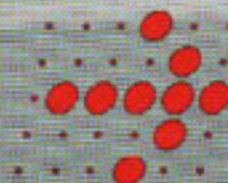


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CD included!

STEVE BAKER



BLUES HARMONICA PLAYALONGS

VOL. 1

**MEL
BAY**

STEVE BAKER

Blues Harmonica Playalongs

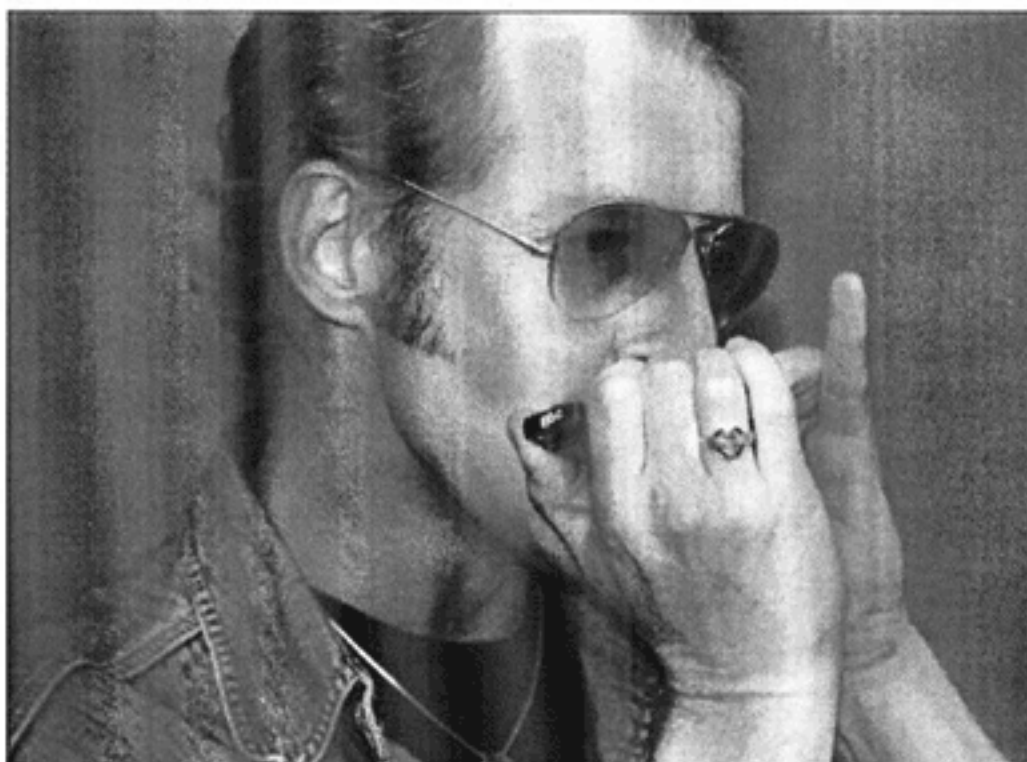
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Table of contents

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	4
------------------------	---

INTRODUCTION	5
---------------------------	----------

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK/CD PACKAGE	6
---------------------------------------	---

WHAT HARPS DO I NEED?	6
-----------------------------	---

ABOUT THE TABULATURE	7
----------------------------	---

THE SONGS	9
------------------------	----------

1. SESSION SHUFFLE	10
--------------------------	----

2. POOR BOY BOOGIE	14
--------------------------	----

3. RAINY DAY BLUES	18
--------------------------	----

4. FUNKY MARDI GRAS	22
---------------------------	----

5. STRAIGHT HARP SHUFFLE	26
--------------------------------	----

6. OFF THE TOP	30
----------------------	----

7. DOUBLECROSSED & BLUE	34
-------------------------------	----

8. WORRIED MIND	38
-----------------------	----

9. STOMPING	42
-------------------	----

10. READY TO GO	46
-----------------------	----

11. GIMME A BREAK	50
-------------------------	----

Appendix: Harmonic Theory and the Harp	55
---	-----------

INTRODUCTION	56
--------------------	----

THE MAJOR SCALE	56
-----------------------	----

HOW CHORDS ARE CONSTRUCTED FROM THE MAJOR SCALE	58
---	----

MAJOR CHORDS AND MINOR CHORDS	58
-------------------------------------	----

MINOR SCALES	59
--------------------	----

THE BLUES SCALE	60
-----------------------	----

THE MIXOLYDIAN SCALE	61
----------------------------	----

IMPROVISING OVER CHORD PROGRESSIONS	63
---	----

CROSS HARP CHORD CHARTS	66
-------------------------------	----

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Baker was born and raised in London, England, and now lives near Hamburg, Germany. He took up the harp in 1969 and has been a full-time professional since 1975. Today he is undoubtedly one of the leading blues harmonica players on the European scene, and indeed one of the finest exponents of this instrument in the world. Among harmonica fans he has earned an international reputation for his outstanding and original playing as well as his excellent books on the subject. Over the years Steve has become a kind of harmonica guru for numerous up and coming young players. His unique style is a exciting fusion of traditional blues elements with innovative melodic ideas and showcases his mastery of dynamics and tone.

In addition to frequent live duo appearances with Hamburg's blues legend Abi Wallenstein and singer/guitarist extraordinaire Chris Jones (with whom he has toured successfully in Australia, Belgium, Germany, Holland, the USA and Russia), Steve gives regular harmonica workshops. He is also much in demand as a session musician, and his concise and distinctive playing can be heard on countless record productions, TV/ film soundtracks, and jingles. He has been Hohner's international consultant for diatonic harmonicas for over ten years and is the author of "The Harp Handbook", acclaimed as the most comprehensive work on the diatonic harp published to date (distributed worldwide by Music Sales Corp.). Apart from performing, recording, writing and teaching, Steve is also active as a harmonica journalist. He has written regular features for the leading German musicians magazine "Fachblatt" as well as numerous articles for various international harmonica publications, and is currently writing a series of workshops for "Soundcheck". His recently published harmonica tuition CD-ROM was one of the first of its kind in the world.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

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(This CD was awarded the quarterly German Record Reviewers Prize)
- 1995: STEVE BAKER & CHRIS JONES – "Slow Roll", AMR 319.1070.2
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- INTERACTIVE BLUES HARP WORKSHOP CD-ROM, Steve Baker, Voggenreiter Verlag
- BLUES HARMONICA PLAYALONGS, Steve Baker, Artist Ahead Verlag

STEVE BAKER'S HOMEPAGE

www.stevebaker.de – all dates and infos at a glance!

INTRODUCTION

This collection of instrumental pieces is directed at the intermediate level diatonic harp player who is looking for practice material in a variety of modern blues styles. The titles each represent a particular type of tune and employ well-known verse structures and grooves which are used by countless bands and harmonica artists all over the world. The harp parts are chosen to illustrate typical approaches to these styles and give you the opportunity to learn exactly how the top players create their exciting sounds. This is not a “how to play the harmonica” book – it assumes a basic knowledge of the playing techniques mentioned in the text. For detailed explanations of these and other techniques see “The Harp Handbook”(Music Sales), “Blues Harping I” (Hohner/Schott) or “Interactive Blues Harp Workshop CD-ROM” (Voggenreiter), all available in English or German.

Every song on the CD can be heard in two versions: the full mix with my original harp as the lead instrument, and a playback version without harp for you to jam along to. In the book, the harp themes (not the solos) are transcribed using tabulature and musical notation plus chord charts. Each song is given a chapter to itself, containing a brief description of the piece, plus relevant background information, to help you to get a handle on the stuff more easily. I’ve tried to point out the tricky bits and comment on how the solos are structured. A practicing tip for each tune helps you master the techniques involved. A separate section (Appendix: *Harmonic Theory and the Harp*) attempts to explain musical theory and the underlying principles of harmony in terms of how they relate to the diatonic harmonica. It explores the basics of improvisation, showing which notes fit to which chords and where they are located on the instrument.



In order to really master these tunes, you need to be able to bend single notes cleanly and accurately. You will also need to learn how to hit bent notes directly (i.e. without first playing the natural note and then bending it down), if you can’t already do this. A knowledge of overblowing is not needed – I’ve used a couple in the solos, but they’re not essential to play the songs.

Rather than playing everything on one harp, I decided to fit the key of the harp to the character of the tune. You will need harps in A, C, D and F (the four most commonly used keys) in order to play everything on the CD in its original key. This reflects musical reality more closely, and helps you get accustomed to the different feel and response of harps in various keys. Most of these numbers are played in 2nd position (cross harp), but there are also examples in 1st and 3rd positions.

When performing live, many players would use a tube amp and bullet mic on songs like these. I decided against this for these recordings, as it would make the sound harder for the reader/listener to duplicate without the appropriate equipment. All the harmonica on this CD was recorded acoustically, using either Hohner Marine Band Classics or Big River Harps (MS), without any effects beyond a little compression and reverb. Of course, if you want to jam along to the playbacks through a Fender Bassman and an Astatic mic, you can, but don’t forget that sound is created in the first instance by the player. Your equipment only comes a distant second.

I hope that these titles will help those up and coming players who want to participate in sessions, sit in with bands, or simply jam along with friends at home. If you can get to grips with the different verse forms and the rhythmic and harmonic structures used here, you’ll be a lot better prepared for what you might encounter when you get up to play with other musicians. That’s the beauty

of the blues – once you get the hang of the basics, you can devote your time and energy to filling them with emotion and content, rather than getting hung up in endless technicalities. If you don't feel like learning the titles as played, you can just use the playbacks as backing tracks to play whatever you want to – of course they'll also work for any other instrument as well as the harmonica.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK/CD PACKAGE

Though it's not absolutely necessary to approach the tunes presented here in any particular order, you may find it easier to start at the beginning due to the more detailed explanations of the grooves and verse structures found in the earlier chapters. Musically speaking, some titles are slightly easier or more difficult than others, but there's no clear starting point. Before starting to learn any of them, I suggest you listen to the whole thing a couple of times first.

Select a number that appeals to you and which you feel comfortable with. Then take a look at the tabulature while listening to it, to see which harp you need and where the notes are to be found. It's a good idea to begin by playing the theme through slowly on your own at first, without using the playback as accompaniment. The text is designed to help you here by taking you through the theme step by step and explaining the more difficult parts. Take your time, and refer to the CD version every now and then to check your phrasing and intonation if you're unsure. When you feel that you've more or less got it down, try playing along with the playback. Each playback has a two bar click (usually 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4) before it to count you in. You may need to listen to this once or twice to get the hang of it.

Under each transcription I've noted the running order for the song, so that you can see how many times I played the theme, the number and sequence of the solos and so on. In most cases I play the theme once or twice at the beginning, then do a couple of solos. These are followed by a short piano or guitar solo to add variety, then another couple of harp solos (hey, this *is* a harmonica instruction CD!) before returning to the theme at the end. The endings are also noted in the transcriptions.

One thing which this package will not prepare you for is backing up a singer, as there are no vocals on the CD. It's intended to help you familiarize yourself with the verse forms and learn how to build solos over them. Accompanying singers, however, is a totally different ball game. In real life situations, this is what you'll probably find yourself doing more often than not. The main thing to remember is that it's vitally important to avoid stepping on their vocal lines, which means you can't just play any old thing which fits to the chord sequence. The first priority of any accompanist is to listen to the singer and then play things which complement the vocal without getting in the way or distracting from it. In the immortal words of Dr. John, "You got to listen to learn, you got to learn to listen"!

WHAT HARPS DO I NEED?



All these tunes are meant to be played on standard 10-hole Richter harmonicas. You can use whichever model you prefer as long as it's tuned to the Richter system. I recommend the Hohner Marine Band Classic, Special 20 Classic or Big River Harp MS. All of the other harps in the Hohner MS series are also suitable. The tempered tuning of the Hohner Golden Melody or Tombo Lee Oskar may make them sound a little rough on some of this material due to the frequent use of double

notes or chord fragments, but if you feel good playing them then go ahead! The Marine Band is often considered a difficult instrument for the beginner, because you need more air and the wooden comb can swell when wet. It has the best tone of all once you've gotten used to it, however.

The key of the harp and the position in which it's played is noted after the tabulature for each title. Whichever model or models you choose to use, you'll need them in the keys of A, C, D and F.



ABOUT THE TABULATURE

In this book I use a similar tabulature to that found in "The Harp Handbook" and other publications. Breath direction is indicated by arrows pointing up (blow) or down (draw), and bends are denoted by bent arrows, the number of heads indicating how many semitones the note is bent. This is an approximate system, but it's serviceable (*see table below*). The note and channel number are also given.

↑ = blow

↗ = blow; half tone bend

↘ = blow; whole tone bend

↗ = overblow

↓ = draw

↘ = draw; half tone bend

↘ = draw; whole tone bend

↘ = draw; 1½ tone bend

↘ = overdraw



I took my harpoon out of my dirty red bandanna,
I was blowin' sad while Bobby sang the blues

KRIS KRISTOFFERSEN

THE SONGS

SESSION SHUFFLE

- STEVE BAKER

♩ = ♩₃

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

E7

B 4 ↓

G# 3 ↓ A 4 ↑ G# 3 ↓ E 2 ↓ E 2 ↓

A7

B 4 ↓

G# 3 ↓ A 4 ↑ G# 3 ↓ E 2 ↓ E 2 ↓


B7

A 4 ↑ B 4 ↓ G 3 ↓ E 2 ↓ C# 2 ↑ G# 3 ↓ E 2 ↓

ENDING

A 4 ↑ B 4 ↓ G 3 ↓ E 2 ↓ C# 2 ↑ E 6 ↑ D 5 ↓ B 4 ↓ Bb 4 ↓ A 4 ↑ B 4 ↓ Bb 4 ↓ A 4 ↑ G 3 ↓ E 2 ↓ E 2 ↓

Form: theme
 harp solo
 harp solo
 piano solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 theme, end

	full version: playback version:	track 01 track 12
Description:		Harp:
12 bar medium-tempo shuffle in E		A harp, 2 nd position

The so-called shuffle rhythm is probably *the* classic blues beat. Its familiar loping groove is also found in other styles, but it's central to modern blues. If you're interested in this kind of music then there is simply no way around learning to shuffle. What you need to remember when playing shuffles is that they are based on eighth beat triplets – this means each bar consists of four quarter beats 1 2 3 4 etc., but each of these is subdivided into three equal parts, so that you count 1 2 3 2 2 3 3 2 3 4 2 3 and so on. This is what gives shuffles their characteristic rolling feel. Technically this rhythm is known as 12/8, but it's usually written as 4/4, with a note at the top indicating that it's played as a shuffle (*see left*). Often the first two triplets are run together, creating the Daa da Daa da effect which you hear on this title (Daa lasts twice as long as da).

