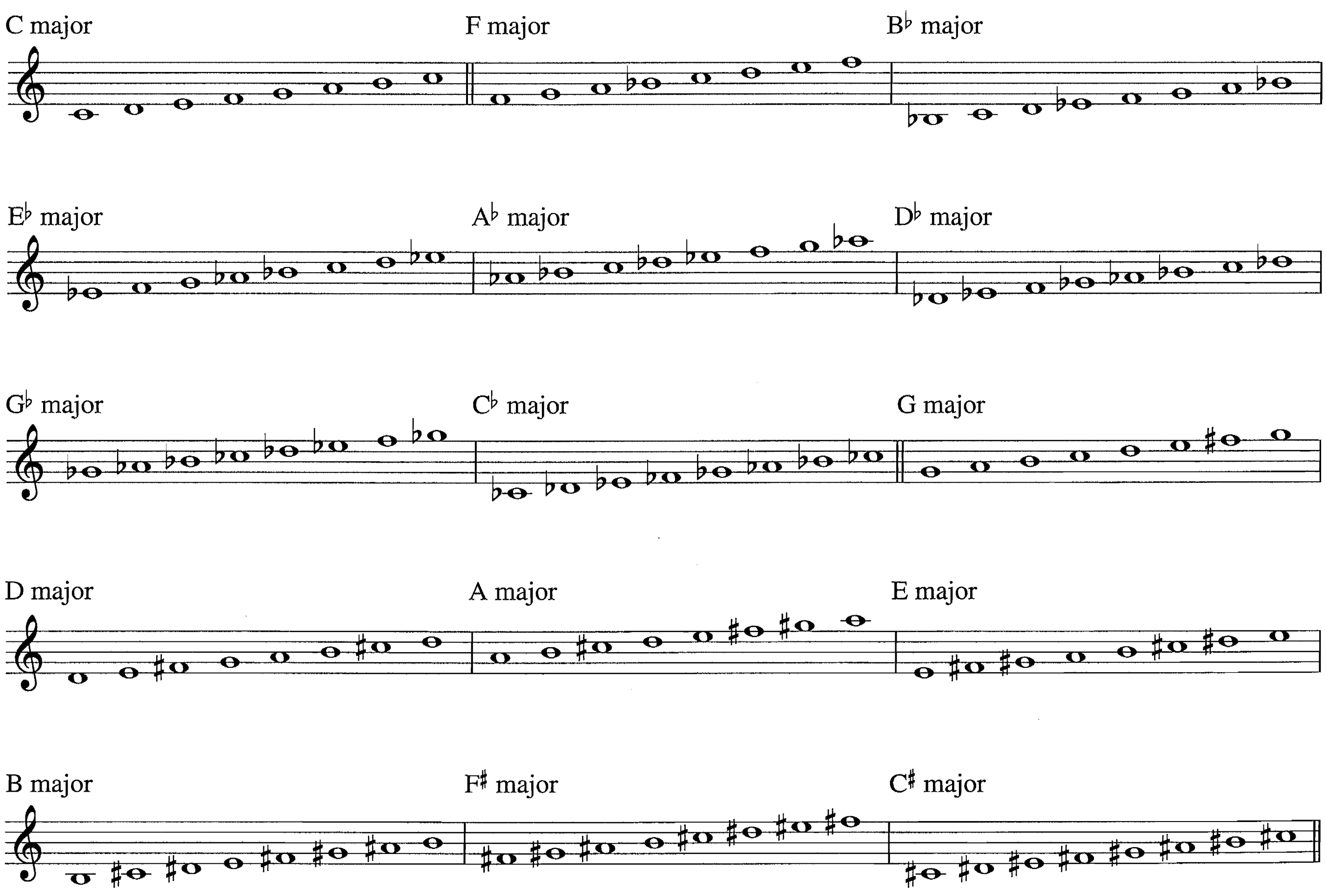
Chapter 2
SCALES and CHORDS

Major scales and modes

First of all, we'll take a look at the **major scale**, which is the fundamental basis of harmony in most contemporary music styles. I recommend that you think of this scale in terms of the intervals it contains (i.e., whole step, whole step, half step, whole step, whole step, whole step, and half step) as this most closely parallels how the ear relates to the scale. Here is the C major scale, showing these intervals:

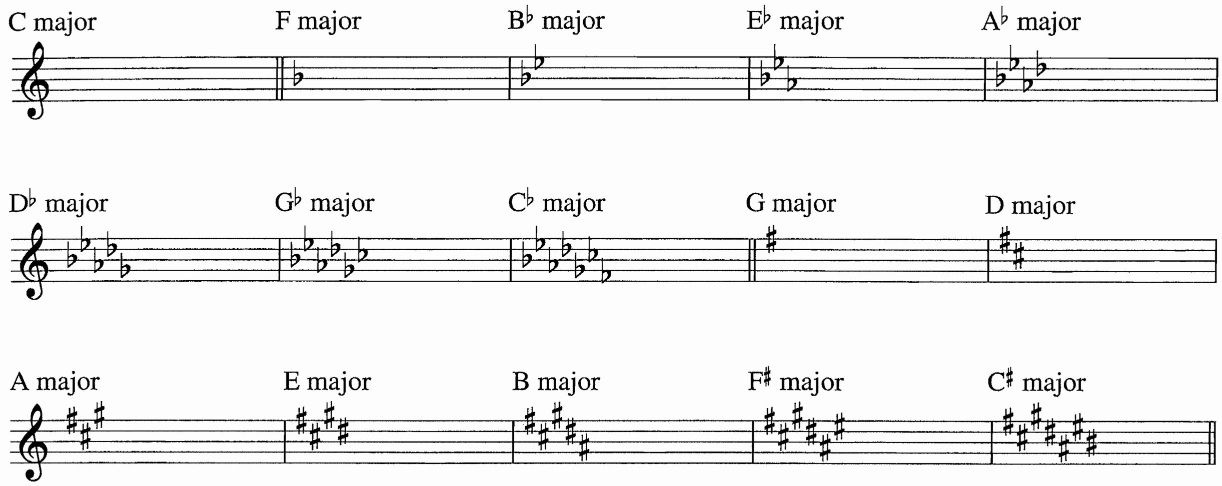


Here for your reference are all of the major scales. After C major, the next seven scales contain flats, i.e., F major has one flat, B♭ major has 2 flats, and so on. The seven scales after that contain sharps, i.e., G major has one sharp, D major has two sharps, and so on.

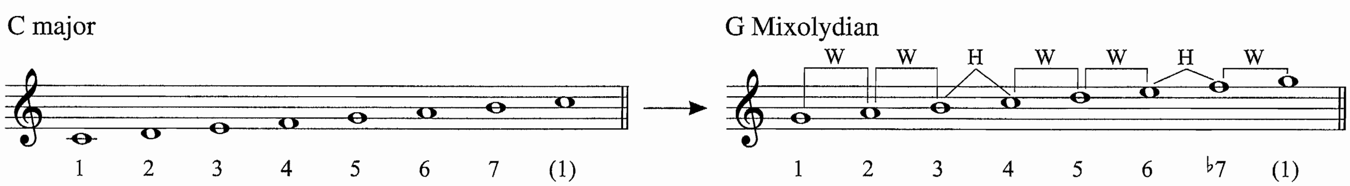


In this book, we'll work with music examples in different keys. For example, a tune will be "in the key of C" if the note C is heard as the tonic or "home base," and if the notes used are within the C major scale (*except* for any additional sharped or flatted notes occurring in the music). As we will see, when playing the blues, we often need to alter the major scale of the key with sharps and/or flats.

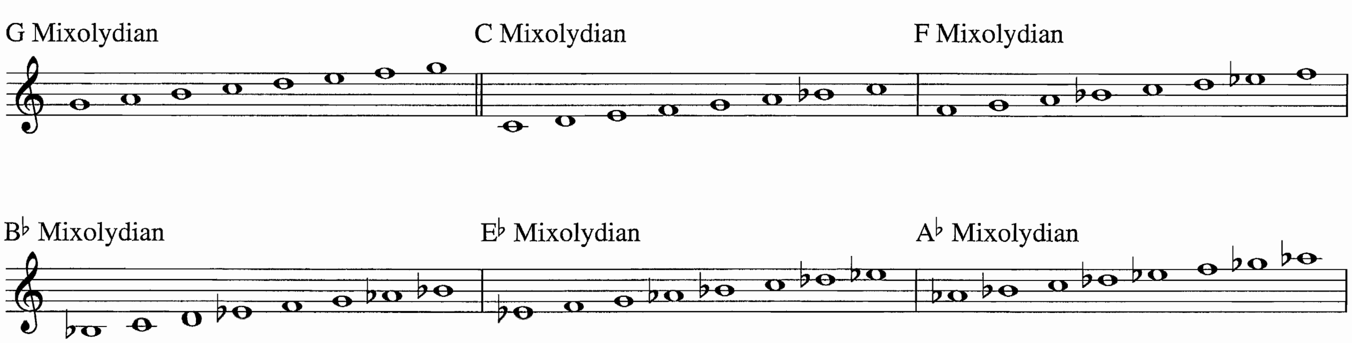
A **key signature** is a group of flats or sharps at the beginning of the music that lets you know which key you are in. Here for your reference are all of the major key signatures:



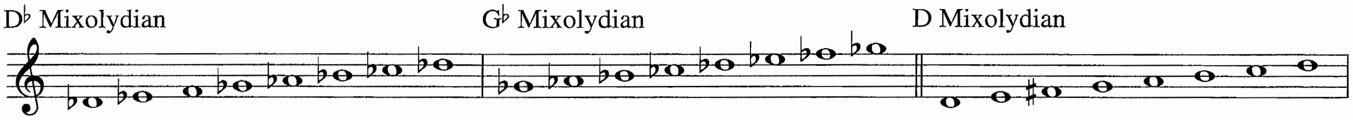
A **mode** or modal scale is created when we take a major scale and displace it to start on another scale degree. The most important mode in the blues is the **Mixolydian** mode, created when the major scale is displaced to start on the 5th degree, as in the following example of a C major scale displaced to create the G Mixolydian mode:



If you compare the two scales above, you'll see that the notes are the same; they just begin (and end) differently. Each has a different tonic or root, and a different pattern of whole and half steps. You can also think of the Mixolydian mode as a major scale with a flatted 7th (1-2-3-4-5-6-♭7); this gives some indication of its unique sound. The Mixolydian mode is commonly used in blues styles as it is the basic scale source for a **dominant seventh chord** (more about dominant sevenths shortly). You should make it a goal to learn all of the Mixolydian modes (each of these is a displacement of a previously shown major scale):

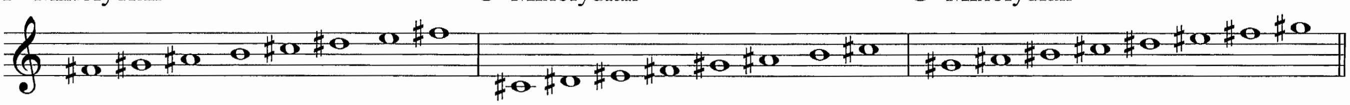


D♭ Mixolydian G♭ Mixolydian D Mixolydian



A Mixolydian E Mixolydian B Mixolydian

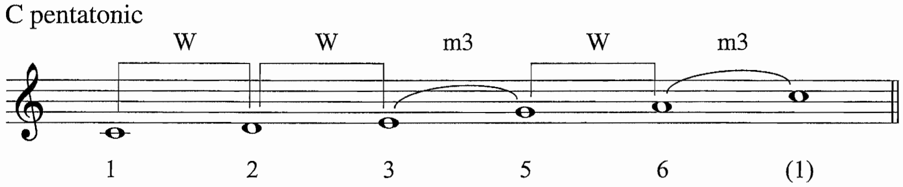
F♯ Mixolydian C♯ Mixolydian G♯ Mixolydian



Pentatonic and blues scales

The **major pentatonic** scale (a.k.a. the pentatonic scale) is a five-note scale widely used in rock, blues, and jazz styles. It can be derived by taking the major scale and removing the 4th and 7th degrees:

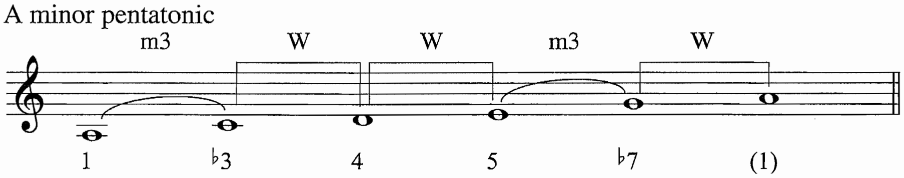
C pentatonic



Note that from bottom to top, this scale now contains the following intervals: whole step, whole step, minor 3rd, whole step, and minor 3rd.

The **minor pentatonic** (a.k.a. blues pentatonic) can be derived from the major pentatonic scale. For example, if we now take the C pentatonic scale and displace it to start on the note A (which is the "relative minor" of C), we create an A minor pentatonic scale, as follows:

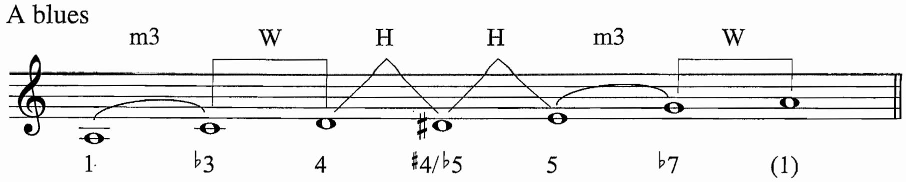
A minor pentatonic



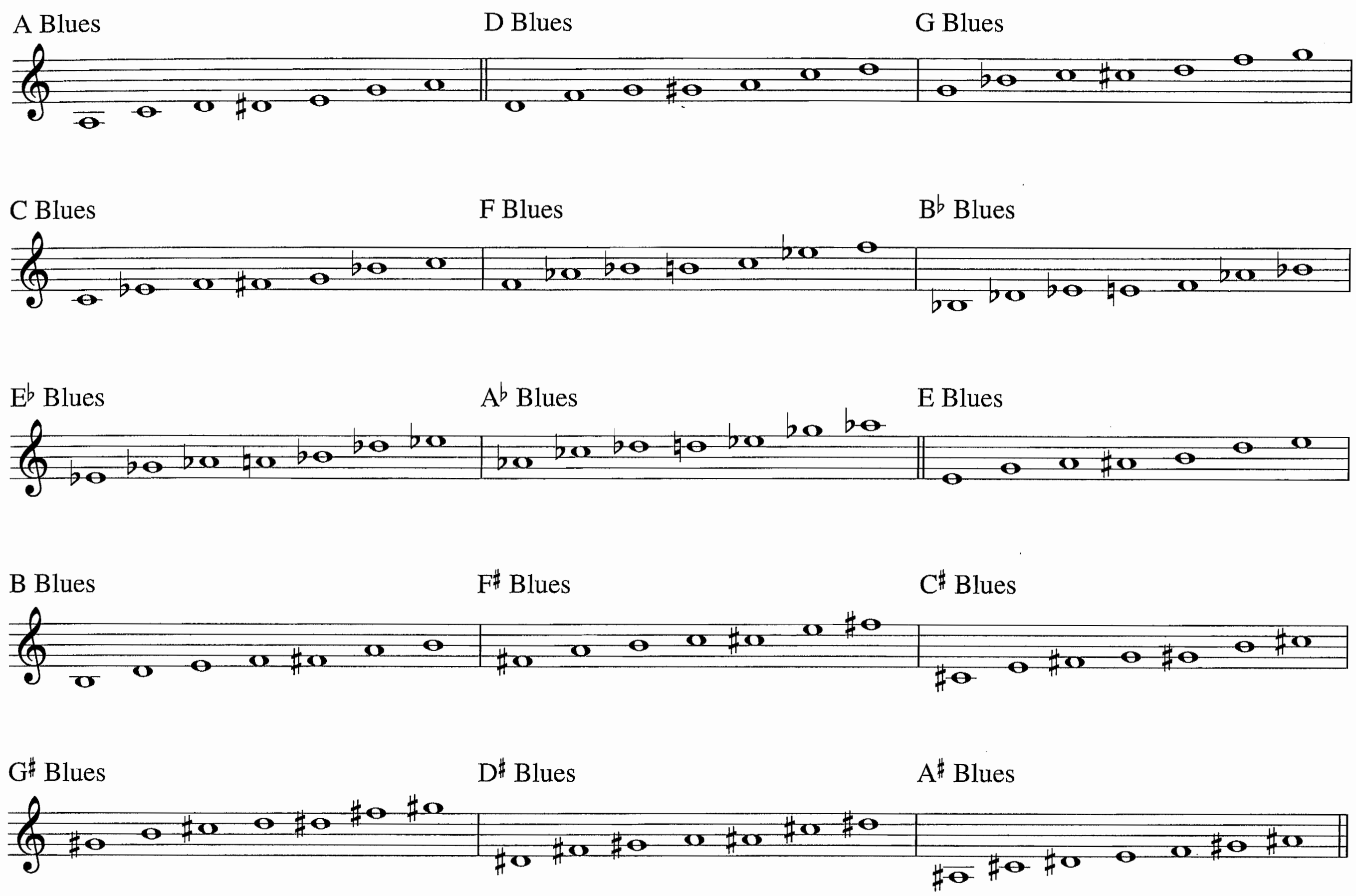
Note that from bottom to top, this scale now contains the following intervals: minor 3rd, whole step, whole step, minor 3rd, and whole step.

