



Topic 5: The history of popular music

Summer Term, Week 3/4, Lesson 2/3 – The Twelve Bar Blues

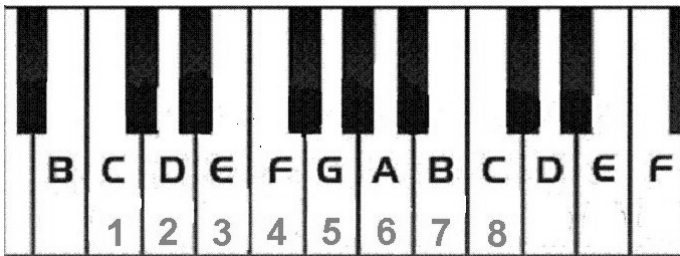
Name:

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The Twelve Bar Blues

The twelve bar blues is built around a sequence of twelve chords – one per bar. The sequence is:

I – I – I – I – IV – IV – I – I – V – IV – I – I
or
 1 – 1 – 1 – 1 – 4 – 4 – 1 – 1 – 5 – 4 – 1 – 1



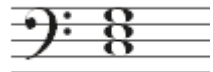
If we are in the key of C, this translates to what chord sequence? The first four chords are completed for you.

C – C – C – C – _____ – _____ – _____ – _____ – _____ – _____ – _____ – _____

Show how this sequence can be written as a bass line (again, the first four chords are completed for you):



Often, the bass line is harmonised by adding simple chords formed by the *third* and *fifth* notes above the bass note (these chords are called *triads*):



If you want, instead of just holding the chord through the bar, it can be repeated each beat:



The vocal line is then put on top of this accompaniment, and is often improvised.

The twelve bars blues is a simple pattern – anyone can learn to play it on the piano!



Here is an example of how a blues verse can fit together with the twelve bar blues pattern:

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

~

TASK A: Performance and composition task

In your pairs from last lesson, go find a free practice room.

Task 1: Work out how to play the twelve bar blues on the piano (bass line only, or bass line plus chords if you're feeling adventurous!).

Your teacher will mark you out of ten:

Task 2: Using the 12-bar blues pattern, set the blues lyrics you wrote last lesson to music. One of you could play the piano, the other sing; or one of you could sing and play the piano while the others plays a second instrument. Again, your teacher will mark you out of ten (and maybe even record your blues!):

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Playing the 12-bar blues

10

*To be completed
 by your teacher*

Composing your own blues

10

*To be completed
 by your teacher*

TASK B: Composition and music writing task

Log on to a computer. On the desktop, open the 'New Public Drive', and within that, Academic Departments > Music > PAS > Fourth Form. Double-click the file called **blues.sib**. Save this file into your own data space (File > Save As). Continue the bass line in the twelve bar blues pattern. Add a piano accompaniment (this can be simple triad chords or as complex as you wish it!). If you have time, you could even add a second instrument with a bluesy melody.