

GUITAR
DVD

★ BY KEITH WYATT

BLUES

TEN IN-DEPTH VIDEO LESSONS ON ESSENTIAL BLUES
MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND GUITAR-PLAYING TECHNIQUES

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★ For over 35 years, **KEITH WYATT** has been active as a guitarist and educator specializing in American music. He is a prolific author of books, instructional videos and columns on subjects ranging from theory and ear training to beginning guitar methods and blues and "roots" styles. Since 1978, Keith has been an instructor at the world-famous Musicians Institute in Los Angeles, where he also serves as Director of Curriculum. Since 1996, he has been touring internationally and recording with LA's legendary Blasters.

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1 STRETCH MARKS

THE ART OF PRECISION STRING BENDING

STRING BENDING HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE

the earliest days of acoustic blues, but when the electric guitar appeared on the scene, its added sustain and dynamic range inspired players to develop a new bending vocabulary with new technical challenges.

T-Bone Walker, the first electric blues guitar star, limited his bending repertoire to half steps, but by the mid Fifties his disciple B.B. King had expanded the technique to include singing whole-step bends and vibrato. A decade later, Albert King blew the lid off the technique with swooping two-whole-step bends that inspired subsequent generations of string-stretchers to explore the outer limits of metallic elasticity.

Effective bending technique is based on the twin pillars of strength: the physical ability to reach and hold a note, and spot-on pitch accuracy. The amount of strength required is a function of how far you want to bend and how much resistance the string offers. Your fingers will build strength through exercise, but a simple rule is to always bend with two or three fingers together rather than one finger by itself. Note, too, that heavy strings are not a pre-requisite for heavy playing: Albert King, a large man, used light-gauge strings tuned below standard pitch.

To develop your bending accuracy, play any note, then bend up to that pitch from two frets (one whole step) below until you match it precisely. Get your fingers to memorize how much effort it takes to raise the pitch one whole step, then repeat the bend as a *pre-bend*—that is, use your muscle memory to bend the note exactly to pitch *before* you pick it. Pre-bending is an excellent test of coordination between ear, hands and instrument.

FIGURES 1–6 are exercises for developing bending strength and accuracy. All are performed on the B string, which is the slinkiest and easiest to bend, but the same concept applies to any string. In **FIGURE 1**, pre-bend and release each note as you descend the A Dorian mode (A B C D E F# G). **FIGURE 2** ascends the same scale. In each case, pre-bend, pick and move up to the next fretted note, bend and shift to the next, and so on. **FIGURES 3** and **4** apply the same concept to the A minor pentatonic scale (A C D E G). The minor third (one-and-one-half-step) intervals within the scale will challenge your ability to hit larger bends accurately.

FIG. 1 A Dorian mode, descending

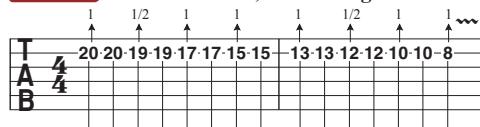


FIG. 2 A Dorian mode, ascending

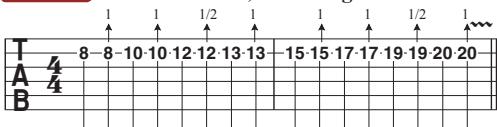


FIG. 3 A minor pentatonic scale, descending

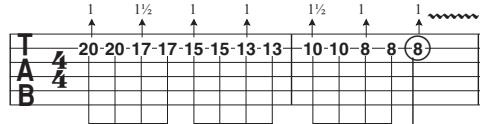


FIG. 4 A minor pentatonic scale, ascending

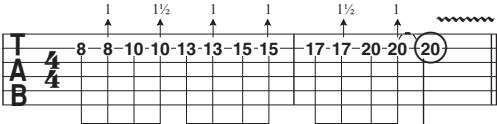


FIG. 5 bending/releasing in continuous half-steps

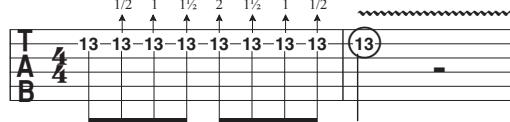


FIG. 6 releasing in continuous half-steps

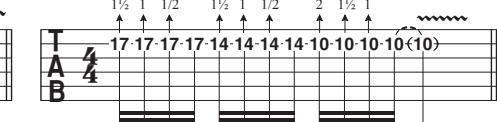


FIG. 7 slow blues

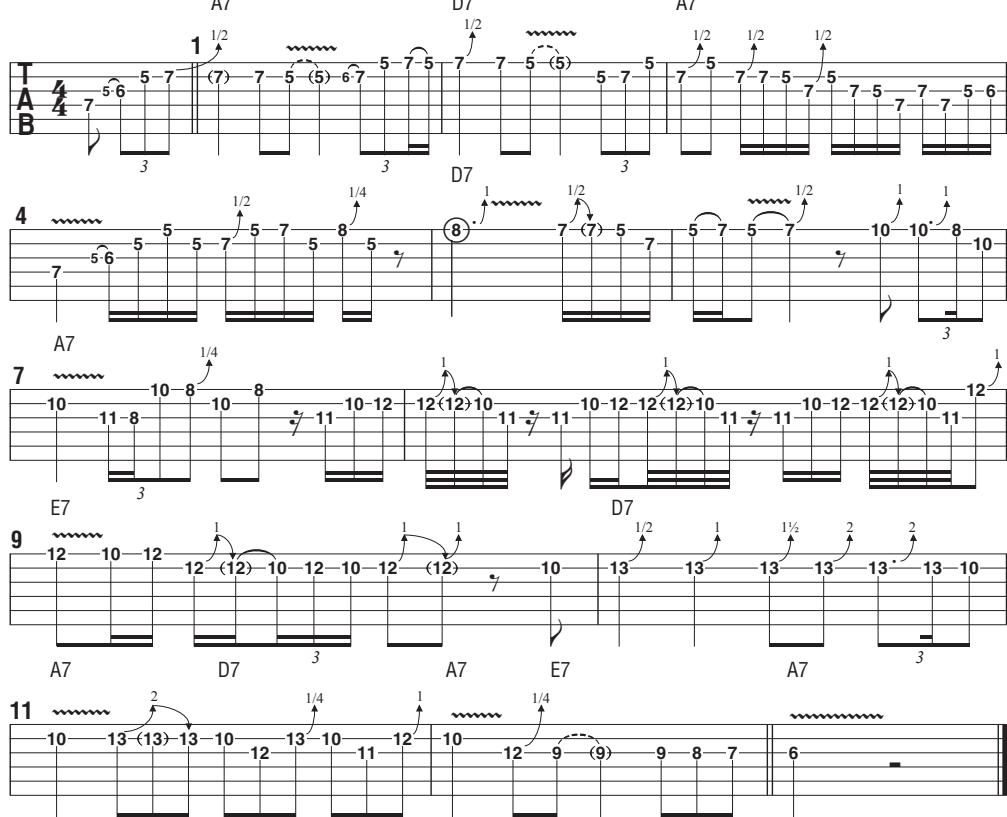


FIGURE 5 requires that you bend in precise, continuously ascending, then descending, half steps, all the way up to two whole steps. Be sure to check the accuracy of your pitch by comparing the bent notes to their unbent counterparts one, two, three and four frets higher. **FIGURE 6**

applies a similar concept to the notes of an A7 arpeggio (A C# E G), culminating in a two-whole step pre-bend and gradual release. Finally, **FIGURE 7** is a survey of string-stretching vocabulary, from quarter tones to two-step bends, compressed into a chorus of a slow 12-bar blues.★