The reason why you need to know this is because it plays a vital role in phrasing over shuffle rhythms – any note which doesn't come right on one of the quarter beats will fall on one of the triplets in between, usually the one before the next quarter beat (da).

Like all 12-bars, this one can be broken down into three 4-bar segments. The theme basically consists of one phrase, which is played once over the first 4 bars, is repeated over the second 4 bars, and repeated again with a slight variation over the final 4-bar sequence, ending with the so-called “turnaround”, which leads into the following verse.

Here the theme starts right on the first beat of the first bar after the drum lead-in. I hit the 4-draw slightly bent and slide straight up to the natural note, holding it for six quarter beats (count 1 2 3 4 1 2) before moving on to the second half of the phrase, which begins on 3-draw on the triplet before the next quarter beat, just as described above. The final note of the phrase (2-draw) also falls in the same way, coming just before the 1-beat of the third bar. Though the rest of the phrase is played using the lipping embouchure, I tongue block this final note. The percussive effect comes from the tongue slap (holes 1 and 2 both sound for a fraction of a second, before the tongue blocks off hole 1).

Second time around the bend on the initial note is more pronounced, but the phrase is otherwise the same. The third 4-bar segment over the V and IV chords B7 and A starts like the other two, but then goes into a slight variation to round the whole thing off. Here the second note of the phrase (A, 4-blow) comes right on the first beat of the bar instead of on the triplet before the 1 beat, as was the case with the first two riffs. Notice that this time the 3-draw is bent down a semitone, producing a G instead of an A_b note (*see practicing tip*).

The first solo starts with a lead-in over the end of the turnaround and is played on the first three holes (1-draw, 2-blow, 2-draw, 3-draw) except for the twiddly bit at the end of the verse. Most of the first 8 bars is tongue blocked except for the bends on 2-draw. The solo builds up to the next verse, and moves into a higher register, mixing tongue blocking and lipping. I play an octave interval on the IV chord in bar 5, blocking holes 4 and 5 while blowing through 3 and 6, followed by a fast jazzy run. Over the last four bars I resolve the tension by returning closer to the theme before leading into the piano solo.

After the piano solo the harp comes back in with a long trill on 4- and 5-draw, then I bend 3-draw in half tone steps down from A_b through G to G_b. This creates a neat effect, as G_b forms an E7/9 chord when played over E7. The rest of this verse is fairly low-key and jazzy before I return to the phrase used in the first solo to build on familiar ground in the last one. The final verse uses the same theme as at the beginning (slight ornamentations) and finishes with a typical blues ending played in straight eighths (1 and 2 and 3 and 4) across the triplet shuffle rhythm.

Practicing tip: Try hitting 3-draw already bent down a semitone. If you have difficulty doing this, play the natural note, then bend it down. Your throat muscles have to remember the position they take on when bending, so that you can learn to adopt the right form when playing bent notes directly. Now try to integrate this into the first part of the phrase from bar 10 in the theme.

SESSION SHUFFLE - EXERCISE 1



Take your time, choose a slow tempo and concentrate on getting the intonation and timing right before you practice with the playback. Another technique used here is playing blow octaves – you can use the tip of your tongue to block two channel openings, letting the air pass around it, through the corners of your mouth and into the two channels either side of the ones you’re blocking.

SESSION SHUFFLE - EXERCISE 2



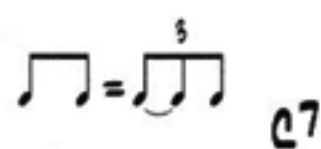


You got to listen to learn,
you got to learn to listen

DR. JOHN

POOR BOY BOOGIE

- STEVE BAKER



C7

Note: C C A C C A C G A C C C A C C A C G A C

Hole No.: 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 2

Blow / Draw: ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓

F7 **C7**

Note: C C A C C A C G A C C C A C C A C G B_b

Hole No.: 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2

Blow / Draw: ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓

G7 **F7** **C7** **G7**

Note: G G G G 4 C C

Hole No.: 1 1 1 E_b 3 2 2

Blow / Draw: ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓


ENDING

Note: G G G C C G 4 C B_b G F E G A C E 3

Hole No.: 1 1 1 2 2 E_b 3 6 5 4 4 3 4 5 6 C 2

Blow / Draw: ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓

Form: theme
 harp solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 guitar solo
 guitar solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 theme, end

	full version:	track 02
	playback version:	track 13
Description:		Harp:
12 bar fast boogie-woogie shuffle in C		F harp, 2 nd position

This style of piano-based boogie-woogie also uses the shuffle rhythm, but here it's distinctly up-tempo. The phrasing is based on the same Daa da Daa da pattern found in the previous title, but everything happens much faster. Should you ever play with a boogie-woogie pianist, you'll find they tend to do quite a lot of tunes like this!

Once again, the verse is divided into three 4 bar segments and the phrase played over the first one is simply repeated over the second. This occurs frequently in blues (both vocal and instrumental), as the different chords in the second section give the same riff a different sound. This time, however, the last 4 bars over the V and IV chords (G7 & F) leading up to the turnaround use a different phrase.

The first phrase uses only three notes in holes 1 and 2 and starts on the 2nd quarter beat of the first bar. You need to count yourself in 1 2 3 4 1 when practicing this. It lasts for two bars (i.e. you play it twice over each of the first two 4 bar sequences) and isn't particularly difficult to play if you take it slowly, so don't try playing it fast until you've grasped the rhythm of the thing. Then see how it works with the playback. Licks like these are inspired by horn riffs and the timing has to be right for them to work properly.

The second part of the theme begins with a lead-in from bar 8 to bar 9 which uses a direct whole tone bend on hole 2. If this is too difficult, you can simply omit that part and start on the first beat of bar 9 with 1-draw. Over the IV chord F in bar 10 we once again encounter the direct semitone bend on 3-draw. Here I'm actually playing a double note, adding a measure of 4-draw to the primary note E_b, which is what fattens up the sound, but this is not essential.

As in the previous title, the solo begins over the turnaround of the first verse and leads into the beginning of the second one. This is a good way of adding tension by anticipating what's coming; it makes tunes like this really move. I play around with the draw notes in holes 2 and 3 for most of the first solo verse, but change the rhythmic accent to the first beat of the bar instead of the second one, as in the theme. This kind of stuff lives from the rhythmic feel rather than from the number of notes, and is well worth practicing. The solo builds in the next verse by retaining a similar rhythmic approach but moving higher and making use of octave jumps from 6-blow to 2-draw. The third solo verse starts with a run up to 5-draw (B_b), hitting it slightly bent before sliding up to the natural note, then bending it down again. The A note you hear at this point is produced by bending 5-draw, not playing 5-blow. This creates more tension but can blow your harp out – no risk, no fun! The solo ends with a fast run up to the top end of the harp followed by a more measured descent into the guitar solo.

The harp comes back in with the same bent double note on 3- and 4-draw that occurred at the end of the theme. The trick here is to get both the intonation and the balance between the

two notes right. I hit them slightly lower than the pitch I'm actually aiming at and then glide up to the desired level before bending down again to complete the phrase. The space between these licks makes them stand out more clearly. Moving from the end of this verse into the next one, I alternate rapidly between 2-draw and 3-blow (both C). This is an effect stolen from rock & roll guitar: thank you Chuck Berry. The last solo verse uses tongue blocked riffs in the middle range, and then moves into octaves (3 hole blocks on the draw notes, 2 hole blocks on the blow notes) before returning to lipping over the IV chord for the high-end stuff. As the final theme is coming next I take things down again, so as to be in the lower register already before it starts. The tune finishes with a standard rock & roll ending which can be used in countless titles of this kind.

Practicing tip: Try this riff from the first solo verse as a constantly repeating pattern:

POOR BOY BOOGIE - EXERCISE 1

This is a good example of the principle of using a lead-in to join up two parts of a tune and can be spun out almost endlessly by adding minor variations.

If you have difficulty with the C E♭ E part on 2- and 3-draw, you can simplify this riff by playing 1-draw 2-blow 1-draw (G A G) instead:

POOR BOY BOOGIE - EXERCISE 2

You can also replace the whole tone bend on 3-draw by playing:

POOR BOY BOOGIE - EXERCISE 3

♩ = ♩♩♩

C 2 C 2 C 2 E 3 C 2 A 2 G 1 C 2 G 1 A 1 G 1

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓

The important thing is to get a hold on the groove.



If you're interested in this kind of music then there is simply no way around learning to shuffle

STEVE BAKER

RAINY DAY BLUES

- STEVE BAKER

♩ = ♩[♩]

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
Chord	G	G	D	D	G	B	D	C	D	B _♭	G
Hole No.	2	2	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	3	2
Blow / Draw	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓

Chord


Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Chord	G	B ₇	E ₇	A ₇	D ₇	G	C	G	D ₇
Note	B	B	C	B	A	G	B	B	G
Hole No.	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	2
Blow / Draw	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

ENDING

Chord

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
Chord	B	D	E	F	E	D	D _♭	C	D	B	G	B	G
Hole No.	3	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	2
Blow / Draw	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Form: theme
 solo
 solo
 solo
 solo
 theme, end

	full version:	track 03
	playback version:	track 14
Description:		Harp:
8 bar slow blues in G (expanded chords)		C harp, 2 nd position

Another common blues pattern is the 8 bar verse. In its simplest form this uses the same three chords (I, IV & V) as the standard 12 bar, but this structure is frequently expanded to include the VI and II or even III chords. As you can see from the chart, the sequence here uses all three of these chords (played major, not minor, as 7/9 chords) to create what is known as a II / V / I progression. This will probably sound pretty familiar, but it poses the soloist with very different challenges than the usual three chord blues number. Basically you need to learn which notes on the harp harmonize with these chords and which ones don't – it isn't enough to simply rely on tried and tested blues licks, because these often contain notes which will clash with the expanded chords employed here. The section on Harmonic Theory and the Harp should help you find the notes which will work. This tune uses the ubiquitous shuffle rhythm, just like the two previous ones.

The theme is deceptively simple and begins with a two note lead-in starting on the 4 before the first beat of the first bar of the verse. You have to count it in like this: 1 2 3 play. Notice that I hit 4-draw and 3-draw already slightly bent down, and slide on up to the natural pitch. This technique is incredibly important for lending definition to the notes you play and is so widespread (not only amongst harmonica players!) that it can be considered standard practice. You'll hear it on all of the tunes found on this CD. The wah-wah hand effect on these notes also adds expression. At the end of the 2nd bar I lead into the IV chord by gradually bending down 4-draw (D → D_b) before playing the C in 4-blow on the first beat of bar 3. This is followed by a legato jump from 4-draw to the semitone bend in 3-draw – you need to hit the bend directly, without first playing the natural note.

Bar 5 starts with the natural note in 3-draw (again it's hit already bent and glides rapidly up), which harmonizes with the I, III and VI chords that accompany it. You then have to bend this a whole tone down to A before hitting the root note in 2-draw over the II chord. As usual the 3-draw at the end is bent directly and slides up.

The first solo is a variation on the theme which ends with a bluesy phrase designed to lead into the next chorus one octave higher. Here the lead-in features an overblow on hole 6 (see tabs on the right) running up to the starting note B, then I drop back into the lower octave for the remainder of the verse. There's another overblow on the transition from the I chord via the III to the VI. The next chorus uses trills to accompany the first couple of chord changes (3 & 4-draw, 4 & 5-blow, 4 & 5-draw, 5 & 6-blow) before returning to single notes on the diminished chord. Over the turnaround I work my way into the upper octave to start the next verse on a semitone bend on 10-blow (B), staying in the upper register for the next few bars. Over the diminished chord I edge down again to end in the lower octave (note the tongue blocked passage leading from bar 4 to bar 5) before returning to the theme in the final chorus. The theme is played the same as at the beginning but with the addition of a couple of double notes to fatten the sound up.

G A B_b B

6 6 6 7

↑ ↓ ↑ ↓

Practicing tip: Controlled bending on hole 3 is crucial to mastering this kind of tune. Without it, you won't be able to bend up towards the natural note (here B), and you won't be able to make use of the minor third (here B_b, semitone bend) or the 2nd (here A, whole tone bend). Try these exercises:

RAINY DAY BLUES - EXERCISE 1

B 3 A 3 G 2 A 3 B 3 A 3 G 2 A 3 G 2

RAINY DAY BLUES - EXERCISE 2

B 3 B_b 3 A 2 G 3 G 3 A 3 B_b 2 B 3 G 2

It's important to learn both to play these notes as clearly defined intervals and to slide from one to the next through the space in between. Refer to the final chart in the Appendix *Harmonic Theory and the Harp* for tips on which notes will sound good over the II, III and VI chords (the alternative versions).



You can call it what you wanna
but I call it messing with the kid

JUNIOR WELLS

FUNKY MARDI GRAS

- STEVE BAKER

A7

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

A 6 ↑
G 5 ↓
E 4 ↓
E 4 ↓
C 3 ↓
A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓
E 4 ↓
D 4 ↑
C 3 ↓
A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓

D7

A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓
D 4 ↑
C 3 ↓
A 2 ↓
A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓

A7

C 3 ↓
D 4 ↑
E 4 ↓
C 3 ↓
A 2 ↓
C 2 ↓
D 4 ↑
E 4 ↓
A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓
D 4 ↑
C 3 ↓
A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓


E7 D7 A7 E7

E 4
E 1 ↓
F# 5
F# 2 ↑
A 6
A 3 ↑
A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓
D 4 ↑
C 3 ↓
A 2 ↓

ENDING

A 2 ↓
G 2 ↓
A 2 ↓
D 4 ↑
C 3 ↓
E 4
E 1 ↓
E 4
E 1 ↓
E 4
E 1 ↓
E 4
E 1 ↓
E 4
E 1 ↓
G 5
A 2 ↓
A 6
A 3 ↑

Form: Theme
harp solo
harp solo
bass solo
guitar solo
harp solo
theme, end

	full version:	track 04
	playback version:	track 15
Description:		Harp:
Funky medium tempo 12 bar in A		D harp, 2 nd position

This title has a different feel from those which came before, as it doesn't use the shuffle rhythm. Funky tunes like this are based on 16th beats, which means that you have to count them 1 2 3 4 2 2 3 4 3 2 3 4 4 2 3 4 and so on. This is a great beat to solo over, but it tends to lead you away from standard harp licks. I always think saxophone when playing this kind of material. Once again, precise timing is most important, as your lines aren't going to swing at this tempo otherwise.