Finally, the **blues scale** can be derived by adding one note, the ♯4/♭5, to the minor pentatonic scale. For example, if we take the A minor pentatonic scale and add the "connecting tone" D♯ between the notes D and E, we create an A blues scale, as follows:

A blues



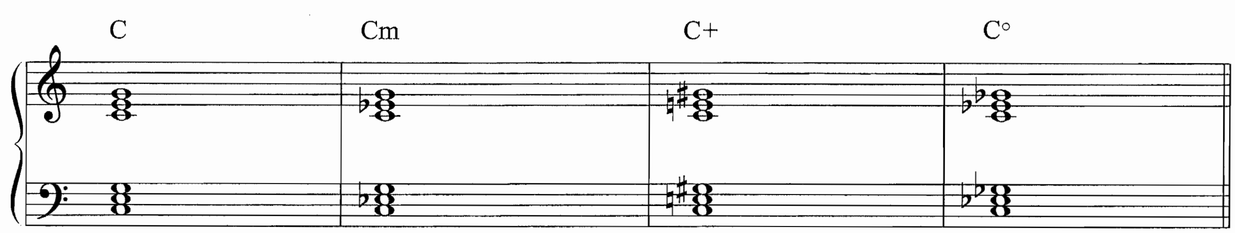
The blues scale is widely used in rock and jazz as well as blues styles. You should make it a goal to learn all of the blues scales, as shown:



Triads and seventh chords

TRIADS

There are four main types of triad (three-part chord) in common usage: **major**, **minor**, **augmented**, and **diminished**. The following example shows all of these triads in treble and bass clefs, built from the root of C in each case:

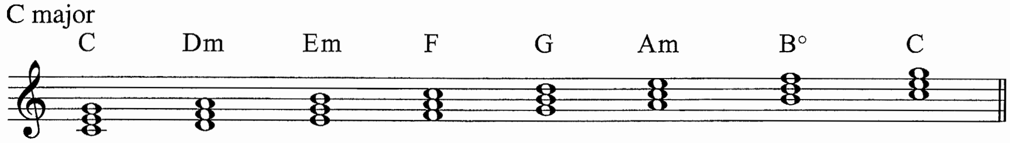


Note that these triads are formed by building the following intervals above the root note:

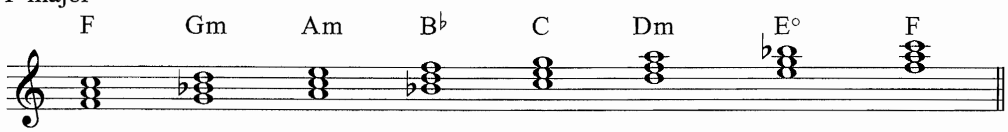
Major triad:	Major 3rd and perfect 5th (1–3–5)
Minor triad:	Minor 3rd and perfect 5th (1–♭3–5)
Augmented triad:	Major 3rd and augmented 5th (1–3–♯5)
Diminished triad:	Minor 3rd and diminished 5th (1–♭3–♭5)

If we construct triads from each degree of the major scale, and stay within the restrictions of the scale, we create **diatonic** triads, which are the harmonic basis of many contemporary styles. The following example shows the diatonic triads found within the C major and F major scales:

C major



F major



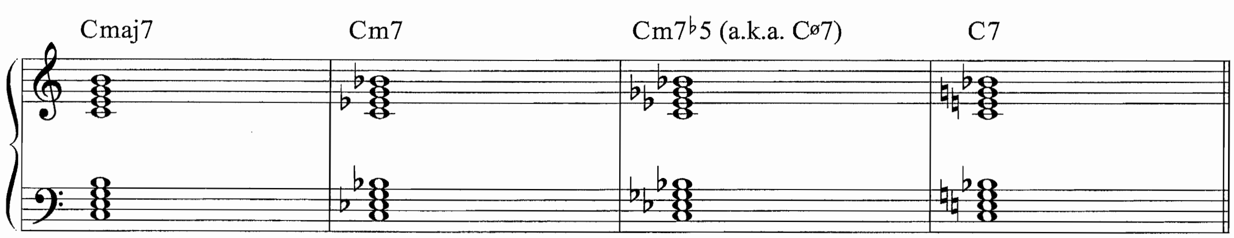
Relating the above triads to the four main triad types, note that **major** triads are built from the 1st, 4th, and 5th major scale degrees, **minor** triads are built from the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th scale degrees, and a **diminished** triad is built from the 7th scale degree. (The augmented triad does not occur anywhere in the diatonic series).

Knowledge of these diatonic triads is important when playing the blues, for the following reasons:

- As we will see, blues progressions commonly use chords built from the 1st, 4th, and 5th degrees of a key, and the simplest form of these chords is the triad form (e.g., C major, F major, and G major triads in the key of C). So knowing the "one, four, and five" chords in every key is essential for the blues musician!
- A vital blues comping technique we are about to learn is the use of "Mixolydian triads," i.e., triads built from or contained within a Mixolydian mode. Well, you now know that the G Mixolydian mode is a displaced version of the C major scale, so all the diatonic triads within C major will also work in a G Mixolydian setting. Similarly, the diatonic triads within F major will also work in a C Mixolydian setting, and so on.

SEVENTH AND NINTH CHORDS

The most basic four-part chords in common usage are the **major seventh**, **minor seventh**, and **dominant seventh** chords. We will also derive a useful alteration to the minor seventh chord, the **minor seventh with flatted 5th** chord (also referred to as a half-diminished seventh chord). The following example shows these four-part chords in treble and bass clefs, built from the root of C:

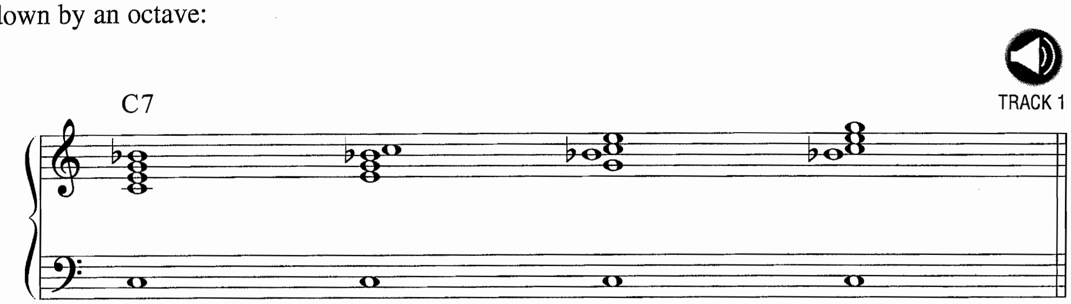


Note that these chords are formed by building the following intervals above the root note:

Major 7th chord:	Major 3rd, perfect 5th, and major 7th (1–3–5–7)
Minor 7th chord:	Minor 3rd, perfect 5th, and minor 7th (1–♭3–5–♭7)
Minor 7♭5 chord:	Minor 3rd, diminished 5th, and minor 7th (1–♭3–♭5–♭7)
Dominant 7th chord:	Major 3rd, perfect 5th, and minor 7th (1–3–5–♭7)

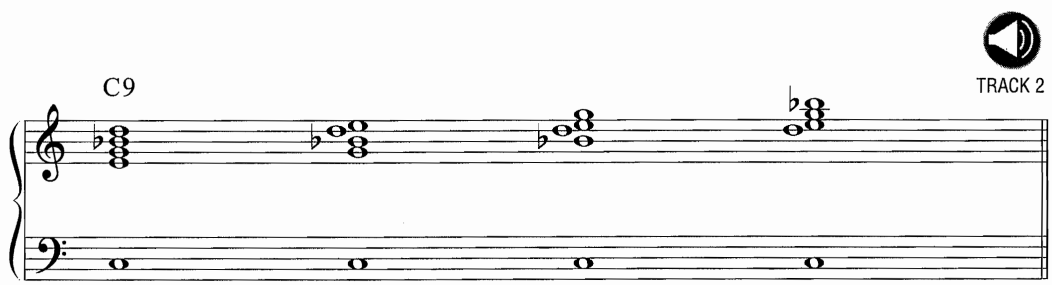
The **dominant seventh** is the most commonly used chord in the blues, and is usually built from the 1st, 4th, and 5th degrees of the key. Note the chord symbol for this chord, which is just the root note followed by the number "7."

Now we'll take a closer look at the dominant seventh chord, showing the inversions. An **inversion** of a chord occurs when the sequence of notes from bottom to top, is modified by moving one or more notes up or down by an octave:



This is also our first look at a chord **voicing** (in this case, for the dominant seventh). A voicing is a specific allocation of notes between the hands, chosen to interpret the chord in question. Here we are simply playing inversions of the chord tones (root, 3rd, 5th, and 7th) in the right hand, together with the root of the chord in the left hand. This is a common voicing for the dominant seventh chord in basic blues.

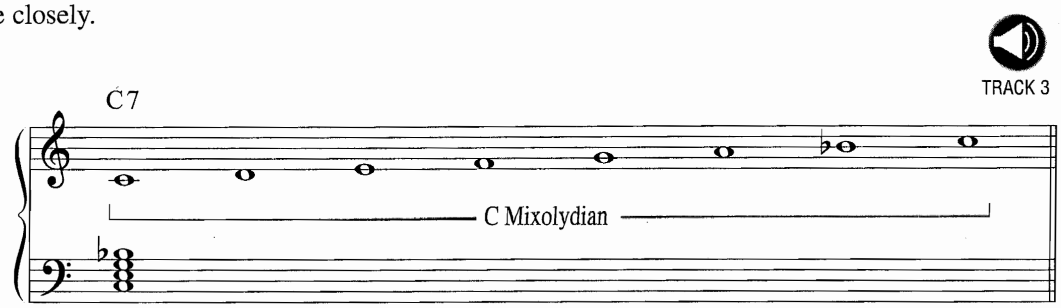
Now we will look at another chord voicing, this time for a **dominant ninth** chord. You can think of this chord as a dominant seventh with a 9th added (a major 9th interval above the root). In the case of the C7 chord in the preceding examples, adding the note D would turn this into a C9 (C dominant ninth) chord. When voicing this chord on the piano, often just the upper tones (i.e., the 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th) are played in the right hand, and again the root can be played in the left hand. Also, these upper tones by themselves create a **minor 7♭5** four-part chord. So, a quick way to voice a dominant ninth chord, is to "build" a minor 7♭5 chord from the 3rd of the original dominant chord, as in the following example (which uses different inversions of an Em7♭5 upper chord in the treble clef, over the root of the C9 chord in the bass clef):



This voicing technique of "building a minor 7♭5 from the 3rd" on dominant chords is extremely useful in blues, rock and gospel styles, and you should make it a goal to learn this voicing in all keys!

Using Mixolydian modes with dominant chords

I mentioned earlier that the Mixolydian mode is a scale source for the dominant chord. For example, all of the notes in a C7 chord are found in the C Mixolydian mode. Now we'll look at this chord/scale connection more closely.



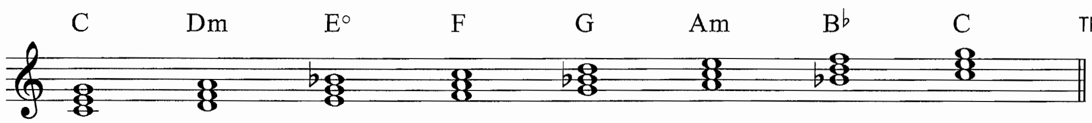
Note that the C Mixolydian mode sounds good when played over the C7 chord, as all of the notes in the chord are contained within the mode. The Mixolydian mode is therefore a good source for melodies, improvisation, fills, etc. over dominant chords, and this technique is widely used in the blues. Here's an example of a blues melody (using the notes within C Mixolydian) played over the C7 chord:

TRACK 4

Note: Unless otherwise specified, all music examples in this book are to be played in a swing-eighths style. This means that, instead of two eighth notes dividing the beat exactly in half, the second eighth note in each pair occurs two-thirds of the way through the beat (equivalent to playing on the first and third parts of an eighth-note triplet, e.g., ♫ = $\overset{3}{\text{♩ ♪}}$). If you're new to this, work with the CD examples and you'll soon get the feel for how it sounds.

Now we'll take a closer look at deriving triads from Mixolydian modes, which as I mentioned earlier is a very common blues piano technique. Let's derive all of the triads contained within the mode C Mixolydian, as follows:

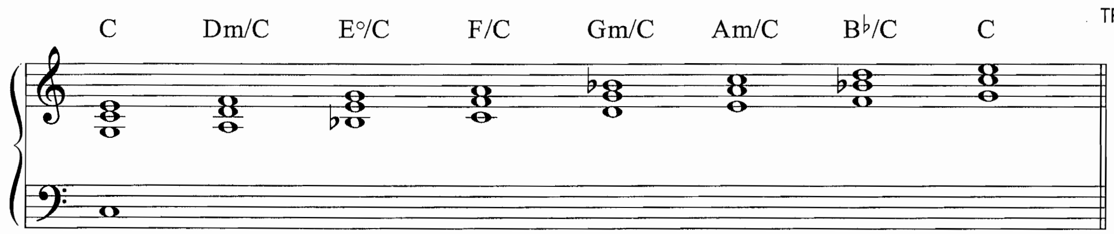
TRACK 5



To review—we know that C Mixolydian is a displaced version of the F major scale, so we would expect the above triads to be the same as the diatonic triads in F major. In fact, the triads are the same, except we are now starting with C instead of F. Go ahead and compare!

Now some great sounds happen when we invert these triads, and then place them over the root of C in the bass clef, as in the following example:

TRACK 6

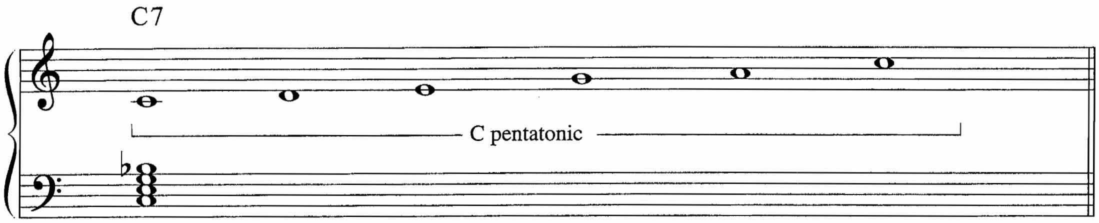


This device works best when the upper triads are in **first inversion** (i.e., with the root of each triad as the top note) or in **second inversion**, as above (i.e., with the 3rd of each triad as the top note). Note the "slash" chord symbols, which describe each specific combination of upper triad over the root of C. Although these are correct chord symbols that we will sometimes see, it is better to think of these combinations as *all being available* when interpreting a dominant seventh chord (in this case, a C7). In other words, we can improvise comping patterns, fills, etc. by moving between these upper triads. Much more fun with this important technique in Chapter 4!

Using pentatonic & blues scales with dominant chords

We can also place the C pentatonic scale over a C7 chord, as follows:

TRACK 7

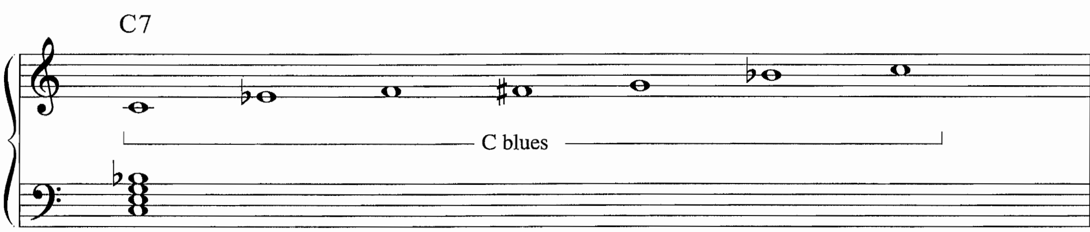


As all of the notes in the C pentatonic scale are contained within the C Mixolydian mode, it should not be surprising that this scale also works well as a melodic and improvisation source over the C7 chord. Here's another example of a blues melody (this time using notes within the C pentatonic scale) over the C7 chord:

TRACK 8

So far, the scales we have used over the C7 chord have resulted in mostly consonant (i.e., no harsh or dissonant) sounds. But now when we place the C blues scale over the C7 chord, some interesting dissonances occur, as in the following example:

TRACK 9



The "tension tones" here are the E♭ and F♯ (technically the sharped 9th and sharped 11th/flatted 5th of the C7 chord), and these are often referred to as the "blue notes." The blues scale has a unique melodic character which tends to offset the vertical dissonances arising from its use over chords, and indeed these tensions are a vital element of what we know as the blues. Here's a melody using the C blues scale, over a C7 chord:

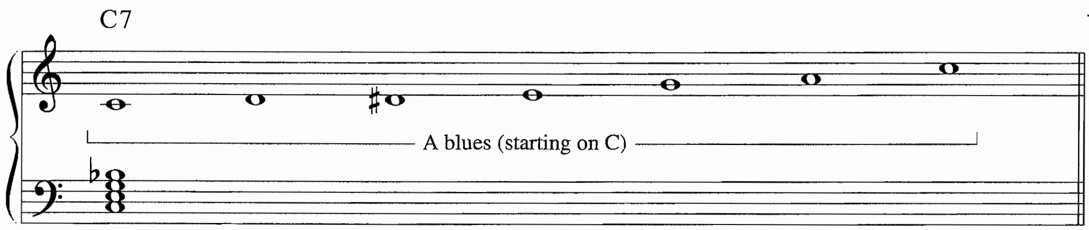
TRACK 10

Listen to the tension and dissonance of the F♯ and E♭ in the melody, against the C7 chord. Also, the F used in the second measure (technically the 11th on the chord) sounds tense over the 3rd of the chord (E) in the left hand. These are very characteristic sounds in the blues!

Note that the previous melody contained some eighth-note triplets. We have already seen that pairs of eighth notes are normally interpreted in a swing-eighths style in the blues. However, there will be times when we need to play on all three parts of an eighth-note triplet (rather than just the first and third parts). When this occurs, we need to notate eighth-note triplets either within 4/4 time (as in the above example, and the majority of examples in this book) or in 12/8 time (as in some of the Chapter 6 "Style File" examples). The choice between these options is a matter of subjective preference—if you find your music is often using all three parts of the eighth-note triplet, consider notating in 12/8 time as an alternative to writing all those triplet signs!

Back when we derived the A minor pentatonic scale, we said that A was the "relative minor" of C major. The relative minor is built from the 6th degree of the corresponding major scale/key, i.e., the note A is the 6th degree of the C major scale. Well, we can also use the blues scale built from the relative minor over the dominant seventh chord—in this case, use the A blues scale over the C7 chord. For ease of comparison with the C blues scale, the A blues scale is displaced to start on the note C in the following example:

TRACK 11



In comparing this example, note that playing the A blues scale over the C7 chord actually sounds more "inside" and creates fewer tension tones than playing the C blues scale over the C7 chord. The only tension tone in the above example is the D♯ (technically the sharped 9th on the chord)—which is enharmonic with the note E♭ (the flat 3rd).

The blues scale in the sequence shown above (displaced to start on the note a minor third interval above the tonic) is sometimes referred to as a "major blues" scale, while the original blues scale (based on C) is sometimes referred to as a "minor blues" scale.

Now we will look at a melody example that uses the notes in an A blues scale over a C7 chord:

TRACK 12

Again, the only real tension occurring against the chord is created by the D♯ in the melody. Skillful blues soloists will often alternate between using the blues scale "built from the root" of the dominant chord (e.g., using a C blues scale over a C7 chord) with using the blues scale "built from the relative minor" (e,g., using an A blues scale over a C7 chord), as we will see later in Chapter 5.

In this chapter, I've tried to summarize the essential music theory and harmony that will help you to play the blues. If you would like further information on these topics, please check out my other music instruction books, *Contemporary Music Theory (Levels 1–3)* and *The Pop Piano Book.* (All of these books are published by Hal Leonard Corporation.)