2 HEY, BO DIDDLEY

EXAMINING THE LEGENDARY BLUESMAN'S TRADEMARK GROOVES

AMONG THE STANDARD RHYTHMS OF

American popular music—shuffle, swing, funk, rock and roll, country and more—there is only one that is known by a proper name. Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," Bow Wow Wow's "I Want Candy," the Who's "Magic Bus," George Michael's "Faith" and U2's "Desire" all owe their rhythmic appeal to Bo Diddley and his eponymous beat. Like his Chess Records labelmate Chuck Berry, Diddley (raised Ellas McDaniel) forged a unique approach to urban music, combining lyric themes ranging from nursery rhymes to the *dozens* (verbal street combat that was a precursor to rap) with rhythms that owed as much to Africa as to the streets of Chicago.

As played by Diddley himself, the beat was a hypnotic stew of maracas, tom-toms and Diddley's own reverb-drenched, tape-delayed guitar. While Diddley's presentation was unique, the beat itself was not his invention. Johnny Otis (whose later hit, "Willie and the Hand Jive," featured the same beat) recalled encountering it in the Thirties, and the rhythmic phrase "shave and a haircut, two bits" goes back much further than that. Other antecedents are the trance-inducing southern ring shout, the *juba* dance and its related thigh-slapping "hambone" rhythm, the Afro-Cuban *son* clave and Yoruba rhythms from Nigeria.

FIGURE 1 displays the basic Bo Diddley beat, which Bo routinely varied, as shown in **FIGURE 2** (note that the harmony is based on major triads rather than the sevenths and ninths of traditional blues). Strum it with a loose, up-and-down motion, controlling the placement and duration of the accents with your fretting hand by alternately squeezing and relaxing your grip. The song "Bo Diddley" is a one-chord vamp, but like Buddy Holly and Johnny Otis you can also adapt the rhythm to 12-bar changes.

The Bo Diddley style places rhythm above all else, and Diddley's solos appropriately favored chord-based ideas rather than flashy licks (the single-note solos on his records were generally played by other guitarists). **FIGURES 3a-c** illustrate three typical melodic chord phrases. In each case, alternate the phrase with the basic rhythm in a call-and-response pattern.

While he is best known for his self-

FIG. 1

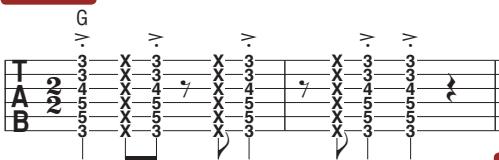


FIG. 2

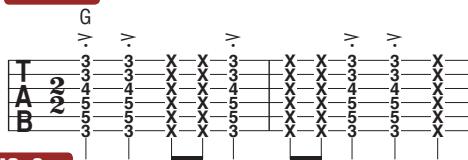


FIG. 3a

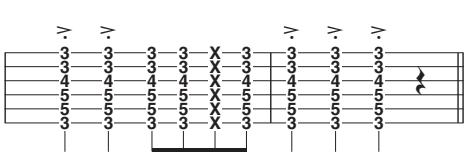


FIG. 3c

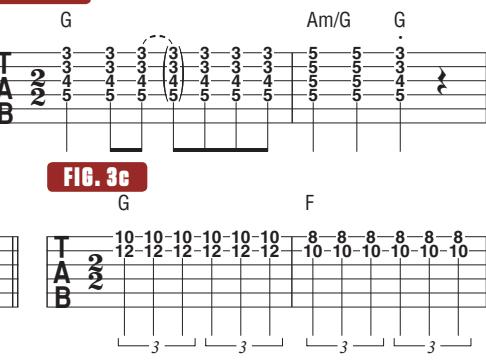


FIG. 3b

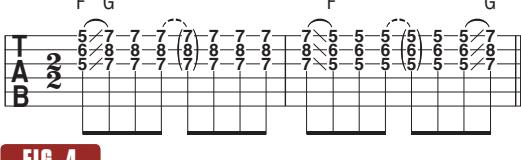


FIG. 4

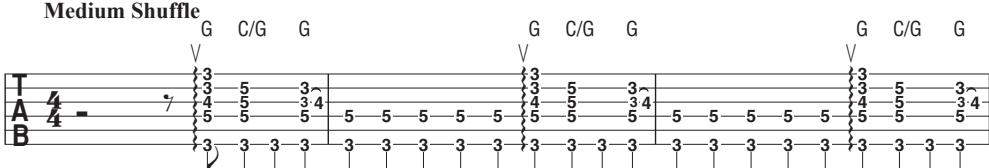


FIG. 5

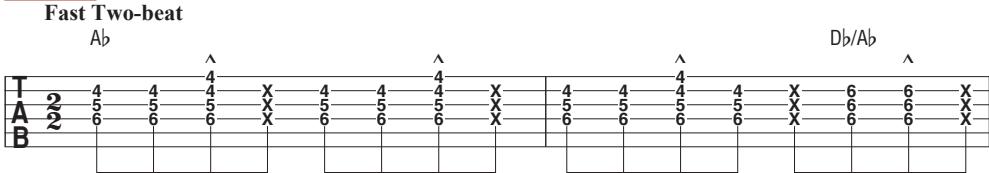
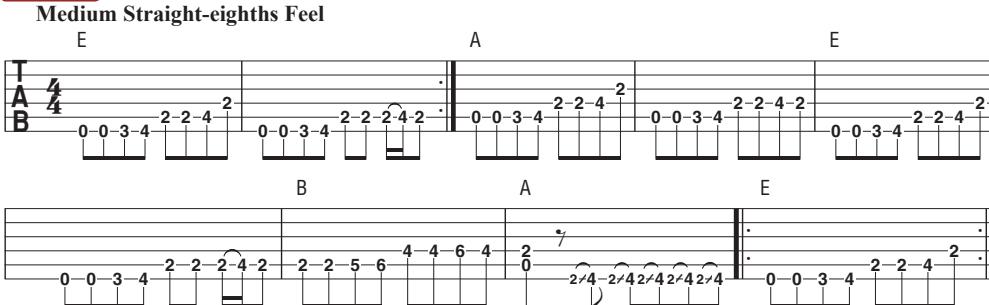