The theme starts with a harp and drum lead-in to the verse – count 1 2 3 4 1 2 when using the playback – which contains two semitone bends. If you like, you can leave these out. You can play 4-blow instead of the bend on 4-draw, and 3-draw as a natural note without bending. It sounds better played as it's written, though!

The theme proper confronts you straight away with the knotty problem of the whole tone bend on 2-draw. Practice! This really is the most important hole on the harp, both as a natural note and as a bend. Notice that I don't slide from the bend back up to the natural note, but leave a short pause and then accent the natural note with a hand "wah". The next part of the phrase uses a direct semitone bend on 3-draw, which is actually a double note. The second half of the riff in bars 3 and 4 is similar but slightly shorter. This four bar riff is repeated with slight variations in bars 5 to 8 before using the 2-draw bend to lead into octaves over the V and IV chords in bars 9 and 10. At the end of the verse the initial phrase is quoted again to take you to the turnaround.

The syncopated feel of the theme sets the mood for the solos that follow – the choice of individual notes is less important than the phrasing, which is firmly rooted in the 16th beat rhythm. I use a combination of major pentatonic and blues scales as the modal basis for improvising here (*see practicing tip*), starting fairly sparsely and increasing note density over the two choruses. The harp plays through the turnaround at the end of the second solo, ending with a break on the first beat of the bass solo which follows.

I go back to more conventional blues phrasing after the guitar solo, holding a long and gradually bent up note with fairly heavy vibrato and then chopping it off with some syncopated licks before the change to the IV chord. In bars 7 and 8 I drop in a horn riff played in octaves before finishing the solo with the lead-in to the theme found at the very beginning of the song. Second time around the theme is slightly different, but the feel is the same – like I said, the phrasing is the thing with this kind of stuff. As long as you use the two modes shown below as your melodic basis, you can't go far wrong. The ending is a typical funky soul device (thank you JB) which is played in octaves.

If you're seeking inspiration for playing this type of tune, traditional harmonica stylists are of little help as most of them don't often venture into this kind of territory (dunno why, it's a natural for the instrument). Try funky R&B/jazz saxophonists such as Junior Walker, Maceo Parker or Manu Dibango, as they are all masters of snappy phrasing and have great melodic ideas which can often be adapted to the harp comparatively easily.

Practicing tip: Major pentatonic exercise:

FUNKY MARDI GRAS - EXERCISE 1

A F# E C# B A F# E F# A B C# E F# A B A
6 5 4 3 3 2 2 1 2 2 3 3 4 5 6 6 6
↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑

Blues scale exercise:

FUNKY MARDI GRAS - EXERCISE 2

A G# E E D# C# A G# A C# D# E E G# A B A
6 5 4 4 4 3 2 2 2 3 4 4 4 5 6 6 6
↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

Both these exercises are arranged so that you can play them as repeating patterns in a 4/4 rhythm. For the pentatonic scale you only need one bent note – a whole tone bend on 3-draw – but you need to learn to play it both as part of a descending and of an ascending sequence. The blues scale is more demanding, as it contains three bent notes including the difficult whole tone bend on 2-draw. Once again it's really important to learn this both descending and ascending. When you feel comfortable with these two modes, try combining them. This is the basis for an enormous amount of blues, jazz and rock improvisation on all instruments, not just the harmonica.

Don't start me to talking —
I'll tell everything I know

RICE MILLER
(Sonny Boy Williamson II)



STRAIGHT HARP SHUFFLE

- STEVE BAKER

8va

SLAP

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

A 4

E 3

A 4

G 3

E 2

D 2

C₂ 2

A 1

A 4

E 2

G 3

E 3

D7

SLAP

A 4

E 3

A 4

G 3

E 2

D 2

C₂ 2

A 1

A 4

E 2

G 3

A 4

A₂ 4

E7

D7

A7

E7

B 4

G₂ 3

E 2

E 3

F₂ 3

E 2

A 4

G 3

E 2

D 2

E 2

D 2

C₂ 2

D 2

C₂ 2

A 1

ENDING

8va

A 4

G 3

E 2

D 2

C₂ 2

A 1

A 10

G 10

E 9

E₂ 9

C 8

E 9

E₂ 9


C 8

A 10

E 9

G 10

A 10

Form:	theme	 full version: 05 playback version: 16	
	harp solo		
	harp solo	Description:	
	piano solo		
	harp solo	Harp:	
	harp solo	Heavy medium tempo 12 bar shuffle in A	
	theme, end		
		A harp, 1 st position	

This style of 1st position “straight harp” is very popular among modern blues harmonica players, though its origins are much older. Its most prominent characteristic is that almost everything takes place either in the bottom octave (holes 1-4) or in the top octave (holes 7-10), in contrast to 1st position folk styles, which mostly involve the middle octave (holes 4-7). The reason for this apparent anomaly is very simple: the middle octave contains a complete major scale in 1st position, but the notes which can be produced by bending do not correspond to the missing “blue notes” minor third, diminished fifth and minor seventh (here C, E \flat and G). It’s possible to obtain these notes by overblowing, but the classic blues stylists were not familiar with this technique. This means that the middle octave remains stubbornly major key and folky, so it will almost never sound right in blues.

In both upper and lower octaves, this is not the case – all three blue notes in 1st position can be reached in the high register by means of blow bending, and all except the minor third (here C) can be produced by draw bending in holes 2 and 3 in the lower register. This fact basically defines the style. However, the playing techniques needed in each register are fundamentally different. Anyone who can bend draw notes shouldn’t have too many difficulties with the bottom octave in 1st position, but blow bending at the top end of the harp is another story.

The theme starts on the first beat of bar 1 with the root note A in 4-blow. I used the tongue block embouchure quite a lot on this title, and the percussive effect created by the tongue slap adds drive. The hand “wah” is also important to give this first note definition. A semitone bend on 3-draw follows (the first blue note!) and the phrase also contains the whole tone bend on 2-draw. Note the rapid octave jump from 1-blow to 4-blow. The two notes before the chord change are both approached as direct bends from below, which helps them sound more forceful. This entire phrase is simply repeated over the second 4 bar segment. Then the harp leads up to the V chord and the theme ends with some tricky bending on 2-draw heading down to the bottom A in 1-blow. You don’t have to worry about the ornamentations – just play the same lick here as at the end of the first two phrases and it’ll work fine.

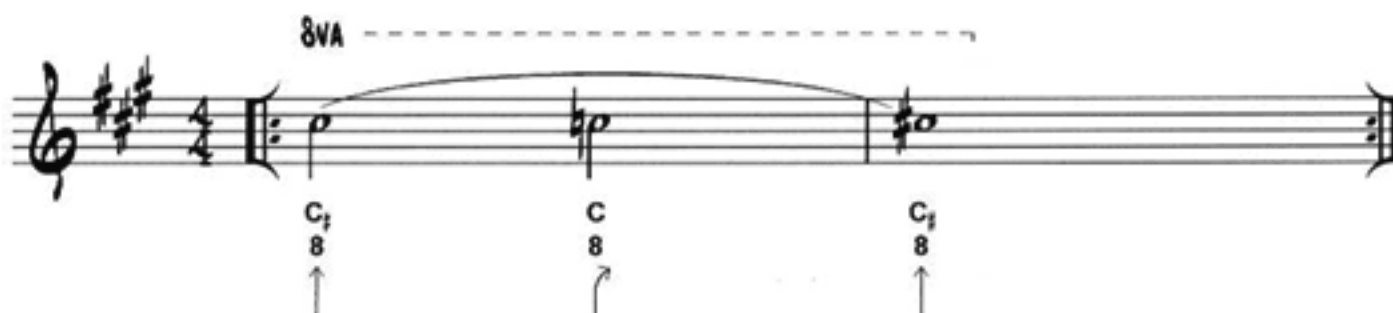
The first solo starts with the semitone bend on 3-draw and uses the same notes as the theme, remaining in the bottom octave. For the second solo, however, I jump directly to the upper register (9-blow) and make extensive use of the blow bends in holes 7-10. This entire chorus contains only two short draw notes, everything else is blown. After the piano solo you get in effect the same two verses again but with slight variations such as the blow bend trill on holes 8 and 9 which is bent down over the change from I to IV chord in the final solo. The theme is repeated in the last verse and the ending is played using blow bending in the top octave once again.

Practicing tip:

Blow bending is a knotty problem for very many players. I'd like to point out a couple of aspects of this technique which may help make it more accessible. First of all, whether tongue blocking or lipping, the embouchure is slightly different from that used when draw bending in the lower register. This is because the high notes are produced by short, stiff reeds vibrating extremely fast, which require considerably less air in comparison to lower pitched reeds, but under much higher pressure.

The secret of blow bending is to maintain the necessary pressure while adopting the smaller mouth space which notes with such short wavelengths need to resonate. I press down with the upper lip, don't take the harp so far into my mouth and move the tongue forward. A good seal between your lips and the harp is of absolutely vital importance here. The "silent vowels" needed for these bends are more like "oui oui" than the "aaah oooh" forms used when bending low notes. The way to increase pressure is not simply to blow harder but to narrow the lip opening. This will automatically give you more pressure.

It can also be extremely tiring on the lips, so don't overdo it! The easiest keys of harp to learn this technique on are G or A – it works on high keys too, but is considerably more difficult. Start on hole 8 or 9 before trying the top hole and use an old harp until you get the hang of it.

STRAIGHT HARP SHUFFLE - EXERCISE 1**STRAIGHT HARP SHUFFLE - EXERCISE 2**

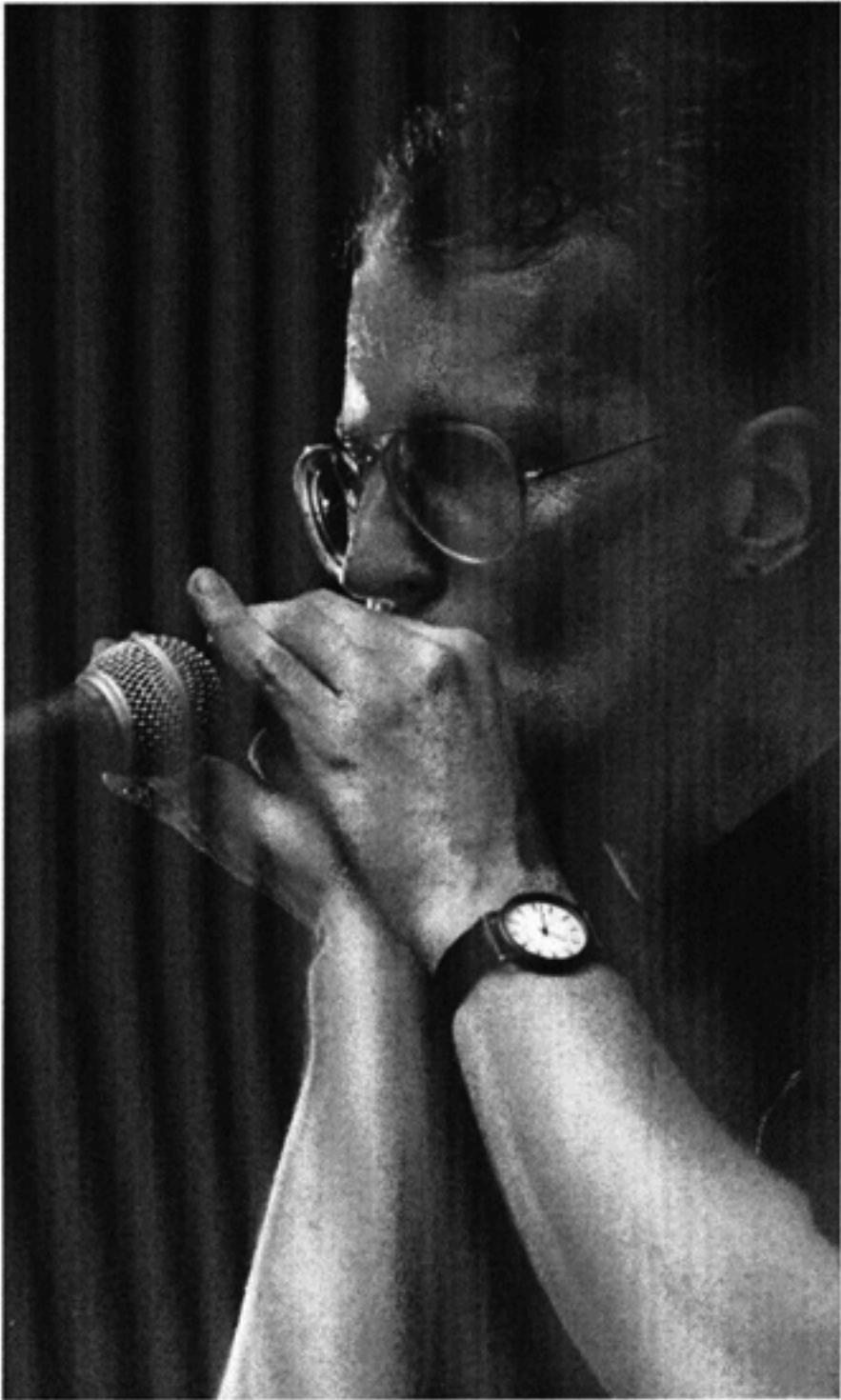
STRAIGHT HARP SHUFFLE - EXERCISE 3

8VA -----

E 9 E 9 C 8 A 7 C 8 A 7

I would rather see you
sleeping in the ground

SAM MYERS



OFF THE TOP

- STEVE BAKER

3

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

D 1
E 2
G 2
G 2
G 2
A 3
B₃ 3
A 3
B₃ 3
A 3
G 2
E 2
D 1
G 2
G 2
G 6
G 3

G7 C7 G7

G 6
G 3

D 1
E 2
G 2
G 2
G 2
A 3
B₃ 3
A 3
B₃ 3
A 3
G 2
E 2
D 1

G7

G 2
G 2
G 6
G 3
G 6
G 3

B₃ 3
G 2
B₃ 3
A 3
B₃ 3

E_b7 D7 G7 D7

G 2
B₃ 3
A 3
G 2
A 3
B 3
G 2
E 2
D 1
E 2
G 2
D 1

ENDING 

Staff 1: E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$

Staff 2: E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$

Staff 3: E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$ E_b7 $D7$


Fingering:

Staff 1: B_b 3, G 2, B_b 3, A 3, B_b 3, G 2, B_b 3, A 3, D 4

Staff 2: B_b 3, D 4, C 4, B_b 3, C 4, D 4, B_b 3, D 4, C 4, G 6, E 5, G 6, A 6, G 6, A 6

Staff 3: B_b 6, A 6, G 6, A 6, G 6, E 5, G 2, B_b 3, C 4, D 4, C 4, D 4, C 4, B 3, D 4, E 5, G 6, D 4, G 2

Form: theme
 theme
 harp solo
 harp solo
 guitar solo
 piano solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 theme, end

	full version:	track 06
	playback version:	track 17
Description:		Harp:
12 bar Medium swing shuffle in G		C harp, 2 nd position

Although it's another shuffle, this title has a slightly jazzy quality which comes from the walking bass line and swing beat. It features different chord changes (2× E_b7/D7) in bars 9 and 10 than the usual V / IV progression. These are also “pulled” one eighth beat triplet before the quarter beat and help to give the tune a slightly different rhythmic and melodic character. However, this style of song also frequently uses the expanded chord sequence (II V I) found in “Rainy Day Blues” on this CD. Swing shuffles are usually played with a fairly laid back feel in comparison to standard blues shuffles.

