

THE BLUES SCALE AND ITS USE

The Blues Scale consists of the following tones: Root, ^b3rd, 4th, [#]4th(^b5), 5th and ^b7th.

Example: F Blues Scale F, A^b, B^b, B, C, E^b, F

When playing a twelve bar blues in the key of G, you may want to use the blues scale exclusively: G, B^b, C, D^b, D, F, G.

When playing a twelve bar blues in the key of B^b, you may want to use the B^b blues scale exclusively: B^b, D^b, E^b, E, F, A^b, B^b.

The Blues scale can also be used over minor chords when the minor chord is sounded for 2, 4, 8 or 16 measures or longer.

Example: If D Minor is sounded for eight measures, you may use the D Blues scale - D, F, G, A^b, A, C, D.

When playing in minor tonalities you may choose to alternate between the Dorian minor and the Blues scale, both having the same root tone.

Example: D minor is sounded for eight measures - play D minor (Dorian) or play D Blues scale or alternate between the two scale sounds.

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

After you become familiar with the Blues scale as I have it listed you may want to add tones to the scale which give the scale sound more variety.

Example: F Blues scale F, G, A^b, A, B^b, B, C, D, E^b, E, F.

This scale sounds strange when played straight up or down. Jazz players usually play bits and pieces of the scale or make up licks utilizing certain notes of the scale. You may want to transpose this scale to all twelve keys for practice.

The TWELVE BLUES SCALES

The image shows handwritten musical notation for the twelve blues scales. The scales are arranged in two groups of six, each group on a different staff (treble and bass clef). The scales are: C, D^b, D, E^b, F, G, A^b, A, B^b, B, C, D, E^b, E, F, G, A^b, A, B^b, B. Each scale is written as a sequence of notes on a staff, with the root note labeled above the staff. The notation is handwritten and includes some slurs and ties.

Basic 12-Bar Blues Form

| I | I or IV | I | I |

| IV | IV | I | I |

| V | IV or V | I | I or V |