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**Blues Improvisation Complete:  
C Treble**

Jeff Harrington

Section II  
Rhythms for Improvisation

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CD tracks from book.  
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## Writing Your Own Ideas, Phrases, and Solos

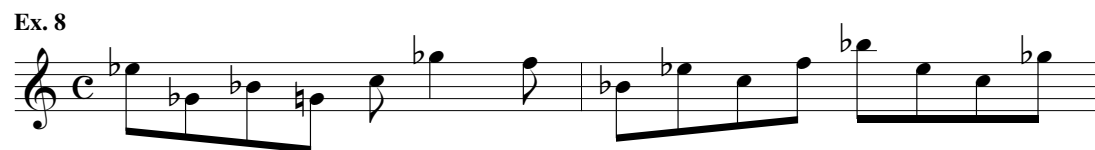
Writing your ideas down on paper is valuable in the study of improvisation. After all, improvisation is simply composing in the moment. Writing out your solos gives you the opportunity to try different ideas and choose the best ones. It also allows you to see your solos on paper.

This will help you to organize your thinking and decide what works best. It will also, when the time comes, help you to compose in the moment.

## Tips for Writing and Improvising With the Blues Scale

Begin using the scale in stepwise motion. This means going up and down the scale without skipping a note. Notice that much of the written material in this book moves by step. Often, we don't need to do much with the scale for it to sound good—it sounds good all by itself!

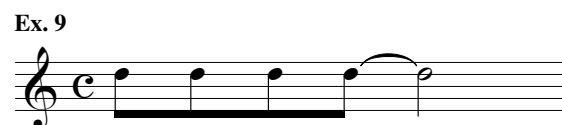
The scale already has built-in skips (no second or sixth degree). If you skip around too much, it will lose its blues quality. However, some interesting and unusual melodies can result (Ex. 8).



## Rhythms for Improvisation

The following are 24 one-bar rhythms. Notice that they use mostly eighth notes. The eighth note is the predominant rhythm in most jazz, Latin, fusion, blues, and rock.

1. Begin with Rhythm 1. Play it for one chorus using only the root of the D Blues scale (Ex. 9) with the D blues track on the CD.



2. Then, do this for each of the remaining 23 one-bar rhythms.
3. Next, do the same but use  $\flat 3$  (F) of the scale, and then the same on 4 (G) of the scale. Continue this exercise for  $\flat 5$  ( $A\flat$ ), 5 (A), and  $\flat 7$  (C).

By using the D blues scale over a D Blues, we are using the blues scale based on the root of the key. Notice that each degree of the scale has its own characteristic sound. The 1 (D) is the home note. It doesn't need to go anywhere. It sounds resolved.

The 5 (A) is the next most stable note of the scale. It usually sounds fairly resolved and consonant.

The 4 (G) has an ambiguous quality and often sounds as though it wants to move down the scale to the root.

The  $\flat 3$  (F),  $\flat 5$  (A $\flat$ ), and  $\flat 7$  (C) are referred to as the blue notes. The  $\flat 3$  can create a great deal of tension and usually wants to move to the root. It is quite dark and “bluesy.” The  $\flat 7$ , while a little lighter, is also very bluesy and tends to resolve up to the root or down to the 5. The  $\flat 5$  is the most dissonant and, therefore, the most dramatic of all the notes. It often resolves down the scale to the root or up to the 5. Its sound is the essence of the blues.

While playing each of these notes, listen to the color and flavor they produce. Then, when you improvise, you will be better able to choose one note over another.

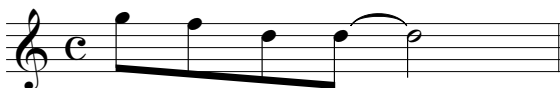
- Next, play each rhythm using the root and  $\flat 3$  (Ex. 10). The order of the notes is up to you. Do this for several choruses each day until you feel confident.