The theme starts on the triplet immediately before the first beat of bar 1 – the second note actually falls on the beat. This phrase makes use of two different bends in 3-draw, both of which have to be played directly, without playing the natural note first. The A in bar 1 should be approached legato, which means you need to proceed from the natural note in 2-draw straight to the whole tone bend in 3-draw without a pause in between. In bar two the theme alternates between the semitone bend and the whole tone bend in 3-draw (B_b and A). This is quite tricky – the first time each note is tongued to accent it, but the second time the transition from B_b to A is legato. This is what gives the phrase its rhythmic quality, so if you don't play it like that it won't sound the same. In bars 3 and 4 the harp completes the riff by playing in octaves over the syncopations laid down by the rhythm section. This entire phrase is repeated in the second 4 bar segment before we come to the chord changes in bars 9 and 10 mentioned above. Here you need to hit the same two direct bends in 3-draw one eighth beat triplet before the beat. It may take some time to learn how to do this smoothly, but listening closely to the playback (the snare drum plays the same pattern) should make it easier to get the timing right, and the exercises in the practicing tip shown below will help you with the bends.

The theme is repeated with slightly more attack (couple of double notes, somewhat louder) in the next verse. The first solo is fairly simple and sparse, sticking close to the chord progression and leaving plenty of space. Notice the sequence 4-draw (semitone bend) / 4-blow / 3-draw (semitone bend) over the E_b7 / D7 changes in bars 9 and 10. The second solo uses chromatic runs (couple of overblows) over the first four bars before reverting to a trill on 4- and 5-draw over the IV chord in bars 5 and 6. I play the overblow in hole 6 (B_b) to harmonize with the E_b7 chord (same note as 3-draw semitone bend – see theme – but an octave higher) and finish the solo playing the root note in octaves (3- & 6-blow) to lead into the guitar and piano solos.

The harp comes back on 3-draw, first as a natural note and then bending it down a whole tone. This A note is the ninth scale degree in G and gives a jazzy effect by creating a 7/9 chord together with the accompaniment. In the 2nd bar I then bend it up to B_b (semitone bend), the 7th in the IV (C7) chord playing behind it. Check the combination of hand wahs and controlled bending right through the second half of this chorus – they lend the harp a sort of muted trumpet quality which is very effective. The next solo starts with some typical blues phrasing, alternating between the bend

and the natural note on 4-draw. On the IV chord I move up to hole 6 and slip in a couple of overblows (B₃ note over C7 chord) before easing down to the lower register again. The final solo uses double notes, trills and octaves (both 2- and 3-hole blocks) to fatten things up a bit and ends on the root note 2-draw with a heavy vibrato. This is followed by the closing theme, which I play quite a bit softer than the solo which preceded it. The ending repeats the E_b7/D7 sequence twice, while the harp moves up a third or a fourth with each repetition. This is followed by a break, which the harp plays through in straight eighth beats (rather like the ending on track 1) and a slight ritardando (slowing down) at the end. Over the final chord I'm playing fifths, blocking hole 3 and drawing on holes 2 and 4.

Practicing tip: Try playing this sequence as a loop, using the same shuffle beat as in the song:

OFF THE TOP - EXERCISE

Legend: $\text{slur over two notes} = \text{triplet}$

Notes and Fingerings:

Note	Fingering	Bend
B ₃	3	down
G ₂	2	down
A ₃	3	down
G ₂	2	down
E ₂	2	up
G ₂	2	down
B _{b3}	3	down
G ₂	2	down
A ₃	3	down
G ₂	2	down
E ₂	2	up
D ₁	1	down
G ₂	2	down

You need to play it both legato (no pauses between the notes) and as clearly separated notes. The easiest way to do this is to accent the single notes with your tongue (t-t-t-t) against the inside of your upper row of teeth, assuming you still have the good fortune to possess them. When playing legato, try to define the starting and finishing point of each tone with your breath, from the diaphragm, rather than with your tongue. It's important to develop your listening skills to the point where you can immediately hear the difference between 3-draw as a natural note (B), a semitone bend (B_b) and a whole tone bend (A). A keyboard or guitar is useful as a point of reference when working on ear training.

DOUBLECROSSED & BLUE

- STEVE BAKER

8mi7 G7 8mi7 F#7

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

F# 6 F 6 E 6 D 5 B 4 A 4 D 5 B 4 E 2 D 2 B 1

8mi7 Emi7 G7 F#7

B 4 D 5 B 4 D 5 E 6 F 6 E 6 D 5 E 6 E 6 F# 6 D 5 B 4


8mi7 F#7 8mi7 F#7

B 4 E 2 D 2 B 4 D 5 C# 5 E 6

G7 F#7 8mi7 Emi7 8mi7 F#7

D 5 F# 6 C# 5 E 6 B 4 A 4 B 4 A 4 F# 3 E 2 D 2 D 5 B 4

Form: Theme
solo
solo
solo, end

	full version:	track 07
	playback version:	track 18
Description:		Harp:
Slow 12 bar shuffle in B minor		A harp, 3 rd position

Blues in minor keys can have a particularly compelling quality, but it demands subtlety and restraint on the part of the player to deliver this. One of the most popular methods of performing minor key numbers on the harp is to use the 3rd position, the first minor mode, in contrast to the more major key characters of the first two positions. One of the great masters of this style was the late George “Harmonica” Smith, who pioneered this approach in the mid-fifties. There are a few points about 3rd position playing in minor keys which it’s useful to bear in mind.

First of all, the natural notes of the harp in 3rd position give you a so-called dorian scale, a predominantly minor scale with one note which is unmistakably major: the sixth scale degree, to be found in 3- and 7-draw (here A_b). This can be very useful when playing in 3rd position over major chords (*see title 10*, “Ready to go”), but gets in the way on numbers like this one, where both tonic (I) and subdominant (IV) chords are minor. If you listen closely to the CD, you’ll notice that I hardly play this note at all. That’s because it would clash harshly with the harmonic structure of the piece, which demands a minor sixth (here G) due to the Em and G7 chords. The easiest way to deal with such situations is to stick to the blues scale (*see practicing tip*), as you can’t really then go wrong. Indeed, this piece is entirely based on the blues scale.

Though 3rd position playing is easiest in the middle octave (holes 4 - 8), it’s important to learn to use the bottom octave as well, in order to really get the most out of it. Once again, good control of the bends in 2- and 3-draw is essential to be able to do this, as you have to keep your tonal center firmly in the 3rd position mode. The practicing tip also shows the blues scale in the lower register.

Though the chord sequence is basically a standard minor 12 bar, a G7 chord is substituted for the normal IV chord Em in bars 2, 6 and 10. This permits some interesting melodic possibilities. The theme starts on the first beat of the bar with the F_♯ note in 6-draw (the fifth in the tonic chord Bm); after holding it over the entire bar, I bend it down a semitone to F over the G7 chord in bar 2. F is the 7th in G, so this simple trick creates a lot of tension. Over the F_♯7 chord in bar 3 the harp drops down to the E in 2-draw – the 7th note of that chord – before bending it down a whole tone and moving directly on to the root note B in hole 1. From there I jump straight up one octave to 4-draw by means of a tongue slap. This is a very useful 3rd position lick which can be worked into all kinds of tunes. Bar 5 also starts with a tongue slap on 5-draw. The next couple of bars use blues scale phrasing, dropping down to 2-draw in the same way as in bar 3, then bending it, before jumping straight back up to 4-draw without playing the bottom root note in 1-draw. The final 4 bars use trills over the F_♯7 and G7 chords, and the closing riff is similar to the ones at the same point in the first two 4 bar sequences.

The solos that follow are all firmly based on the blues scale in Bm. The first one starts with a couple of bluesy bends on 6-draw, then I run up through the scale notes to the 4th degree in the upper octave (9-blow, E) over the change to the IV chord before dropping back to the middle and lower octaves for the remainder of the verse. The next chorus begins with a phrase using tongue blocked octaves on both draw (holes 4&8 and 5&9) and blow notes (holes 5&8). This involves switching from a 3 hole block on the draw notes to a 2 hole block on the blow notes, which means

you have to change the part of your tongue used to cover the channel openings. This is worth practicing, as it can be used in many different situations and is equally useful in 2nd position. Then more bluesy phrasing in the middle and lower registers.

Notice that the sequence 2-draw whole tone bend / 1-draw / 4-draw, involving the octave jump from hole 1 to hole 4, keeps cropping up in various different variations here.

The final verse is similar in parts to the theme at the beginning, but the first few bars are played one octave lower, giving it a darker feel. Note the bend on 3-draw during the transition from bar 8 to bar 9: it starts on the whole tone bend, drops to the three semitone bend and then slides back up again ($F_{\sharp}-F-F_{\sharp}$). The song ends with a trill on holes 4- & 5-blow, the 7th and 9th notes respectively in the Bm chord.

Practicing tip:

Try playing the blues scale in 3rd position shown in the tabulature as a loop. Start in the middle octave – this is fairly easy, as you only need to bend 6-draw down one semitone. The rest of the scale uses only natural notes in this register. When you feel confident playing this both as an ascending and a descending scale, move down to the lower register and try to play the same sequence of notes an octave lower. This is a lot more demanding, as in addition to the difficult whole tone bend in 2-draw you also need to master the three semitone bend *and* the whole tone bend in 3-draw. It's important to realize that there is a major difference between the mouth and throat shapes needed to play the lowest possible bend in these channels (2-draw: whole tone bend; 3-draw: 3 semitone bend), and the shapes required for bending less than the maximum amount. Don't try to force the notes down, just take your time and try to find the right shapes in the throat. These bends are created way down at the base of the tongue, not at the front of the mouth. They cannot be played by simply drawing harder, so don't overdo the air pressure or you'll just damage your harp. Listen to George Smith's recordings for inspiration here and don't despair! Once you can hit these notes at will, 3rd position harp should hold no more terrors for you.

DOUBLECROSSED & BLUE - EXERCISE 1

B D E F F \sharp A B D B A F \sharp F E D B A B

4 5 6 6 6 7 8 9 8 7 6 6 6 5 4 4 4

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓

DOUBLECROSSED & BLUE - EXERCISE 2

B D E F F# A B D B A F# F E D B A B

1 2 3 2 3 3 4 4 5 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 1 1 1

↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Tabs in [brackets] = alternative



Gimme that harp, boy,
ain't no fat man's toy

DON VAN VLIET
(Captain Beefheart)

WORRIED MIND

- STEVE BAKER

Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
G	1	↓
A	2	↑
C	2	↓
E	3	↓
E _b	3	↓
D	3	↓
C	2	↓
G	1	↓
A	2	↑
C	2	↓
E	3	↓
E	3	↓
E	3	↓
E _b	3	↓
D	3	↓

Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
C	2	↓
E _b	3	↓
E _b	3	↓
D	3	↓
C	2	↓
A	2	↑
G	1	↓
E	3	↓
G	1	↓
A	2	↑
E	3	↓
A	2	↑
C	2	↓
B _b	2	↓
B	2	↓


Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
G	1	↓
B	2	↓
G	4	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
E _b	3	↓
D	3	↓
C	2	↓
A	2	↑
G	1	↓
E	3	↓
C	2	↓
E _b	3	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
C	2	↓
E _b	3	↓
C	2	↓
B _b	2	↓
B	2	↓
G	1	↓

ENDING

Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
G	1	↓
B	2	↓
G	4	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
F	4	↑
G	4	↓
B _b	5	↓
G	4	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
F	4	↑
E _b	3	↓
C	2	↓

Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
C	2	↓
C	6	↑
B _b	5	↓
A	5	↑
G	4	↓
G _b	4	↓
F	4	↑
E	3	↓
G	4	↓
A	5	↑
C	6	↑
E _b	3	↓
D	3	↓

Form: Theme
solo
solo
theme, end

	full version:	08
	playback version:	19
Description:		Harp:
Classic slow 12 bar blues in C		F harp, 2 nd position

The slow 12-bar in the style of B. B. King is one of the most popular type of blues standards. This one is a normal 12-bar shuffle with an early IV chord in bar 2. Though tunes like this are generally associated with the guitar, they are also great for harp – there’s so much space! For that very reason, however, it’s necessary to pay especially close attention to your intonation and timing when playing this sort of title – mistakes are much more noticeable than is the case with up-tempo numbers. The theme starts with a shuffle triplet lead-in to the first beat of bar 1 – you count it in 1 2 3 2 2 3 3 2 3 and begin on 4. The drums play exactly the same figure, which makes it easier.

