

INTRODUCTION TO NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES

Volume 2 of A New Approach To Jazz Improvisation deals with the blues in several of its many forms. In this volume you will find two slow blues in the keys of G and F, two medium fast blues in Bb and F, one minor blues in C, one 6/8 blues in C minor, one medium tempo blues in C, three rock blues, and one blues using substitute chords in the key of F.

If you have never improvised using scales and chords as the basis for your improvisation, I strongly urge you to study Volume 1 Jazz Guitar as that volume deals with the problems of beginning improvisation.

The recording to Nothin' But Blues is designed to provide a rhythm section for those who have never had the opportunity of playing with guitar, bass, and drums; and to offer an authentic accompaniment for those musicians who do not always have one available. Since the recording is in stereo, guitar players may practice with bass and drums by turning off the guitar (right channel.)

An existing knowledge of major, minor and dominant seventh scales is preferred but is not essential. If not already mastered I would suggest memorizing the twelve major, twelve minor and twelve dominant 7th scales listed on page 30. It is also advisable to memorize the twelve blues scales listed on page 24.

Every minor scale employed on the blues recording and throughout this book is in the Dorian mode. This minor mode will be referred to as a scale throughout this book. The other familiar forms of minor scales, harmonic, pure, and melodic minor are used in more advanced jazz tunes and will not be covered in this volume because it would tend to confuse rather than help aspiring improvisors.

The jazz blues has traditionally been twelve measures in length or twenty-four measures (long-meter, such as track 6.)

The two most important items to keep in mind when improvising (within pre-set forms such as blues and standard tunes) are the needed scales and the length of time notes of each scale will be sounded. The length of time may vary from one beat to many measures depending on the form of the tune you are improvising on. For instance, the first song, Mr. Super Hip, employs three minor scales: F minor, Bb minor and G minor. The scales appear in this order: 4 measures of F minor, 2 measures of Bb minor, 2 measures of F minor, 1 measure of G minor, 1 measure of F minor, 1 measure of G minor, and 1 measure of F minor. All seven choruses of this tune follow this same harmonic form or sequence. At this point, Volume 1 would be helpful in organizing scales into patterns which in turn are used to form a more cohesive solo.

In this revised edition, I have blackened in the chord tones of each scale. You will find that most scales run from the tonic note (also called the root) to the 9th tone of the scale. Since jazz players have always used scales and chords in building their improvised solos it is natural to stress learning chords as well as scales. A triad consists of the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of a scale. A 7th chord consists of the 1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th notes of a scale. A 9th chord consists of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th notes of a scale. Jazz solos consist of bits and pieces of scales, chords, leads, chromaticism, rests, repeated notes and sequences.

A major chord/scale is represented by a letter followed by a triangle (CΔ). A minor chord/scale is represented by a dash after the letter (C-). A dominant 7th chord/scale is represented by a seven after the letter (C7). A half-diminished chord/scale is a ø (Cø). A dominant 7th chord/scale which has altered tones in the scale is called a diminished whole tone scale and is represented by a #9 after the C7 (C7#9). This diminished whole tone scale contains the following tones: root, lowered 2nd, raised 2nd, major 3rd, raised 4th, raised 5th, (no sixth) and lowered 7th. In the key of C it would look like this: C D♭ D# E F# G# B♭ C. The chord tones would be C E G# B♭ and either D♭ or D#. Volume 3 "The ii/V7/I Progression for Guitar" goes into great detail about this scale sound and other more advanced jazz scales and chords.

There is no substitute for listening to the jazz masters play the blues. Since live jazz concerts are rare, I strongly urge you to listen to the jazz recordings listed on page 71.

Soloing: by Jamey Aebersold

1. Keep your place - don't get lost. If you do get lost LISTEN to the rhythm section. The drummer will often give a little crash at the beginning of new sections. If you hit a note that is not what you intended, move it up or down a half-step and you'll probably be back in the scale (or chord). Remember, jazz music usually moves in two, four or eight bar phrases. You're never far from a new phrase beginning.

2. Play right notes. This really means play the notes you hear in your head... the notes you would sing with your mouth. Having the scales and chords in front of you on a piece of paper is merely a guide. They don't provide the actual music that's going to be played. THAT comes from YOUR imagination. If you've got the scales, chords, and chord/scale progression MEMORIZED it provides courage to your imagination and allows you to operate from a more creative natural basis. It allows you to take some chances. It helps remove FEAR..

3. Using REPETITION and SEQUENCE is natural in music. It's found in all types and styles of music. The novice improviser often feels that if they repeat an idea, everyone knows they are going to repeat it, so why do it; plus it's not original enough for your EGO so you don't play it. WRONG! The listener needs to hear some repetition and sequence or else they can't remember anything you play. Repetition and Sequence are the glue that holds solos together. The usual number of times something is repeated depends on you but the average is 2 or 3 and then your mind will tell you when to repeat and/or when to sequence. It's a part of the way we hear music played by others.

