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Written by Dr. Victor Ezquerra, instructor at Metro Music Makers IntroductionBlues music was created by African-Americans in the United States and were developed
internationally, and an emotion. Blues music tends to be about love and sadness, built off a simple I-IV-V 12-bar chord progression, contains very down-to-earth lyrics, and evolves with time. This blog takes a close look at the meaning, structure, and history of blues music. And before we continue, consider Metro Music Makers if you are interested in
piano lessons in Atlanta, vocal instruction, or another instruction, or another instruction to your home. What is the blues? The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music, and a genre. The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music, and a genre. The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music instruction to your home. What is the blues? The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music, and a genre. The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music instruction to your home. What is the blues? The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music instruction to your home. What is the blues? The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music instruction to your home. What is the blues? The blues is several things: a feeling, a form of music instruction to your home. What is the blues? The blues is several things: a feeling, a feeling, a feeling, a feeling is several things: a feeling is 
bluegrass, country, gospel, zydeco, traditional country, and Native American music that would eventually bear fruits including rock, R&B, soul, and jazz. Here is a great article that situates American music in historical and cultural contexts. Below are several aspects, qualities, and
interpretations that help explain and analyze the broad concept of blues music. What is blues form? The musical form (the way a piece of music is organized) of the blues tends to be relatively simple. Probably the most common form is the 12-Bar blues, which only uses three chords (I, IV, and V) and repeats after each twelve bars or measures. Although
every four bars. The A line is sung during the first four bars and repeated during the second four bars. The B line almost always rhymes with the A line and is sung during the first four bars. Below is an example of a blues verse in AAB form taken from B.B. Kings 1969 song, The Thrill is Goneclick here to listen to the song. The thrill is gone, the thrill is gone,
gone away (A line, measures 1-4)The thrill is gone baby, the thrill is gone away (A line, measures 5-8)You know you done me wrong baby, and youll be sorry someday (B line, measures 9-12)It is important to note that although the 12-bar chord progression and the AAB lyric form tend to be the most widely used, there are other forms of the blues. What
are the musical characteristics of the blues? Because blues music evolved throughout the 20th century, its characteristics are dynamic and dependent on the specific type, phase, or sub-genre of the blues that is considered. However, several common characteristics can be identified. Guitar and vocals are the instruments most frequently heard in blues
music. Other instruments commonly heard are piano, harmonica, drums, and bass. Early on, not only were the lyrics of the blues improvised, but the instruments as well. Due to lack of accessibility and money, blues artists often had to make their own instruments. This would give rise to the one-stringed diddley bow, which was played with a bottle
neck; the percussive washboard, which was played rhythmically with thimbles; an incredibly basic wind instrument (the jug); the spoons; and the washtub bass. Click the links to see and hear those resourceful and cool instruments! Many of the characteristics found in the blues can be attributed to the influence of African music and culture. The use of
improvisation, syncopation (emphasizing off-beat rhythms), social involvement (music during work/play), unique timbres (which can be raspy, twangy, and seem less polished than European music), call and response (one or more musicians plays/sings a musical phrase and another musicians or group of musicians answer with a musical phrase), and
blue notes (expressively bending/altering pitches in non-Western intervals) these are all attributes that can be traced back to African influence. What is blues or Im feeling blue. Being blue refers to feeling sad,
melancholy, downtrodden, heartbroken, down, guilt, despair, or other gloomy emotions. Although there are happy and uplifting blues songs, blues music is focused around harsh realities of life. Love is also a central subject matter is
expressive, honest, and straightforward. Since the blues is expressing pain, the performer(s) should have and understanding of and be able to communicate that pain. The language used in that communicate that pain, the performer(s) should have and understanding of and be able to communicate that pain.