The long E note in bar 1 (3-draw) has a hint of a double note to it (a little air is flowing through hole 4 at the same time), as does the E_b leading into bar 2. This semitone bend is gradually bent further down to the whole tone bend (D) before sliding straight to 2-draw (C) for the first beat of bar 2. This sounds simple when you hear it, but it takes practice and concentration to make it work. The first phrase is repeated in bar 3 with a slight variation, then at the end of the bar I bend the E in semitone steps down to the whole tone bend D, which is held for most of bar 4. This note is the 9th scale degree in C and creates a C7/9 chord together with the backing.

On bar 5 this tension is resolved by a long C note on 2-draw. Bar 6 sees a similar figure to that already encountered at the end of bar 1, using the semitone bend in 3-draw and then bending it further down, before returning to the familiar E in 3 draw for bar 7. At the end of bar 8 there is a neat lead-in to the V chord in bar 9: first I play the whole tone bend on hole 2, then the semitone bend in the same channel (B_b→B). These are followed by the root note of the V chord G (1-draw) on the first beat of bar 9. From there I go back to the semitone bend in hole 2 and then jump directly to 4-draw followed by 4-blow (octave note and 7th in the V chord G7). On bar 10 the phrase is similar to the one in bar 6 and the lead-in to the V chord on the turnaround uses the same notes as already mentioned above in bars 8-9. Throughout this verse I use hand “wahs” to add emphasis to the individual notes. That’s an awful lot of words to describe a single 12-bar chorus, but the simplicity of pieces like this is deceptive!

The first solo begins with a trill on 4- & 5-draw, which is initially hit bent down. Over the change from I to IV chord I also bend it down briefly and allow it to slide back up again. Then a double note on the same channels is followed by a jump from 3-draw to 6-blow and 5-draw to accentuate the C7 chord in bar 4. The second 4 bar segment starts with faster phrases before leading to another bent trill (this time on 3- & 4-draw). The final 4 bars continue with simple, clear phrases, all of which use the notes of the blues scale, much as in the theme. Sometimes I tongue block single notes (especially 2-draw) to vary the sound.

The second solo starts by bending the root note C in 2-draw in semitone steps down to B_b and giving the individual notes some heavy “wah”. After the trill on 5- and 6-draw at the end of bar 4 I lead into the second 4 bar block using octaves and tongue slaps in the upper octave (2- and 3-hole blocks again!), then return to the blues scale phrasing found elsewhere in the piece. On the V chord in the turnaround, both harp and band lower the volume to take things down and create a more intimate atmosphere for the final theme. Notice the variation in bars 5 - 8: the tongue blocked passage

over the IV chord followed by the bent trill on 3- & 4-draw. I also play a different bluesy lick over the IV chord in bar 10 directly before the ending. For the final note I bend 3-draw down a whole tone to get the 7/9 chord effect again on the ending.

Practicing tip: Pieces like this really show the importance of controlled intonation and precise bending. Once again, the critical notes are to be found in holes 2- and 3-draw. When practicing, it's useful to play these notes as long and drawn out as your lung capacity permits, because then you have more time to listen to your intonation and your control over modulating it, as well as concentrating on tone. Tone is definitely the single most significant factor in expressive playing, and the importance of working on it cannot be over-emphasized. Start by playing the E note in 3-draw and holding it as long as you can. Listen to the pitch of the note: – does it remain constant or is it fluctuating? – Does it have a pleasant sound? – Can you add a vibrato to make it sound smoother?

The idea is that the note should resonate within your vocal tract, which means that the mouth and throat have to adopt a form which corresponds to the frequency of the note in question, and act as a resonance chamber for the wave form. You can actually feel this when it occurs, and the tone becomes fuller and more powerful. The vocal tract is also where most vibrato is created by rhythmically contracting and expanding the opening of the larynx. Next try gradually bending this note down in a glissando (slide), passing through the semitone bend E_b, and continuing to the whole tone bend D. Hold this note for as long as you can, trying to maintain a constant pitch.

WORRIED MIND - EXERCISE 1

E 3
E_b 3
D 3
D 3
E_b 3
E 3

Now try this riff from the IV chord in the final theme:

WORRIED MIND - EXERCISE 2



This is a great standard lick which can be used in many situations. Take your time and concentrate on getting the intonation of the individual notes right. Few things convey musical tension more effectively than a well controlled slide, and you'll never regret the time spent learning to play them.

Everyday
I have the blues

B. B. KING



STOMPING

- STEVE BAKER

E

Note
Hole No.
Blow / Draw

E C_# B E C_# B E E C_# B E E C_# B E C_# E

2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 2

↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓

A **E**

G E G E G E G C_# E C_# B E E C_# B E C_# E E C_# B E B D E

3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 1 2 2

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

B **A** **E** **B**

B B E E A G G G E G G E C_# B G E C_# B E B C_# B B C_# B

1 1 2 2 4 3 3 3 2 3 3 2 2 1 3 2 2 1 2 1 2 1 1 2 1

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓


ENDING

B, B B, A G E C_# B E₆ E₆ B₄ C_#5 B₄ A G, B C_# E₆

4 4 4 4 3 2 2 1 E₃ E₃ B₁ C_#2 B₁ 4 3 4 5 E₃

↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑

Form: theme
 theme
 harp solo
 harp solo
 piano solo
 piano solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 theme, end

	full version:	09
	playback version:	20
Description:		Harp:
Rock 4/4 12 bar in C		A harp, 2 nd position

This rhythm is actually often referred to as 8/8 – it’s strongly based on eighth beats (1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and), which give it a particularly straight ahead character. Really this is a rock beat rather than a standard blues groove, but rock & roll has been around for about 50 years already, so you never know when you may find yourself playing it!

Though the tabulature only shows the single notes, this harp theme is just as much a chordal rhythm pattern as a single note tune. On the I chord E, the harp plays a rhythmic figure combining the draw chord with a couple of related single notes. On the IV chord it switches to a single note pattern not dissimilar to the one found in the practicing tips for the previous title before returning to the chord rhythm in bar 7. Over the V and IV chords in bars 9 & 10 the harp plays single notes, sticking closely to the component notes of the chords themselves. It’s important to hit the semitone bend on 2-draw (E_b) in bar 9, as this note is the major third in the V chord B7. The second time around the theme is played using the tongue blocking embouchure to beef it up a bit. This is especially effective over the IV chord in bars 5 & 6.

The first solo starts with a semitone bend played directly on 4-draw, which glides rapidly up to the natural note and is combined with a hand “wah” for greater emphasis. The following figure accents the off beats and ends with a whole tone bend on 2-draw. Over the second 4 bar segment the phrase is repeated and varied – check the double “wah” on the first note this time around. The verse concludes with a simple rocky phrase using notes from the blues scale over the V and IV chords before leading into the next one by playing through the turnaround. The second solo starts with the root note E in octaves (3- and 6-blow), creating a “brass section” effect, then the following run fills out the first 4 bar segment and leads into the repeat of the octave riff over the IV chord. This time the phrase finishes earlier to leave space before the V chord. This solo ends much as the previous one, with a short lead-in to the piano solo.

The harp comes back with a drawn-out trill on channels 4- & 5-draw, then drops down to some simple tongue-blocked tones on 2- and 3-draw over the IV chord. On the V chord I hit 1-draw already bent down, slide up to the natural note, then play another direct bend on 2-draw before immediately returning to 1-draw and bending it down to end the phrase on 1-blow. The chorus finishes with another tongue blocked phrase on 2- and 3-draw, similar to the one used a few bars previously on the IV chord. Over the turnaround I play chopped rhythmic chords leading into the next chorus, which continues in the same sparse vein and leads up to the octave riff used earlier, which recurs on the final solo verse. On the repeat of this phrase over the IV chord in bars 5&6 I play it one octave higher (6- & 9-blow). The final theme follows, played as at the beginning of the piece except for the last phrase before the end (*see practicing tip*). The closing riff is largely played in octaves and is a typical rock & roll ending.

Practicing tip:

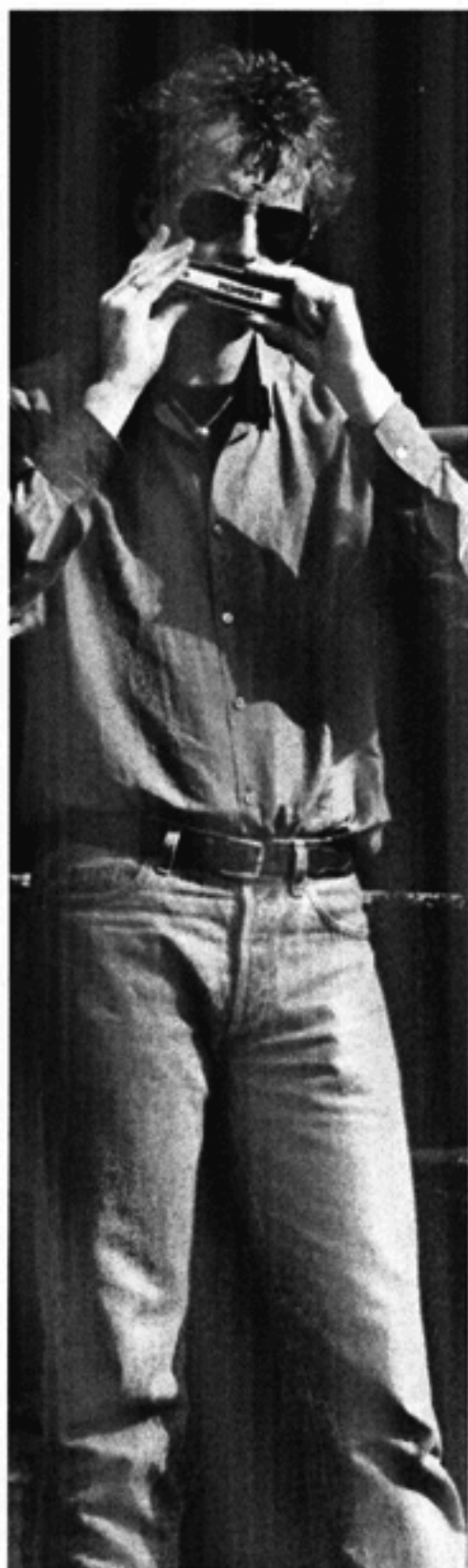
When playing rhythmic chord patterns, the definition or attack is what gives them their percussive character. I usually form syllables with the tongue to ensure that the airstream hits the reeds with full force right away, instead of starting gradually and building up. One of the most useful is the “k” sound made by hitting the soft palate with the back of the tongue while inhaling. This can be used to give chords a “chopped” quality, but is also good on single notes, as it can be a more effective way of accenting them than for example forming a “t” with the tip of the tongue and the front teeth. On this pattern I use the “k” each time I play the root chord based on 2-draw

STOMPING - EXERCISE 1

Try playing some of your favorite licks and accenting the important notes like this. It isn't such a good idea to accent them all – even though this technique can work better than the “t” method, it sounds unnatural if you use it all the time. Here's the lick used as a variation in the final theme, which leads directly into the ending. It contains two blue notes (minor third and diminished fifth, G & B \flat), which are both semitone bends played directly.

STOMPING - EXERCISE 2


You can loop this to practice it, as it's exactly one bar in length, or you can add 2-draw at the end to finish it off.



Blow the back off it!

PETER WOLF
(J. Geils Band)

Form: theme
 theme
 harp solo
 organ solo
 guitar solo
 harp solo
 harp solo
 theme, end

	full version:	track 10
	playback version:	track 21
Description:		Harp:
Medium/fast swing shuffle 12 bar in D		C harp, 3 rd position

In contrast to the previous 3rd position piece (track 7, “Doublecrossed & Blue”), this one is in a major key and makes extensive use of 7/9 chords. In spite of this, the theme consists almost entirely of notes from the (basically minor) blues scale. One of the wonderful things about the blues scale is that, even though the third is minor, it can be played over 7th chords containing major thirds and still sound right. The main difference between the two titles from the player’s point of view is that here you can use the major sixth in the dorian mode, the B-natural note found in 3- and 7-draw, without sounding out of tune. It’s the third in the IV chord G and crops up fairly often in the solos. Otherwise the playing techniques involved are fairly similar – you need to be able to hit the whole tone bends in 2- and 3-draw directly, and there are a number of jumps from 1- to 4-draw.

On much of the theme I use the tongue blocking technique for its fuller sound and rhythmic tongue slap, and use a lip block only on the bottom two channels. The first four notes on holes 4 and 3 are actually played as double stops, with a touch of the next channel up added to the main note to fatten it up. The subsequent run down from 3- to 1-draw in bar 2 uses direct whole tone bends in 3- and 2-draw (the practicing tip suggests some alternative versions if you find it difficult to hit these notes). After playing 1-draw you have to jump a whole octave back up to 4-draw. The phrase is completed by playing the fifth (whole tone bend on 3-draw) and seventh (4-blow) notes of the D scale. In the 2nd four bar section the phrase starts the same way, but is varied a bit. Check the passage 4-blow, 2-draw bend, 1-draw, 4-draw which concludes this part – you can use this kind of lick in many situations when playing in 3rd position. The harp leads into the final 4 bar section with a percussive tongue slap on 4- and 5 draw before playing 5-blow (the fifth in the V chord A7). The theme finishes with a similar phrase to the one which ended the second 4 bars, but remains on 1-draw. The second verse repeats the theme with minor variations, ending with a tongue blocked single note lead in to the first solo, which is largely played in octaves. Note that the rhythm section plays a different groove on this verse, moving away from the swing feel of the theme and leaving more space. From this point onwards the band alternates between these two grooves.

After the organ and guitar solos, the harp returns on the swing groove with a whole tone bend on 3-draw and runs down the blues scale to the low 7th note C in 1-blow, accompanied by “wah” effects. I play a similar bottom octave blues phrase over the IV chord, but start it with 3-draw – B is the third in the G chord and can be used without any problems in this context. This chorus ends with a rhythmic bend on 6-draw which signals the change of rhythm coming on the following verse and leads into a simple bluesy phrase in the middle register which I extend down into the bottom octave. This is very effective over the sparser accompaniment here. Over the IV chord the harp returns to playing octaves (check the 3- and 7-draw at the beginning of bar 6), continuing in this mode before going back to single note phrasing to finish off the solo and lead back into the final theme. Here there is a break on the first beat of bar 11 and the guitar plays the ending on its own, joined by the other instruments on the final chord. The harp finishes with a trill on 4- and 5-blow (C and E, the 7th and 9th notes respectively in the closing chord).