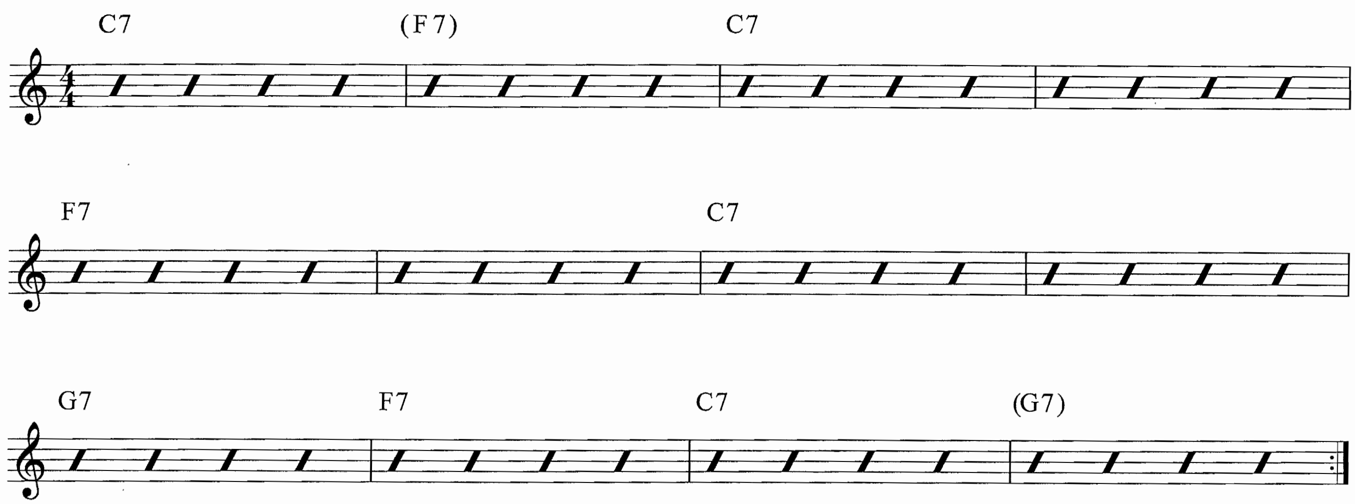
Chapter 3

BLUES PROGRESSIONS and LEFT-HAND PATTERNS

The twelve-bar blues

Most blues music is organized around a twelve-measure structure or "form." This means that a twelve-measure chord progression is repeated for both the melody and the improvised solo parts of the song. Here is a basic 12-bar blues progression in the key of C:

C Blues



We can make the following observations on the above blues progression:

- The chords used are dominant seventh chords built from the 1st, 4th, and 5th degrees of the key (C major), which we will now refer to as the I7, IV7, and V7 chords, respectively.
- The 12-bar sequence breaks down into three sections of four bars each, as follows:

  The first four bars normally use the I7 (C7, in this case), frequently moving to the IV7 (F7) in the second bar.

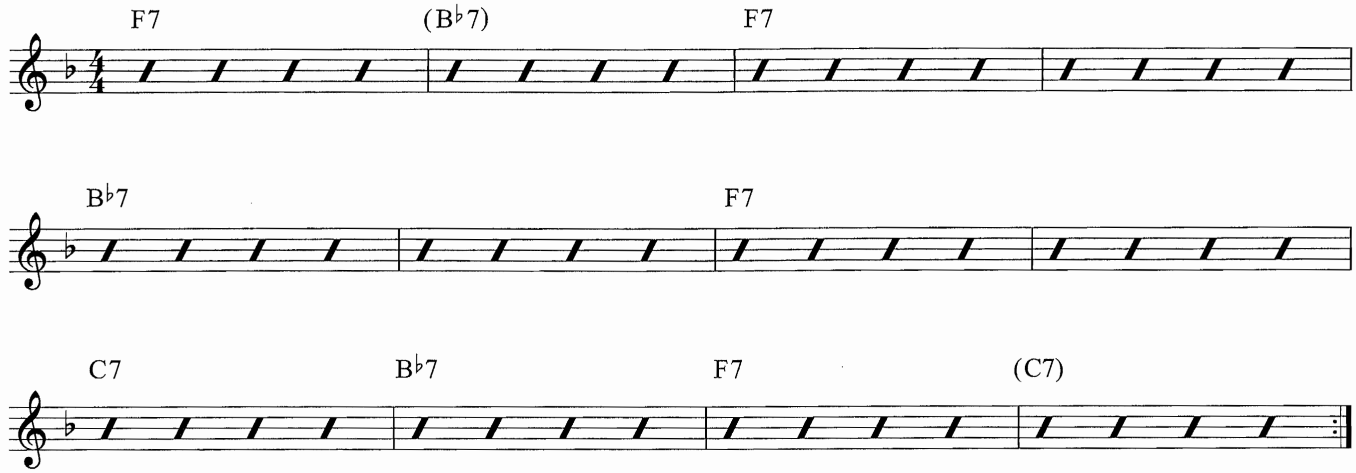
  The second four bars (i.e., from bar 5 of the form) begin with the IV7, normally returning to the I7 after two bars (on bar 7).

  The third four bars (from bar 9) begin with the V7 (G7 in this case), typically followed by the IV7 (in bar 10), and then returning to the I7 in bar 11. Bars 11 and 12 are a "turnaround" section leading back to the beginning of the form, and present many chord progression possibilities. The simplest options are to stay on the I7, or to move to the V7 in bar 12.

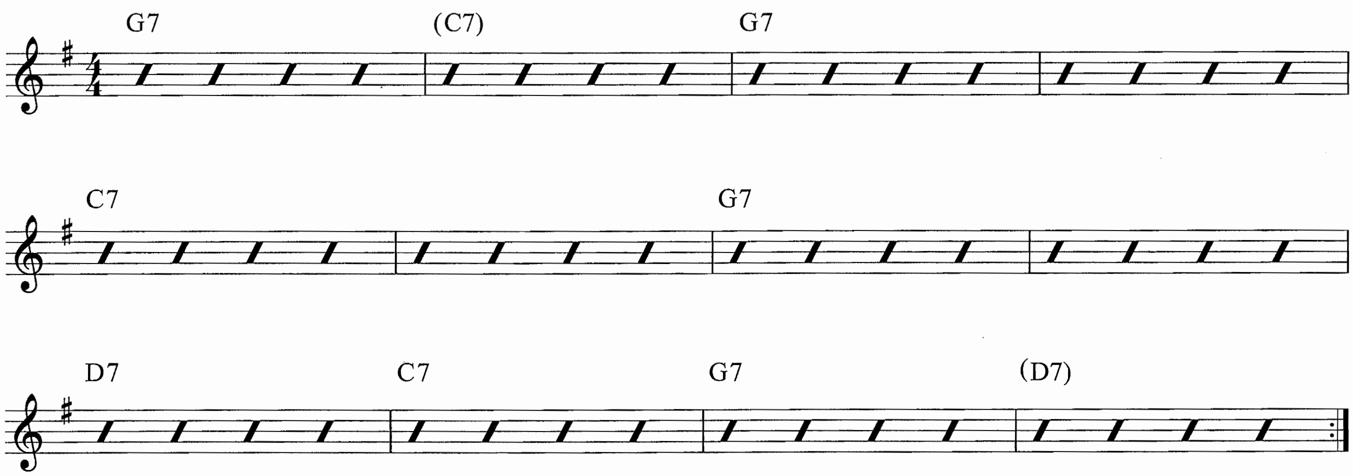
There are many variations on the above blues progression, particularly in jazz blues where more substitutions and complex chords can be used.

It is very useful to know this progression in as many keys as possible. Here for your reference is the above blues progression in the commonly used keys of F, G, and D:

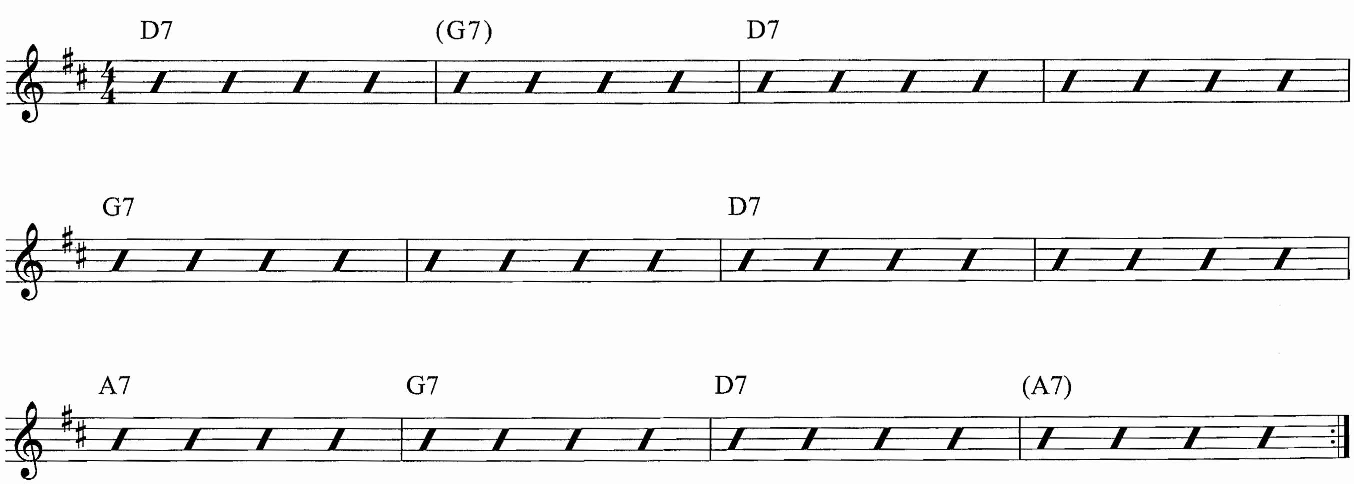
F Blues



G Blues



D Blues



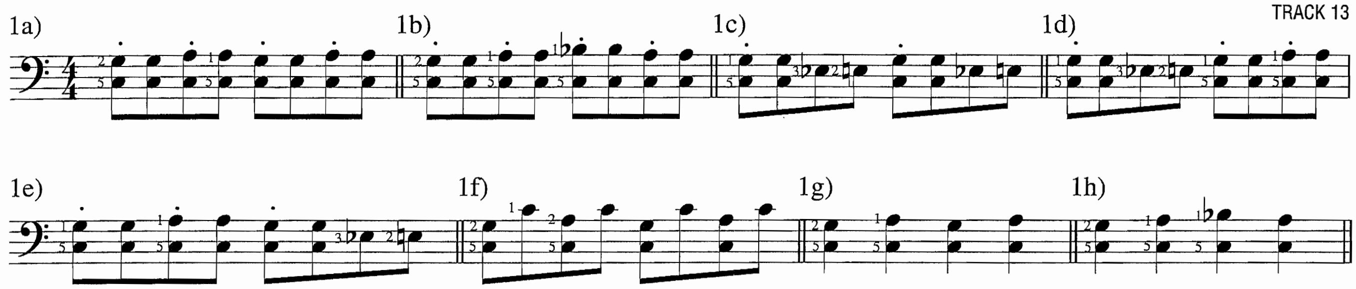
If you're playing with a band, and someone calls out, "Let's play the blues," most likely it is this progression and form that they're talking about. Now we'll see how to apply some authentic left-hand patterns to these chord progressions...

Left-hand patterns–group one (using intervals)

It's vital to develop a rock-solid left-hand groove when playing the blues. Your left hand literally "is the band," as it propels the rhythm while also defining the harmonic progression. The more your left hand is on "auto-pilot," the more you'll be able to focus on the different right-hand techniques we'll be exploring.

This first group of left-hand patterns makes use of two-note intervals (sometimes referred to as "double stops") as well as single notes. These patterns are found in Chicago blues all the way through to R&B and rock 'n' roll styles, and were used by blues pianists such as Otis Spann and Memphis Slim, among many others. Again, don't forget to "swing the eighths."

TRACK 13



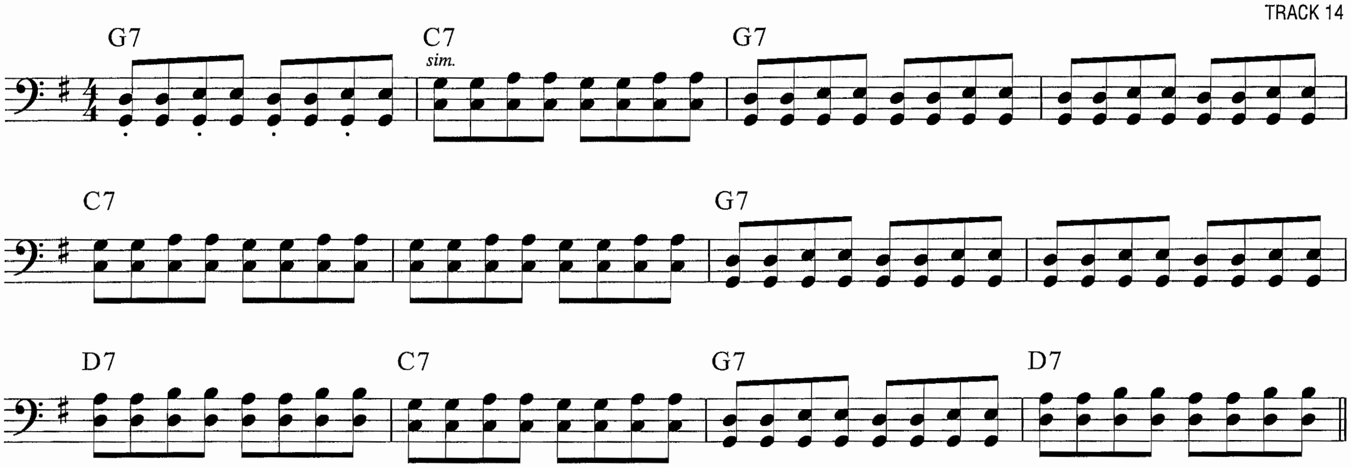
These patterns can be further analyzed as follows:

- Pattern 1a is the basic root-5th, root-6th pattern—a good foundation for many blues (and rock) styles.
- Pattern 1b is a variation on pattern 1a, adding the 7th of the chord on beat 3.
- Pattern 1c moves from the ♭3rd to the 3rd (E♭ to E in this case) during beats 2 and 4, imparting "forward motion" to the groove. This type of pattern is used in boogie woogie as well as Chicago blues.
- Pattern 1d is a variation on pattern 1c, adding the root-6th interval during beat 4.
- Pattern 1e is another variation on pattern 1c, this time adding the root-6th interval during beat 2.
- Pattern 1f is another variation on pattern 1a, this time adding the root with the thumb on all the upbeats.
- Patterns 1g and 1h are variations on patterns 1a and 1b, this time just using quarter notes. These can work well if the right-hand part has some eighth-note subdivision.

Now we'll apply some of these patterns to 12-bar blues chord progressions, beginning with the following 12-bar blues in G.

Practice it along with the CD, and then if possible with a metronome or drum machine, until the groove is right.

TRACK 14



It's also good to play these patterns in as many keys as possible (you never know what key you might need to play the blues in!). Next we have a left-hand pattern over the blues progression in C:

TRACK 15

Go ahead and play each of the left-hand patterns in Group One around the blues progression in at least one key. Keep the rhythm steady, and "lock into the groove"!

Left-hand patterns–group two
(using three-note chords)

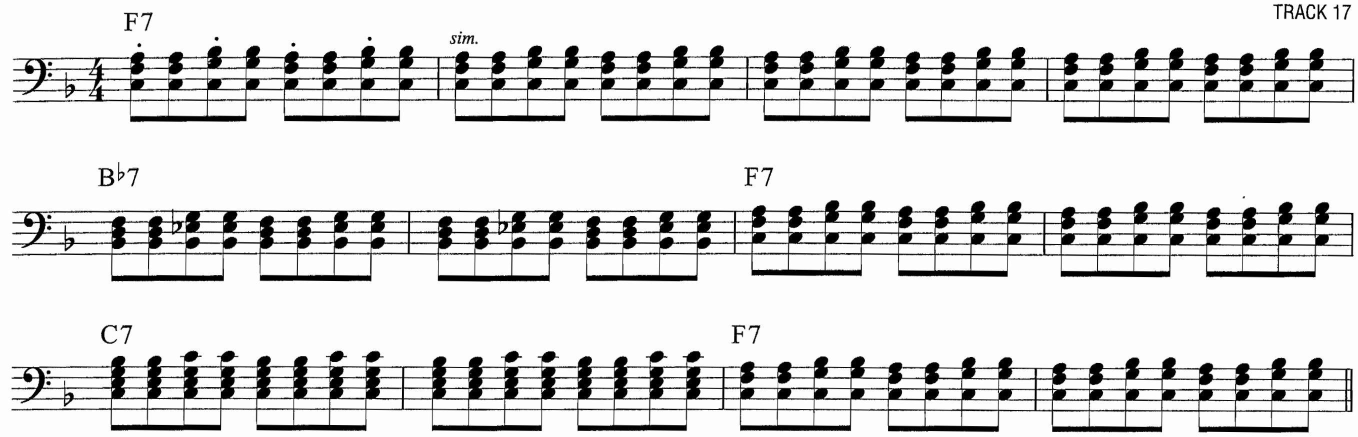
Now we'll look at some left-hand patterns using a more chordal approach, as used by boogie woogie pianists such as Meade Lux Lewis:

TRACK 16

Notice that these patterns sound more dense than than the interval-based Group One patterns. You won't want to play these too low on the piano, as they'll sound muddy. Pattern 2a uses a C triad on beats 1 and 3, alternating with an incomplete G7 "passing" chord on the weak beats 2 and 4. Pattern 2b also uses a C triad on beats 1 and 3, alternating with an F triad on beats 2 and 4. Pattern 2c defines the C7 dominant chord on beats 1 and 3, with the 7th moving up to the root during beats 2 and 4.

Now we'll use all of these patterns on a 12-bar "blues in F":

TRACK 17



Note that for voice leading reasons (i.e., to stay in the same register on the keyboard) we moved from pattern 2a on the F7 chord to pattern 2b on the B♭7 chord, and later to pattern 2c on the C7 chord. This is a bit more of a "workout" for the left hand, and you should strive to articulate each of the notes evenly and distinctly.

Left-hand patterns–group three
(using single notes)

The next group of left-hand patterns use single notes (as opposed to two-note intervals or three-note chords). This more linear approach is well suited to the faster tempos found in jump blues, as well as some of the "walking octave" left-hand parts used in boogie woogie styles.