settings. When blues artists share their truth, both artists and audience feel that deep meaning. Not every blues artist has had a rough upbringing, struggled with poverty, had to do grueling labor, or had their heart broken the way they describe in their music. However, what (good) blues musicians are honest and truthful about is the feeling of having
the blues. Genuine blues music isnt learnedits felt. Blues history Blues music began in the southern United States in the late 19th century, most notably along the Mississippi delta. It was developed by African-Americans who blended European music with African music. The combination of those cultures and sub-cultures created what would become
the blues. Early precursors that paved the way for blues music include work songs, field hollers, spirituals, folk ballads, and minstrels. Early blues that refers to a specific geographic location, the Mississippi Delta. Typically, delta blues was performed with only one vocal part and
one guitar (sometimes the piano); often the musician would perform alone by singing and playing at the same time. It was played in rural, informal settingslike a porch or a barand was not widely distributed through media. Lyrics were centered around things seen in the countryfields, trains, manual labor, etc. Out of the relatively few recordings that
are still in existence from this time, many were done in the field by researchers like Alan Lomax instead of commercial recording companies. Robert Johnson (1911-1938) is one of the most famous American artists of all time. He was a mysterious delta blues singer and guitar player who allegedly sold his soul to the devil at a crossroads in order to play
guitar better. Very little is known about Johnson, who died in 1938 at age 27, so his music and persona have developed a legendary mysticism in American folklore. He is famous for songs like Crossroads Blues and Love in Vain, which would be covered by countless artists and eventually sell over half a million copies of his complete recordings despite
the fact that he died in relative obscurity. Johnson also foresaw the transition of blues from the country to the city, as he sang about in Sweet Home Chicago. During the same time, blues music existed in the northern U.S., albeit different from how it did in the south. The ensembles resembled early jazz instrumentation, the locations were in cities, and
some artists experienced commercial success. Northern blues music contained characteristics derived from African music, but overall sounded much more refined and European when compared with delta blues. Mamie Smiths (1891-1946) song, Crazy Blues (1920), has been credited as the first significant vocal blues recording, selling over 75,000
copies in Harlem alone over the course of a few weeks. W.C. Handy (1873-1958) wrote instrumental blues music, and was the first to publish St. Louis Blues ong in 1912Memphis Blues era. Watch Handy perform that song on the
Ed Sullivan show in 1949. Out of these early types of blues music, the delta blues would be the one with a more lasting impact. Urban blues came in the middle of the 20th century. Urban blues is the term used to describe blues during that time, which resulted from several
changes. Firstly, blacks moved out of the southern United States to look for new opportunities during what was called the Great Migration. The urban designation points to a geographic change: blues music moved from rural areas to urban cities. Like delta blues refers to a specific location where the early blues occurred, Chicago blues is a term that
refers to a major hub of the urban bluesChicago. Secondly, by the mid-twentieth century, technology had changed the musical landscape. Electric instruments, vocal amplification, improved recording techniques, record players, and radio revolutionized the way people created and experienced all music, including the blues. The urban blues introduced
a new type of blues ensemble. Piano, harmonica, and especially drums and bass were frequently seen during performances instead of only a single voice with a guitar. The guitars that were being played were now electric instead of only a single voice with a guitar. The guitars that were being played were now electric instead of only a single voice with a guitar. The guitars that were being played were now electric instead of only a single voice with a guitar.
(actual concerts instead of casual get togethers), increased number of and better-quality recordings, and increased exposure to blues artists and music through several forms of media. This era of the blues would lay the foundation for the creation of other musical genres including rock, funk, soul, and R&B.Following the evolution of the blues, Muddy
Waters (1913-1983) was born in Mississippi and became a prominent blues musician in Chicago. With his modest guitar playing and unforgettable voice, Waters was an embodiment of the urban blues that would inspire countless other artists. Two of his more popular songs are Got My Mojo Workin (1957) and Hoochie Coochie Man (1954). B.B. King
(1925-2015), who was mentioned above, was another blues artist who followed the Great Migration from the south to the northern U.S., where he would be regarded as a legendary guitarist because of his unique and soulful solo guitar playing. His song, which was titled after the name he gave his guitars, Lucille, (1968) demonstrates his amazing solo
playing and tells the story about how guitar practically saved his life. Blues revival (1960s, blacks in America had turned their attention to other genres such as R&B and soul music. The blues was no longer the most popular genre for
black Americans. However, beginning in the 1960s, many white musicians in the U.S. and abroad had discovered the blues and began playing it. Although blacks still played the blues, its popularity amongst white audiences and musicians brought the genre to the foreground again, but in a different cultural contexthenceblues revival. In the 1960s,
blues music became faster and louder, venues and audiences got much larger, and it spilled outside of the U.S. into Europe. Rock music was built directly off blues music, with artists like Elvis and Chuck Berry drawing inspiration straight from blues form and content. Eric Clapton covered Robert Johnsons Crossroads in 1966, and later released an
album with B.B. King in 2000. The Rolling Stones derived their name from a Muddy Waters song, also covered Johnsons Love in Vain in 1969, and worked frequently with the famous bluesman Howlin Wolf. Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, the Allman Brothers, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and many of their contemporaries recognized and harnessed the power
of the blues. Innumerable musicians would continue to follow suit as time went on. There are many, many examples of how musicians from the 1960s onward have borrowed from, collaborated with, been inspired by, and learned from blues music still around? Yes, blues music still remains alive and well. A term that has been used
to describe recent blues music is Americana. Although this term can be used to identify a contemporary version of any U.S. roots music including the blues. The two artists pictured directly above are part of the newest generation of
blues artists; Christone Kingfish Ingram on the left and Gary Clark Jr. on the right. Both artists continue the musical traditions of the blues in music from all around the world today. Conclusion Despite the fact that the blues had humble
beginnings and is relatively simple, it has sustained the interest of artists and audiences, spread around the globe, and adapted to changes imposed by time and place. The success of the blues stems from its adaptability, honesty, and universality. Whether its regarded as a feeling, genre, culture, form, and/or all of those things, the blues has been one
of Americas most important contributions to the world. If youre interested in playing the blues, check out this 3-part video course I created for Metro Music Makers. If you need Alpharetta piano lessons or other in-home music instruction for your family, get in touch. Citations: 1 Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the Worlds Peoples.