Practicing tip: As with the other 3rd position title, you need to work on the heavy bends in 2- and especially in 3-draw in order to really get a handle on this stuff. If you have trouble playing these bends (and they are pretty difficult!), you can leave some of them out. Try playing the first part of the theme like this, for example:

READY TO GO - EXERCISE 1

D 4 4 C 4 B 3 G 2 F 2 D 1 D B 3 C 4

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑

or like this:

READY TO GO - EXERCISE 2

D 4 4 C 4 B 3 G 2 G 2 D 1 D B 3 C 4

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑

or even like this:

READY TO GO - EXERCISE 3

D 4 4 C 4 B 3 G 2 E 2 D 1 D B 3 C 4

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑


Another thing which takes practice is learning to play the octave jumps. A tongue slap makes the jump easier and gives the top note additional punch, as it allows you to avoid having to slide rapidly across the intervening channel openings. I do this by lipping 1-draw and then using the top right hand side of the tongue (not the middle, but towards the front) to rapidly block holes 1-3, allowing 4-draw to sound on its own. You can also do this by lipping, but you have to move the harp very quickly in order to make the notes in holes 2 and 3 sound together before hitting 4-draw. Another important trick is to learn to play octaves on the upper draw notes – try these ones:

READY TO GO - EXERCISE 4

B 7 D 8 E 8 F 9 D 8 E 8 D 8
B 3 D 4 E 5 F 5 D 4 E 5 D 4

This entails blocking three channels with your tongue and playing the two holes on either side. I find this easiest if I use the upper surface of the tongue to block with (it's wider than the front!). This exercise involves switching from draw (three hole block) to blow (two hole block) in octaves. These effects are very useful in all positions and are well worth the effort spent learning them.

Form: 4 bar intro
theme
harp solo
harp solo
guitar solo
harp solo
harp solo
theme, end

	full version:	track 11
	playback version:	track 22
Description:		Harp:
Rumba 12 bar in A		D harp, 2 nd position

The rumba rhythm has long been an element of New Orleans piano styles, and has subsequently been assimilated into the blues mainstream. Its jumping, catchy 4/4 groove is great to improvise over and lends itself admirably to ending verses with a break on the first beat of the final bar. The vocal or solo instrument plays over the resulting space, leading into the following verse. This title doesn't involve any really difficult techniques and is quite simple to play – timing, tone and intonation are the important things here.

The band starts with a 4 bar intro, running down from the V chord and finishing with a break on the first beat of the 4th bar as mentioned above. Count 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 1 etc. to get the feel for the groove. The harp comes in on the “and” immediately following the break. Though they're written as single notes in the transcription, the notes on 3-draw which start the theme (and recur continually during it) are actually double stops, as some of the air is also passing through channel 4, thickening up the sound. They also lie in between the minor (C) and major (C_#) thirds in A – I hit them as semitone bends and then slide up almost to the natural note, but not quite. It's notoriously hard to write these type of things down accurately, so the best thing to do is to trust your ears. A lot of the phrasing here depends on hitting notes which lead into the next bar just ahead of the beat – this happens on the transitions from bars 2-3, 6-7 and 8-9. Once again you'll need to be able to play whole tone bends on 2- and 3-draw as well as the sliding semitone bends discussed previously in order to duplicate the way the theme is played here. The verse ends with another break, but the harp doesn't play it along with the band, leaving me free to start the solo over the break without creating a cluttered feel.

The solo starts with a quick lick on 4- and 3-draw, followed by a long upward glide from the semitone bend on 4-draw to the natural note. The next phrase is a classic blues scale riff – the solos use a mixture of blues and major pentatonic scales and once again steal shamelessly from saxophone licks. I've tried to leave plenty of space in order to retain the light, floating feel. Just as in the theme, the thirds on the I chord (3-draw in 2nd position) are often neither major nor minor, but somewhere in between. I play over the turnaround at the end of the first solo verse, leading into the next one along with the band (no break this time). The second solo verse is followed by a guitar solo, however, and here the harp plays the break together with the band – as it's followed by a different lead instrument this sounds right.

The guitar solo finishes with another break, and the harp comes in on the octave A note (6-blow) for some more sax-like riffs on the first four bars before moving to a typical harp lick (*see practicing tip*) played across the rhythm, then back to the harp/horn lines for the last four bars. Once again I play rhythmically through the turnaround to set up the final solo verse, where the opening phrase on 5-blow and 4-draw is immediately repeated an octave higher (8-blow & 8-draw). On the V chord the riff is similar to the one used in the previous verse, but I slip in an octave jump from 4-draw to 1-draw. This chorus again finishes with a break, which the harp doesn't play in order to

leave space for the start of the theme which follows. The final theme is basically the same as at the beginning and the ending is played in octaves.

Practicing tip: Here are a couple of phrases from the solo for you:

GIMME A BREAK - EXERCISE 1



This riff starts the first solo chorus and isn't especially difficult or complicated in itself. The tricky part with this kind of stuff is to learn to control your intonation on the long gliding bends as well as on the notes which are hit directly bent (such as the C above). That's what gives these relatively simple phrases tension and dynamics. It's always a good idea to phrase sparingly when playing tunes of this sort, and to concentrate on tone and timing rather than producing a cascade of notes.

GIMME A BREAK - EXERCISE 2



This lick from the harp chorus following the guitar solo is three eighth notes in length, which means that it starts at a different point in the rhythm each time it's repeated. This is what creates the effect of moving across the beat.



You'd better come on in my kitchen,
it is going to be raining outdoors

ROBERT JOHNSON

I got the key to the highway,
billed out and bound to go

BIG BILL BROONZY



Appendix: Harmonic Theory and the Harp

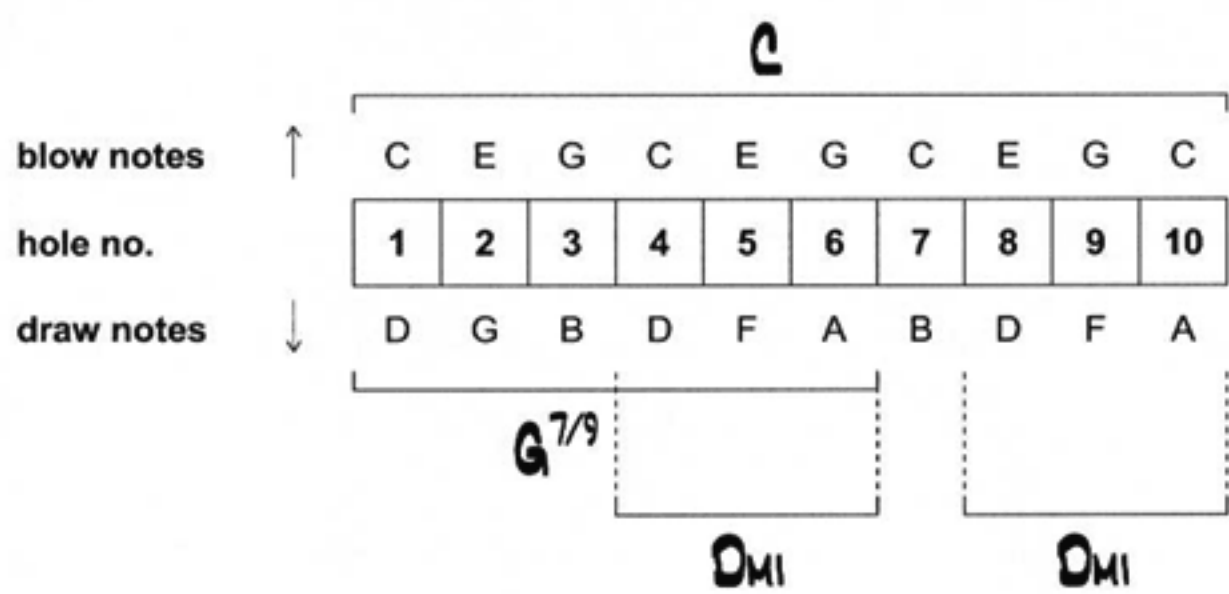


Fig. 2: All chords available on the Richter harp in C

found between (and including) any given note and the note one octave higher. By great good fortune these same eight notes are the basis for how the harmonica is tuned and are to found as a complete sequence in holes 4-7 (see fig. 1, 2 and 3).

Musicians usually allocate numbers to these notes according to their positions in the scale, so that “do” is referred to as “I” (Roman numeral one) or the 1st scale degree, “re” as “II” or the 2nd and so on. The eighth scale degree is the same as the first (both are called “do”), but is one octave higher. It’s possible to continue up the scale from here. The next note up is one octave higher than the 2nd scale degree and is referred to as the 9th, the following note is the 10th and so on. As in the case of the diatonic harmonica itself, these relationships hold true in any key. The secret of scales, however, is actually not the notes themselves, but the spaces or intervals which lie between them.

semitone interval	2		2		1		2		2		2		1					
scale degree	I	II				III	IV	V		VI		VII		VIII/I	XI/II		X/III	XI/IV
note	C	C♯	D	E♭	E	F	F♯	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C♯	D	E♭	E	F
	do	re				mi	fa	sol		la		ti		do				

Fig. 3: Scale degrees and semitone intervals of C major scale superimposed on chromatic scale

If you look at how far apart the eight notes of the major scale lie (fig. 3), you’ll see that the interval between steps I and II is a whole tone or two semitones. From II to III is also a whole tone, but from III to IV is only one semitone. The interval between IV and V is a whole tone once again, as are V to VI and VI to VII. The closing interval VII to VIII is a semitone, giving the following pattern of intervals in semitones for any major scale: 2 2 1 2 2 2 1.

HOW CHORDS ARE CONSTRUCTED FROM THE MAJOR SCALE

All the chords in any key are derived more or less directly from the notes of the major scale in that key. The way in which they're constructed follows a very simple system which is applicable to all keys. Chords are numbered according to the same principle as scale degrees, and take the number that the root (first) note of the chord occupies in the scale. In their simplest form, chords are a combination of three scale notes played simultaneously. These are known as "triads" and are constructed by taking alternate notes from the scale. C major, for example, the I or tonic chord in the key of C, consists of the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of the C-major scale, C, E and G. F major, the IV chord (so called because it's based on the 4th scale degree), consists of the 4th, 6th and 8th scale degrees, F, A and C. Within each chord, the notes of the triad are numbered according to their position in the scale of that key, and are referred to as the root, third and fifth, i.e. C is the root note in a C major chord and the fifth in an F chord (*see fig. 4a*).