TRACK 18

These patterns can be further analyzed as follows:

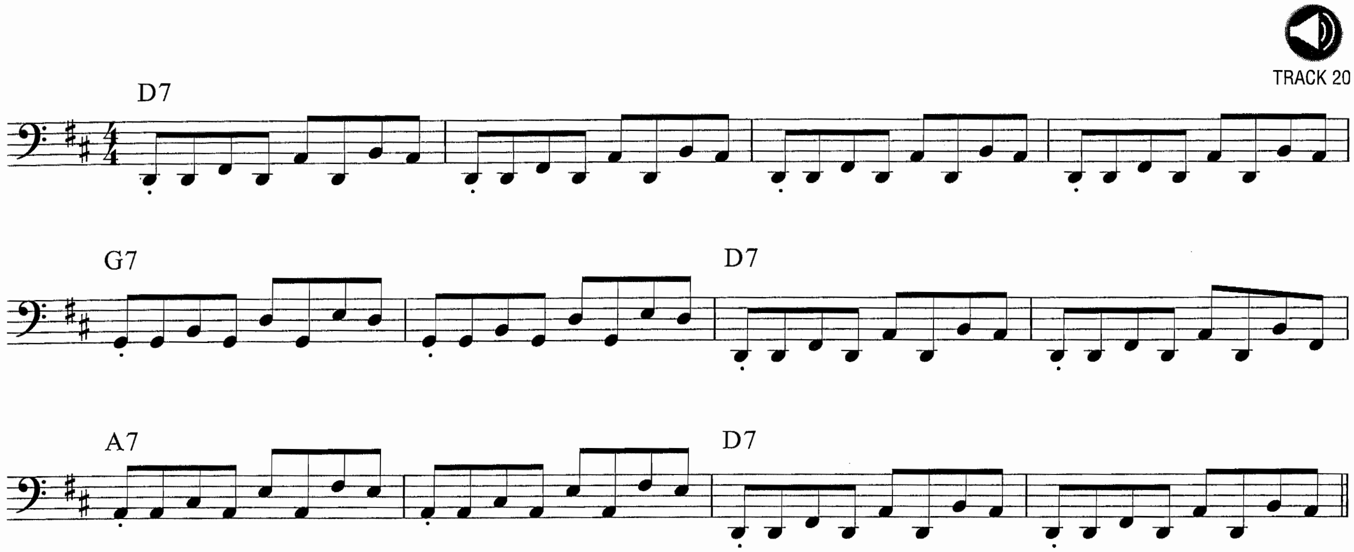
- Pattern 3a moves from the ♭3rd to the 3rd, and is similar to 1d, but without the double stops.
- Pattern 3b outlines the basic chord tones (1, 3, 5, 6).
- Pattern 3c has a dominant sound due to the 7th being used, and is similar to 1b, without the double stops.
- Patterns 3d and 3e are variations on pattern 3b.
- Pattern 3f is a variation on pattern 3d, using quarter notes on beats 1, 2, and 3.
- Pattern 3g is outlining the triad tones, using quarter notes on beats 1 and 3.
- Pattern 3h uses a "dotted quarter-eighth" rhythm, in the style of New Orleans blues legend Fats Domino.
- Pattern 3i is a variation on pattern 3h, using a "♭3-to-3" half-step movement.
- Pattern 3j is another Fats Domino-style pattern.
- Patterns 3k–3n are typical of boogie woogie styles. Pattern 3k is a one-measure phrase, with an ascending chromatic half-step movement between the 3rd and 5th of the chord. Pattern 3l is a classic two-measure boogie woogie phrase, outlining the dominant chord tones in octaves. Patterns 3m and 3n are variations on pattern 3l.

Again we'll apply some of these patterns to 12-bar blues chord progressions, beginning with the following 12-bar blues in G:

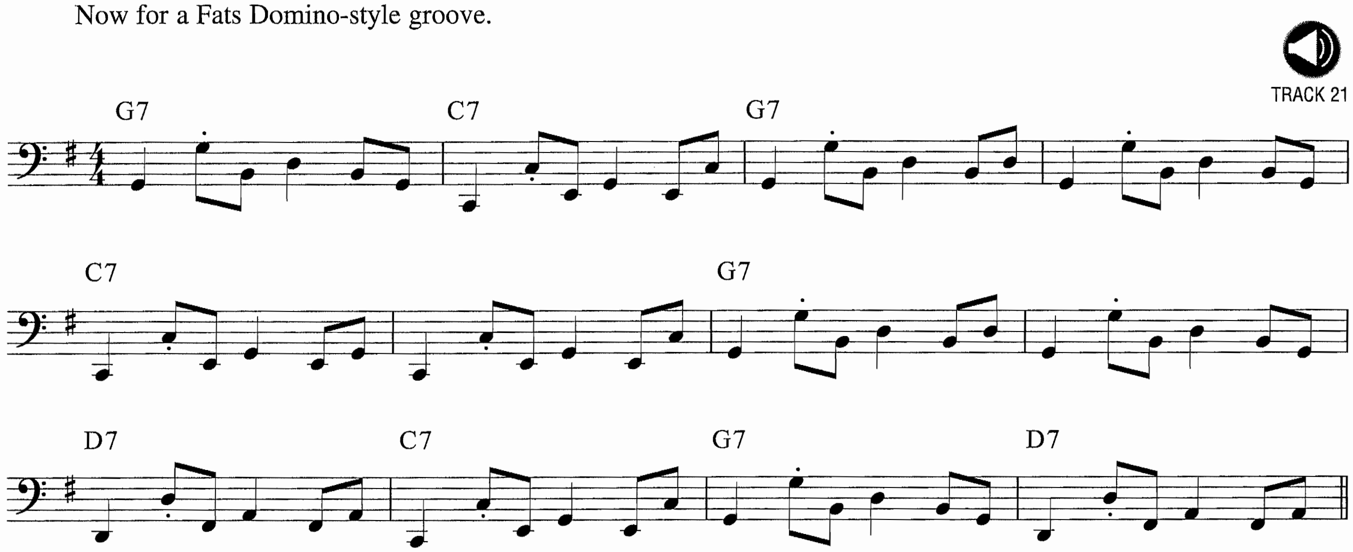
TRACK 19

You should work on becoming instinctively familiar with the octave intervals needed in this left-hand pattern, so that when the pinky lands on each downbeat, the thumb is correctly positioned to play the note an octave above. Note that this pattern is varied in measures 9 and 10 in order to connect back to the root of the G7 chord in measure 11, using descending scalewise movement.

This is a classic jump blues pattern that works great at faster tempos.



Now for a Fats Domino-style groove.



Notice that the root of the chord (rather than the 5th) is played on the last note of some measures, in order to better connect into the root of the next chord.

Left-hand patterns–group four
(using rhythmic anticipations)

The next group of left-hand patterns use **rhythmic anticipations**. This occurs when a note lands on an "upbeat" (or halfway through a beat) and then continues through the following downbeat. The most common beats to be "anticipated" in this way are beats 1 and 3 of the measure. Also note these patterns use a **straight eighths** (rather than swing eighths) rhythm. Anticipations and straight-eighths rhythms are common in New Orleans blues styles.

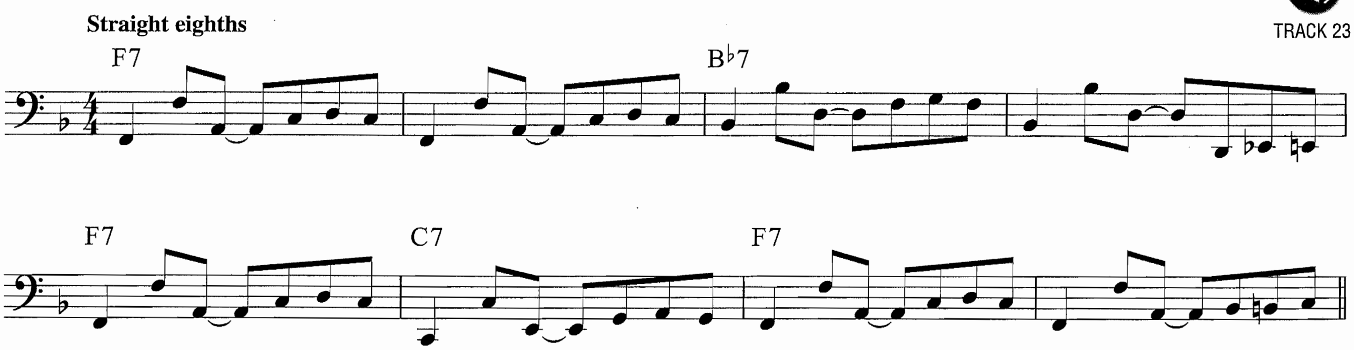
TRACK 22

These patterns can be further analyzed as follows:

- Pattern 4a is the classic New Orleans-style pattern, anticipating beat 3 with the 3rd of the chord.
- Pattern 4b is a busier variation of 4a, moving between the 5th and 6th of the chord at the end of the measure.
- Pattern 4c is a variation of 4b, without the root being played on beat 2 of the measure.
- Pattern 4d anticipates beat 4 by a sixteenth note (i.e., the note A is played a sixteenth note ahead of beat 4). Sixteenth-note anticipations are also found in New Orleans blues (as well as funk and R&B ballad styles).
- Pattern 4e is a two-measure phrase designed to lead from a I or tonic chord (F, in this case) to a V chord (C) and back again. Note the anticipations of beat 3 in the first measure, and beat 1 in the second measure.

We'll now apply one of these patterns to a blues progression in F. The following example uses an **8-bar blues** format (a variation on the traditional 12-bar sequence) often found in New Orleans blues styles:

TRACK 23



Note that the preceding pattern is varied in measures 4 and 8, using ascending half-step intervals at the end of the measure. Practice the straight-eighths rhythm until it is even and precise, paying particular attention to the anticipation of beat 3, which is a vital part of this groove.

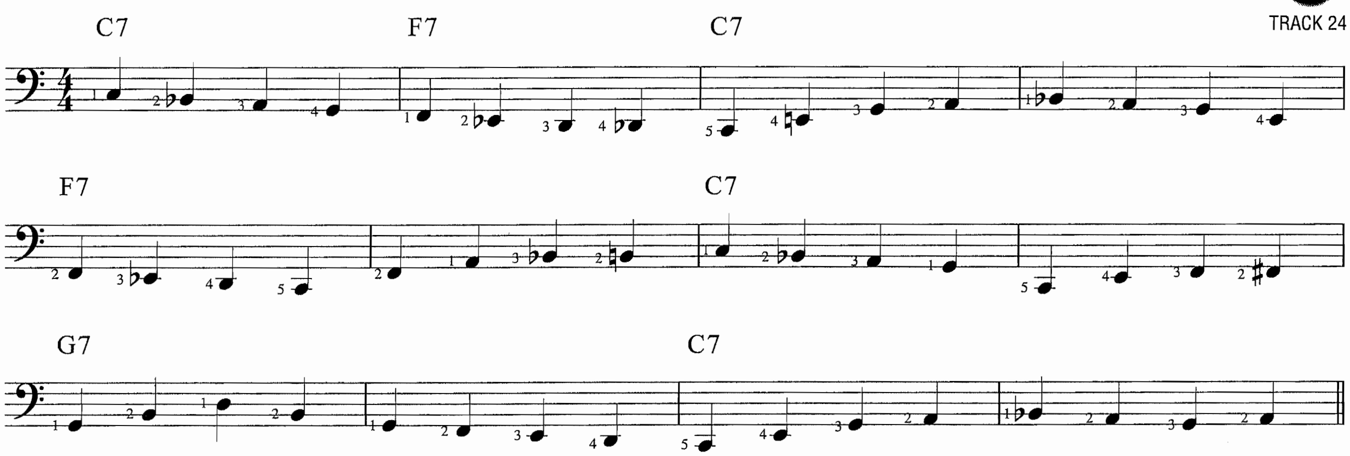
Walking bass lines

Now we will look at how to construct a "walking bass line." This is normally a series of quarter notes played by the left hand, outlining the chord progression and providing melodic movement and interest. There are many ways to construct a walking bass line over blues chord changes, but these general guidelines will help:

- The root of the chord is almost always played on beat 1 of each measure, except when a chord change is continuing into a second measure. In this case, other basic chord tones (i.e., 3rd, 5th, or 7th) can be used on beat 1 of the second measure.
- Once you know what register you want to play the root of the next chord in (i.e., how high or low) you can then design an ascending or descending line during the preceding measure, to lead into that root note. These lines often use **scalewise movement** (Mixolydian modes) or **chordal arpeggios** (triads or dominant seventh chords).
- Successive **ascending** or **descending half steps** are often used, for example connecting the 3rd to the 5th of a chord (3, 4, ♯4, 5) or the 7th to the 5th (♭7, 6, ♭6, 5).
- A half step interval is often used between beat 4 of a measure and the root of the next chord on beat 1 of the following measure. This kind of **half-step approach** is especially cómmon in jazz blues.

With these ideas in mind, here's our first walking bass line example:

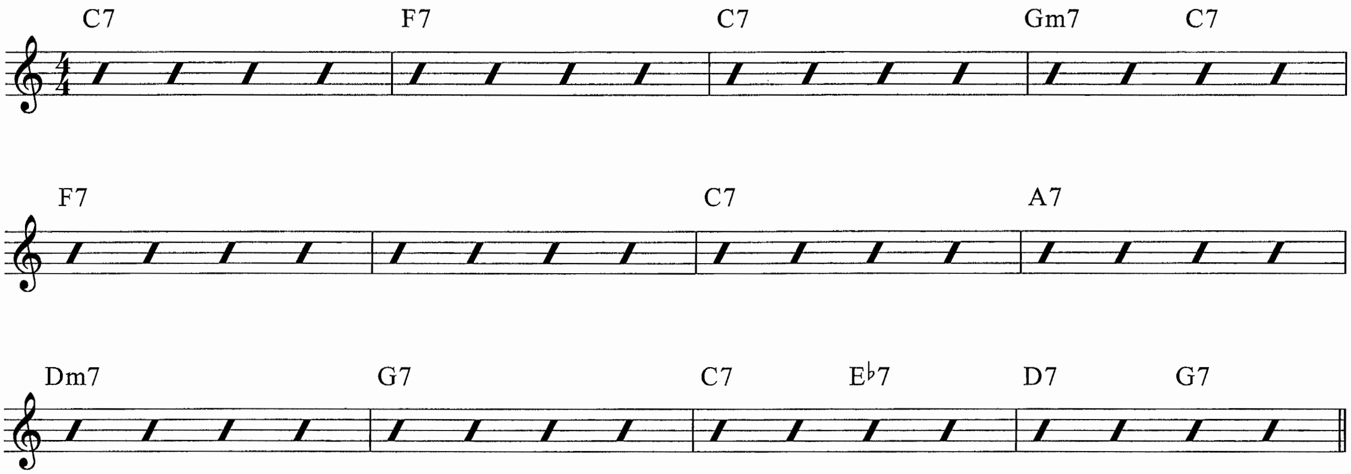
TRACK 24



Here's how we constructed the bass line above:

- From measure 1 to measure 2, we descend scalewise from C to F, using the C Mixolydian scale.
- In measure 2, we continue descending (now using F Mixolydian), and add a chromatic approach tone (D♭) on beat 4, which connects into the root of the following chord (C) by half step.
- In measures 3 and 4, we ascend and then descend using arpeggiated chord tones of the C7 chord.
- Measure 5 is similar to measure 2, with desending scale tones from F Mixolydian on the F7 chord.
- Measure 6 starts with the root of the F7 chord on beat 1, and then ascends by successive half steps from the 3rd, leading into the root of the following C7 chord.
- Measure 7 is the same as measure 1.
- Measure 8 starts with the root of the C7 chord on beat 1, and then ascends by successive half steps from the 3rd, leading into the root of the following G7 chord.
- Measure 9 ascends and then descends using an arpeggiated G major triad (1, 3, 5, 3 of the G7 chord).
- Measure 10 begins with the root of the G7 chord and then descends using the G Mixolydian scale.
- Measures 11 and 12 are the same as measures 3 and 4 (except that measure 12 ends on the note A).

The preceding example again used the "basic" C blues progression first seen in Chapter 3. However, more jazz-influenced blues styles will vary the basic blues progression with different substitute chords. Here is an example of such a "jazz blues" chord progression, with added chords and substitutions:

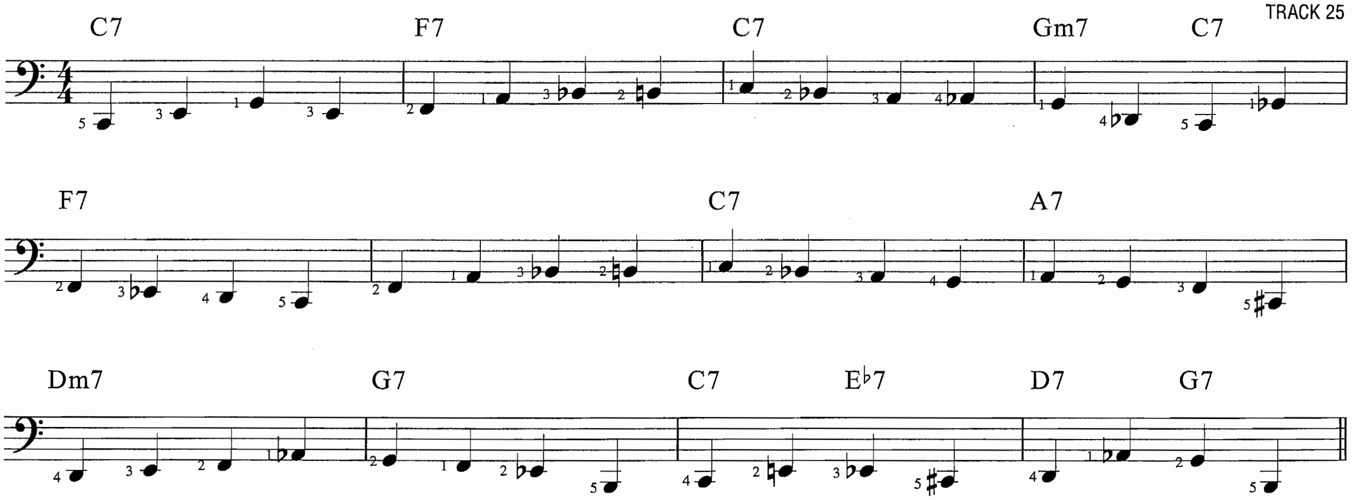


There are many such variations on the basic blues progression, and although it is beyond the scope of this book to explore them all, we can comment on the substitutions used in the above example, as follows:

- Measure 4 contains a "ii–V" progression in F (a minor seventh chord built from the second degree, and a dominant seventh chord built from the 5th degree), leading to the F7 chord in measure 5.
- Measure 8 uses a dominant seventh chord built from the 6th degree of the key (A7), leading to the "ii–V" progression in C in measures 9–10.
- Measures 11–12 present many "turnaround" possibilities to lead back to the tonic chord in the first measure. In this case, the E♭7 chord "approaches" the D7 chord by half step, and then the D7 and G7 chords lead back to the C7 chord in measure 1 using a strong "circle-of-5ths" root interval movement.

Now we'll create a walking bass pattern for the above progression, as follows:

TRACK 25



Note that we have again made use of the walking bass techniques outlined previously, now applied to the jazz blues progression with substitutions. Later in Chapter 4, we'll add right-hand voicings to these walking bass lines, to create some authentic jazz blues comping grooves.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the left hand in blues piano styles—it provides the essential rhythmic and harmonic foundation of the groove—so practice all of the left-hand patterns in this chapter until they are secure. Then we can add all of the fun stuff in the right hand!