FIG. 6



named beat, Diddley was no one-trick pony. He also scored hits with rhythm-heavy tracks, including "I'm a Man" (similar to **FIGURE 4**), a hypnotic, one-chord vamp with a deep blues feel, and "Who Do You Love," based on a pumped-up country groove, à la Chuck Berry's "Maybelline" (**FIGURE 5**). "Roadrunner," similar to **FIGURE 6**,

was a proto-hard-rock classic that opened with a descending pick scrape, a radical technique for the era. In both his playing style and choice of instruments (he crafted a rectangular-bodied guitar later replicated by Gretsch and nicknamed "The Twang Machine"), Bo did it his way.★



3

THE ART OF THE FILL

KNOWING WHEN TO CHIME IN AND WHEN TO HUSH

A FUNDAMENTAL BUILDING BLOCK OF

the blues style is the concept of *call-and-response*, a continuous form of interactivity expressed through everything from solo phrasing to the interplay between performer and audience (check out the timeless B.B. King album *Live at the Regal*, in which the audience is as much a part of the show as the band). A form of call-and-response that is built into most blues arrangements is the *fill* (a short instrumental phrase between vocal lines). Fills can be composed, as in a horn-section arrangement, or improvised, as when a guitarist tosses off a spontaneous lick. In either case, the back-and-forth between vocalist and fill creates an ongoing musical conversation.

While fills are easy to grasp in theory, they can be slippery in practice. Two challenges emerge: first, since the space between vocal phrases is often quite limited, fills must be equally brief, sometimes even down to one note (the musical equivalent of shouting "yeah!"). Second, during live performance, a player must be able to follow the singer's phrasing and respond instantly under always-changing conditions. The solution to both challenges is the same: develop a vocabulary of short but complete phrases that can be quickly plugged into whatever space is available.

The three primary ingredients of any phrase are note, rhythm and touch (or *articulation*—the way you shape each individual note). In tight spaces where the number of notes is restricted, the importance of rhythm and touch is magnified. To play effective fills, you need to put your phrasing under a microscope and edit ruthlessly. But the results will benefit every aspect of your playing. After all, if you can make a complete statement with a single note, your solos will speak volumes.

FIGURE 1 is a collection of mini-phrases shaped to fit holes from one to four beats in length (you can combine short phrases to create longer fills). Rhythmically, guitar fills are very similar to drum fills in that they usually resolve on a downbeat; melodically, they tend to end on chord tones. The third essential factor, touch, doesn't translate well to the printed page. To really learn how fills work, listening is required. Fills are essentially carefully constructed versions of your regular licks, and once you get a feel for economical phrasing, the variations are endless.

FIGURE 2 shows fills arranged in the con-

FIG. 1

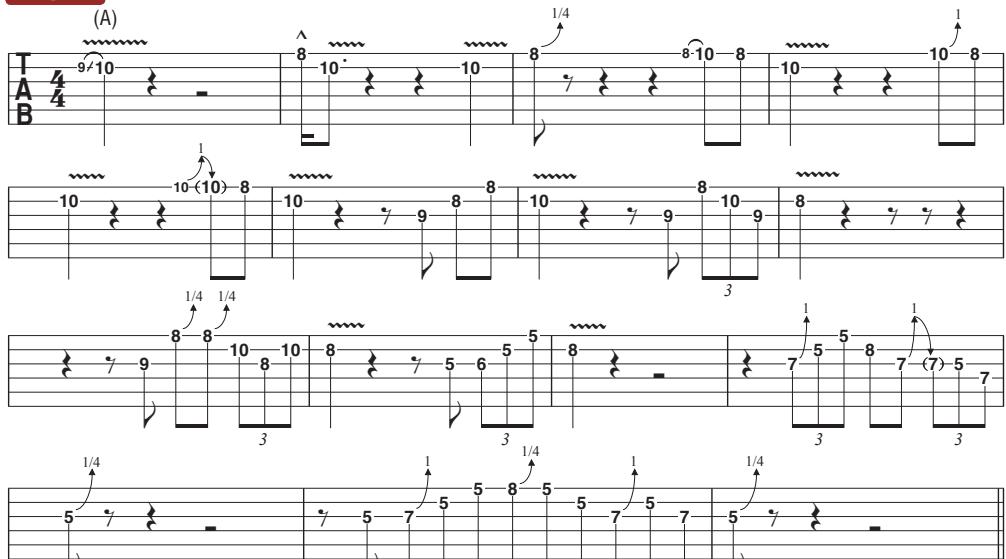


FIG. 2

text of a 12-bar medium-tempo blues shuffle with generic vocal phrasing. Note that the turnaround (the last two bars) is also a fill that provides the final word on each chorus. In practice, judging how well a specific fill works in a particular instance involves a number of factors, and it's ultimately about carrying on an effective musical conversation with the singer.

To build your fill vocabulary, listen to great blues singers and note how the guitar, sax and other instru-

ments interact with the vocals (recordings by the three Kings—B.B., Albert and Freddie—are virtual fill textbooks, as are individual tracks like "Further Up the Road" by Bobby Bland and Guitar Slim's "The Things That I Used to Do"). A great fill is a mini-masterpiece, and the proof is that before most of the world ever heard of Stevie Ray Vaughan, it was his concise, stinging fills on David Bowie's "Let's Dance" that made people sit up and take notice. ★



4 THREE INTO TWO

THE SWEET SPOT WHERE "STRAIGHT" AND SWING EIGHTH NOTES OVERLAP

WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO BASICS, ANY

style of popular music starts as a beat, and from an analytical perspective, beats fall into just two fundamental categories: divided by two and divided by three. The first category includes even, or "straight," eighth notes (two equally spaced notes per beat) and 16th notes (four equally spaced notes per beat), which are the building blocks of styles including rock, funk, Latin, and the endless subgenres of dance music. The second category is based on the *triplet* (three equally spaced notes per beat), which is the foundation of shuffle and swing and, by extension, blues and jazz.

For the first half of the 20th century, the commercial popularity of blues and jazz meant that divided-by-three beats dominated the scene, but during the Fifties, pop music began a wholesale shift to straight (divided-by-two) beats that persists to this day. As a rule, a groove is based on either one or the other, but certain recordings made during the transitional period display a sort of rhythmic ambivalence, where both occur at the same time. More than historical oddities, however, these provide some important insights into that essential but elusive musical quality known as *feel*.