Shorter Version, 4th Edition. ISBN13: 978-1-337-10157-8. Editor: Titon. Authors: Cooley/Locke/Rasmussen/Reck/Scales/Schechter/Stock/Sutton2 Jazz: The First 100 Years. Third Edition. ISBN13: 978-1305637092. Martin, Henry and Waters, Keith. (Many of the links in this article redirect to a specific reviewed product. Your purchase of these
products through affiliate links helps to generate commission for AudioLover.com, at no extra cost. Learn more) The blues is a genre of music that has deep roots in African American culture and has significantly influenced the development of various music genres, including rock, jazz, and R&B. It is characterized by its distinct chord progressions,
soulful melodies, and emotive lyrics that reflect the struggles and experiences of its performers. The origins of the blues can be traced back to the late 19th century in the southern United States, particularly in African American communities. It emerged as a form of expression for those who were enslaved or oppressed, serving as a way to convey their
emotions and experiences. One of the defining features of the blues is its unique musical structure. It typically follows a 12-bar pattern, which provides a framework for improvisation and allows musicians to express their individuality and creativity. The blues also incorporates specific scales, such as the blues scale, which consists of the root, flattened
third, fourth, flattened fifth, fifth, and flattened seventh notes of the major scale. Blues music is characterized by its soulful and raw sound. It often features call and response patterns, where the lyrics of the singer are echoed by an instrument, such as a guitar or harmonica. The rhythm is typically syncopated, with emphasis on the offbeats, giving the
music a distinctive swing and groove. Improvisation is a crucial element of blues music. Musicians are encouraged to express themselves through their playing, adding their own unique style and interpretation to the music. This improvisational aspect allows for a wide range of emotions to be conveyed, from deep sadness to joy and celebration. Over
the years, the influence of the blues has spread far beyond its original roots. It has become a foundation for many other genres, including rock and roll, jazz, and even contemporary pop music. The raw emotion and expressive nature of the blues have resonated with artists from all backgrounds, leading to its integration and evolution into various
musical styles. In this article, we will delve deeper into the origins and characteristics of the blues, exploring its structure, scales, chord progressions, and rhythm. We will also examine the importance of improvisation in the blues and its enduring influence on other genres. Join us on this journey through the rich and soulful world of blues music. The
blues can be traced back to the late 19th century and has its roots in African American history and culture. It evolved from a combination of African Americans, particularly those who were enslaved or facing racial discrimination. During
slavery, African Americans were stripped of their freedom and faced unimaginable hardships. Music served as an outlet for them to express their sorrows, hopes, and aspirations. The early blues songs were performed a
capella or accompanied by simple instruments such as the acoustic guitar or harmonica. As African Americans moved from the rural south to the urban cities during the Great Migration, the blues began to evolve. The influence of other music styles, including ragtime and jazz, started to shape the sound of the blues. This led to the emergence of classic
blues artists such as Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Mamie Smith, who gained popularity in the 1920s. The blues became a powerful form of expression, allowing African Americans to share their personal experiences and emotions. It was a way for them to tell their stories and connect with others who could relate to their struggles. The melancholic
blues musicians, leaving an indelible mark on the genre. Their influential guitar playing techniques, powerful vocals, and heartfelt lyrics continue to inspire musicians to this day. While the blues initially thrived within the African American community, its popularity eventually crossed racial and cultural boundaries. It became a part of American
popular music and influenced the development of various genres, from rock and roll to rhythm and blues. The origins of the blues are deeply rooted in the history and experiences of African Americans. It serves as a testament to the resilience and creativity of a marginalized community, and its enduring legacy continues to captivate audiences around
is worth noting that the structure of the blues allows for improvisation and individual expression. Musicians have the freedom to improvisational aspect is one of the reasons why the blues has remained a vibrant and evolving genre. Overall, the
component of blues music and is integral to capturing the distinct tonality and emotion of the genre. It is a specific scale that incorporates both major and minor elements, creating a unique and expressive sound. The blues scale is typically based on the pentatonic scale, which consists of five notes per octave. However, the addition of one additional
note, known as the blue note, gives the scale its characteristic bluesy sound. This added note is often a flattened third, resulting in a unique tension and melancholic quality. The typical blues scale includes the root, flattened third, resulting in a unique tension and melancholic quality. The typical blues scale includes the root, flattened third, resulting in a unique tension and melancholic quality. The typical blues scale includes the root, flattened third, resulting in a unique tension and melancholic quality. The typical blues scale includes the root, flattened third, resulting in a unique tension and melancholic quality.