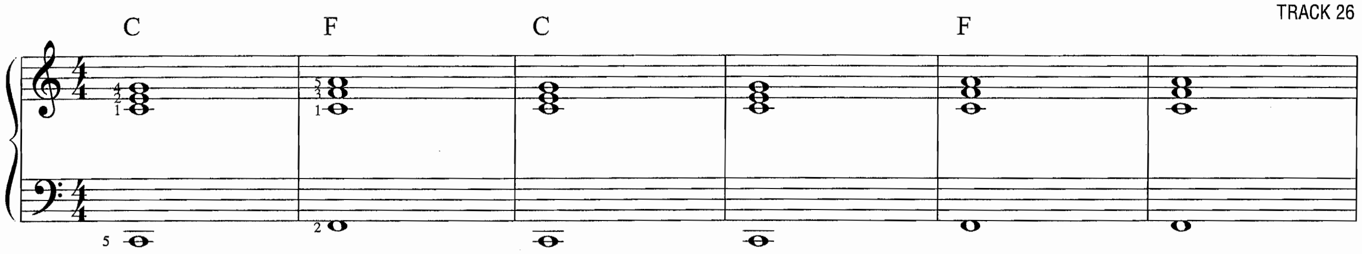
Chapter 4

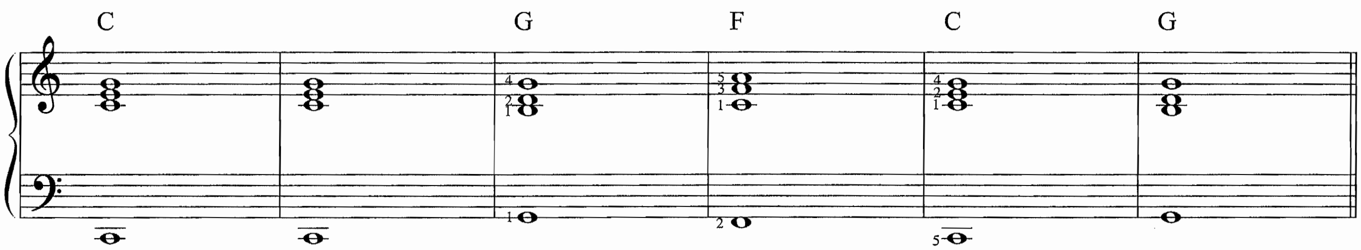
BLUES VOICINGS and COMPING

Triad voicings

As discussed in Chapter 2, a **voicing** is a specific choice of notes to interpret the chord(s) in question. The simplest voicing choice for the blues progression is to use major triads, built from the root of each chord, as in the following example:

TRACK 26





Note the following points about the above voicing example:

- The chord symbols shown are based on a C blues progression except that only triad instead of seventh chord symbols are shown (e.g., C instead of C7, F instead of F7, etc.) This reflects the fact that these basic triad voicings do not include the 7th of the chord. This type of triad voicing is often found in simpler (i.e., pop- and rock-blues) styles.
- The above voicings use inversions of triads in the right hand, to create smooth voice leading (i.e., avoiding unnecessary interval skips) from one chord to the next. This type of right-hand voice leading is important in most contemporary piano styles, including the blues.

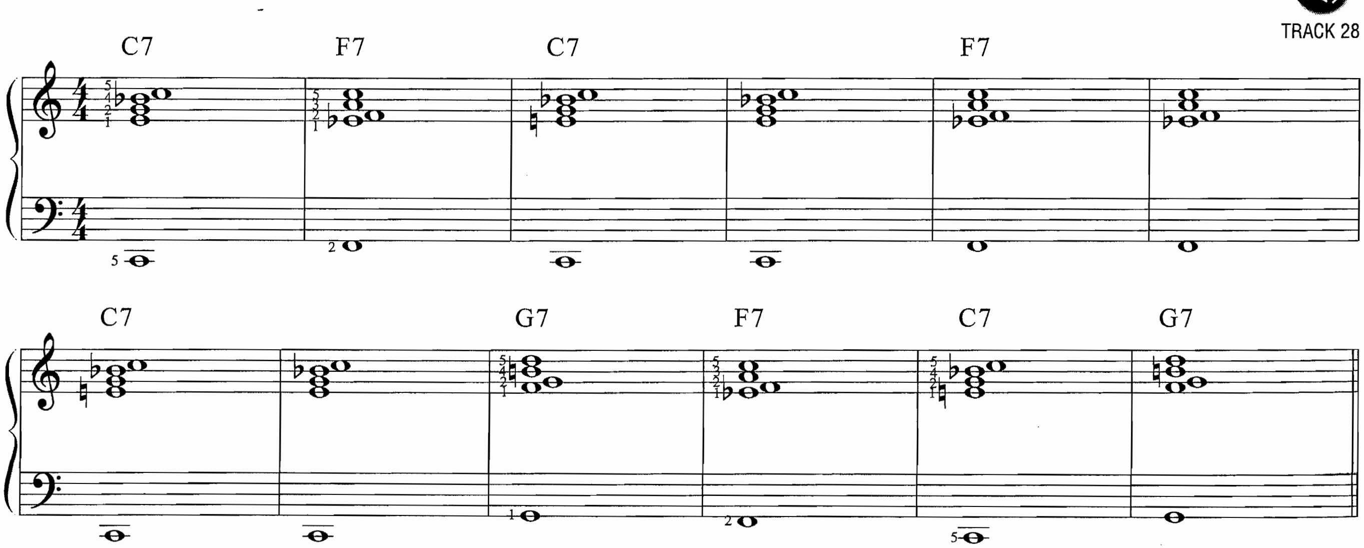
Once we have made a decision how to "voice" the chords in a blues progression, we can then apply rhythmic patterns in the left and right hands, to create an authentic comping (or accompaniment) pattern. We will first do this using left-hand pattern 1a together with the above triad voicings in the right hand, as shown on the following page:

Note that the right-hand triad part uses rhythmic anticipations within a two-measure phrase. In the first measure, the triad lands on beat 1 and then halfway through beat 2 (or the "and of 2"), anticipating beat 3. In the second measure, the triad lands on the "and of 1" anticipating beat 2, and then lands on beat 3. This type of right-hand rhythmic phrasing is very common in blues, pop, and rock styles.

Hopefully when practicing this example, your left hand will be getting more automatic (from your practice in Chapter 3!) so you can focus on getting these right-hand rhythms smooth and "in the pocket." You can also use the CD example for "hands separate" practice (to play just the right-hand part above, turn down the right channel so that you just hear the left-hand part and the click track on the CD).

Dominant seventh and ninth voicings

The next voicing choice on the blues progression is to include all four notes of the dominant seventh chord (i.e., root, 3rd, 5th, and 7th) in the right hand. Again we can invert the dominant seventh chords for voice leading purposes. These four-part chords create a denser sound compared to the triad voicings:

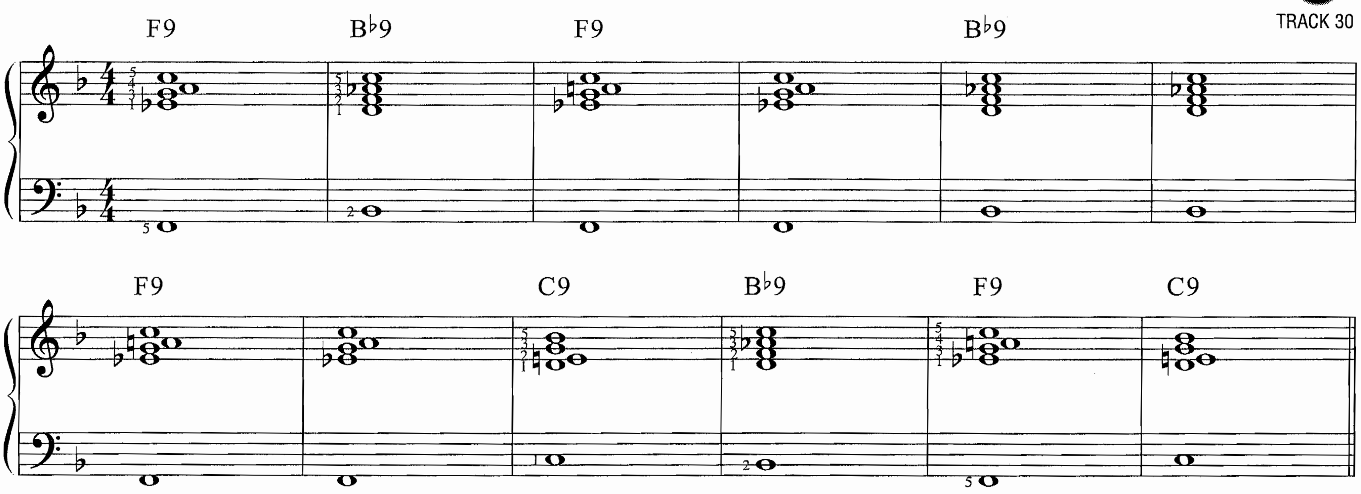


Now we will combine these voicings with the left-hand pattern 3g, to create the following groove:

TRACK 29

Another voicing approach we saw for the dominant chord back in Chapter 2 was to play the upper tones of a dominant ninth (i.e., the 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th) in the right hand, over the root in the left hand. These dominant ninth voicings sound a little more sophisticated than plain dominant seventh chords when applied to the blues progression, as shown in the following example in the key of F:

TRACK 30



As discussed previously, each of these "upper chords" is a minor 7♭5 chord in its own right, which is "built" from the 3rd of the overall dominant chord (for example, in the first measure we have an inverted Am7♭5 chord in the right hand, which is built from the 3rd of the overall F9 chord). The root of each dominant chord is then played in the left hand.

Now we'll combine these voicings with a typical Memphis Slim-style left-hand pattern. On this CD track, there's a Chicago blues rhythm section for you to play along with:

TRACK 31

Notice that the right-hand rhythm anticipates beat 3 in the odd-numbered measures, and beat 4 in the even-numbered measures, creating a two-measure rhythmic phrase. In the next example, we'll now use dominant chord voicings in the left hand, to support a melody drived from the blues scale in the right hand:

TRACK 32

Note that the left-hand chord rhythm in the previous example also creates a two-measure phrase, landing halfway through beat 1 (or the "and of 1") and then on beat 3, on all the even-numbered measures.

This is also our first look at a blues melody, and in this example the G blues scale is used throughout. Note that the same four-measure melodic phrase is repeated three times—this is a common structure in simpler blues styles.

"Backcycled" triad voicings

The next blues voicing technique to look at is "backcycled" triads. This name is given to triads that move from I to IV (a.k.a backwards on the circle of 5ths). For example, if we are comping on an F or F7 chord, we can move from an F triad to a B♭ triad (a I-to-IV movement) and then return to the F triad. Being able to do this spontaneously from any major triad inversion is a great asset in many piano styles, including the blues. In the following example, we "backcycle" from each of the I, IV, and V triads in the key of F:

TRACK 33

Notice that we are also voice leading these triads (i.e., choosing inversions to connect smoothly between chords). Now we will combine these voicings with the left-hand pattern 3c to create the following groove on a 12-bar blues in F:

TRACK 34

Note that the right-hand rhythm anticipates beat 3 of each measure. This is a great comping pattern for basic blues, blues/rock, and "shuffle" styles. Strive to make the movement between the right-hand triads as smooth as you can!

Mixolydian third intervals and patterns

The next device we will explore is the use of third intervals within Mixolydian modes, a technique employed by contemporary blues mainstay Jan Garfinkle as well as a great many of his predecessors. First of all, let's look at the C Mixolydian mode, together with the third intervals available within the mode:

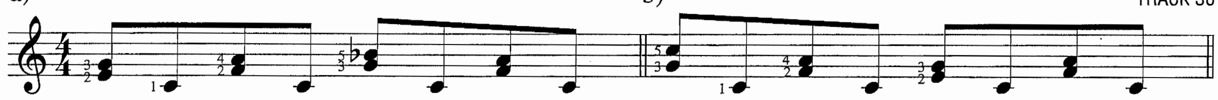
TRACK 35

C Mixolydian (in thirds)

We can use the third intervals above to create comping patterns that will work on a C7 dominant chord, as follows:

TRACK 36

a) b)

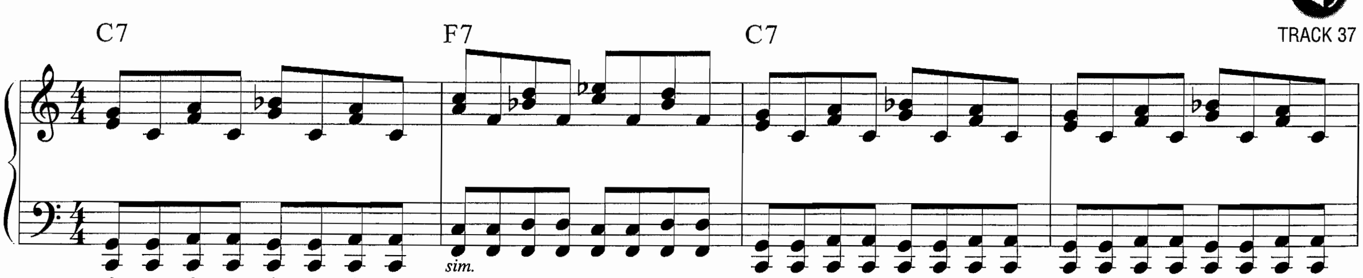


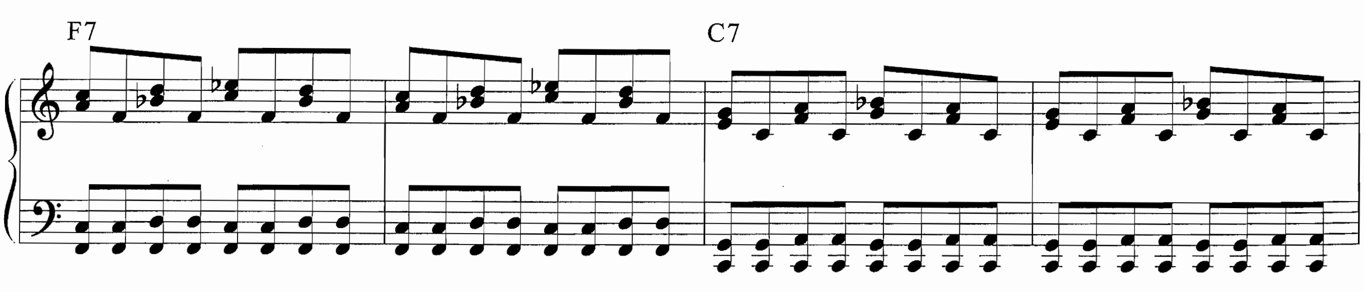
c)

Patterns A and B are one-measure phrases that play the root (C) of the implied C7 on on all the "upbeats." Pattern A uses the third intervals with the top notes of the 5th, 6th, and 7th of the chord—these are the most commonly used "Mixolydian third" intervals in the blues. Pattern B is a variation that begins with the root and 5th of the chord on beat 1 (creating a fourth interval). Pattern C is a two-measure phrase that uses the note C as a "drone" or repeated note, above the moving thirds underneath.

Now we'll use some of these patterns on 12-bar blues comping grooves, beginning with this blues in C.

TRACK 37





This is a very useful basic comping pattern that will work in many blues contexts, and I recommend that you learn it in as many keys as possible! Now we'll look at another comping example:

TRACK 38

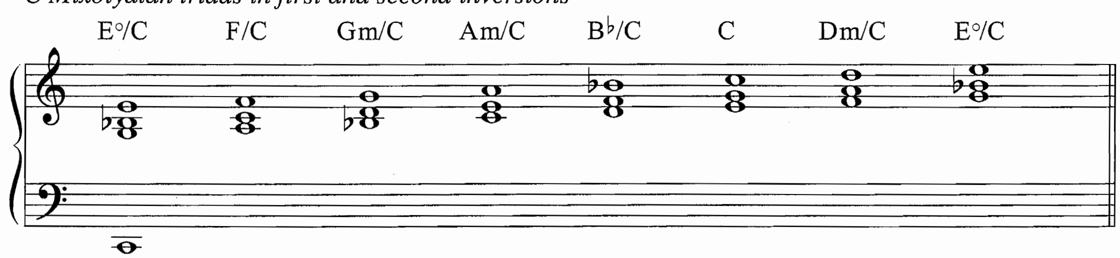
As this groove uses the two-measure "Mixolydian third" pattern, it works best on simpler blues progressions that stay on the I chord in measures 1–2 and 11–12 and on the V chord in measures 9–10.

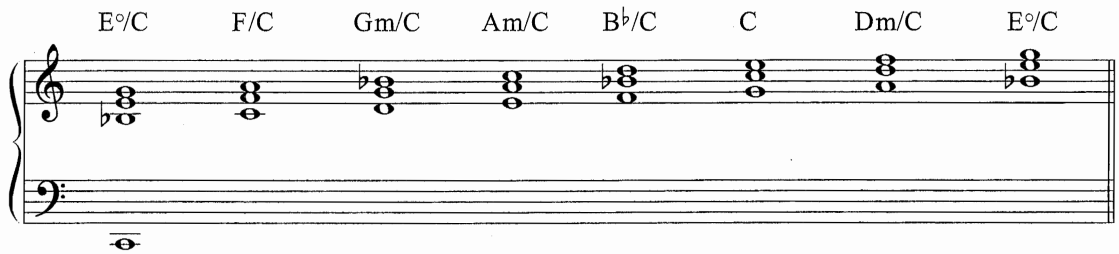
Mixolydian triad patterns

We saw in Chapter 2 that we can derive triads from within a Mixolydian mode. Now we will use them as comping embellishments on dominant chords. These triads are typically used in first and/or second inversions, as follows:

TRACK 39

C Mixolydian triads in first and second inversions





Note that the preceding triads are all diatonic to F major, as C Mixolydian is a displaced version of the F major scale. The first triad shown in both 1st and 2nd inversion (E°/C), together with the root note of C, creates a C7 chord, as the notes in the E diminished triad (E, G, and B♭) are the 3rd, 5th, and 7th of the chord respectively. As E° (over the root of C) therefore sounds most "inside" the overall C7 chord, we will often start and/or end a "Mixolydian triad" right-hand phrase with this upper diminished triad. The other triads shown above contain various combinations of basic chord tones and upper extensions or passing tones of the overall dominant chord. Now we'll use these upper triads in some comping patterns, as follows:

This example is based entirely on second inversion Mixolydian triads, applied to a 12-bar blues in C. In the first measure, note that the upper triads used are E diminished, F major, and G minor. These triads (i.e., with the 5th, 6th, and 7th respectively of the overall C7 chord on top) are probably the most commonly used second inversion Mixolydian triads. We then do the same thing on the F7 and G7 chords, using upper triads from the F Mixolydian and G Mixolydian modes respectively. Again this is another very useful example to have "under your fingers" in different keys.