Exhibit A is Chuck Berry's all-time rock and roll anthem "Johnny B. Goode." The original Chess Records track from 1956 features a veteran blues rhythm section laying down a swing beat while Chuck simultaneously rocks in straight time, a combination that lends the groove a magical, floating quality absent from most of the countless versions of the song recorded since. To approximate this straight-over-swing feel, set a drum machine to a shuffle at 100 beats per minute and on your guitar play a single note in a straight-eighth rhythm (**FIGURE 1a**). This may require considerable concentration at first, but once it becomes more comfortable, graduate to the classic Chuck Berry rhythm pattern, i.e. a boogie rhythm with a straight feel (**FIGURE 1b**). When played consistently, the two feels blend into a rhythmic third way that is neither two nor three.

Well before "Johnny B." was recorded, T-Bone Walker (a major influence on Berry) explored a similar effect by occasionally soloing in straight time over a swing groove (check out his showcase instrumental, "Strollin' with Bone"). To simu-

FIG. 1a

Accompaniment:

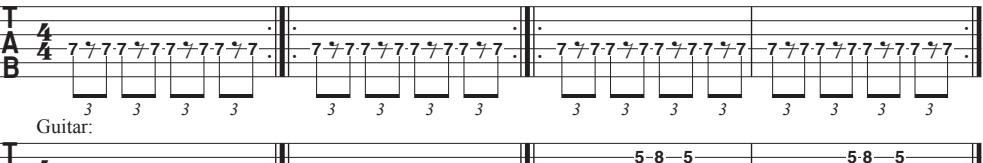
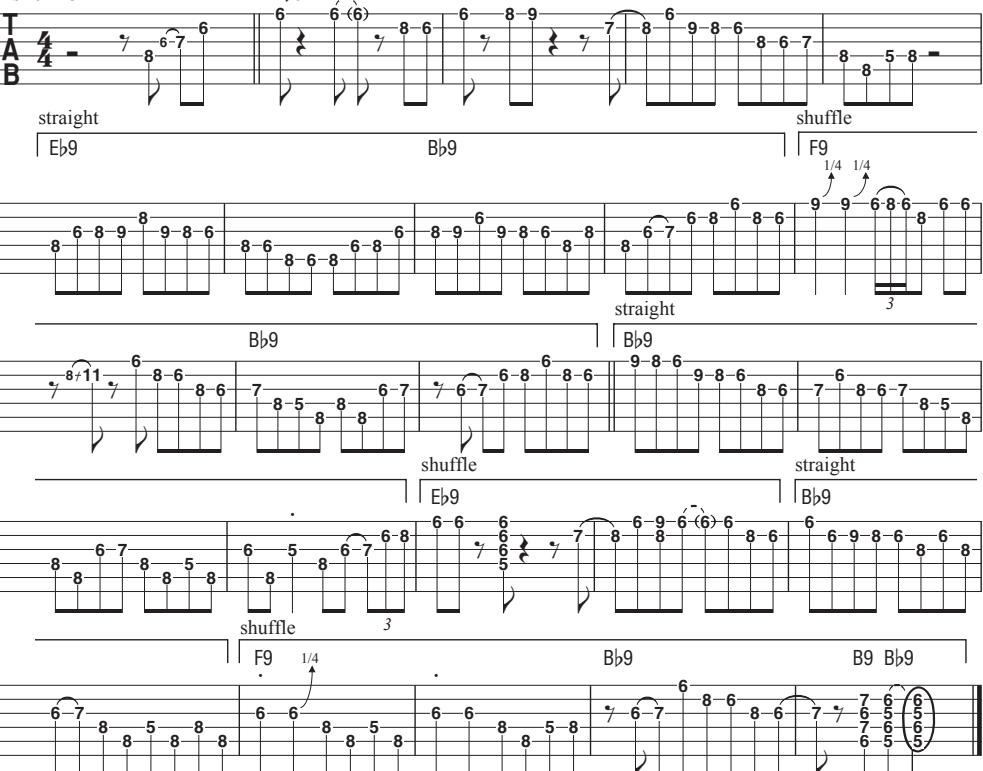


FIG. 3

Uptempo shuffle
straight



late the results, play a minor pentatonic scale over a swing beat while alternating between shuffle and straight time (**FIGURE 2**). When you can make the shift smoothly, apply the same idea to familiar phrases. This blend of two and three also counteracts one of the most common pitfalls of beginning blues and jazz soloists, which is to interpret swing with an excess of bounce.

Going the other way, reverse the exercise in **FIGURE 2** by soloing with a swing feel over a straight groove. The combination creates a laid-back quality in your phrasing that makes the groove feel roomier and

FIG. 2

more comfortable, like a well-worn shoe. The solo in **FIGURE 3** alternates between swing and straight phrasing. At faster tempos, the actual difference between the two is subtle, but you can feel the effect.

Like the *blue note* that exists between the minor and major third, the in-between quality of three-into-two rhythm eludes notation (try transcribing Howlin' Wolf's hypnotic masterpiece "Back Door Man," for example), but it's one of the secret ingredients that elevates the simple musical components of blues into something transcendent.★



5 LOWDOWN AND DIRTY

LOWDOWN AND DIRTY GETTING DOWN IN THE LOW REGISTER

ASK YOURSELF A SIMPLE QUESTION:

when you solo, how often do you play a note below the fourth string? If you're like most guitarists, the answer is rarely, if ever. But while the treble strings are and always will always be prime soloing real estate, venturing occasionally into the lower register can put a fresh, ear-catching spin on your phrasing. Furthermore, adding another octave to your range is almost like getting a new instrument without spending a dime.

Blues guitarists who have used low-end phrasing to notable effect include Freddie King ("Sen-Say-Shun") and Johnny "Guitar" Watson ("Three Hours Past Midnight"), as well as such capo-users as Gatemouth Brown ("Boogie Uproar") and Albert Collins, who were forced by the clamp to move across, rather than down, the neck. All favored bright tone and employed a strong attack, factors that combine to make the low strings "pop."

A useful way to begin building your low-end vocabulary is to simply transpose familiar licks down an octave. You can use your ear to hunt and peck, but the process becomes much more efficient when you mentally organize phrases based on their relationship to the scale rather than as specific fingerings. For example, analysis of **FIGURE 1**, a blues lick fingered in its usual position, reveals that it consists of the minor third, major third, fifth, sixth and octave (b3-3-5-6-8). To play the same lick anywhere else on the neck (or in any other key), you just need to locate the major scale pattern in the new location and replicate the sequence, which is the same regardless of the key or position.