be C, Eb, F, Gb, G, and Bb. What makes the blues scale versatile is that it can be used over various chords within the blues progression. This flexibility allows musicians to create melodic lines and solos that reflect the changing harmonies of the song. The blues scale is particularly well-suited for improvisation, as its structure allows for expressive and
emotive playing. Musicians can bend or slide notes, add vibrato, and use other techniques to further enhance the bluesy feel of their performance. Furthermore, the bluesy feel of their performance. Furthermore, the bluesy feel of their performance to further enhance the bluesy feel of their performance. Furthermore, the bluesy feel of their performance to further enhance the bluesy feel of their performance.
musicians and listeners alike. It is important to note that while the blues scale is a fundamental element of blues music, it is by no means the only scale or the dorian scale, to add variety and complexity to their playing. Whether used as a
that underpins countless blues songs. It provides a structure for the chord progression and serves as a foundation for improvisation and songwriting in the blues genre. The 12-bar blues genre. The first four bars star
with the tonic (I) chord, establishing the key of the song. This is often a dominant seventh chord. The next two bars return to the tonic (I) chord, releasing the tension and providing a resolution. The final two bars conclude with the dominant (V)
progression remains consistent, there are variations that exist. These variations may include adding additional chords or altering the order of the chords within the progression. One of the reasons why the 12-bar blues progression is so enduring is its simplicity and flexibility. It provides a solid foundation for musicians to build upon and allows for
creative expression. Musicians can experiment with different voicings and inversions of the chords, incorporate passing chords, or add chromaticism to add complexity and personalize their interpretation of the progression. Additionally, the 12-bar blues progression serves as a canvas for improvisation. Musicians can create melodic lines and solos
using the blues scale and explore different techniques such as bending notes, slides, and expression allows musicians to develop their improvisational skills and develop their unique voice within the blues genre. Overall, the 12-bar blues progression is a cornerstone of blues music. Its simplicity,
versatility, and potential for creativity make it a powerful tool for musicians to express emotions, tell stories, and connect with audiences. Whether performed by a soloist or a full band, the 12-bar blues progression is a testament to the enduring appeal and timeless nature of this genre. Blues music is characterized by its distinct chord progression,
which creates the foundation for the genres signature sound. While there are variations and substitutions, there are a few primary chords form the blues. The three main chords in the blues are the tonic (I), subdominant (IV), and dominant (I
backbone of the 12-bar blues progression and provide the harmonic structure for blues songs. The tonic (I) chord, often referred to as the home chord, establishes the key of the scale. For example, in the key of C, the C7 chord would
contain the notes C, E, G, and Bb. This chord is typically played in the first four bars of the 12-bar blues progression. In the key of C, the F7 chord is commonly used as the subdominant. It consists of the notes F, A, C, and Eb. It is usually played in bars five and six of the 12-bar
blues progression. The dominant (V) chord serves as a leading chord back to the tonic (I) and creates a sense of resolution. In the key of C, the G7 chord is often used as the dominant. It includes the notes G, B, D, and F. This chord is played in bars nine and ten of the 12-bar blues progression. While these three chords are the foundation of the blues,
variations and substitutions are also common. Musicians may choose to add additional chords, such as the minor sixth (vi) or the diminished seventh (vii) chords can be employed to add color and texture to the music. Musicians can
experiment with different voicings, inversions, and chord substitutions, allowing for personal expression and individual style within the blues framework. Understanding and effectively using blues chords is crucial for musicians in order to create the authentic sound and feel of this genre. Whether played with a guitar, piano, or any other instrument,
rhythm is often characterized by its syncopated and swung feel. Syncopation refers to offbeat accents, where the emphasis falls on the weak beats or between beats rather than the strong beats. This rhythmic placement adds a subtle shuffle of
swing to the music, which gives it a relaxed and groovy quality. Instead of playing evenly spaced notes, blues musicians swing the eighth notes, emphasizing the long note on the downbeat and shortening the note on the downbeat and shortening the note on the upbeat. This rhythmic nuance contributes to the infectious and toe-tapping quality of the music. Furthermore, blues rhythm often
incorporates rhythmic motifs and patterns that repeat throughout a song. These patterns, also known as riffs, serve as the backbone of the music and create a recognizable and catchy rhythmic groove. Riffs are typically played by instruments like the guitar, piano, or harmonica, and they form a call-and-response relationship with the vocals or other
instruments. Blues rhythm provides ample room for improvisation and individual expression. Musicians are encouraged to explore different rhythmic variations, fills, and accents within the framework of the song. This improvisation and exciting nature of blues music. Its worth
mentioning that the blues rhythm is not limited to a single tempo or style. Different subgenres of blues, such as Delta blues, chicago blues, and Texas blues, their own characteristic rhythmic variations and grooves. For example, Delta blues often features a slower tempo with a looser and more laid-back feel, while Chicago blues tends to have a
driving, energetic rhythm with tighter instrumentation. Blues rhythm has had a profound influence on a wide range of musical genres, from rock and funk. Its infectious groove and syncopation have become an essential part of the musical language and have shaped the development of popular music as we know it today. Overall, blues
rhythm is the pulsating heartbeat of the genre. Its syncopation, swing, and improvisatory nature create a lively and engaging musical experience that draws listeners in and keeps them hooked to the rhythm of the blues. Improvisation is a fundamental element of blues music, allowing musicians to express their creativity, emotions, and individuality
The ability to improvise is highly regarded in the blues community and is an essential skill for any blues musicians to add their own
personal touch and interpretation to a song. A key component of blues improvisation is the use of scales, particularly the blues scale, along with various bending, sliding, and vibrato techniques, to create soulful and
expressive phrases. Beyond the blues scale, improvisation in the blues relies heavily on aural tradition and an intuitive understanding of the genre. Blues musicians develop their improvisation in the blues relies heavily on aural tradition and an intuitive understanding of the genre. Blues musicians develop their improvisation in the blues relies heavily on aural tradition and an intuitive understanding of the genre.