Ex. 10



- Then, play with the root,  $\flat 3$ , and 4 (Ex. 11). Keep adding notes of the scale until you have all six (or as many as the each rhythm will allow). This is an excellent way to gain rhythmic control and to ease into playing with the entire scale.

Ex. 11



- Tape yourself to see how you sound.

### Rhythms for Improvisation

## Write Your Own Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas

Try writing your own one-bar ideas:

1. A. Keep the rhythm of bar 1 of the C Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas, but choose different notes from the C blues scale (Ex. 12).

**Ex. 12**

Rhythm from bar 1; new notes from C blues scale



Move most often by step, either up or down. Practically anything will sound good, so write freely.

- B. Do this for all the bars.
  - C. Play and record what you've written with Track 1 of the CD, and listen back to how it sounds. Notice which ones sound best and change the ones you don't like. Then, record it again.
2. A. Take the notes of bar 1 but change the rhythm. Try putting the notes of bar 1 to a rhythm from another bar (Ex. 13), select one from Rhythms for Improvisation on page 26, or simply invent your own. Make sure the rhythm is four beats long.

**Ex. 13**

Notes from bar 1; rhythm from bar 10



- B. Do this for all the bars.
  - C. Play and record it with the CD and listen to how it sounds. Keep the best ones and fix the ones you don't like. Then, record it again.
3. Write your own one-bar ideas. Come up with your own rhythm and notes, and record them with the CD. Rewrite as needed.

## Improvising With the Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas

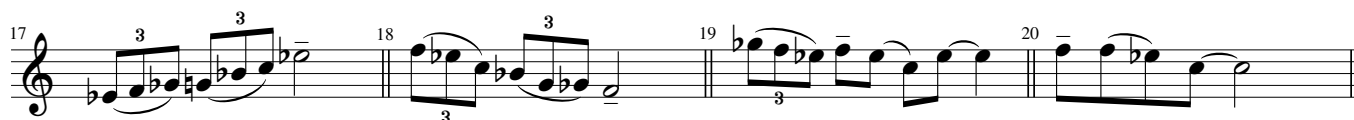
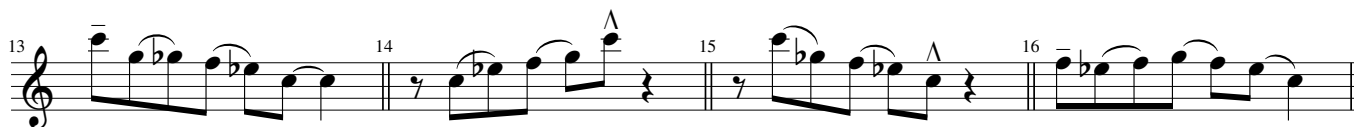
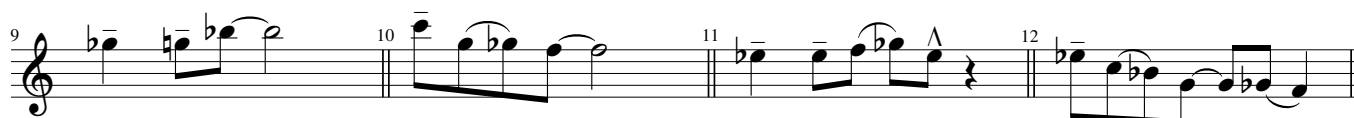
You are ready to improvise with the Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas when you can do the following in any one key:

1. Play the Blues Scale Exercises by memory at mm 100.
2. Play the Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas exercises A–K (as listed on page 24) with the CD.
3. Play your own written one-bar ideas.

Now, continue by improvising your own one-bar ideas using the blues scale for that key. Imitate the sound of the written ideas. Keep it simple and don't think too much. Play what you hear. Try not to be critical of your ideas while you're playing. Enjoy it and have fun!

# C Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas

1 13



# F Blues Scale One-Bar Ideas

2 14

