

Blues Method

for mountain dulcimer

by Bing Futch

101

\$19.00



***Learn How To Play
Delta Blues!***

Table of Contents

Getting Started: Let's Play The Blues!.....	6
Chapter 1: Rhythm.....	8
Chapter 2: Intervals & Scales.....	13
Scale Degrees.....	14
Intervals.....	16
Pentatonic Major and Minor Scales.....	17
Taking The Lead.....	24
Your First Solo.....	28
Your 2nd Solo.....	30
Chapter 3: Chords.....	32
Moving Barre Chords.....	34
The Blues Form.....	36
A Story of the Blues.....	37
Blues In E (simplified).....	38
Listen To The Colors.....	40
A Selection Of Tunes In Tablature.....	41
Chapter 4: It's (Mostly) All You.....	50

Let's Play The Blues!

We're going to get you playing the blues right away, but we'll start off *extremely* simple. First of all, we'll be in DAD tuning for this entire book. Second, we're in the key of E and it's 4/4, or common, time. Where the same number is on all three strings, you're barreing the chord. Hold that position as you play the eighth notes. Take it nice and slow - here we go!

Track #1 - 75 BPM

E5 (I)

D 1 1 1 1 4 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 4 3 1
A 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
D 1 1 3 1 0 1 1 3 1 0 1 1 4 3 1

A5 (IV)

E5 (I)

T 4 4 4 6 4 4 4 4 1 1 1 1 3 4 1
A 4 4 4 6 4 4 4 4 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
B 4 4 4 3 1 1 3 1 0 1 1 1 1 1 1

B5 (V)

A5 (IV)

E5 (I)

T 5 5 7 5 5 4 4 4 3 1 1 3 1 1 1 1 1
A 5 5 7 5 5 4 4 4 3 1 1 3 1 1 1 1 1
B 5 5 7 5 5 4 4 3 1 1 3 1 1 1 1 1 0

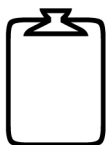
The Basics

Congratulations, you've just played your first blues! We'll spice it up later and get those moneymakers shaking, but this straight-forward reading will do for now. What we have here is a standard **12-bar blues**. That's the name of this *form* and it's the basic template for most blues music. There are twelve measures in the form, which is repeated until the end of the tune. The *chord progression* is also part of the form and, though there can be many variations, standard blues chords follow a basic 1 - 4 - 5 or I - IV - V pattern. These numbers refer to notes in a *scale* and are called *scale degrees*.

The text above the tablature shows both the chord you are playing and the scale degree. We'll get to what all that means on the next page. By playing this piece as written, you are supplying four ingredients:

1. Rhythm - By strumming and picking. This is the essential "bread" in the sandwich.
2. Chords - By moving chords around on the fretboard in a series of progressions. This is the "meat" of the sandwich.
3. Bass - By walking up or down those lower tones on the bass string, you are actually serving as your own bass player! While cool to do, you can have a killer blues tune without a bass line. Consider it the "lettuce and tomato" of the sandwich. (Sometimes, you just want bread and meat, right?)
4. Leads - By choosing individual notes from a pre-determined scale, you can switch between chords and leads (also called "solos", "riffs", "licks, etc.) to fill out your arrangement. Leads are the "condiments" on your sandwich. Again, you can have a blues tune with just rhythm and chords, but it tastes *so much better* with some mayo and mustard. (Never write a book when you're hungry.)

You can change up the rhythm in a number of ways (which we'll explore), use different chords in different keys, try all kinds of bass lines and explore many solo possibilities. All of these elements (along with lyrics) combine to make a blues tune. Yet, the basic *form* of the tune rarely changes.



Definition

The term **form** refers to the layout or structure of a piece of music.

When you see this clipboard, look for an explanation of a term used in the main text.



Important!

Watch for the bullhorn to give you an alert regarding crucial aspects of music theory.



Note

This box will contain extra bits of information on the subject being discussed.



Listen

Look to this container for a tip on general listening ideas and/or blues songs that will demonstrate the concepts being discussed.