improvisation in the blues. Musicians often engage in a musical conversation, where they take turns playing phrases that echo and respond to each other. This interaction adds depth, dynamics, and engagement to the music. Blues improvisation offers a platform for musicians to showcase their technical prowess, but it is equally important to convey
emotion and storytelling through the music. Through their improvisations, blues musicians are able to communicate a wide range of emotional states, including joy, sorrow, longing, and resilience. Improvisation in the blues is not limited to instrumentalists. Vocalists also have the opportunity to showcase their improvisational skills by adding their
unique style and interpretation to the lyrics. They can vary phrasing, incorporate vocal embellishments, and accentuate certain words or phrases to convey their personal expression. Blues jams and live performances often provide a fertile ground for improvisation. Musicians have the chance to interact and feed off the energy of the audience and
fellow band members, leading to extended and inspired improvisational passages. Ultimately, improvisation is at the core of what makes the blues so captivating and engaging. It allows musical experience for both themselves
and their audience. The influence of the blues extends far beyond its original roots, permeating various genres of music and shaping the landscape of popular music. The raw emotion, powerful storytelling, and distinct musical characteristics of the blues have inspired countless artists across different styles and eras. Rock and roll, one of the most
influential genres of the 20th century, owes a significant debt to the blues. Pioneers such as Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, and The Rolling Stones embraced the foundation for rock and rolls energy and attitude, as well as its
societal impact and cultural significance. Jazz, with its emphasis on improvisation and individual expression, has been deeply influenced by the blues. Early jazz musicians drew from the blues in terms of structure, chord progressions, and improvisation and individual expression, has been deeply influenced by the blues. Early jazz musicians drew from the blues in terms of structure, chord progressions, and improvisation and individual expression, has been deeply influenced by the blues.
elements into their music, creating a fusion of styles that became known as jazz blues or swinging the blues. R&B artists like Ray Charles, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin blended blues, gospel, and soul elements to create a vibrant and expressive genre. R&B artists like Ray Charles, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin blended blues, gospel, and soul elements to create a vibrant and expressive genre. R&B artists like Ray Charles, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin blended blues, gospel, and soul elements to create a vibrant and expressive genre.
showcased the versatility of the blues, infusing it with contemporary influences and paving the way for the birth of soul and funk music. Country music, particularly the subgenre of country blues, also bears the imprint of the blues. Artists like Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams incorporated blues elements into their country songs, introducing a new
level of emotional depth and storytelling in the genre. This fusion of country and blues laid the groundwork for the development of rockabilly and later genres such as alt-country. Even modern pop music has been influenced by the blues. From the soulful vocals of Adele to the blues-inflected guitar riffs of John Mayer, contemporary artists continue to
draw from the rich tradition of the blues. The emotional intensity, melodic phrasing, and storytelling heritage of the blues can be heard across various pop subgenres. The blues has proven to transcend both time and boundaries, inspiring artists from different cultures and backgrounds. Its unmatched ability to convey raw emotion and capture the
diverse human experience has made it a universal language that resonates with listeners worldwide. Its influence can be heard in the DNA of multiple genres, shaping the course of music history and continuing to inspire and captivate artists and audiences alike. The blues is a genre of music history and continuing to inspire and captivate artists and audiences alike.