4. CHORD TONES (the 1, 3, 5, & 7 of a scale) are great notes to begin and end a phrase with. Just sing a phrase and see if you don't follow this simple rule. Our ears HEAR chord tones first so it's natural to begin and end there. Plus, it gives us and the listener what we're listening for - *harmonic stability*.

5. SOUND: Be sure that you are getting a good, full sound on your instrument (or voice). Don't let the scales and chords or the progression or tempo intimidate you. Sound is foremost and is the FIRST thing a person latches onto when you sing or play. It leaves a lasting impression. So, be yourself and let your voice or instrument ring out. It's the main ingredient of your musical personality.

6. LISTENING: There's no way anyone is going to play jazz or improvise well without **listening** to those musicians who have come before. Through listening alone you can find ALL the answers. Each musician is a result of what they have listened to. It's easy to determine who people have listened to by listening to them play. We all tend to use imitation and it's good to do this. Some feel that if they listen to others they'll just sound like them. This is not true but your ego will try to convince you it's true. The ego hates competition or what it perceives to be competition. Don't let it fool you. If no one listened to anyone else, why play music? Music is for everyone and truly is a Universal Language.

7. Everyone has the ability to improvise - from the youngest child to the senior citizen. You have to have desire and set aside time to work at it until moving your fingers becomes automatic and the distance between you mind and fingers grows smaller and smaller to where you think an idea and your fingers are already playing it. It's not magic. If it is, then magic equals hard work and perseverance. When asked, "What is the greatest obstacle to enlightenment?" the Buddha replied, "Laziness." *I agree!*

Here is a version without a lyric but rather a blues melody.

A Phrase 1 (melodic idea)
C7 F7 C7

TAB 5 8 5 8 5 8 8 5 5 8 5

A Phrase 2 (melodic idea repeated but using appropriate chord scale notes)
F7 C7

TAB 5 8 5 8 5 8 8 5 5 8 5

B Phrase 3 (new musical idea/summary)
G7 F7 C7

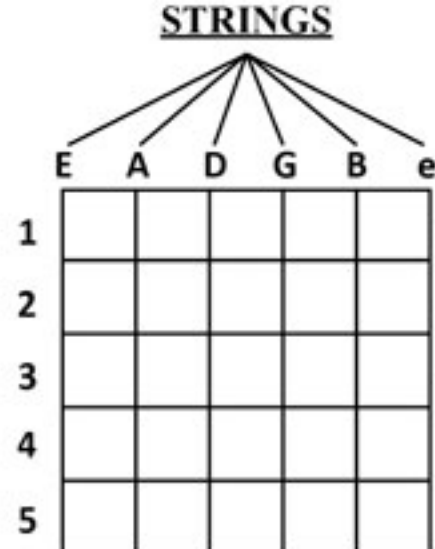
TAB 5 5 5 5 8 5 8 5 8 5 8 5

It is important to remember that this is not the only way to play a blues. However, this is a great technique to get control of and can help you pace yourself as your improvisations become more involved and you begin to take more choruses when you solo. It is excellent practice, even for advanced players, to practice remembering what was played in the first phrase and repeating it in the second phrase. This concept also allows your listeners to become familiar with and identify with the melodies you are playing.

When beginning to practice the blues, you should (1) get the feel of the roots, (2) then the first five notes of each scale, (3) then the triad (root, 3rd and 5th), and (4) finally the entire scale. Here is what that would sound like (starting on the next page).

When beginning to practice the blues, without using the blues scale it's necessary to:

1. Get the feel of the roots first
2. Then the first five notes of each scale
3. Then the triad (root, 3rd, and 5th)
4. And finally the entire scale.



A number next to a fret indicates the position of the scale or chord

While the guitar is laid out vertically in two octaves, it is important that guitarists learn to play scales and arpeggios one octave at a time. This makes it easier to visualize the guitar and how the scales function in a musical way rather than a mechanical way. It's very easy to become overwhelmed with the number of possible scale shapes. Even though there are three and four shapes presented for each one-octave scale shape, there are basically only two one-octave scale shapes presented below. These are moveable shapes. For each scale presented there is a shape that starts with the first or second finger and one shape that starts with the third or fourth finger of the left hand. Because these shapes are moveable they should be played on each string group presented. A chart showing the root notes (notes that name the scale) for each string is shown below as well.