The tricky part is that there is usually more than one way to finger the same phrase. **FIGURES 2a-d** show four options. Out of context, all choices are equal, but when you surround them with other phrases, one usually emerges as the best. At first, this process of analysis is quite time consuming, but when you develop the habit of learning phrases as portable sequences rather than position-specific shapes, it speeds up dramatically.

FIGURE 3 is a 12-bar solo played exclusively on the three lowest strings. To give the notes more presence, use a middle or bridge pickup combined with an aggressive attack,

FIG. 1



FIG. 2

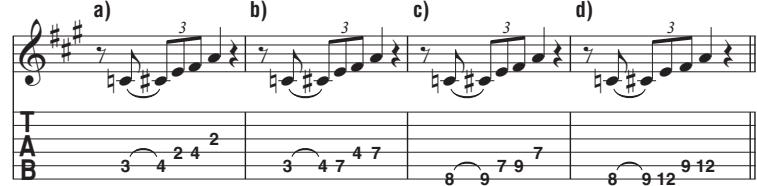
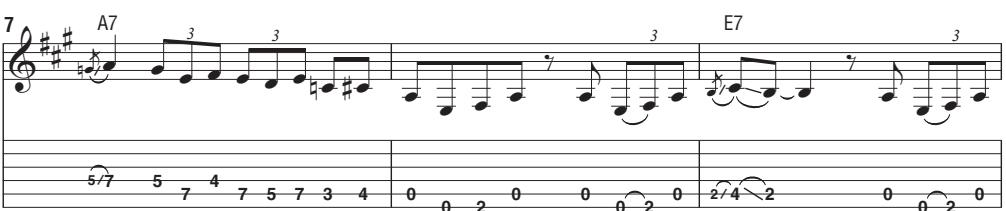
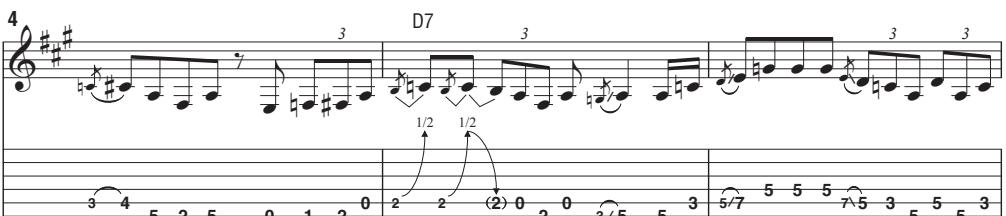
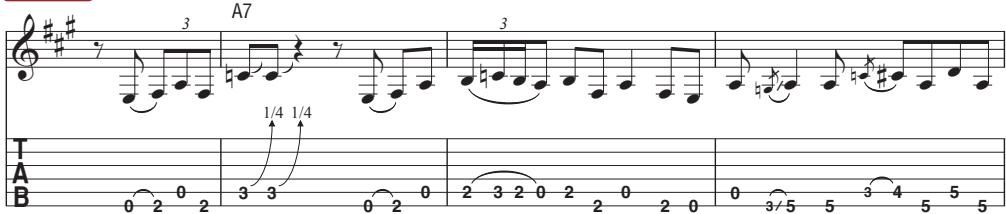


FIG. 3 medium shuffle



including bare-finger string pops. Furthermore, for additional phrasing options use open strings when available, as demonstrated in the final three bars of this example. ★



6 ACCENTED SPEECH

EMPHASIZING CERTAIN NOTES TO MAKE YOUR LICKS COME TO LIFE

THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF A BLUES

phrase—or any musical phrase, for that matter—are melody, rhythm and articulation (also known as *touch*). On the guitar, touch is a product of both hands—the fret hand executes techniques like string bending and hammer-ons, while the pick hand is primarily responsible for expressing *dynamics*, which encompass volume, intensity and tone.

To understand the importance of dynamics, consider how they influence our perception of the spoken word. A prime example is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. After hearing it once, you may not be able to quote much more than those four words, but you can't forget the dynamic intensity of the delivery. Now imagine the speech delivered by text-to-voice software. The words are the same, but they don't stick. Dynamics have the same effect on music, and if you don't manage them, a significant part of your message may be lost.

The first step in our exploration of dynamics is to pluck a familiar minor pentatonic scale pattern with your bare thumb and finger, as shown in **FIGURE 1**. An uneven attack creates dynamic variation, but with random results. Now play the scale again, this time focusing on control. Sound the first note by brushing the string with the side of your thumb, then attack the next note by hooking one of your pick-hand fingers under the string and snapping it back against the fretboard (**FIGURE 2**). Repeat the exercise using the opposite dynamic pattern (**FIGURE 3**). Now use your pick—you can still create dynamic contrast, but you also give up that breathy, barely-there brush and aggressive *snap*. The unique quality of bare fingers is why influential players like Albert King and Albert Collins opted for the no-pick approach, though *hybrid* picking—using a flatpick in tandem with the fingers—offers a compromise. Play the pattern again, alternating flatpick and bare finger for the best of both worlds.

FIGURE 4 illustrates the effect that shifting dynamics can have on a classic blues riff, akin to changing the emphasis in a sentence (e.g. *What are you looking at?* *What are you looking at?*). **FIGURE 5** illustrates a solo played over a medium-tempo