The next example now uses first inversion Mixolydian triads for the comping pattern. On the CD track, there's a blues/rock rhythm section for you to play along with. This example is recorded in a straight-eighths rhythmic style, which is common in contemporary blues/rock.

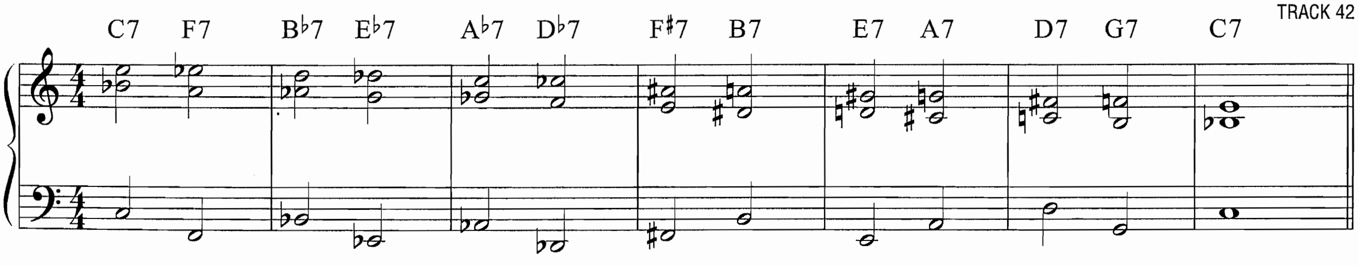
TRACK 41

"Seven-three" voicings

We will now turn our attention to the "seven-three" (or "7-3") chord voicing technique. This uses the 7th and 3rd of the chord, as either a right-hand voicing, or in the left hand to support a melodic idea in the right hand. The "7-3" voicing is actually a cornerstone of jazz piano technique, but it also works very well on the blues, particularly the more jazz-oriented blues styles. We will also develop the "7-3 extended" voicing, where we add a chord extension or alteration to the basic 7-3, resulting in a three-note voicing, again for left or right hands.

First we will look at a series of simple 7-3 voicings on dominant seventh chords, starting with a C7 chord and then moving in a circle-of-5ths sequence (a series of V-to-I relationships, e.g., C to F, F to B♭, etc.):

TRACK 42



Note the close voice leading used in this example, as the notes in the right hand move by half step from one chord to the next. This can also be practiced with the two right-hand lines inverted, i.e., the 7th could be placed on top of the 3rd on the first C7 chord, which would then voice lead to the 3rd on top of the 7th on the next F7 chord, and so on.

We will now combine this “7-3 extended (stage 1)” voicing technique, with the same walking bass line as follows:

TRACK 45

Note that the right hand is again creating a two-measure rhythmic phrase, now with the added 13ths and 9ths on the dominant chords.

Next we will add an altered tone (either a sharped 9th or sharped 5th) to the basic 7-3 voicing, to create what we call “7-3 extended (stage 2)” voicings. This creates a more sophisticated and “jazzier” harmony, in the following sequence of dominant chords around the circle of 5ths:

TRACK 46

The “sharped 5th” shown on the dominant chords in the above example can also be referred to as a “flatted 13th.” Note that when the 7th of the chord is placed above the 3rd (e.g., on the C7 chord, the B♭ is now above the E), then the ♯9th of the chord (E♭ or D♯ in this case) can be placed on top, and when the 3rd of the chord is placed above the 7th (e.g., on the F7 chord, the A is now above the E♭), then the ♯5th of the chord (C♯ or D♭ in this case) can be placed on top. As with the previous exercises, this exercise can be practiced with the 7-3 lines inverted.

Back in Chapter 3, we created a “jazz blues” progression in C that contained various “ii–V” and substitute chord variations on the basic blues progression, and then we created a walking bass line for this jazz blues progression. Now we will add some “7-3 extended (stage 2)” voicings in the right hand, to create the following jazz blues comping groove:

Blues endings and turnarounds

Finally in this chapter, we will focus on some two-measure phrases used for endings and turnarounds in blues tunes. As mentioned in our discussion of basic blues progressions, measures 11 and 12 of the form present many variation possibilities, and it is here that these ending and turnaround phrases are most typically used. **Endings** will normally lead into a I or tonic chord, and **turnarounds** will normally lead into a V chord, in preparation for going back to the top of the form and continuning with the I chord.

Our first two-measure "ending and turnaround" idea uses a descending bass line to connect between the I (on beat 1 of the first measure) to the V (on beat 1 of the second measure):

ENDING AND TURNAROUND #1

Stage 1 (bass line)

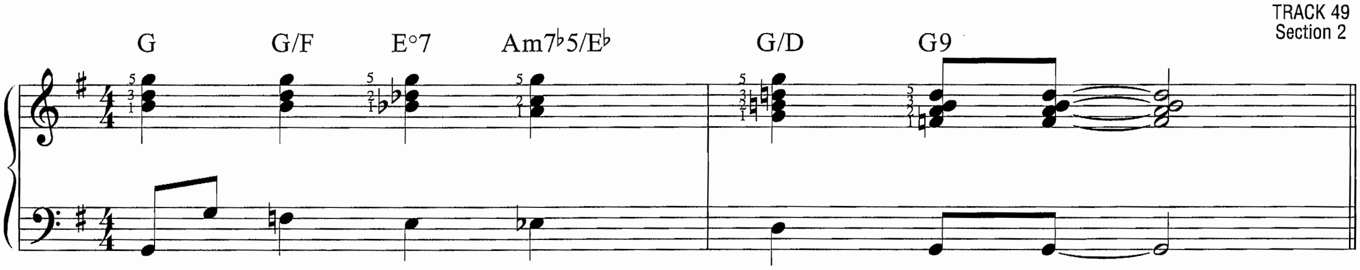
TRACK 49
Section 1

Notice that this bass line ends on the I or tonic (G in this case), which anticipates beat 3 in the second measure. This would work fine for an ending, i.e., measures 11 and 12 on the last time through the blues form. (Shortly we will see a version of this phrase that ends on the V, which could then be a turnaround leading back to the beginning of the blues form.)

Now we will place some chords in the right hand over the above bass line in the left hand, to create an authentic Fats Domino-style blues ending phrase:

Stage 2 (add right-hand chords)

TRACK 49
Section 2



This classic blues sequence (which is very useful, and worth learning in as many keys as possible) is made up of the following elements:

Measure 1,	beat 1	I or tonic chord (G in this case)
	beat 2	I chord, inverted over the ♭7 or flatted seventh (G/F)
	beat 3	VI diminished seventh chord (E°7)
	beat 4	The II minor 7♭5 (or half-diminished 7th) chord, inverted over the ♭VI or flatted 6th (Ami7♭5/E♭).
Measure 2,	beat 1	I chord, inverted over the V (G/D).
	beat 2	I dominant 9th chord (G9).

Stage 3 (add right-hand triplets)

Now we'll add some rhythmic styling to these voicings, using eighth-note triplets in the right hand:

TRACK 49
Section 3

Stage 4 (add half-step approach chord)

Depending on what type of ending or turnaround we want, the chords during beat 2 in the second measure can be varied. For example, if we wanted an ending with a chromatic half-step "approach" into the last chord:

TRACK 49
Section 4

This type of "dominant approach" chord movement (i.e., moving down by half step from the A♭9 to the G9) is a common jazz and blues technique.

Stage 5 (end on V chord)

So far, all of the stages 1–4 have resulted in endings, as we have ended on the I or tonic chord rather than the V chord. Now we will end on the V chord (creating a turnaround), as follows:

TRACK 49
Section 5

Notice that we have again used a dominant approach chord in the second measure, this time an E♭9 approaching the D9 by half step. This now works as a turnaround, and we can go back to the top of the blues form (most probably either a G, G7, or G9 chord).

ENDING AND TURNAROUND #2

Stage 1 (bass line)

All of the preceding examples have used a descending bass line. Now we will look at some examples using an ascending bass line, as follows:

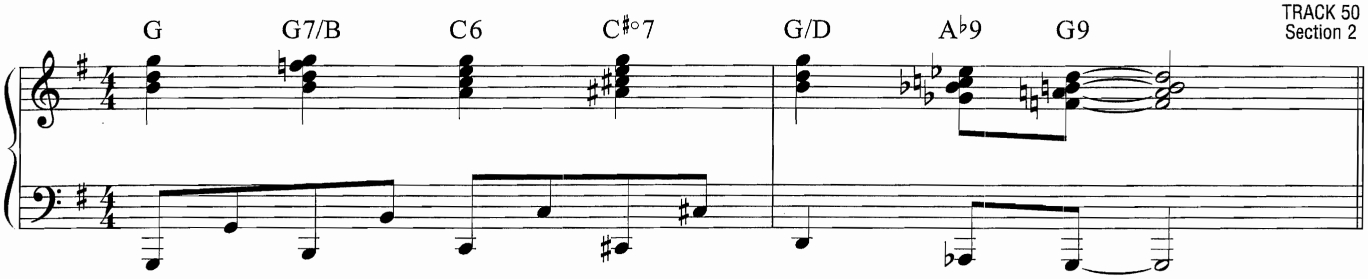
TRACK 50
Section 1

This is a boogie woogie type bass line, similar to pattern 31 in Chapter 3, except that the part uses the I–III–IV–♯IV–V scale degrees, with respect to the tonic or key.

Stage 2 (add right-hand chords)

Now we will place some chords in the right hand over the above bass line in the left hand, to create an authentic Big Maceo Merriweather-style boogie woogie ending phrase:

TRACK 50
Section 2



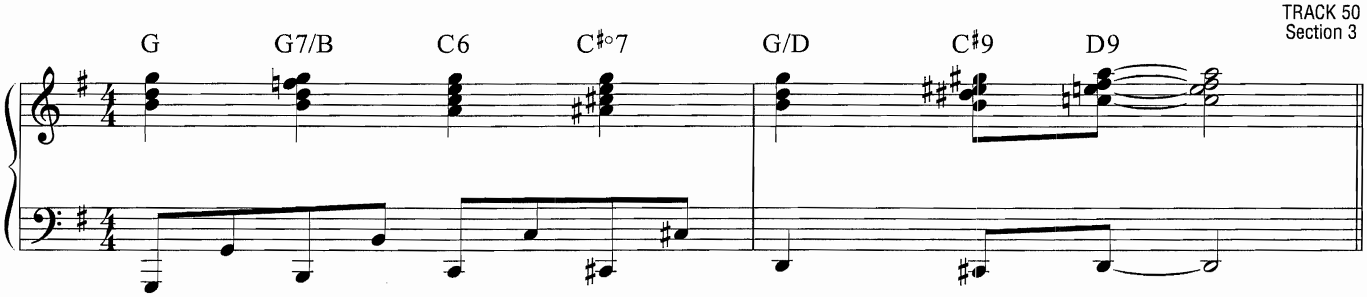
This is another classic blues "ending and turnaround" sequence (again worth learning in as many keys as possible), and is made up of the following elements:

Measure 1,	beat 1	I or tonic chord (G in this case)
	beat 2	I7 chord, inverted over the III (G7/B)
	beat 3	IV major sixth chord (C6)
	beat 4	♯IV diminished seventh chord (C♯°7)
Measure 2,	beat 1	I chord, inverted over the V (G/D)
	beat 2	♭II dominant 9th chord (A♭9), if a dominant approach chord is being used
	"and" of beat 2	I9 chord (G9)

Stage 3 (end on V chord)

Note the preceding phrase again ends with a dominant approach chord movement (the A♭9 moving down by half step to the G9). As before, we can change this phrase from an ending to a turnaround by ending on a V chord instead of a I chord, as in the following example:

TRACK 50
Section 3



This time the dominant approach into the final V chord is by ascending half step (i.e., the C♯9 moving up to the D9). This "half-step up" movement, although a staple of gospel styles, is not as common in the blues as the "half-step down" dominant approach we saw earlier.

Now that we have a blues voicing and comping foundation, in Chapter 5 we'll dig into all those classic right-hand techniques for fills, solos, etc. that will really bring your blues piano to life!

Chapter 5
RIGHT-HAND TECHNIQUES and SOLOING

Grace-note phrases

Grace or "crushed" notes (i.e., notes of very short duration) are an authentic and vital element in blues piano styles. Grace notes are normally either one or two ascending half steps into a "target" note on a chord (normally the 3rd, 5th, or 7th), or from a blues or pentatonic scale. We will now apply grace notes to some comping techniques from Chapter 4, starting with the "Mixolydian third" interval patterns:

TRACK 51

Notice how this right away makes the pattern sound "bluesier"? In both a) and b) above, we are adding grace notes into the 3rd and 5th of the implied C7 chord. Here I would suggest using the 2nd finger of the right hand on all of the grace notes, then either "sliding it off" the black key to play the 3rd (E), or using the 3rd finger to play the 5th (G). Next we have a new version of a 12-bar blues in C, this time with grace notes in the comping pattern:

TRACK 52

Now we'll combine grace notes with sixth intervals and "backcycling" to create a right-hand pattern that is useful in New Orleans blues styles through to contemporary blues/rock. Sixth intervals are inversions of third intervals, and can be created by taking either first or second inversion triads and removing the middle note. We saw how to use backcycled triad movements in Chapter 4. We can combine all these ideas to create a two-measure phrase that works over a C7 chord, as follows:

TRACK 53

In the above pattern, the grace note E♭ is leading into the 3rd of the chord (E) by half step. The E-C sixth interval can be thought of as the "outer tones" of a first inversion C triad, and occur on beat 1 and halfway through beat 4 (the "and of 4") in the first measure, anticipating beat 1 of the second measure. During beat 2 of each measure, we also have a backcycled triad movement, moving to an F triad and then back to a C triad.

Now we will apply all of this to an 8-bar blues progression in F (the CD track has a New Orleans-style blues rhythm section for you to play along with). As we have already seen, New Orleans blues often uses anticipations of beat 3, which makes this pattern suitable for the style.

TRACK 54

Straight eighths

Parallel thirds and sixths

This term is used to describe third or sixth intervals moving in ascending or descending half steps. Often these phrases will start at a point "outside" the chord or scale and then resolve into the chord, as in the following two-measure third interval example which works over a G or G7 chord:

TRACK 55

This type of phrase is associated with the great boogie woogie and blues pianist Jimmy Yancey, and can be used in many different comping and soloing contexts. Notice that the third interval of A♯ and C♯ occurs halfway through beat 2 in each measure, and then resolves to the third interval of B and D on beat 3. With respect to the implied G or G7 chord, this is a "♭3–3" and "♭5–5" movement. Notice the third interval of B and D also anticipates beat 1 of the 2nd measure, creating a two-measure phrase in total.

We can also use sixth intervals in a similar "parallel" manner, and again this is often used to resolve into chord or "target" tones. This type of phrase is associated with the Chicago blues pianists Lafayette Leake and Big Maceo Merriweather:

TRACK 56

This time the sixth interval of C♯ and A♯ occurs on beats 1 and 3 of the first measure, and resolves to the sixth interval of D and B on the following eighth-note triplet. In the second measure, the sixth intervals move through two descending half steps, before resolving into the chord tones of the implied G or G7 chord. The use of sixth intervals repeatedly within eighth-note triplets is also found in rock 'n' roll piano styles.

Now we will integrate these "parallel" third and sixth interval techniques to create a right-hand solo over a 12-bar blues progression in G, with a boogie woogie style left-hand pattern:

TRACK 57

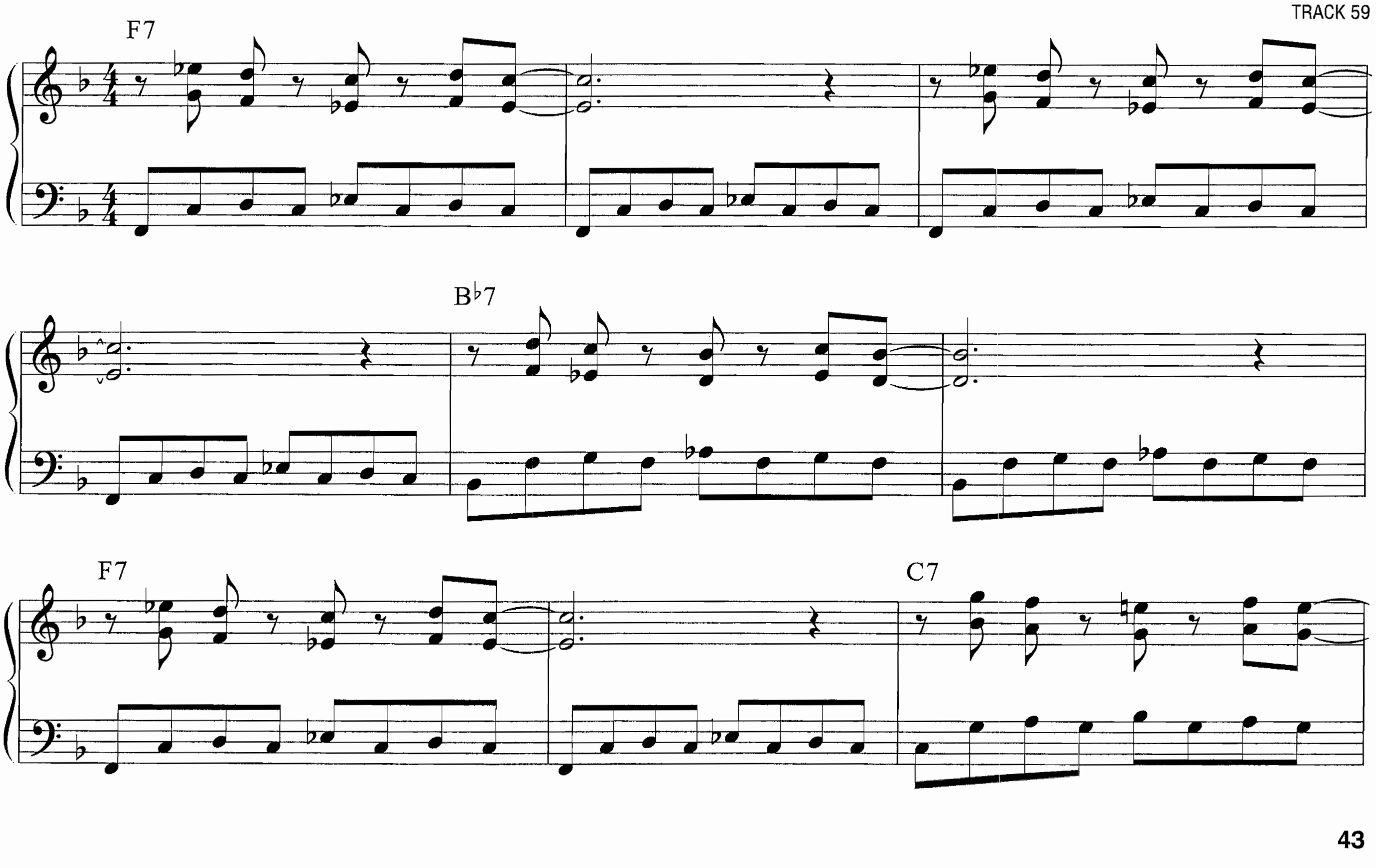
Mixolydian sixths

We can also use sixth intervals "modally" (i.e., within a Mixolydian mode restriction) as well as moving them in parallel half steps. This creates a very melodic sound and is great for solos or fills. Here's a two-measure phrase using sixth intervals within an F Mixolydian mode:

TRACK 58

Relating this to the implied harmony of an F7 chord, notice that the phrase ends on the sixth interval of E♭ and C, which are the 7th and 5th of an F7 chord, respectively. This type of leading into target tones on the chord is used to good effect on the following 12-bar blues in F:

TRACK 59



In this example, the sixth intervals used on the F7, B♭7, and C7 chords are from the F, B♭, and C Mixolydian modes, respectively. Note that the sixth interval phrase resolves into the 7th and 5th of the F7 chord (in measures 2, 4, 8, and 12), into the 3rd and root of the B♭7 chord (in measure 6), and into the 5th and 3rd of the C7 chord (in measure 10). Adjusting the phrases in this way, rather than just transposing the phrase when the chord changes, gives a smoother and more musical result.