that holds a timeless and profound significance in the world of music. Its roots in African American history and culture, coupled with its powerful storytelling, raw emotion, and expressive qualities, have made it a vital and influential genre that has shaped and continues to permeate various musical styles. From its origins in African American
communities in the late 19th century, the blues has grown into a global phenomenon. Its distinct musical structure, characterized by the 12-bar blues progression and the blues scale, provides a framework for musicians to explore their creativity and deliver soul-stirring performances. Improvisation plays a pivotal role in the blues, allowing musicians
to express their individuality, evoke deep emotions, and engage in musical conversation. The use of call and response, rhythmic motifs, and the incorporation of the blues scale adds depth, variety, and excitement to the music. Furthermore, the blues has had a far-reaching impact on other genres. Its influence can be heard in rock and roll, jazz, rhythmic motifs, and the incorporation of the blues scale adds depth, variety, and excitement to the music. Furthermore, the blues has had a far-reaching impact on other genres. Its influence can be heard in rock and roll, jazz, rhythmic motifs, and the incorporation of the blues has had a far-reaching impact on other genres. Its influence can be heard in rock and roll, jazz, rhythmic motifs, and the incorporation of the blues has had a far-reaching impact on other genres.
musical language have made it an essential part of the global musical tapestry. Whether it is the haunting melodies, the evocative lyrics, or the masterful guitar solos, the blues has the power to move and catharsis, provides a voice for the marginalized, and celebrates the triumph of the global musical tapestry. Whether it is the haunting melodies, the evocative lyrics, or the masterful guitar solos, the blues has the power to move and catharsis, provides a voice for the marginalized, and celebrates the triumph of the global musical tapestry.
the human spirit. So, let us continue to embrace and appreciate the blues for what it is a vibrant and soulful art form that speaks to our shared experiences and emotions. By doing so, we honor the rich legacy of the blues and ensure its timeless relevance in the ever-changing world of music. One of the most popular types of form in music is the 12-Bar
general formula or blueprint for how to write or analyze a piece of music. It is usually found by taking and labeling sections of the music to see what, if any, sections of the music to see what, if any, sections of the music to see what, if any, sections can be small, like a single measure or even an entire movement. If we compare reading
 music to reading a book, sections can be like a single sentence, a paragraph, a page, or even a chapter. We label these sections with letters, usually labeling the first section of the piece A, then the piece A, then the next one B, and so on. In a pop song, the first verse could be A, and then the chorus B and the bridge C, and the form of a song that goes verse-chorus.
bridge would be written as ABC.12-Bar Blues is a musical form that was created for Blues music. It is also sometimes referred to as Blues Changes. Blues is a musical genre that stems from African-American traditional songs and work songs. It is a forerunner to other genres like Jazz, Rock and Roll, and Rhythm & Blues. The 12-Bar Blues form is
called that because it has a chord progression that takes place over 12 bars or measures. The chord progression uses only the I, IV, and V chords of a key, also called the tonic, subdominant, respectively. The 12 meaures are broken up into three groups of four. The progression and form, therefore, looks like this: 12 Bar Blues Chord
Sequence Roman NumeralsIIIIIVIVIIVIVIIII the key of C Major, the chord progression would be:12 Bar Blues Chord Sequence C MajorCCCCFFCCGFCCTwo examples of 12-bar blues using that chord sequence are Johnny B. Goode by Chuck BerryIn
terms of labeling the sections, this can be done in a few ways. One way is to label the different chords the tonic would be A, the subdominant would be B, and the Dominant would be B, and the Dominant would be A, the subdominant would be four
measures long, and the C and the second B would each only be one measure long, for example. Another way is just to take each measure section so that the form would look like ABC. Again, however, this is a
bit too non-specific because each letter doesnt really tell us all that much. We think the best form labeling system for the 12-Bar Blues is so recognizable on its own, it is likely in the table format above that you will see it and write it. While each 4-measure phrase in the chord progression is different in a
12-Bar Blues piece, if there are lyrics to the song, they will usually follow the AAB form. This means the first two lines of the lyrics will be the exact same thing, and then the third line is different. Listen to this example, Hound Dog by Elvis. Hound Dog by Elvi
dog, crying all the timeYou aint nothing but a hound dog, crying all the timeWell, you aint never caught a rabbit and you aint never caught a rabbit and you aint never show the standard chord progression of a 12-Bar Blues piece, because Blues above show the standard chord progression of a 12-Bar Blues piece, because Blues above show the standard chord progression of a 12-Bar Blues piece, because Blues and Jazz are highly improvisational genres without strict musical rules, there are also variations that people
that does this is Creams cover of the Robert Johnson Crossroads. Robert Johnson Crossroads Policy is normally would.12 Bar Blues Elongated DominantIIVIIIVIVIIA song that uses this progression is Rock and Roll by Led Zeppelin. Rock and Roll by
Led ZeppelinA 12-Bar Blues song with an ending turnaround plays a V chord in the final measure rather than a I chord. Because the V is dominant and wants to lead back to the start of the progression and repeat it, usually with the next verse.12 Bar Blues End
TurnaroundIIVIIVIVIVIAn example of a turnaround is found in the song Tush by ZZ Top. Tush by ZZ Top. Tush by ZZ TopBecause Blues is very similar to Jazz music, many of the 12-Bar Blues songs that have seventh chords than dont. Here is what
common things to learn when youre first playing an instrument.12 bar blues is a chord progression that defines the number of bars or measures in a typical blues song structure. In this lesson we are going to learn the plane.12 Bar