FIG. 1

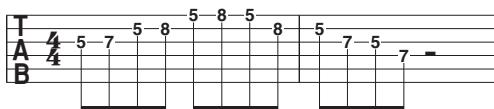


FIG. 2

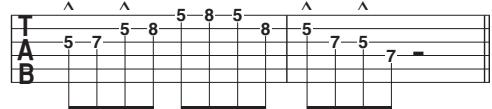


FIG. 3

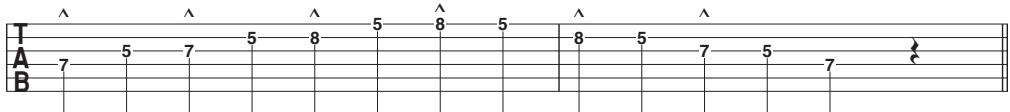


FIG. 4

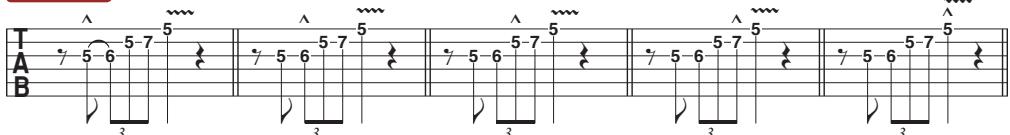
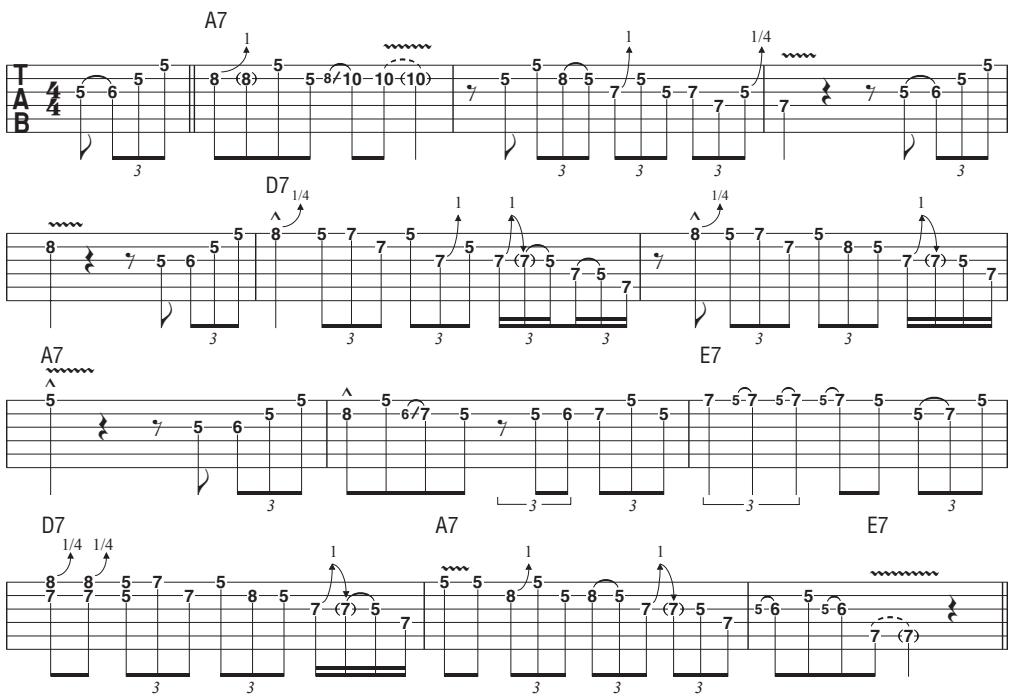


FIG. 5 Medium shuffle



shuffle feel and built around varying dynamics. The first four bars are played softly, bars 5–8 with a bit more power and bars 9–12 with a hard attack. Play with a clean tone to hear the dynamic detail, as distortion also adds compression, which limits your dynamic range.★



7 CHICKEN PICKIN'

USING YOUR PICK-HAND FINGERS TO PLUCK STRINGS AND CREATE FUNKY LICKS THAT "POP"

IN THE LAST CHAPTER WE EXAMINED THE

role of the picking hand, particularly the use of bare fingers, in creating dynamics and adding dimension to your phrasing. Early in the electric blues era, this bare-handed approach was especially popular among “down-home” (rural southern) players, who also developed a variation on bare-fingered technique called *chicken pickin’*. The musical potential of imitating hens clucking in a barnyard may be somewhat limited, but the technique also opens the door to a variety of funky, percussive phrases.

Basic chicken-pickin’ technique works as follows (FIGURE 1): holding the pick between your thumb and index finger, rest the tip of your pick-hand middle finger on the same string as the note you’re fretting. Pick the string with a downstroke of the flat pick (producing a muted *thunk*), and then pluck the string with an upstroke of your middle finger (producing the actual note). Return the middle finger to its resting position and repeat. Once you master the basic choreography, the “cluck” is enhanced when you combine chicken pickin’ with string bending.

FIGURES 2–4 show typical chicken-pickin’-style phrases. Downstrokes with the pick are indicated; the rest of the attacks are upstrokes with a bare finger (typically the middle). The first example demonstrates chicken pickin’ combined with a string bend. The second opens with several clucks on a muted string before adding a bend, and the third uses a series of half-step bends and releases for the ever-popular “crying chicken.”

Though chicken pickin’ is closely associated with traditional country music, it also meshes perfectly with another down-home staple: the funky *boogaloo* (or *soul blues*) groove that propelled many soul hits in the Sixties (FIGURE 5 is a typical rhythm example). The last example (FIGURE 6) extends the technique beyond the barnyard; when you fret the notes, press them only halfway down (flat-pick the fifth string and finger-pop the rest). The resulting half-pitch/half-percussion effect substantially increases the funk quotient of practically any lick. FIGURE 7 is a 12-bar solo over a boogaloo groove that demonstrates a variety of fine-feathered phrases.

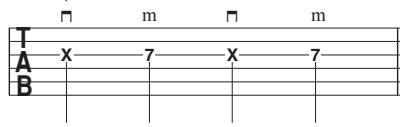
For more examples of percussive chicken-pickin’ phrasing in a blues context, check out anything by Albert Collins. Using his bare thumb and fingers to pluck the strings, he elevated string popping into one of the most distinctive electric blues styles of his generation.★

□ = downstroke w/pick

▽ = upstroke w/pick

m = pluck string w/middle finger

FIG. 1



*mute string w/pick-hand middle finger while picking

FIG. 2

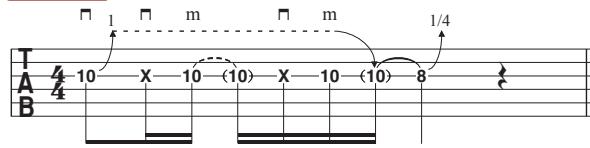


FIG. 3

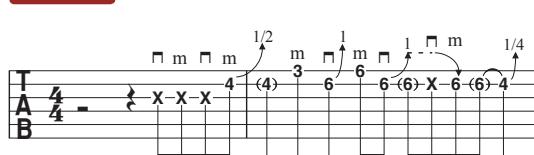


FIG. 4

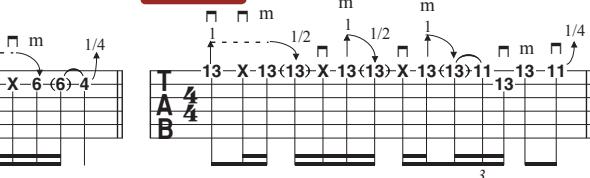
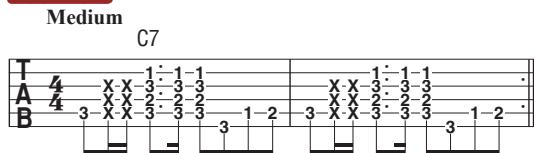