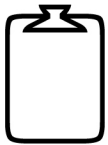
Chapter 2: A Lovely Bunch Of Notes ‘N’ Stuff

If you think of a blues song as a particular way of speaking, then it’s important for us to understand the language. Though we are focusing on how to play the blues on a *diatonic* mountain dulcimer (give or take a few frets), we still need to take a look at the bigger picture to see how everything’s related. Those African tribes with their voices up in song, singing what they knew to be music older than their land; they didn’t know any music theory and didn’t need to. However, we’re going to use western music theory to frame the issue.

Have yourself a big stretch, grab something cool to drink and get ready to dip into the *chromatic* world.



Dan Aykroyd as Elwood Blues at The House Of Blues Downtown Disney, October 2008 (photo by Bing Futch)



Definition

Let’s begin with a single **note**. You can also call it a **tone**, or perhaps a **pitch**. These are all correct terms for the sound you hear when you pluck a string.

If you pluck two strings and sound two **notes**, you now have an **interval**. The notes can be sounded together or one at a time. The relationship between **intervals** is measured in **steps**.

A **scale** is a sequence of notes. The **chromatic** scale contains 12 notes which are all a **half-step** apart. The **diatonic** scale contains 7 notes which is a combination of 2 **half-steps** and 5 **whole steps**.

Track #15

Chromatic Scale

8va

T
A
B

0 0+ 1 1+ 2 3 3+ 4 4+ 5 6 6+ 7

D D# E F F# G G# A A# B C C# D



Important!



12 half-steps



The fret numbers with “+” after them indicate half-steps up. If you don’t have that particular fret, you can play the number without the “+” and bend the string a half-step up.

Diatonic Scale

As we found out before, the *diatonic* scale is a combination of 2 *half-steps* and 5 *whole-steps*. This is relative to *chromatic* scale. Two half-steps make a whole-step so, beginning again with D as the starting note, the pattern of whole-steps and half-steps goes like this: **whole - whole - half - whole - whole - whole - half**. Take a look at the chromatic scale below with this pattern marked at the bottom:

8va

T
A
B

0 0+ 1 1+ 2 3 3+ 4 4+ 5 6 6+ 7

D D# E F F# G G# A A# B C C# D

whole whole half whole whole whole half

A whole-step from D to E; another whole-step from E to F#; a half-step from F# to G. See the pattern emerging? In relation to the chromatic scale, the diatonic scale weaves its way through five whole-steps and two half-steps to create what we also call the *major scale*!

Track #16

D E F# G A B C# D

8va

T
A
B

0 1 2 3 4 5 6+ 7



Important!

Individual notes can be raised or lowered a half-step by the use of a symbol. A '#' indicates that the note is to be raised a half-step. A 'b' indicates that a note is to be lowered a half-step.

Leads: Opening Up A Dialogue

Let's have a little fun, shall we? In blues music, you have rhythm, chords and bass as a foundation upon which you can build leads and vocals. Think of the lead as a monologue, the voice of the speaker if there weren't any lyrics. In fact, many blues songs are instrumentals where the lead instrument does all of the "talking." If you couldn't speak, what would you express through your fingers on the fretboard?

Leads can be little snippets played in between verses or long, drawn out fireworks shows of notes. They can be single string melody fragments or licks with some harmony thrown in. There are a lot of possibilities, but right now we're just going to focus on how to take our cue from the *pentatonic minor* and *blues pentatonic minor* scales without sounding like we're playing, well...a bunch of scales.

Blues Riff #1

Track #34

8va

4/4

D A D

1 0 1 3 3 1 1 0 3 3

This musical notation shows a blues riff in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The bottom staff is a guitar fretboard with strings D, A, and D. The riff consists of a sequence of notes: D (1st fret), A (0th fret), D (1st fret), Bb (3rd fret), Bb (3rd fret), D (1st fret), D (1st fret), A (0th fret), Bb (3rd fret), and Bb (3rd fret). The notes are connected by a slur, indicating they are played in sequence.