piece is continuing then chord V is often used this is called a turnaround chord.12 Bar Blues in CLets try this standard progression out in C major is as follows: Lets have a listen to how the twelve bar blues in C as it is played in C
major.Can you hear how the overall structure has a clear sense of balance to it? Also, you can hear how I have used chord V in the 12th bar as a turnaround chord because the piece is continuing. Twelve Bar Blues Variations There are many ways in which you can vary the typical 12 bar blues structure. One of the most obvious ways is that it can be
played in any key! The example above was in C major, but we could have 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major if you felt like a real challenge!!It can also be played in both major and minor keys. 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major if you felt like a real challenge!!It can also be played in both major and minor keys. 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major if you felt like a real challenge!!It can also be played in both major and minor keys. 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major if you felt like a real challenge!!It can also be played in both major and minor keys. 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major if you felt like a real challenge!!It can also be played in both major and minor keys. 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major if you felt like a real challenge!!It can also be played in both major and minor keys. 12 bar blues in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in E Flat or even in C sharp major in G, in 
Chord I to Chord IV. This is called quick-change or quick four and can be very effective. Have a listen to this example of quick-change blues in E major:12 bar blues examples: Jonny B Goode This song by Chuck Berry recorded in 1959
is one of the most famous 12 bar blues songs. It follows the standard blues progression in B flat major and is a great example to listen to: Hound Dog This iconic song by Elvis Presley from 1956 follows twelve bar blues in C:Tutti Frutti This 1955 hit from Little Richard features some fantastic blues piano playing in F major: How to Play Twelve Bar
Blues PianoWe are going to have a look at how to play some 12 bar blues on the piano. In order to do this we need to have a look at the bassline, the chords and the melody. For each part I am going to give you a beginner task to try followed by a more advanced task. Blues Bassline The groove of a twelve bar blues piece is largely built on the bassline.
which provides a foundation for the rhythmic feel and also the chord structure. The bassline is built on the root note of each chord. So, if we are playing 12 bar blues in C then the 1st bass note we play will be the note C as C major is the 1st chord in the progression. When the chord changes to an F in bar 5 then we will change our bass note to F, etc. It
is possible to play blues piano with a very simple left hand bass just using a single note for each chord:12 bar blues in C simple bassline more complicated. Have a listen to this bassline that is based on a proken chord pattern and see if you can have a go at
playing it:12 bar blues in C broken chord bassline (it may well take a bit of practice to get it right as it is quite complex):12 bar blues in C
advanced basslineBlues ChordsThe next part we add is the chords to give it a bluesy feel. Added chords are simply where an extra note(s) is added to the basic C major chord (C-E-G) this gives it a jazz/blues sound. I have used an added
chord for each bar in the progression. Have a go at playing these chords:12 bar blues basic chords we are playing. Have a listen/look at this example and then try playing it yourself: 12 bar blues advanced chordsWhen you have
practised this you can try combining the bassline and chords:12 bar blues advanced chords and bassline Blues melody I have written for our piano blues piece below. You can see how I have added some short sections of melody to the chords we have
already practised:12 bar blues melody 12 bar blues melody and bassline as one twelve bar blues on the piano! Good luck! Share this post: on Twitter on Facebook Ben Dunnett LRSM is the founder of Music Theory Academy. He is a
music teacher, examiner, composer and pianist with over twenty years experience in music education. Read More Megan Lavengood In a blues song with a sung text, the lyrics consist of a line that is repeated, then followed by a contrasting line (aab). The melody often follows this structure as well. Blues melodies often leave large gaps to allow for
call-and-response between the melodic instrument and other instruments. The blues scale is like a minor pentatonic scale with an additional chromatic passing tone: domefafisolte [latex](hat1-\downarrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\uparrow\hat4-\upar
dorerimisolla [latex](\hat1-\hat2-\uparrow\hat2-\hat3-\hat6)[/latex]. This chapter discusses some of the earliest recorded blues songs, Gulf Coast Blues by Clarence Williams, as recorded by the enormously commercially successful
blues singer Bessie Smith in 1923. Example 1. Gulf Coast Blues (1923), recording by Bessie Smith and Clarence Williams. Much blues music is sung, and so lyrics play an important role in this genre. The four-bar phrases that make up the 12-bar bluesare commonly matched with lyrics that have anaabstructure: the first line is stated and then repeated
(sometimes with some alteration), and the third line contrasts. Gulf Coast Blues by Clarence Williams (1923) is one example of this (Example2). The repeated lyric will often be set to a repeated melody, mimicking theaabstructure of the lyrics, though this does not happen in Gulf Coast Blues.structurelyricaThe man I love, he has done left this
townaThe man I love, he has done left this townbAnd if it keeps on raining, I will be Gulf Coast bound, Example 2. Lyrics of Gulf Coast Blues by Clarence Williams, Another essential part of blues phrase structure is the notion of call-and-response, a feature likely inherited from the work songs of enslaved Africans and African Americans. The vocal,
lyricized melody takes on the role of the call while an instrumental filler takes on the role of the phrase. Example annotates a transcription of Gulf Coast Blues to show this call-and-response relationship. Example 3.