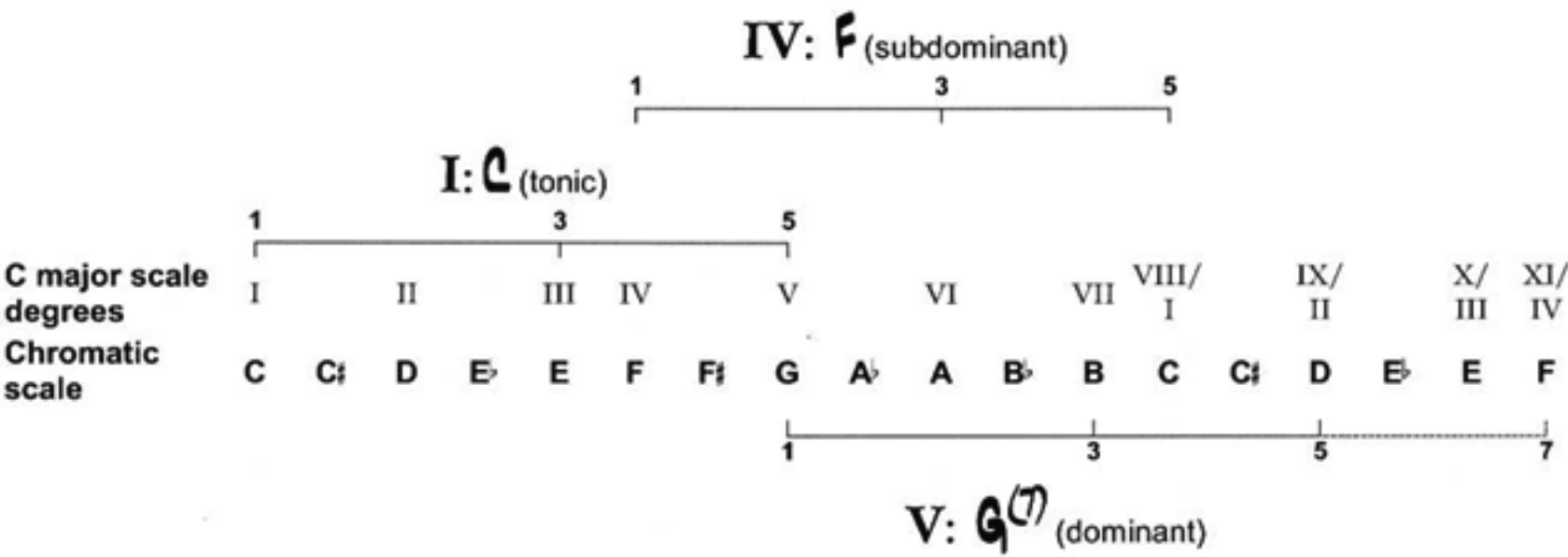


Fig. 4a: I, IV and V chords of C major scale superimposed on chromatic scale

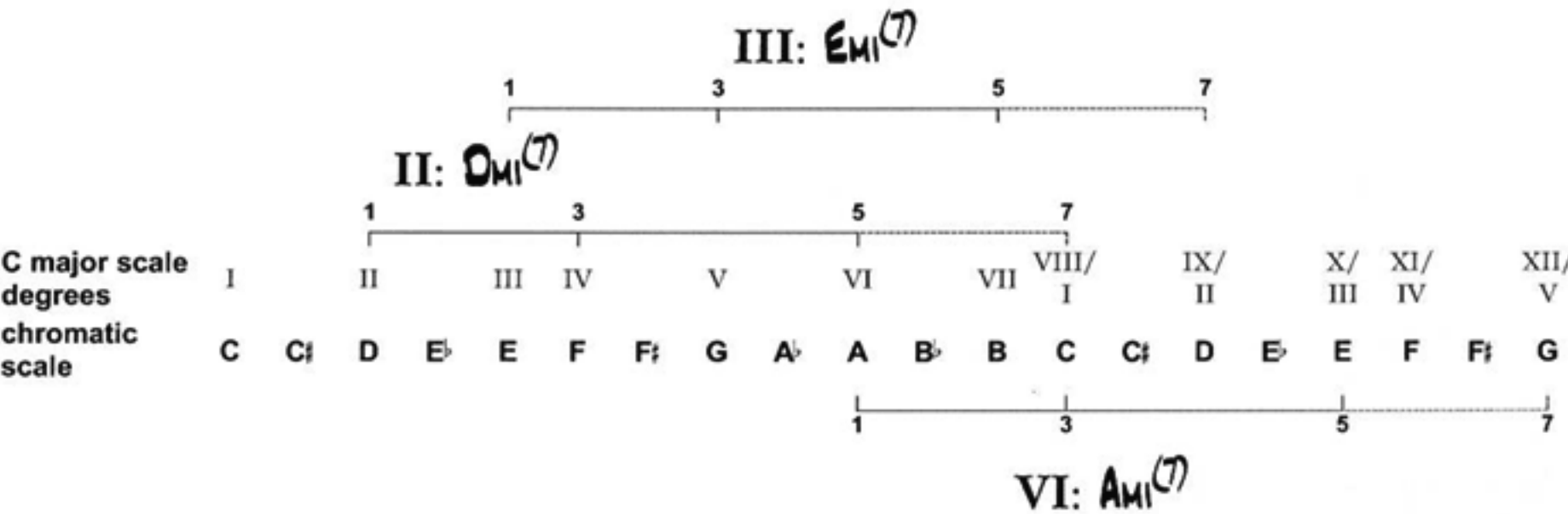


Fig. 4b: II, III and VI chords of C major scale superimposed on chromatic scale

MAJOR CHORDS AND MINOR CHORDS

The most important chords in any key are the 3 major chords based on the 1st, 4th and 5th scale degrees, generally called the I, IV and V chords (also known as the tonic, subdominant and dominant chords). These are usually the chords people mean when they talk about “three chord songs”, and they are the chords used in the standard 12 bar blues progression.

The next most important chords are the relative minor chords based on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th scale degrees (the II, III and VI chords). In blues and jazz these can sometimes be played as major chords – i.e. the third is raised one semitone. What makes a particular chord major or minor is the intervals between the three notes of the triad. With major chords, the interval between the root note and the third is always 4 semitones (also known as a “major third”), while the interval between third and fifth is 3 semitones. With minor chords this relationship is reversed – from the root to the third is always 3 semitones (“minor third”) and from the third to the fifth 4 semitones. You can check this out using *fig. 4b*. Minor chords have a more melancholy effect, major chords a brighter feel. In every major key, the I, IV and V chords are major, while the II, III and VI chords are minor (unless “majorized” as mentioned above – exceptions prove the rule!).

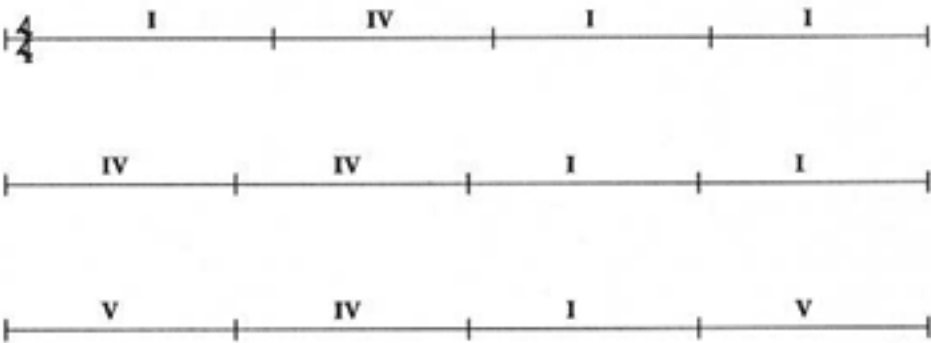


Fig. 5: 12 bar blues form

Often the triad is extended to the next alternate note to create a four note combination – the V chord is often played like this, using the 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th scale degrees. In the key of C this would be G, B, D, F, creating a G7 chord (F is the 7th note in the scale of the chord, G). By going a step further and adding yet another note (in this case the 13th step, A in the key of C), you get a chord type which is often used in blues, the so-called 7/9 chord.

MINOR SCALES

Although minor chords are constructed out of the notes of the major scale, each chord has a scale or mode of its own, with a different sequence of intervals than the major scale. The simplest example is the VI chord, also known as the relative minor key in relation to the I chord. In the key of C this chord is Am and if you play the notes of the C major scale through using the 6th scale degree A as your starting and finishing point you get an aeolian minor scale in A: A B C D E F G A. This is known as the parallel minor scale and has the interval pattern 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 (*see fig. 6a*). You can always use this scale in the key of the chord when playing over minor chords.

AEOLIAN MODE, 2 OCTAVES

Semitone interval	2	1	2	2	1	2	2								
Note	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A
Hole No.	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	9	9	10
Blow / Draw	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
Step	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII/I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII

Fig. 6a: Aeolian mode on the Richter harp in C


The II and III chords derived from the major scale are also minor, as we have seen above, and give slightly different minor modes when played in this way. In C the II chord is Dm and the notes of the C major scale played through from D to D give a dorian minor scale D E F G A B C D with the interval pattern 2 1 2 2 2 1 2.

The III chord Em gives a phrygian minor scale E F G A B C D E with a semitone step as the first interval: 1 2 2 2 1 2 2. On a C harp these modes in Am, Dm and Em correspond to the 4th, 3rd and 5th positions respectively (see fig. 6b).

DORIAN MODE, 2½ OCTAVES

Semitone interval

2122212



Note	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A
Hole No.	1	2	2	3 2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	9	9	10
Blow / Draw	↓	↑	↓	↑ ↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
Step	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII/I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII/I	II	III	IV	V

PHRYGIAN MODE, 2 OCTAVES

Semitone interval

1222122



Note	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E
Hole No.	2	2	3 2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8
Blow / Draw	↑	↓	↑ ↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Step	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII/I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII

Fig. 6b: Dorian and phrygian mode on the Richter harp in C

THE BLUES SCALE

The major scale is the basis of most traditional folk and classical music, but it isn't really heard a great deal in blues. Its relevance is mainly confined to the construction of chords as explained above. The single note sequences heard in blues (and much rock) singing and improvisation are frequently based on two other scales or modes which make use of different patterns of intervals. The first is known as the "blues scale" and consists of seven notes (including the octave note), arranged in the following intervals: 3 2 1 1 3 2. The tabulature shows how this works in both 2nd and 3rd positions on a C harp (see fig. 7).

This mode is so named because it contains the three so-called "blue notes" minor third (three semitones above the root), diminished fifth (one semitone below the 5th major scale degree) and minor 7th (two semitones below the octave note). These all lie in between the notes of the major scale

and create a poignant, somewhat minor key atmosphere. It's actually a minor pentatonic scale, with one additional note: the diminished fifth, which lies between the fourth and fifth scale degrees. This is the most important "blue note" and gives this mode much of its unique character. The beautiful thing about the blues scale is that even though it's basically minor, it sounds good over the three major (or 7/9) chords in the standard 12 bar sequence, so you can't really go wrong if you stay within it. Many of the harp solos on this CD stick fairly closely to the blues scale mode.

G BLUES SCALE, C HARP, 1 OCTAVE

Semitone interval		3	*	2	1	*	1	3	*	2		*	*	*	
Note		G	B _b	C	D _b	D	F	G	G	F	D	D _b	C	B _b	G
Hole No.		2	3	4	4	4	5	6	6	5	4	4	4	3	2
Blow / Draw		↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓

D BLUES SCALE, C HARP, 2 OCTAVES

Semitone interval		3	*	2	1	*	1	3	*	2		*	*	*
Note		D	F	G	A _b	A	C	D	F	G	A _b	A	C	D
Hole No.		1	2	2 3	3	3	4	4	5	6	6	6	7	8
Blow / Draw		↓	↓	↓ ↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓

Fig. 7: G and D Blues scales on the C harp. Blue notes are marked *

THE MIXOLYDIAN SCALE

The peculiar name hides a most useful scale which is the quintessential cross harp mode. Mixolydian means the same old eight notes of the major scale, but played starting and finishing on the fifth scale degree – for example the C major scale played from G to g. This is what we do all the time when playing “cross harp” or 2nd position.

The resulting mode is almost major, but the 7th note (5- & 9-draw) is a semitone lower (blue note!) than in the corresponding major scale, which automatically confers a more bluesy feel. The interval pattern now looks like this: 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 (see fig. 8a).

G MIXOLYDIAN MODE, C HARP, 2 OCTAVES

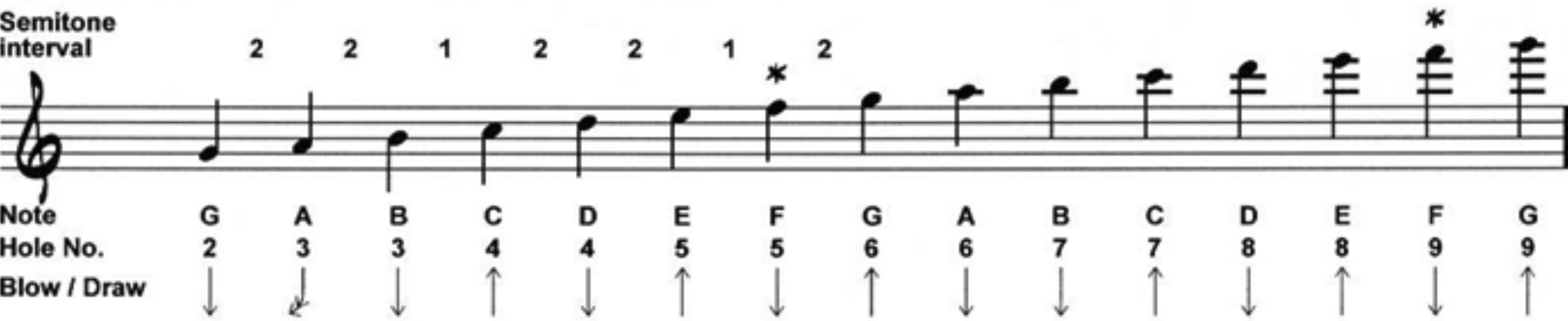


Fig. 8a: G mixolydian mode on the C harp. Blue notes are marked *

The mixolydian mode also contains one of the earliest scales known to man, the major pentatonic mode, which is frequently heard in rock, jazz or country music. Here the interval pattern is 2 2 3 2 3, i.e. it's a major or mixolydian scale minus the 4th and 7th scale degrees (see fig. 8b).

G PENTATONIC SCALE, C HARP, 2 OCTAVES

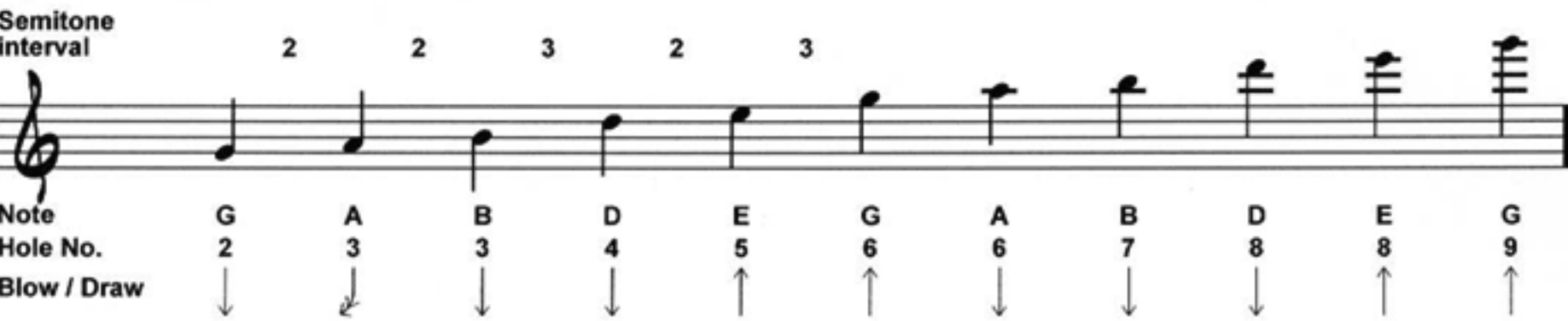


Fig. 8b: G pentatonic scale on the C harp.

By combining the blues scale and mixolydian mode in 2nd position, the harp player (or indeed any other instrumental soloist) has a vast range of possible note combinations which will fit to most of the chord sequences encountered in blues, rock and many simpler jazz pieces (see fig. 9).

G MIXOLYDIAN MODE, C HARP

Diagram showing the G Mixolydian mode on a C harp. The scale is G A B C D E F G. The notes are written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff, the note names, hole numbers, and blow/draw directions are listed:

Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
G	2	↓
A	3	↓
B	3	↓
C	4	↑
D	4	↓
E	5	↑
F	5	↓
G	6	↑

G BLUES SCALE, C HARP

Diagram showing the G Blues scale on a C harp. The scale is G A_b B_b C D_b D F G. The notes are written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff, the note names, hole numbers, and blow/draw directions are listed:

Note	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
G	2	↓
A _b	3	↓
B _b	3	↓
C	4	↑
D _b	4	↓
D	4	↓
F	5	↓
G	6	↑

COMBINATION

Diagram showing the combination of the G Mixolydian mode and the G Blues scale. The scale is G A_b A B_b B C D_b D E E_b F G. The notes are written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff, the note names, hole numbers, and blow/draw directions are listed:

Chromatic Scale	Hole No.	Blow / Draw
G	2	↓
A _b	3	↓
A	3	↓
B _b	3	↓
B	3	↓
C	4	↑
D _b	4	↓
D	4	↓
E	5	↑
E _b	5	↓
F	5	↓
G	6	↑

Fig. 9: Combination of mixolydian mode and blues scale

Diagram showing the construction of chords from the G Mixolydian mode. The scale is G A B C D E F G. The notes are written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff, the scale degrees, G mixolydian mode notes, and chord symbols are listed:

scale degree	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII/I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
G mixolydian mode	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Chord Symbol	I: G ^(7/9)				V: Dm ^(7/9)										

Fig. 10: Construction of chords from mixolydian mode. Note that the V chord is minor

IMPROVISING OVER CHORD PROGRESSIONS

From the standpoint of musical theory, there are two main aspects to improvising. **Either** you play modally, which means you stay in the basic mode or scale of the key in which you're playing and use these notes to construct phrases which allow you to follow the chord changes, **or** you construct phrases out of the scale of each individual chord, in effect treating every chord as a separate key. This is more common in jazz than in blues or rock. Much blues improvisation is basically modal, because the blues scale sounds right over all the chords of the 12 bar progression and a few others besides.