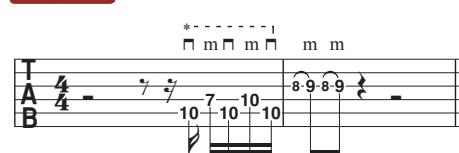
FIG. 5



Medium

C7

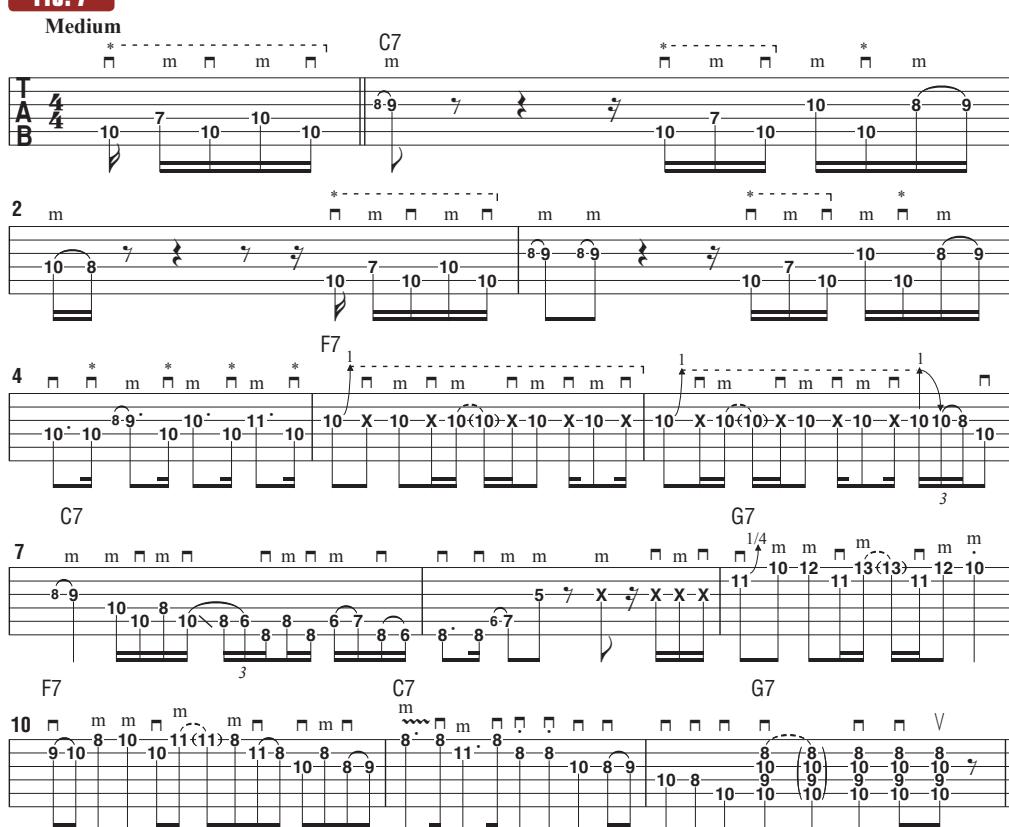
FIG. 6



*partially mute strings w/fretting fingers

*partially mute strings w/fretting fingers

FIG. 7



Medium

C7

G7

G7



8 “AIN’T GOT THAT SWING”?

CRACKING THE JAZZ-BLUES CODE, PART 1

THOUGH IN CERTAIN WAYS JAZZ AND BLUES

would seem to represent opposite musical poles—complex/rudimentary, intellectual/physical, technical/intuitive—they evolved from common sources. Now, 100 years later, they remain inseparable at heart. Over the next few lessons we’ll take a look at how to crack the jazz-blues code, beginning with a comparison of standard blues and jazz rhythm styles.

When blues and jazz were first captured on records in the early Twenties, they had much in common, including a shared *triplet shuffle*-based rhythmic feel. But it wasn’t long before the two styles began to settle around different interpretations of the shuffle. For blues, it was the *boogie shuffle*, based on the driving boogie-woogie piano style that featured heavy downbeats in the left hand alternating with prominent upbeats in the right. Adapted to the guitar, it has remained the go-to blues rhythm pattern ever since (see FIGURE 1). For jazz, it was *swing*, with a steady, light quarter-note pulse, sparse upbeats and a more “floating” feel. Assuming you’re already familiar with the blues boogie shuffle, let’s look at how to capture a swing feel.

In a classic swing rhythm section, the guitarist shadows the drummer’s *ting-ting-ting-ting-ta-ting* cymbal pattern, reinforced by the bassist’s quarter-note *walking line*. Emulate this pattern by brushing the pick lightly across muted strings and then apply the same feel to the minimal *shell voicing* rhythm in FIGURE 2. Fret each note with a separate finger, mute the unused strings, and release fret-hand pressure immediately after each pick stroke (for more on this approach, including a 12-bar shell voicing arrangement, see the November, 2009, *Talkin’ Blues* column). This “felt more than heard” swing guitar accompaniment style was epitomized by guitarist Freddie Green’s metronomic role in Count Basie’s rhythm section. (For an updated take, also check out Jimi Hendrix’s playing on “Up from the Skies.”)

In a small band, the guitar can also improvise the accompaniment (i.e. *comp*) around the singer or soloist rather than

FIG. 1 Medium shuffle

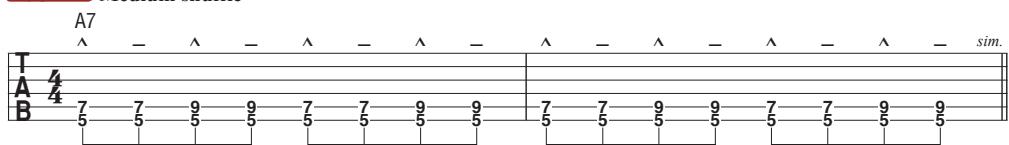


FIG. 2 Swing

FIG. 3 Swing

playing the repeating patterns typical of blues. As such, every example of comping is somewhat different, but FIGURE 3 shows a highly adaptable sample. Even while sticking to I-IV-V harmony and standard sixth and ninth chords, employing half-step anticipations (in parentheses) and a “cool” attack (i.e.

using your fingers to pluck the chords) are enough to establish a jazz vibe, and just a few eighth-note kicks amongst the whole and half notes will inject the swing.

Next time, we’ll take a more detailed look at how to form and use “uptown” chords.★



9 TAKING IT UPTOWN

JAZZ-BLUES, PART 2: EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS

A TRADEMARK OF THE BLUES STYLE IS THE

use of dominant-quality chords in place of diatonic major or minor chords. Dominant sevenths make up almost the entire harmonic vocabulary of *down-home blues*, or blues that's close to its rural origins. Jazz, however, was born in the crowded streets of New Orleans and has remained urban music ever since—in other words, *uptown*. One means of expressing this sophistication is through the use of more complex chord structures.

The first step in taking a chord *uptown* is to *extend* it, or add notes beyond the basic seventh-chord structure (1 3 5 b7). The two standard extensions are the *ninth* (an octave above the second) and the *13th* (an octave above the sixth). FIGURES 1a and 1b show a few voicings for each of these two chord types, arranged by top (melody) notes. Extensions are common in both blues and jazz. Blues artists employ them to add *uptown* flavor to the I-IV-V progression, and jazz artists use them as a starting point for more complex harmonic excursions.

Even further “*uptown*” in terms of feel are *altered* dominant chords, in which the fifth and/or the ninth are raised or lowered a half step, adding dissonance that telegraphs a chord change. Musically, the most effective way to absorb these chords is to take one sequence at a time—FIGURE 2 shows a few typical examples—and study how the alterations link the notes of one chord to the next (note that the diminished seventh chord, while technically a unique chord quality, often functions as an altered dominant [7b9] chord; both names are shown).

In blues, a similar effect is created by simply preceding the change with the chord a half step away, a trademark of electric blues pioneer T-Bone Walker. FIGURE 3 shows a 12-bar *uptown blues comp* (improvised accompaniment) using just sixth and ninth chords with half-step approaches. FIGURE 4 is a jazzier version, built around the same basic I-IV-V changes and including various extensions and alterations.

Next month, we'll take it even further *uptown* with a look at *chord substitution*. See you then. ★

FIG. 1a ninth chords

FIG. 1b 13th chords

FIG. 2 altered chords

FIG. 3 “uptown” blues comp

FIG. 4 jazz-blues comp



10

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

JAZZ BLUES, PART 3: ADDING PASSING CHORDS AND SUBSTITUTIONS TO THE 12-BAR PROGRESSION

IN THE LAST TWO LESSONS, WE COMPARED

standard blues rhythm patterns and chord structures with those of jazz blues. But the comparisons don't stop there. Where traditional blues harmony is relatively static, jazz-blues progressions routinely feature *chord substitutions* designed to create constant harmonic motion within the 12-bar framework. While the theory behind this can be daunting, the results sound quite natural in an "up-town" sort of way. Let's look at a few of the most common subs.

For reference, **FIGURE 1** illustrates a basic 12-bar blues progression in the key of C. The first substitution in the progression typically appears in bars 2 and 6, right after the IV ("four") chord and before it returns to the I ("one") (key of C: F7 to C7). (Note: In the language of blues harmony, it is understood that both these chords are dominant sevenths, their full names, I7 and IV7, typically being shortened to simply I and IV. The same holds true for other chords, such as the V, short for V7.) Here, the IV chord is swapped out for a *passing chord*: either #ivdim7 ("sharp four diminished seven") or iv7 ("four minor seven"; note that lowercase Roman numerals denote minor and diminished chords), as shown in **FIGURES 2a** and **2b**. Each of these passing chords alters the chord structure by a half step to smooth the return to the I chord. This provides what is known as *chromatic voice leading*.

In jazz harmony, dominant-seven chords are often paired with minor-seven chords to form ii-V ("two-five") progressions (ii7-V7; key of C: Dm7 to G7), a chord combination that increases the sense of anticipation for an upcoming chord change. In blues, the I7 chord (for example, C7) functions as the V ("five") of the IV chord (F7), and pairing it with that chord's ii7 chord (Gm7) sets up the change from I in bar 4 to IV in bar 5, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 3**.

Extending the ii-V idea, *ragtime*, a popular turn-of-the-century style that influenced both blues and jazz, popularized the I-VI-II-V ("one-six-two-five," all dominant sevenths) chord cycle (key of C: C7-A7-D7-G7). In a 12-bar jazz-blues progression, this usually appears first in bars 7–10 and repeats, in a compressed timeframe, in bars 11 and 12 (see **FIGURE 4**). This bluesy

FIG. 1 basic 12-bar blues progression

II:	C7		F7		C7		C7		F7		F7		C7		G7		F7		C7		C7		G7	:	V
function:	I		IV		I		I		IV		IV		I		I		V		IV		I		V		

FIG. 2a sharp-four diminished

bar: 2 | sharp-four diminished

F7 F#dim7 C7

function: IV #ivdim I

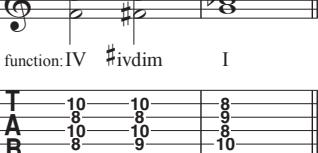


FIG. 2b four minor

bar: 2, 6 | four minor

F7 Fm7 C9

function: IV iv I

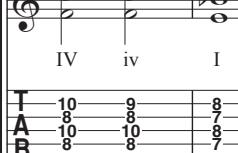


FIGURE 3 two-five of four

FIG. 3 4 | two-five of four

Gm7 C13 F9

ii/IV V/IV IV



FIG. 4 on | one-six-two-five-one

bar: 7 A7 D9 10 G13 11 C7 A7#5 12 D9 G7#5 1 C9

C7 A7 D9 G13 C7 A7#5 D9 G7#5 C9

function: I VI II V I VI II V I

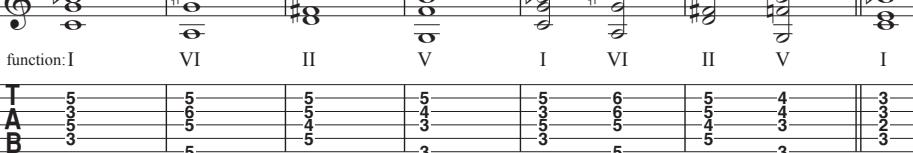
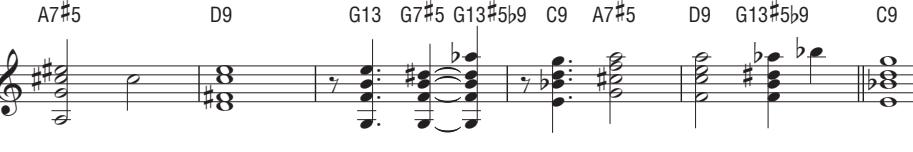


FIG. 5 "kitchen sink" comp

C13 F9 F#dim7 C9 Gm7 C13 C7b13 F9 Fm7 Fm9 C7



A7#5 D9 G13 G7#5 G13#5b9 C9 A7#5 D9 G13#5b9 C9



dominant-seventh chord cycle has a natural forward energy, like a ball rolling downhill.

FIGURE 5 compiles all these substitutions, along with typical extensions and alterations, into a single "kitchen-sink" chorus of jazz-blues accompaniment.

Still more variations in jazz-blues harmony are possible—*bebop blues*, for example, is chock-full of changes—but those covered here provide a solid introduction. Next time we'll turn to the inevitable question: "How the #&! do you play blues over this stuff?" ★