Call-and-response in the melody of Gulf Coast Blues. Much as the harmonies of the blues tend not to stick to one diatonic key, flouting the norms of tonal music, the melodic practice into a scale on which beginning
improvisers can base their melodies. The blues scale is essentially a minor pentatonic scale with an added chromatic passing tone leading up to sol [latex](hat5)[/latex]. Example 4. The C blues scale is essentially a minor pentatonic scale with an added chromatic passing tone leading up to sol [latex] (hat5)[/latex].
underlying harmony. When this scale is combined with the chords of the major bluesI, V, and IV, or C major, F major, and G major in the key of Cthe characteristic clashes between mi/me [latex](\hat3\downarrow\hat3)[/latex] and ti/te [latex](\hat3\downarrow\hat3)[/latex] and ti/te [latex](\hat3\downarrow\hat3)[/latex] are especially notable. These clashes often produce blue notes that are
not really flat or natural, but somewhere in between mi/me [latex](\hat7\\downarrow\hat3)[/latex]. The major blues scale Some improvisers find it helpful to think of a major blues scale. The difference between a major and minor pentatonic scale is identical to
the difference between the major and minor blues scale is a rotation of the blues scale for the relative minor. Begin the blues scale on me [latex](\downarrow\hat3)[/latex], and you will get a blues scale to begin on its
second note yields the major blues scale. Compared to the minor blues scale (with flatted thirds and sevenths) over
major chords is also a perfectly normal practice. Blues scales worksheet (.pdf, .mscz). Asks students to spell scales and transcribe a melody that uses the blues scale (.pdf, .mscz). Video assignment, Asks students to pair off and create videos with call-and-response improvisation. Backing track
available here. Blues composition. Asks students to synthesize information about blues harmony and blues melody. Notation option (.pdf, .docx) Audio option 
pentatonic. A type of motion where a chord tone moves by step in the same direction. For example, CDE above a C major chord would be an example of neighboring motion, in which D can be described as a passing tone. Entire harmonies may be said to be passing when embellishing another harmony, when the
voice-leading between the two chords involves mainly passing tones (as in the passing 6/4 chord). A feature of musical phrasing that features a simulated dialogue between two instruments or groups of instruments. Notes whose exact pitch sounds somewhere between the flat and regular versions of a scale degree, particularly 3 and 7.A scale that
proceeds ma2ma2mi3ma2mi3. For example, starting on C, the C major pentatonic scale is CDEGA. The components of blues music are a base for the introduction of many other sub-genres of this music. This article concentrates on the musical elements of blues music are a base for the introduction of many other sub-genres of this music. This article concentrates on the musical elements of blues music are a base for the introduction of many other sub-genres of this music.
changes in its characteristics since its inception. Most notable genres of music such as rock and rhythm and blues have been developed on the basis of the combination of African and Western cultures in the Southern part of America. Some of early blues music personalities were Bukka White,
Robert Johnson, and Bessie Smith. Banjo and piano were the early instruments in this music type. Major Elements of Blues MusicMelody and Harmony The harmony of blues music mainly focuses on the first, fourth and fifth E chords. And for G
as the starting chord, the following chords would be C and D. This is exactly similar to the standard relative chord combinations. When it comes to melody, blues music also consists of an emphasis on the flattened third, fifth and seventh notes of a major scale. These notes are traditionally played in a blues scale. RhythmThe rhythm is also a unique
characteristic of blues music. The rhythm is based on the 12-bar and 48-beat repetitive pattern. The three above-mentioned chords are played for 12 bars. Normally, the bar is divided into certain numbers of beats for the fourth chord, and eight beats for the first
chord again. This will be followed by four beats for the first chord, finally coming down to eight beats for the first chord. Taking the example of E-A-B combination, the 12 bars can be divided in E/E/E/A/A/E/E pattern. Lyrics us the first chord. Taking the example of E-A-B combination, the 12 bars can be divided in E/E/E/A/A/E/E pattern. Lyrics us the first chord. Taking the example of E-A-B combination, the 12 bars can be divided in E/E/E/A/A/E/E pattern. Lyrics us the first chord. