Blues

Blues is a style of music evolving from African American spirituals/ work songs and noted for its melancholy sound. Blues originated in the US (Deep South) in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Key features:

- **4/4 time**
- **12 bar blues progression**
- **3-line verse structure**
- **Blues notes/ blues scale**
- **Slow tempo**
- **Sad lyrics**
- **Use of harmonica** *(esp in acoustic blues)*

The first Blues singers were African Slaves. Their music grew out of **despair** of slavery. Even after their release the slaves were still held down by **appalling** poverty, and **deprived** of any kind of **privilege**. For many this 'freedom' was worse than the slavery.



When the slaves were set free in 1865, they faced poverty and homelessness. The nightmare of slavery was over, but black people were often denied jobs and mistreated in other ways, as this song tells us:

I been hurt an' mistreated
'till I done made up my mind.
I been hurt an' mistreated
'till I done made up my mind.
Gonna leave dis ol' country
An' all my troubles behind.

These words come from a blues song. 'Singing the blues' has always been a way for black Americans to tell of the unhappy things in their lives. Whatever the notes of the tunes, all Blues songs are based on the same set of three **chords**.

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Blues

Listen to the following examples of the 3-line structure of blues. Notice the first 2 lines are the same and then there is a different 3rd line.

- *Standing in the Rain blues* – Bessie Smith

Standin' in the rain and ain't a drop fell on me
Standin' in the rain and ain't a drop fell on me
My clothes is all wet but my flesh is as dry as can be

It can rain all day, I ain't got no place to go
It can rain all day, I ain't got no place to go
Because it's cold outside in that ice and snow

If it rains five days that won't give me no blues
If it rains five days that won't give me no blues
I've got my raincoat and hat, umbrella, boots and shoes

Rain, rain, rain don't rain on me all day
Rain, rain, rain don't rain on me all day
'Cause if I get too wet, I've got to go into the house and stay

- *3 o'clock in the morning blues* – BB King

Well now it's three o'clock in the morning and I can't even close my eyes
Three o'clock in the morning baby and I can't even close my eyes
Can't find my baby and I can't be satisfied

I've looked around me and my baby she can't be found
I've looked all around me, people and my baby she can't be found
You know if I don't find my baby I'm going down to the Golden Ground

Goodbye, everybody I believe this is the end
Oh goodbye everybody I believe this is the end
I want you to tell my baby Tell her please please forgive me

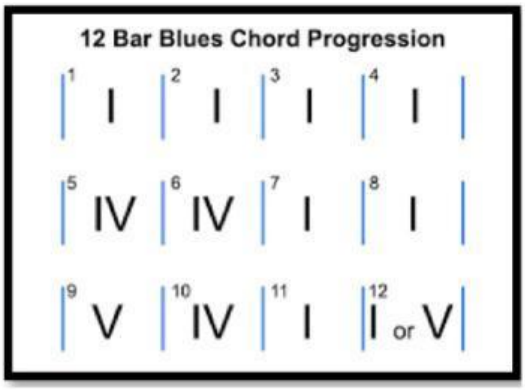
LIVEWORKSHEETS

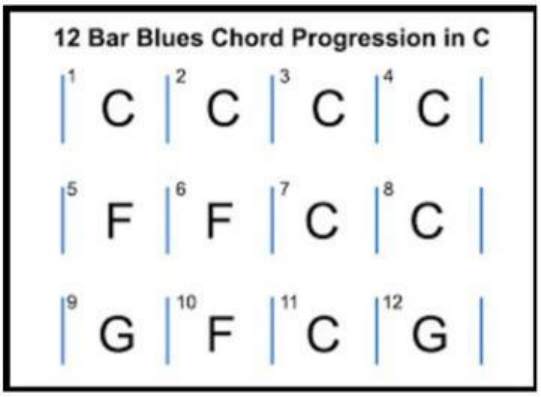
The most common form of Blues is the 12 bar Blues, so named because of the **length of the music is twelve bars**, and it fits with the typical Blues lyrics.

Whatever tune is used, the harmonies stay mostly the same. This means the tunes are always similar. It also means they can be **improvised.**

The 12- bar blues structure has been used in lots of subsequent popular music including:

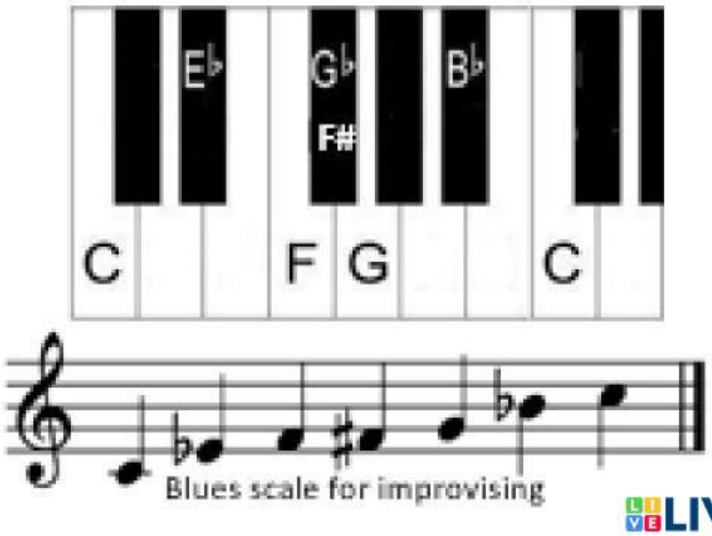
- Blues
- Swing
- Rock 'n' roll



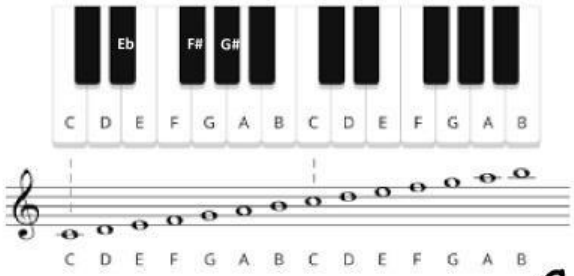


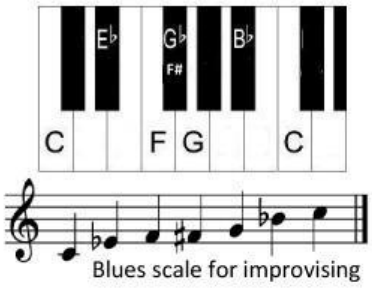
"C Jam Blues" is a jazz standard composed in 1942 by Duke Ellington. As the title suggests, the piece follows a **twelve-bar blues** form in the key of C major. The main tune is extremely easy to play, with the entire melody featuring only two notes: G and C.

In between renditions of this tune, players improvise their own solos. Tunes are based on the **blues scale** which include flattened 'blues' notes to give it that bluesy feel.



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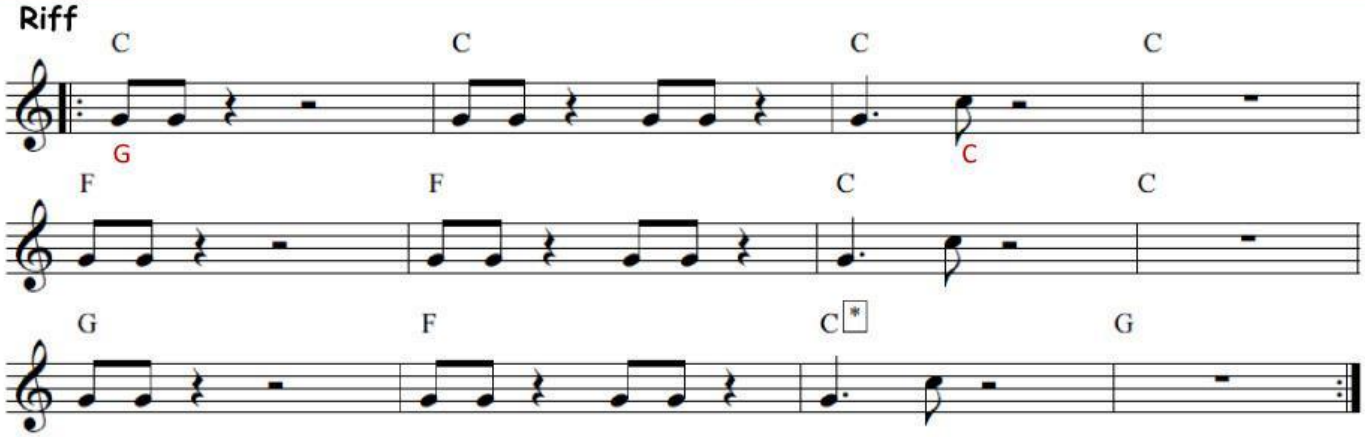


C Jam blues

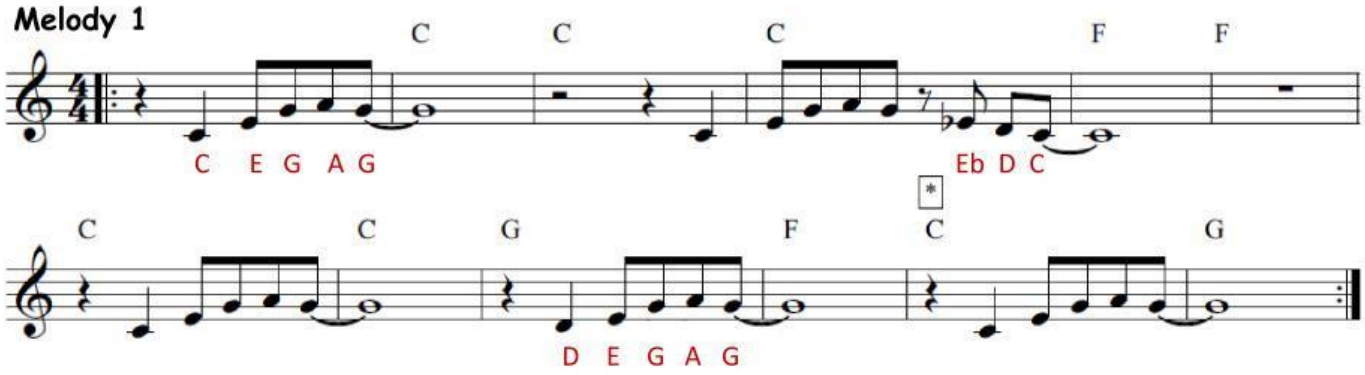
Intro



Riff



Melody 1



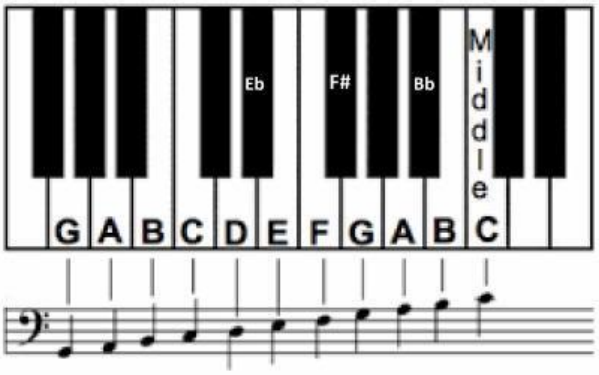
Melody 2



*Ending



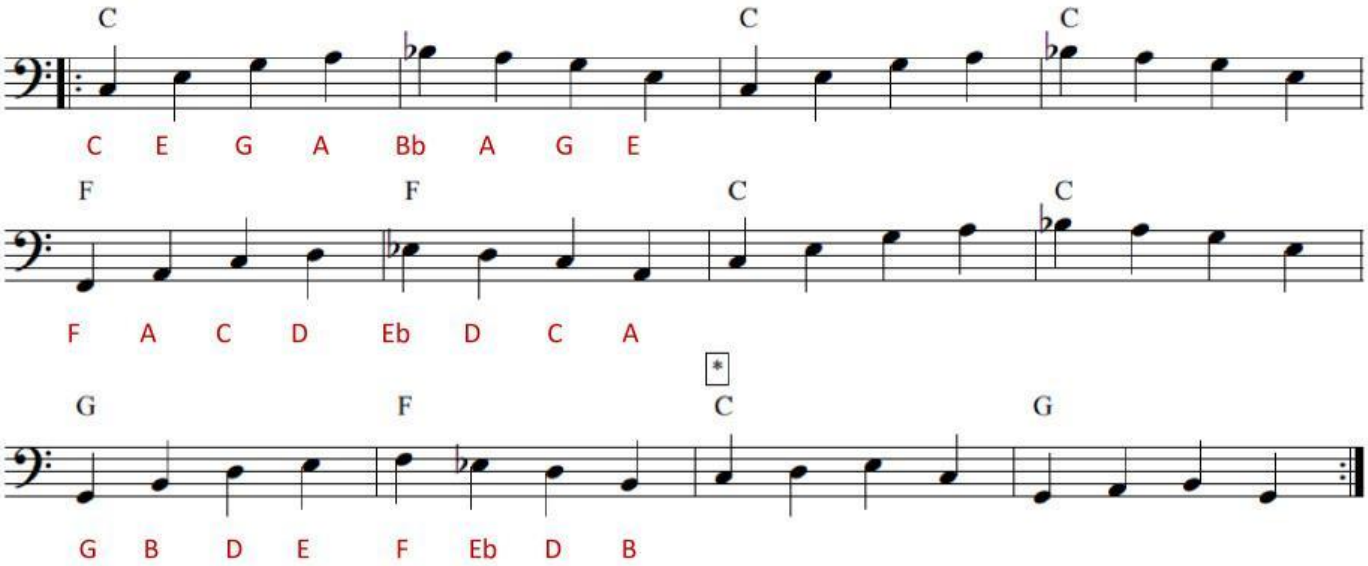
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Intro

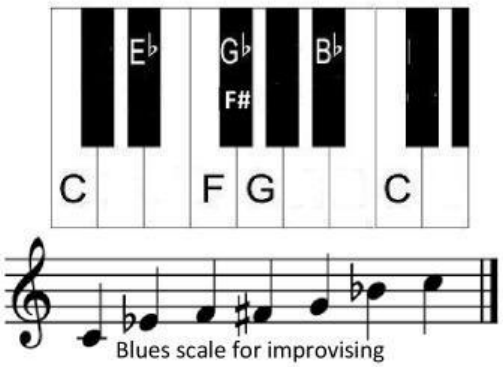


Bass



***Ending**





The 12-Bar Blues

1	2	3	4
C	C	C	C
5	6	7	8
F	F	C	C
9	10	11	12
G	F	C	G

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