Root Notes On The Sixth and First String

0	1	3	5	7	8	10	12
E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E

Root Notes On The Third String

0	2	4	5	7	9	10	12
G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G

Root notes On The Fifth String

0	2	3	5	7	8	10	12
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A

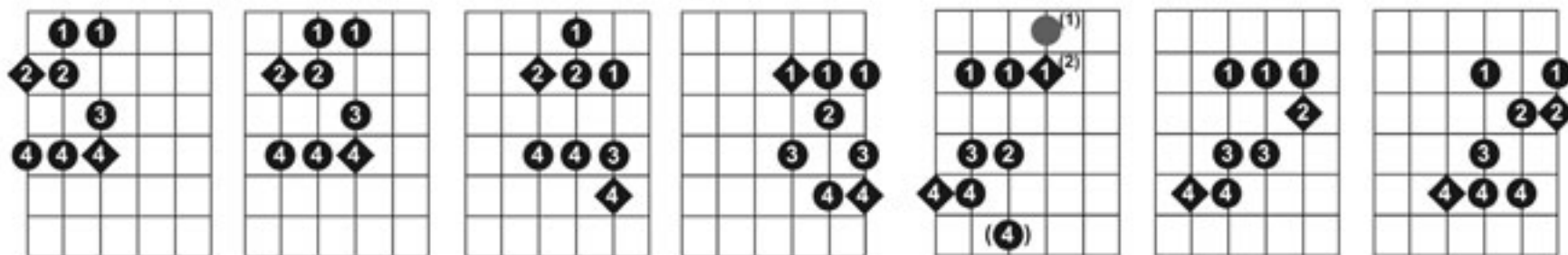
Root Notes On The Second String

0	1	3	5	6	8	10	12
B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B

Root Notes On The Fourth String

0	2	3	5	7	9	10	12
D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D

One-Octave Major Scale Patterns (numbers in parenthesis indicated optional fingering) ◆ = Root Notes



Once the one octave scales are mastered, guitarists can combine two different one-octave scales to play two-octave scales. Be sure to mix and match and even manipulate some of the basic scale shapes to cover the entire fretboard. This process will insure that guitarists can play any scale in any key anywhere over the fretboard. Large scale shapes and fretboard mastery can be achieved by combining simple (and small) one-octave shapes.

THE BLUES SCALE AND ITS USE

The blues scale consists of the following: Root, $\flat 3$ rd, 4th, $\sharp 4$ th, 5th and $\flat 7$ th, root.

EXAMPLE: F blues scale = F, $A\flat$, $B\flat$, B, C, $E\flat$, F

F

When playing a twelve bar blues in the key of $B\flat$, you can use the $B\flat$ blues scale:

$B\flat$, $D\flat$, $E\flat$, E, F, $A\flat$, $B\flat$

$B\flat$

The blues scale can also be used over minor chords when the minor chord is sounded for 2, 4, 8, or 16 measures or longer. EXAMPLE: If D minor is sounded for 8 measures, you may use the D blues scale: D, F, G, $A\flat$, A, C, D. The context of the song is very important, too. Some songs and chord progressions don't lend themselves to using the blues scale.

When playing in minor tonalities you may choose to alternate between the dorian minor and the blues scale, both having the same root tone. EXAMPLE: D minor is sounded for eight measures - play D minor (dorian) or play D blues scale or alternate between the two scale sounds.

Experiment alternating between dorian minor and the corresponding blues scale over any of the first dorian minor recorded tracks.

The blues scale is used to convey a 'Funky,' 'Down-home,' 'Earthy' or 'Bluesy' sound/feel. Don't run it into the ground by overuse! Rhythm and blues players use this scale extensively. Experiment with the blues scale listed below and apply them to the recorded tracks on the play-a-long recordings. Always use the blues scale sound with taste.

One-Octave Patterns Blues Scale

Two-Octave Patterns

Four-to-the Bar #2

Three systems of guitar music for "Four-to-the Bar #2". Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature, and a corresponding guitar tablature staff. The first system has four measures with chords C7, G^b7, F7, D^b7, C7, G-7, C7, and C7^b5. The second system has four measures with chords F7, F7, F[#]o, C7/G, C7, E-7, and A7. The third system has eight measures with chords D-7, D^b-7, D-7, A^b7, G7, F/A, B^bo, G/B, C7, B^b7, A7, E^b7, D-7, A^b7, G7, and D^b7. The tablature includes various fret numbers and bar lines.

Use three-note voicings in the following etude.

Three staves of guitar music for an etude. Each staff is in 4/4 time and features a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat. The first staff has four measures with chords C7, F7, C7, and F7. The second staff has four measures with chords F7, C7, and A⁺7. The third staff has eight measures with chords D-7, G7, C7, A7, D-7, and G7. The music consists of eighth and quarter notes with various rests.

F7

TAB 8 6 7 8 9 5 8 7 5 6 5 8 5 8 8

B \flat 7 **F7**

TAB 6 7 8 9 5 8 7 5 6 5 8 5 8 8 7

C7 **F7** **C7** (Play first time only)

TAB 8 7 8 7 8 5 7 8 7 8 7 6 5 8 6 8 8

SOLOS **F7**

TAB 8 5 7 8 5 7 8 6 8 % % %

B \flat 7 **F7**

TAB 8 5 7 8 6 8 9 6 8 % %

C7 **F7** **C7** **F7**

TAB 8 5 7 8 5 7 8 5 7 8 6 8 8 5 7 8 5 7 8 %