8va

T A B

1 0 1 3 3 1 1 0 1 1

This musical notation shows the same blues riff as above, but with a tablature (TAB) staff. The notes are represented by numbers on the strings: 1 (D), 0 (A), 1 (D), 3 (Bb), 3 (Bb), 1 (D), 1 (D), 0 (A), 1 (Bb), and 1 (Bb). The notes are connected by a slur, indicating they are played in sequence.



Note

When we talk about **leads**, it can be anything that involves playing basically one note at a time. Some of the terms that you may run across in this book and out there in the music world do have some significance, so here are a few:

Leads - Generally, any series of notes played over the chord changes or by themselves.

Licks - Short melodic fragments typically played in between verses.

Riffs - Repetitive motifs that can reoccur throughout a song.

Solos - Usually extended melodies played as a centerpiece to a tune. Largely improvisational, they are the showstopping highlight of most blues music.

Blues Riff #2

Track #35

Musical notation for Blues Riff #2, Track #35. The notation is in 4/4 time, 8va, and includes a guitar fretboard diagram. The riff consists of two measures, each repeated. The first measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note F#4, and a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note D5. The fretboard diagram shows the following fret numbers: 4, 6, 4, 6, 4, 3, 3+, 3, 6, 4, 4. A bend symbol (-1/2) is placed over the 3+ fret.

Remember, when you see the fret number with the arrow, bend in that direction, it means to bend *first*, then pluck the note. These riffs are placed within repeat marks (the little double dots) so be sure to play them through a few times to get the full effect. The “+” indicates what the half-step fret number would be.

Blues Riff #3

Track #36

Musical notation for Blues Riff #3, Track #36. The notation is in 4/4 time, 8va, and includes a guitar fretboard diagram. The riff consists of two measures, each repeated. The first measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note F#4, and a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note D5. The fretboard diagram shows the following fret numbers: 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 7, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 7.

So far, we’ve been dealing with a basic 4/4 time signature; the number on top represents the number of *beats* in each measure while the lower number assigns the beat to a particular duration of note, in this case “4” refers to the quarter note. While a lot of blues is straightforward like that, there are many songs which have a definitive “rolling” feel that can be attributed to the 12/8 time signature. In this case, there are 12 beats per measure and the eighth note gets the beat. That gives you four clusters of three eighth notes so you could, in theory, also count through a bar of 12/8 with a count of four.

Here is probably the most famous blues riff of all time, used by countless musicians. What I’ve included here is not only the riff, but a simple rhythmic accompaniment. Something is happening on every beat of the measure. The “X” marks require you to dampen the strings so that they don’t ring out, but instead make a “chunking” noise like a heartbeat. On the eighth rests, don’t do anything - let that silence do its job!

Blues Riff #4

Track #37

Musical notation for Blues Riff #4, Track #37. The notation is in 12/8 time, 8va, and includes a guitar fretboard diagram. The riff consists of four measures, each repeated. The first measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note F#4, and a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note D5. The third measure contains a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, a quarter note G5, and a quarter note A5. The fourth measure contains a quarter note B5, a quarter note C6, a quarter note D6, and a quarter note E6. The fretboard diagram shows the following fret numbers: 4, 1, 3, 1, X, X, X, X, 1. The “X” marks indicate where to dampen the strings.

Template

Tracks #63 - 64

The first system of music features a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is written on a single staff. Below the staff, there are three staves labeled 5, 6, and 8, which correspond to the lyrics "D", "A", and "D" respectively. The notes are placed on the lines of these lower staves.

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". It consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is written in 4/4 time. The melody is simple and consists of a few notes. The lyrics are written below the bottom staff. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure contains the notes D4, A4, and D4. The second measure contains the notes D4, A4, and D4. The third measure contains the notes D4, A4, and D4. The fourth measure contains the notes D4, A4, and D4. The lyrics are "The Rose Tree", "The Rose Tree", "The Rose Tree", and "The Rose Tree".

9 D A D 10 11 12