Drone notes within blues scales

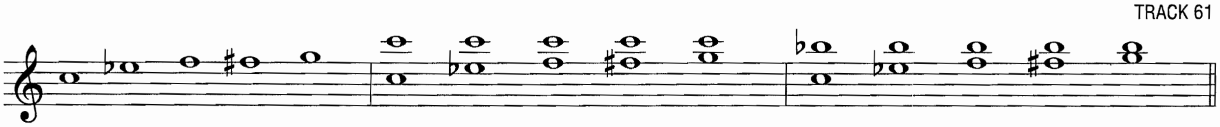
A "drone" note is a repeated or held note above a moving line or phrase. The blues scale contains some very useful drone possibilites that sound great for solos and fills. We start with the following example, which uses drone notes of C (the tonic) and B♭ (the 7th) within a C blues scale:

TRACK 60

This type of phrase is used in many eras of the blues—from Otis Spann's legendary contributions to the Muddy Waters band, to rock 'n' rollers like Jerry Lee Lewis, right through to modern day blues/boogie/rock pianists like Jools Holland. It's a classic part of the blues piano vocabulary! Notice that in the first measure, the C (tonic) is the "drone" or repeated note, over the movement of ♭5–5 (i.e., F♯ to G) underneath. In the second measure, the B♭ (7th) is now the drone, again over the F♯ to G movement.

Although the ♭5–5 movement works particularly well under these drone notes, any of the other notes in the C blues scale can also be used under the tonic or 7th as a drone, as follows:

TRACK 61



Note that in the first measure above, the notes of the C blues scale (except for the 7th) are shown. These notes are then combined with C (the tonic) as the drone in the second measure, and B♭ (the 7th) as the drone in the third measure.

We'll now put these combinations to work, in the following blues piano solo example (on the CD track, there's a blues/rock "shuffle" rhythm section for you to play along with):

We can analyze the right-hand solo devices used in the preceding example, as follows:

Measures 1, 5 & 9	Tonic (C) as drone, above ♭5–5
Measures 3, 7 & 11	7th (B♭) as drone, above ♭5–5
Measures 2, 6 & 10	Tonic (C) as drone, above other C blues scale notes
Measures 4, 8 & 12	7th (B♭) as drone, above other C blues scale notes

These C blues scale phrases work over the complete C blues progression (i.e., over the C7, F7, and G7 chords). The tensions produced by the blues scale notes against these chords are very characteristic of the blues. Note that we are also using the grace note of F in all of the even-numbered measures, which then leads into the ♭5 (G♭) before moving back to F—again, a very useful blues sound, especially when used together with the drone notes (i.e., C or B♭) above.

Back in Chapter 2, we saw that the A blues scale could also be used as a source for a melody or solo over a C7 chord. In a similar manner to the drone note combinations shown for the C blues scale, now we'll look at the drone note combinations available within the A blues scale:

TRACK 63

Note that the drone notes are now A (in the second measure above) and G (in the third measure). The A blues scale is built from the relative minor of C, and can also be used as a scale source over the whole C blues progression, as shown in the following example:

TRACK 64

To summarize: we can make use of phrases from both the C blues and A blues scales (with drone notes) when building solos over a C blues progression. We'll shortly see how to combine these scales when soloing.

Drone notes with half-step connecting lines

We can also use drones (again, normally the root or 7th of the dominant chord) above lines that connect the ♭3rd to the 5th of the chord, by ascending half steps. The following phrase works over a C7 chord:

TRACK 65

Beneath the drone note in both measures, we have the chromatically ascending line E♭–E–F–F♯–G (the ♭3–3–4–♯4–5 of the implied C7 chord). Technically these notes are available within the combination of the C blues and A blues scales. The phrase ends with the grace note E♭ (the ♭3rd) leading to E (the 3rd).

Unlike the previous "blues-scale-with-drone" phrases that work over the complete blues progression, this type of phrase generally needs to be transposed to fit the chord changes, as the ascending half-step line specifically leads into the 3rd and 5th of the chord. The next example now applies this concept to a solo over the C blues progression, transposing as needed to fit the chord changes of F7 and G7:

TRACK 66

Note that the basic two-measure phrase used is a rhythmically displaced version of the previous figure. The second part of each phrase starts on the middle eighth-note triplet in beat 4, rather than waiting for beat 1 of the next measure. As well as adding rhythmic variation, this phrasing sometimes anticipates the chord change (i.e., into measures 2 and 10), creating some harmonic interest and tension. The descending line during beat 4 of measures 2, 6, and 10 is derived from the C blues scale. On the chord changes lasting for two measures, the right-hand drone note shifts from the root to the 7th in the second measure of the phrase.

Combining blues scales when soloing

We have already used the blues scale from the tonic (e.g., the C blues scale over a C blues progression) and from the relative minor (e.g., the A blues scale over a C blues progression) to create solo ideas. Combining these blues scale possibilities together is a very useful technique that we'll now explore. Rather than just mixing all of the notes in the C blues and A blues scales together, it will sound more musical if we *alternate* between phrases (i.e., from C blues and A blues, respectively). This is a technique that many blues guitar greats (notably Stevie Ray Vaughan) have used, and it also works great on piano, as in the following example, a right-hand solo over a 12-bar blues in C:

We can also apply drone notes above these blues scale phrases, as in the following example:

TRACK 68

Note that in the first two measures of each line, we use the drones C and B♭ over the C blues scale phrases, and the drones A and G over the A blues scale phrases. Then on the last phrase of each line, we continue with the drone note of G over the C blues scale—the 5th of the scale can also be used as a drone in this way, which continues the "top note" from the previous phrase.

Octave runs using blues scales

Another great source of solo or fill ideas is to use octave runs in the right hand. These runs typically use blues or pentatonic scales, or Mixolydian modes. (This technique is also frequently used in gospel piano styles.) The next example uses a different combination of C blues and A blues scale phrases over a C blues progression, this time using octaves in the right hand (see following page):

TRACK 69

You should physically learn and memorize the octave intervals needed to play this example in the right hand, so that the thumb and pinky always lands the correct distance apart. This technique is great for building up the energy in your blues piano arrangements!

Note that in the above example, the right-hand part for the first four measures was derived from the C blues scale, and this idea was then partly transposed and modified to create the A blues scale phrase in the second four measures. A mixture of C blues and A blues scale phrases was then used for the last four-measure phrase.

The last few examples have focused on the C blues progression, using the C blues and A blues scales—you should, of course, work on these techniques in as many keys as possible!

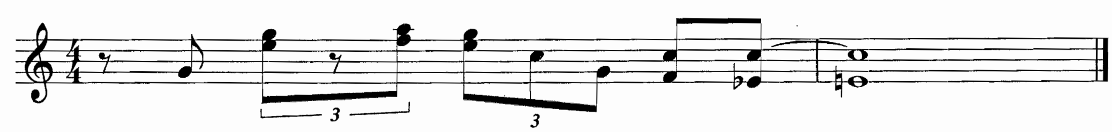
Crossover or "resolving" blues licks

An indispensable part of the blues vocabulary, is the crossover or "resolving" right-hand lick (or what Dr. John has referred to as "the famous lick"). I like the term "crossover," as these descending phrases require the upper fingers of the right hand to "cross over" the thumb on their way to the lower notes in the phrase. The term "resolving" refers to the fact that these licks normally end with a half-step resolution into the 3rd of the chord. All of the following examples work over a C or C7 chord; you should, of course, learn these phrases in as many keys as possible.

Crossover lick #1

Here is our first crossover lick example:

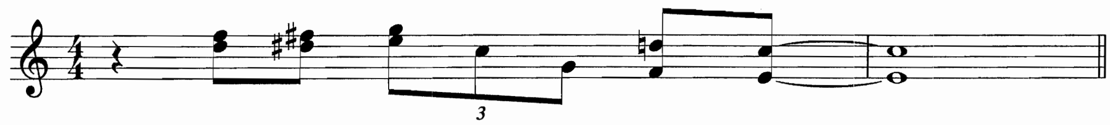
TRACK 70
Section 1



This is a simple, classic crossover that could be found in Chicago or New Orleans blues, as well as jazz and rock 'n' roll styles. The central feature of the lick is the descending C major triad arpeggio during beat 3. This requires the 4th and 5th (or 3rd and 5th) fingers on the 3rd interval E and G, followed by the 2nd finger on C, and then the thumb on G. Then on beat 4, the 2nd finger crosses over the thumb to play the F, with the 5th finger playing the C above. Finally, the thumb plays the E♭ on the "and of 4," which then resolves into E (the 3rd of the implied C or C7 chord) in the second measure, played with either the thumb or 2nd finger.

Crossover lick #2

Now for a variation on this phrase in the style of Memphis Slim, adding "chromatic third" intervals:



TRACK 70
Section 2

Note the descending C triad figure is again used, and the fingerings are similar.

Crossover lick #3

We can also add on some "Mixolydian third" intervals (with grace notes) to the basic crossover, to create the following lick in the style of Big Joe Turner:

TRACK 70
Section 3

This phrase now uses the descending C triad figure during beat 4 of the first measure. At the beginning of the second measure, I would suggest using the 2nd and 4th fingers on the third interval F and A, and then using the 2nd finger to "slide" from the E♭ to the E (below the 3rd finger playing the G). This then leaves the thumb free to play the C on beat 2. This fingering can then be repeated for the remainder of the measure.

Crossover lick #4

Now for a New Orleans-style variation:

TRACK 70
Section 4

This phrase adds a few twists to the basic crossover. Now we have a ♭3–3 movement on the implied C or C7 chord, followed by the descending C triad arpeggio using a sixteenth-note triplet, all during beat 1. The "resolving" part of the lick then occurs from beat 2 to beat 3, using the notes F and E♭ which are a half step either side of the eventual target note of E (again the 3rd of the chord).

Crossover lick #5

Now a rhythmic variation on the above, with octaves:

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Section 5

Here the repetition of the flatted 3rd (E♭) inside the octaves, before moving to the 3rd (E) on the sixteenth-note triplet, is particularly effective. I would suggest using the 2nd finger on the C at the beginning, followed by the thumb, 3rd, and 5th fingers (on the G, E♭, and G), the thumb, 4th, and 5th fingers (on the A, F, and A), and then back to the thumb, 3rd, and 5th fingers (on the G, E♭, and G). The descending C triad arpeggio can then be played with the 4th and 2nd fingers, followed by the thumb.

Crossover lick #6

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Section 6

This is a variation on the above phrase, with the ♭3rd grace note (E♭) moving to the 3rd (E) on beat 2 of the first measure, and without the octaves on beats 2 and 3.

Crossover lick #7

Now for a crossover lick that connects a IV chord back to a I chord (e.g., F7 to C7 on a C blues) in the style of Memphis Slim, as follows:

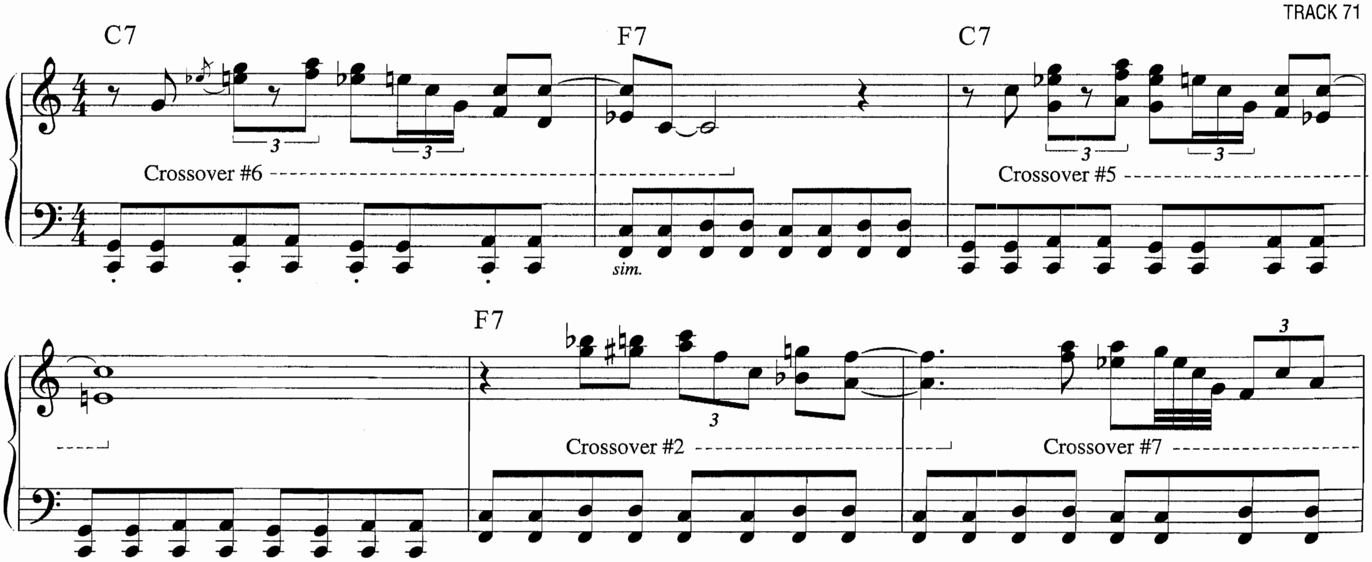
TRACK 70
Section 7

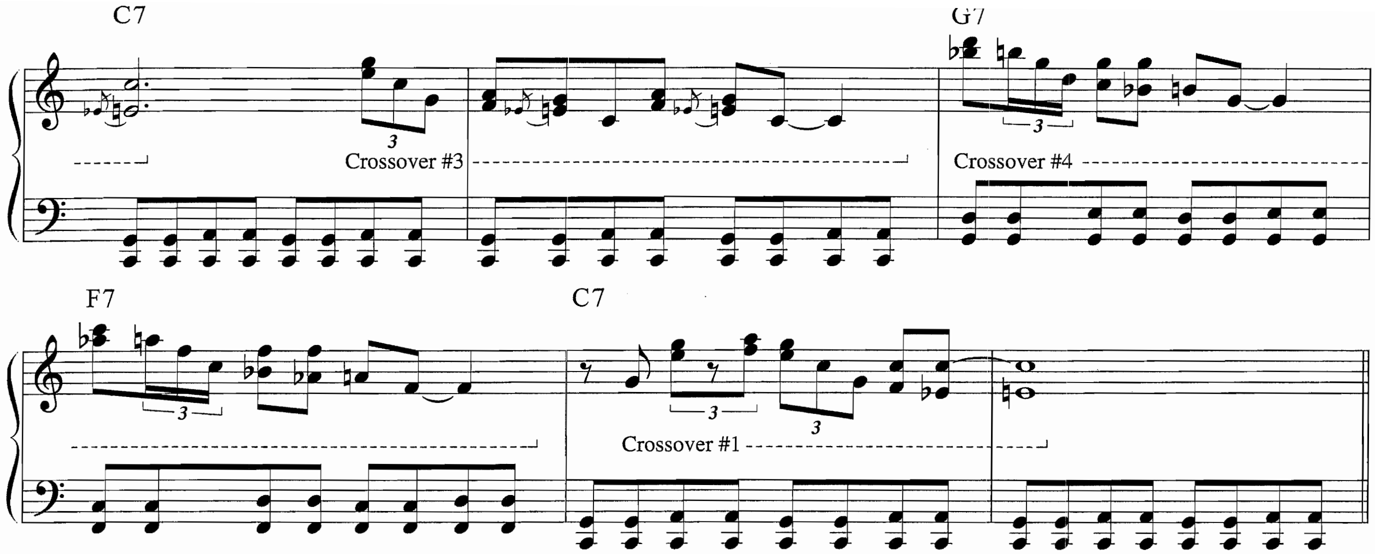
Note that this lick starts with the root and 3rd (F and A) followed by the 7th and 3rd (E♭ and A) of the F7 chord. Then during the last part of beat 3, we have a descending C minor triad (which can be thought of as being "built" from the 5th of the F7 chord). Then during beat 4, the root (F), 5th (C), and 3rd (A) are arpeggiated, before resolving to the C7 chord in the next measure.

In the preceding crossover lick #7, don't worry too much about counting or subdividing the 32nd notes (they go by too fast!)—just make sure the first G is on the "and of 3," and the F is on beat 4, and play the notes in between as evenly as you can. Fingering-wise, I would suggest using the 3rd and 5th fingers on the 3rd interval F and A, followed by the 2nd and 5th fingers on the (augmented) 4th interval E♭ and A. The descending C minor triad arpeggio can then be played with the 5th, 3rd, and 2nd fingers and the thumb, with the 2nd finger then "crossing over" to play the F on beat 4.

Now we will combine all of the preceding crossover licks to create a blues solo in C, as follows:

TRACK 71





Note that in the above example:

- In measures 1 and 2, crossover lick #6 was amended to transition into the F7 chord (i.e., the resolution at the end was changed to move from D to E♭, instead of from E♭ to E).
- In measure 5 and the first part of measure 6, crossover lick #2 was transposed up a perfect 4th interval to work over the F7 chord.
- In measure 9, crossover lick #4 was transposed up a perfect 5th interval to work over the G7 chord.
- In measure 10, crossover lick #4 was transposed up a perfect 4th interval to work over the F7 chord.

Tremolos or "rolls"

A tremolo or "roll" is a fast alternation between individual notes or groups of notes. In the blues, tremolos often fall into one of the following categories:

a) Tremolos between the hands, i.e., the right and left hands playing alternating chord voicings. This produces a dramatic effect often used for introductions in boogie woogie and blues styles.
b) Tremolos in the right hand, alternating single notes. Favorite interval are octaves, thirds, and sixths.
c) Tremolos in the right hand, alternating a two-note interval on top (typically a third) with a single note below (typically an octave below the top note).