The concept of the "tonal center" is essential to understanding modal improvisation. If you're using the blues scale to construct a solo in a particular key, the tonal center is always the root note of the scale – G for a tune in G. Even when playing over the IV and V chords, where G is not their root note, it remains the point of reference, the note which most phrases will start or finish on. The heart of the matter is that all riffs resolve towards the tonal center.

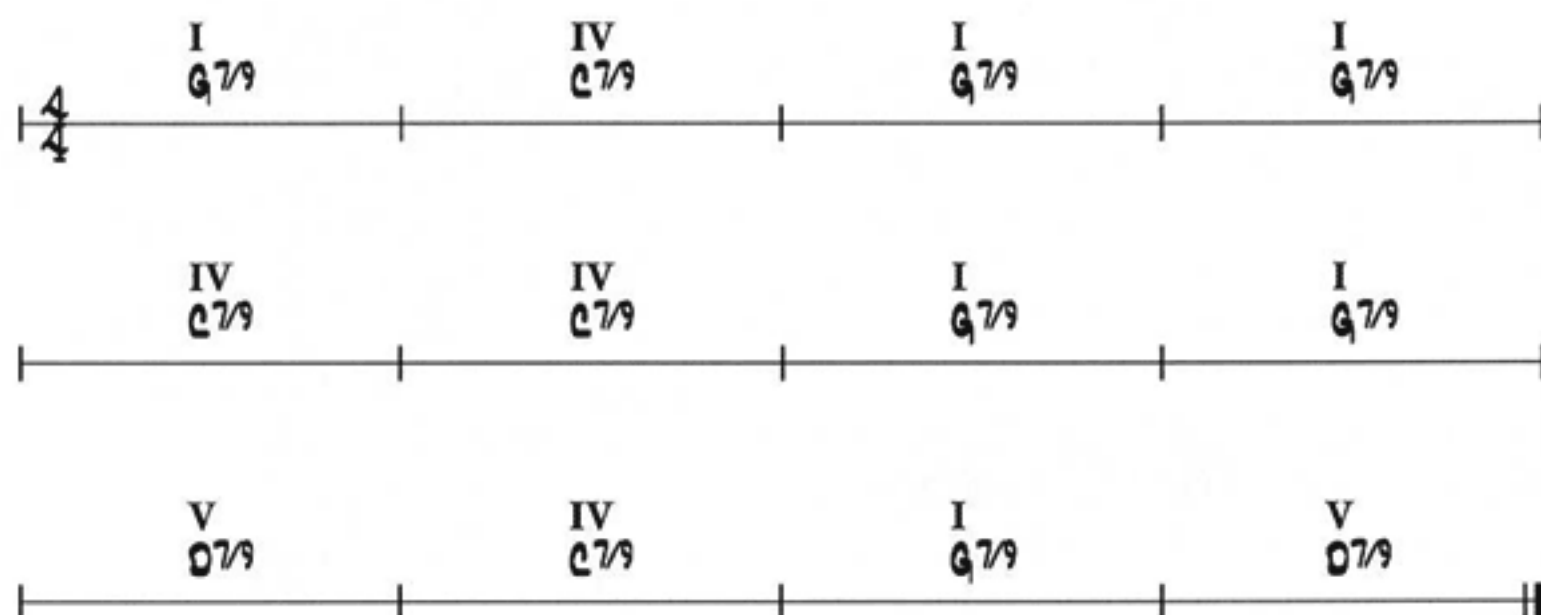
Modal blues scale improvisations can be great, but they do have their limitations. Even with a simple 12 bar, it's hard to really follow the chord changes closely, since many important notes of the I, IV and V chords are not found in the blues scale. This is one of the reasons why the mixolydian mode is so useful in 2nd position, as it contains several notes which are more closely related to the various chords. It's almost always used in combination with the blues scale, as all the solos on this CD demonstrate.

However, the mixolydian mode also contains some notes which will clash with one of the chords but will fit nicely to another. To overcome this problem, the player needs to make use of the second principle of improvisation mentioned above, and select notes belonging to the scales of the individual chords. You need to learn which notes sound good over which chords, or perhaps more to the point, learn which notes won't sound good over particular chords so you can avoid playing them! The classic clangers are usually notes which are a semitone above one of the chord notes – a major third over a minor chord, for example, or a minor seventh note over a VI chord. Try playing 3-draw without bending on your D harp over an A minor chord (or a D7 chord, the IV in the key of A), or 5-draw on your C harp over an E7 chord to hear these painful dissonances for yourself. In each case, a note one semitone lower would sound great (3-draw semitone bend on the D harp, 5-blow on the C). It's also true, however, that it doesn't much matter what note you play as long as you resolve it to a harmonious one, but you still have to know which notes harmonize with a particular chord and which ones don't!

What the harmonica player therefore needs to do is to relate the relatively simple system of how chords are constructed to the actual notes available on the harp. It's easier to visualize this stuff on a keyboard or guitar, because you can see where the notes lie in relation to one another, but basically you have to learn which notes belong to which chords, and where they are to be found on the harp. The starting point here has to be the position in which the harp is to be played on any given tune, as this defines your frame of reference by giving you the I chord.

When playing over any given chord you can safely assume that all notes which are either part of the chord or closely related to it will sound "right". In practical terms this generally means the root, third, fifth, seventh and ninth notes of that chord, whether it's major or minor. These tones can be sustained without any risk of sounding bad. In order to connect or lead up to these harmonious sounding notes, you can use virtually any other notes from the blues or mixolydian modes in the key of the song, but they may not always sound too good when played as long, sustained notes.

Let's say we're playing a standard 12 bar in G, using the I, IV and V chords, on a C harp in 2nd position. Here's the chord sequence:



A glance at the charts on pp. 67 will show you that all of the notes comprising the I chord, G7/9, are to be found as draw notes, and that all natural draw notes on the instrument belong to this chord. The root note G also occurs three times as a blow note in channels 3, 6 and 9. Due to the tonal arrangement of the harp, all the blow notes belong to the C major (IV) chord, but the 7th and 9th notes in this chord, B \flat and D, are not among them. D is available as a draw note and B \flat can be reached as a semitone bend in 3-draw (also as a whole tone bend in 10-blow and as an overblow in 6-blow). This is a really important note over the IV chord. On the V chord D7/9, the root note (D) occurs three times in the draw chord (in holes 1, 4 and 8) and the fifth (A) twice (holes 6 and 10). The third (F \sharp) isn't available as a natural note, though it can be played by bending (2-draw, 9-blow), but the 7th and 9th notes in this chord (C and E) occur frequently as part of the blow chord. Fortunately it's no problem to substitute a minor for a major third on the V chord in blues, and this note F is easily available as a natural note (5- and 9-draw). Both F and A can also be produced by bending a whole tone in 2- and 3-draw.

As you can see there's plenty of choice and surprisingly few notes which will really sound "wrong" over a standard 12 bar like this. The only real no-no is holding the natural B in 3- and 7-draw over the IV chord C7/9 – this won't sound good! You really have to learn to hit the semitone bend (here B \flat) if you want to use 3-draw at this point. However, the B \flat will also sound fine over the I chord (blues scale), so you can simplify things by always playing 3-draw bent down a semitone, which many blues players do. With several of the 2nd position tunes on this CD, I play 3-draw somewhere in between a semitone bend and its natural pitch over the I chord. Often I hit it well bent and slide up to a point just under the natural pitch, moving between the minor and the major third.

It can be a mistake to try to follow the chord progression too closely by only playing the component notes or scales of the chords, as this tends to sound stilted and unnatural. You're usually better off trying to build modal phrases using the blues or mixolydian scales in the key of the song, and employing your knowledge of how chords are constructed to expand on these phrases and avoid wrong notes.

One of the most fascinating aspects of improvising is learning to use the different ways that any given note relates to the various chords in the progression. By playing the same note over different chords you can create a sense of movement without actually having to do anything, because the harmonic relationship between note and chord changes. In the 12 bar blues mentioned above, a typical way of doing this would be to play the G in 2-draw not only over the I chord G7/9, but also over the IV chord C7/9, thus changing its harmonic role from root note to fifth. You play the same note, but it sounds different! As you can see from the chart below, all the scale notes in any particular key occur in several different roles in the various chords related to that key. Look through them to find notes which you can play over several different chords, and experiment with these to hear what they sound like. Here the I - VI chords in the key of G are shown; the order of the notes in each chord is always root - third - fifth - seventh - ninth.

G	B	D	F	A	=	G ^{7/9}	(I)
C	E	G	B _b	D	=	C ^{7/9}	(IV)
D	F _‡	A	C	E	=	D ^{7/9}	(V)
A	C	E	G	B	=	A ^{mi} ^{7/9}	(II)
B	D	F _‡	A	C _‡	=	B ^{mi} ^{7/9}	(III)
E	G	B	D	F _‡	=	E ^{mi} ^{7/9}	(VI)
G	B _b	D	F	A	=	G ^{mi} ^{7/9}	(I alternative)
D	F	A	C	E	=	D ^{mi} ^{7/9}	(V alternative)
A	C _‡	E	G	B	=	A ^{7/9}	(II alternative)
B	E _b	F _‡	A	C _‡	=	B ^{7/9}	(III alternative)
E	A _b	B	D	F _‡	=	E ^{7/9}	(VI alternative)

Fig. 11: I-VI chords and alternatives

music depth and intensity except going out and playing and playing and playing! Feeling has to be lived, you can't learn it from a book or indeed from any other teaching aid. If these pointers can provide you with some guidelines when you go out and blow, though, so much the better. Now it's up to you, so put the book down and get out your harp!

Happy Trails,
Steve Baker

The alternative minor versions of the I and V chords show the possibilities of blues scale modal improvisation – you can play the minor thirds B_b and F over the I and V chords, even if the accompaniment is playing them as regular major 7/9 chords. The alternative major versions of the II, III and VI chords are common in blues and jazz; once again, only the third in each chord has been changed. It's really useful to know where these notes are to be found when playing numbers like Rainy Day Blues on this CD.

The next chart shows you where the component notes of each of these chords are located in 2nd position on a C harp. This information applies to cross harp playing in any key, as the relationships between the chords and the tonal layout of the harp remain constant.

In the end, all this information alone won't make you a better player, but it may help you realize how the notes and chords hang together on the harp. Nothing can give your

CROSS HARP CHORD CHARTS (for C harp)

G^{7/9} (I chord in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

↑

↑

↓

↓

↓

E♭

A♭

C

E♭

F♯

B♭

~B

E♭

G♭

B♭

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

D

G

B

D

F

A

B

D

F

A

D♭

G♭

B♭

D♭

~E

A♭

D♭

F

A♭

D♭

F

A

A♭

bends

overdraws

C^{7/9} (IV chord in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

↑

↑

↓

↓

↓

E♭

A♭

C

E♭

F♯

B♭

~B

E♭

G♭

B

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

D

G

B

D

F

A

B

D

F

A

D♭

G♭

B♭

D♭

~E

A♭

D♭

F

A♭

D♭

F

A

A♭

bends

overdraws

D^{7/9} (V chord in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

↑

↑

↓

↓

↓

E♭

A♭

C

E♭

F♯

B♭

~B

E♭

G♭

B

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

D

G

B

D

F

A

B

D

F

A

D♭

G♭

B♭

D♭

~E

A♭

D♭

F

A♭

D♭

F

A

A♭

bends

overdraws

A_{MI}^{7/9} (II chord in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

	E _b	A _b	C	E _b	F _‡	B _b	~B	E _b	G _b	B _b
	C	E	G	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	D	G	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A
	D _b	G _b	B _b	D _b	~E	A _b	D _b	F	A _b	D _b
		F	A							
			A _b							

bends

overdraws

B_{MI}^{7/9} (III chord in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

	E _b	A _b	C	E _b	F _‡	B _b	~B	E _b	G _b	B _b
	C	E	G	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	D	G	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A
	D _b	G _b	B _b	D _b	~E	A _b	D _b	F	A _b	D _b
		F	A							
			A _b							

bends

overdraws

E_{MI}^{7/9} (VI chord in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

	E _b	A _b	C	E _b	F _‡	B _b	~B	E _b	G _b	B _b
	C	E	G	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	D	G	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A
	D _b	G _b	B _b	D _b	~E	A _b	D _b	F	A _b	D _b
		F	A							
			A _b							

bends

overdraws

GMI^{7/9} (I chord alternative in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

↑

↑

↓

↓

↓

↓

↓

E

A

C

E

F

B

~B

E

G

B

↑

↑

C

E

G

C

E

G

C

E

G

C

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

D

G

B

D

F

A

B

D

F

A

D

G

B

D

~E

A

D

F

A

C

↓

↓

↓

↑

↑

F

A

A

OMI^{7/9} (V chord alternative in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

↑

↑

↓

↓

↓

↓

↓

E

A

C

E

F

B

~B

E

G

B

↑

↑

C

E

G

C

E

G

C

E

G

C

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

D

G

B

D

F

A

B

D

F

A

D

G

B

D

~E

A

D

F

A

D

↓

↓

↓

↑

↑

F

A

A

A^{7/9} (II chord alternative in 2nd position)

overblows

blow notes

hole no.

draw notes

bends

↑

↑

↓

↓

↓

↓

↓

E

A

C

E

F

B

~B

E

G

B

↑

↑

C

E

G

C

E

G

C

E

G

C

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

D

G

B

D

F

A

B

D

F

A

D

G

B

D

~E

A

D

F

A

D

↓

↓

↓

↑

↑

F

A

A

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