We will now look at examples of all the above types of tremolo, beginning as follows:

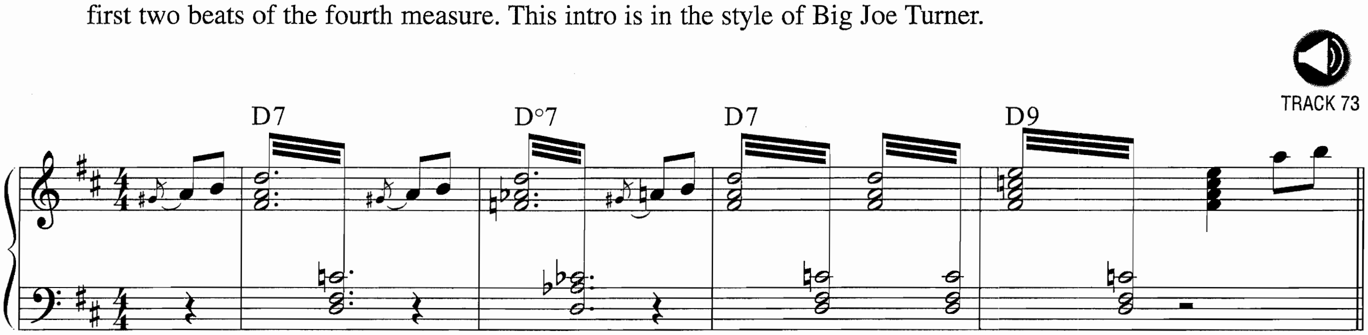
Tremolo example #1 (Boogie woogie style intro)

TRACK 72

Here, the rapid alternation of chords between the hands produces a very dense effect. The G♯ in the right hand, is a sharped 5th on the C7 chord. The tremolo is then followed by a series of "parallel" sixth intervals. This intro is in the style of Meade Lux Lewis.

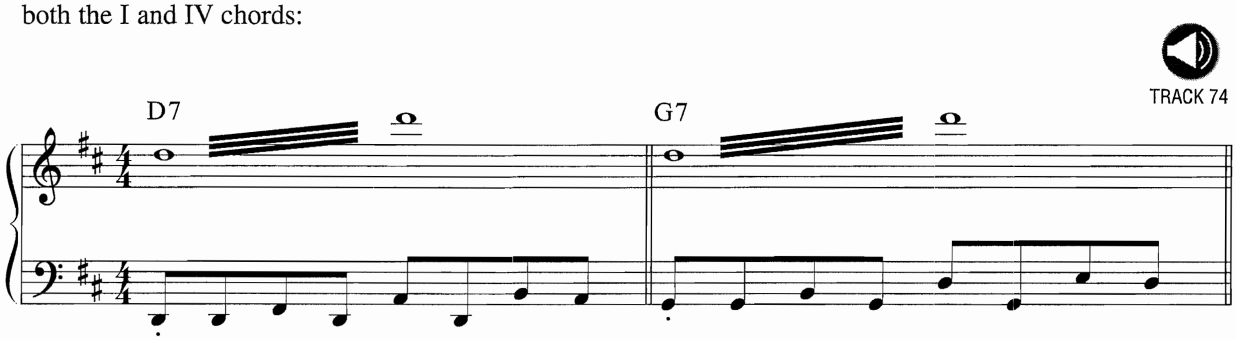
Tremolo example #2 (Jump blues style intro)

Here, the movement between the dominant and diminished chords is again a very characteristic blues intro device. Note that the tremolos occupy beats 1–3 of the first two measures, all of the third measure, and the first two beats of the fourth measure. This intro is in the style of Big Joe Turner.



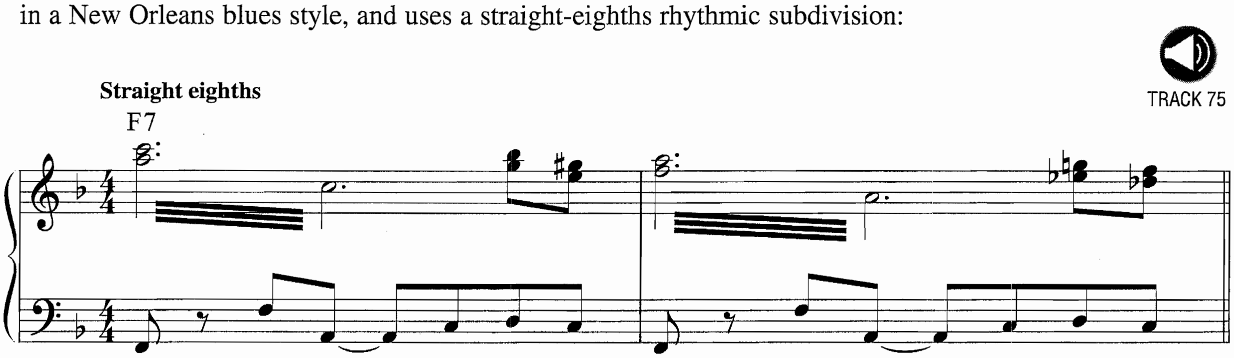
Tremolo example #3 (Octaves, using tonic of key)

Next we have some single-note octave tremolos in the right hand. These will often use the tonic or 5th of the key, over the I, IV, and/or V chords. In the following example, the note D (tonic of the key) is used over both the I and IV chords:



Tremolo example #4 (Octaves and third intervals)

Next we have a variation on the octave tremolo, with a third interval "inside the octave" at the top. This third interval is normally the root and 3rd, or 3rd and 5th, or 5th and 7th of the chord. The next example is in a New Orleans blues style, and uses a straight-eighths rhythmic subdivision:

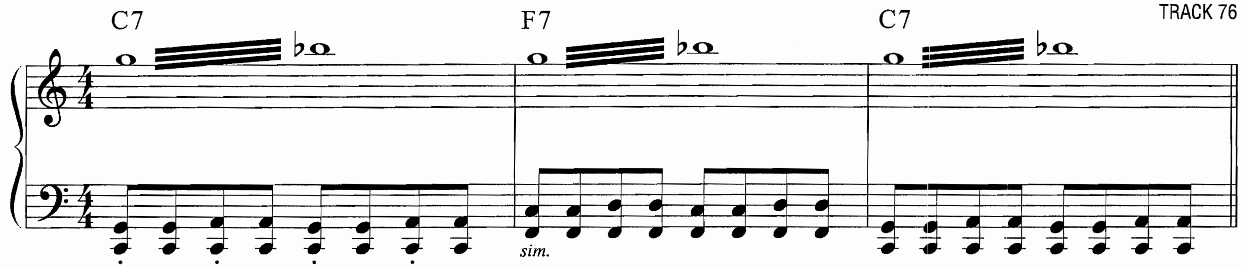


Note that in the first measure of the preceding example, the third interval at the top of the tremolo is the 3rd and 5th (A and C) of the F7 chord, and in the second measure the interval at the top of the tremolo is the root and 3rd (F and A) of the chord. Also, a "parallel" third interval of E and G♯ is used at the end of the first measure, leading into the F and A interval in the second measure.

Tremolo example #5 (Minor 3rd interval, using 5th and ♭7th of key)

Next we have a single-note tremolo using a minor third interval. These often use either the 5th and flatted 7th, or the root and flatted 3rd, with respect to the key of the blues progression. This example uses the 5th and flatted 7th (G and B♭) over the I and IV chords in the key of C:

TRACK 76

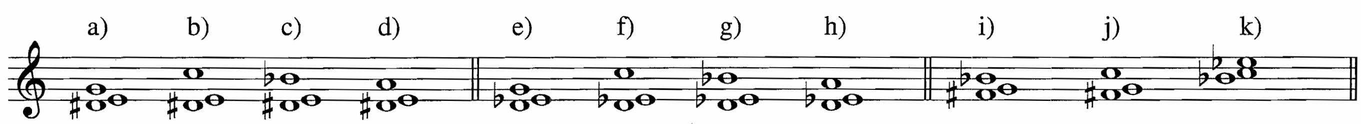


This interval tremolo can be continued over the remaining chords in the basic blues progresion (i.e., including the V chord) if desired. This is a particularly useful device in blues/rock and shuffle styles.

"Cluster" voicings and arpeggios

Here we are using the term "cluster" to refer to a group of three notes, where the interval between the bottom two notes is a half step or whole step (the half step being more common). With respect to the chord, the bottom two notes are normally either the ♭3rd and 3rd, or the ♭5th and 5th, or the 13th (6th) and 7th. The use of clusters in the blues is probably most associated with pianist Otis Spann (a pivotal member of Muddy Waters's band), and these dissonant sounds certainly helped piano players be heard above the din in noisy blues clubs. Clusters can also be arpeggiated (i.e., "broken chord" style) as well as played together (as a voicing). Here are some clusters that can work well over a C blues progression:

TRACK 77



Note that in the above example:

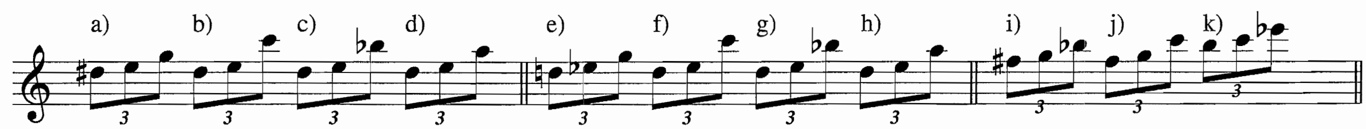
- The clusters in the first measure can work over a C7 chord (the bottom two notes are the ♭3rd and 3rd).
- The clusters in the second measure can work over an F7 chord (the bottom two notes are the 13th or 6th, and the 7th).
- The clusters in the third measure can work over all of the chords in the basic blues (i.e., C7, F7, and G7)—with some dissonances and tensions, of course!

Now we will apply these cluster voicings on a 12-bar blues in C:

TRACK 78

Next we will see how the same cluster voicings can be arpeggiated (this time transposed up an octave):

TRACK 79



Now we will apply these cluster arpeggios on a 12-bar blues in C:

TRACK 80

As with all of the right-hand devices in this chapter, be sure to practice these clusters in as many keys as possible. Well, now it's time to put all of these techniques to work in Chapter 6, where you get to play some tunes in the styles of several famous blues pianists. Have fun!

Chapter 6
STYLE FILE

In this chapter, we have seven tunes written in different blues styles, and you'll get a chance to apply the techniques used by some of the most famous blues pianists. Each of these songs features an intro (either a short "pickup" or longer section) and an ending, and contains several choruses or repeats of the blues progression. Each chorus consists of 12 measures, except for the tune "Mardi Gras Groove," which has an 8-bar blues structure commonly found in New Orleans blues, and "Blue Stone Rock," a blues-influenced take on modern rock.

Some of the tunes have "comping" or chordal accompaniment sections (often with rhythmic syncopation) as well as sections containing more soloistic or ornamental right-hand passages. However, note that in some blues styles (as well as in rock 'n' roll) the line between comping and soloing is often blurred, i.e., right- hand "comping" parts can still sometimes be busy and elaborate.

The first tune, "Meade's Boogie," is recorded with piano only, as were many of the boogie-woogie recordings of the period. On the CD, the left-hand part is on the left channel and the right-hand part is on the right channel, so you can practice each hand's part separately by turning down one channel or the other. The remaining tunes are all recorded with a rhythm section (bass and drums) as well as piano. On these CD tracks, the rhythm section is on the left channel and the piano is on the right channel. To play along with the band on these tunes, just turn down the right channel. "Slow" and "Full speed" tracks are also provided on the CD for each song.

1. Meade's Boogie

The first tune is written in the style of "Honky Tonk Train," a famous boogie woogie piece by Meade Lux Lewis. The three- and four-note chordal voicings shown in the left hand were commonly used in early boogie-woogie styles. Other typical devices are the cluster-type voicings used in the second chorus, and the "rhythmic displacements" (superimposing different right-hand rhythms over the repetitive left-hand part) in the second and third choruses. Also the repetition of the same right-hand phrase in measures 9–12 of each chorus is a noted stylistic device from this period.

As with most piano blues, the key is to play a rhythmically strong and consistent left-hand part. Try to articulate the chordal voicings cleanly, observing the rests within each eighth-note triplet. The more automatic the left-hand part becomes, the better you will be able to execute the varying rhythms called for in the right hand.


7
B♭7
F7
10
C7
13
F7
2nd Chorus
F7
16
19
B♭7
F7
22
C7


24
F7
3rd Chorus
26
F7
29
31
B♭7
F7
34
C7
36
F7

4th Chorus

2. Chicago Breakup

The next tune is written in the style of "Chicago Breakdown" by Big Maceo Merriweather, who influenced many other Chicago blues pianists (notably Otis Spann). Again we see the boogie woogie influence (in particular the left-hand patterns) on other blues styles, including Chicago blues. This piece features a broken-octave left-hand pattern, and lots of third and sixth interval phrases in the right hand (also a favorite device of Chicago blues pianist Lafayette Leake). Note the right-hand eighth-note triplet patterns, using chromatic sixth intervals in the third chorus and arpeggiated triads from the G, C, and D Mixolydian modes in the fourth chorus, as well as the diminished triad patterns in the third chorus.

Again work on the left-hand part until it is rhythmically precise and the octave intervals are secure. You can also isolate some right-hand parts for "hands separate" practice, i.e., the triplets and tremolos in the third chorus.

TRACK 83 slow

TRACK 84 full speed

2nd Chorus
G7
C7
G7
D7
G7
3rd Chorus
G7
C7


31
G7
D7
34
G7
4th Chorus
37
G7
40
C7
43
G7
D7
46
C6
C#°7
G/D
A♭9
G9

3. Every Night I Have the Blues

Next up, we have a tune written in the style of "Every Day I Have the Blues," recorded by Memphis Slim, another important Chicago blues pianist. This again uses a boogie-woogie influenced left-hand part, which at this more medium tempo creates a "chugging" and propulsive effect. Note the use of right-hand crossovers in the intro, in the first chorus, and a variation in the second chorus. Eighth-note triplet patterns are also used in the second chorus, using repeated top notes (or drone notes) from the blues scale. In the third chorus, the repetition of the three-beat right-hand phrase against the steady left-hand pattern is another example of rhythmic displacement.

Work on playing the right-hand crossover phrases in the first and second choruses as evenly as you can, at a slower tempo at first if necessary (particularly the last section of the second chorus). Again, having the left- hand pattern on "auto-pilot" will help you, especially during the rhythmic displacements used in the third chorus.

TRACK 85
slow

TRACK 86
full speed


G7
F7
C7
G7
2nd Chorus
C7
F7
C7
F7
C7
G7
F7
C7
G7
3rd Chorus
C7


30
F7
C7
33
F7
35
C7
G7
38
F7
C7
G7
C9
rit.

4. Joe's Jump

This is a "fast and furious" jump blues written in the style of "Sally Zu-Zas" by Big Joe Turner, whose career spanned the period from early boogie woogie to jump blues, through to R&B and the rock 'n' roll era. Note the four-measure intro using tremolos between the hands, with the main groove starting at measure 5 (part-way through the first chorus). The single-note pattern in the left hand outlines each chord, and is often found in jump blues at faster tempos. In addition to crossovers combined with third intervals and chordal "punches" in the right-hand part, we also have octave figures and tremolos in the high register by the fourth chorus, which raises the energy level and adds excitement.

Make sure you are comfortable with the right-hand phrases at a slower tempo (especially the sixteenth-note triplets in the first and second choruses, and the octave figures in the fourth chorus) before trying at a faster tempo. Also work on playing the tremolos (in the intro and fourth chorus) as evenly as possible.


2nd Chorus
13
D7
16
G7
19
D7
A7
22
D7
3rd Chorus
25
D7
28
G7


D7
A7
3
D7
4th Chorus
D7
8va
8va
G7
D7
8va
A7
loco
D7
rit.

5. Fat Cat Blues

The next tune is written in the style of "Detroit City Blues" by Fats Domino, one of the most famous names in the New Orleans blues scene. His distinctive style was born out the blues and transitioned successfully into R&B and early rock 'n' roll. This tune features the lolling, eighth-note-triplet comping style that became his trademark. The first chorus shows this comping style, while the second and third choruses are more solo-based in the right-hand part. The left-hand pattern, with eighth-note pickups into beats 1 and 3 of each measure, is also a signature of this style. Note the distinctive right-hand crossover phrases in the second and third choruses, a feature of the New Orleans sound.

Play the eighth-note "triplet" comping in the first chorus firmly and evenly, with a little more emphasis on each downbeat (refer to the CD as needed). Isolate and practise any right-hand figures as necessary (for example, the crossover phrases with sixteenth-note triplets in the second and third choruses).

TRACK 89 slow

TRACK 90 full speed


D9
C9
G
D9
2nd Chorus
G7
C7
G7
C7
G7
D7
C7
G7
D7

3rd Chorus

6. Mardi Gras Groove

Now we have another New Orleans blues, this time in the style of Huey "Piano" Smith and Dr. John. This style often uses straight-eighths (as well as the "swing" feels of other blues styles), and contains anticipations in the left-hand part, giving a Latin or "rhumba" tinge to the rhythm. Note also the elaborate right-hand part (using sixteenth-note figures and triplets), the signature New Orleans-style "crossover" phrases, and the tremolos in the fourth chorus. Like a lot of New Orleans blues, this tune has an eight-bar form (a variation on the more traditional twelve-bar form).

Ensure the left-hand figure (with the rhythmic anticipations) is solid, before adding the right hand. Practice at a slower tempo at first, and isolate the trickier right-hand parts as needed (i.e., the sixteenth-note triplets and crossovers in the second and third choruses, the tremolos in the fourth chorus, and the 32nd-note triplets in the coda).

TRACK 91 slow

TRACK 92 full speed


12
C7
15
F7
3rd Chorus
F7
18
B♭7
21
F7
C7
F7
24
4th Chorus
F7
27
B♭7
F7


C7
F7
Coda
F7
C7
F7
C7
F7
C7
F

7. Blue Stone Rock

Our last tune is in the blues/rock vein, in the style of pianists Chuck Leavell (Rolling Stones), Nicky Hopkins (The Who), and others. Like the previous tune, this piece also uses a straight-eighths rhythmic feel (as does a lot of contemporary blues/rock). Note the fairly continuous eighth notes played in the right hand, reminiscent of early rock 'n' roll piano styles. However, the tune uses 8-measure sections and more modern rock chord changes, rather than the standard blues progression and form.

There are lots of fun devices used here, including drone-note phrases in the intro and coda, variations on backcycled triads in the first A section, parallel third intervals in the second A section, and so on. Make sure the left hand is very solid and even, and articulate the right-hand part brightly, with a little extra emphasis on the downbeats. Rock on!


B♭
F
C
E♭
B♭
C
Coda
F7
B♭
E♭
F7
B♭
E♭
F7
B♭
E♭
F7
B♭
E♭
C7
F7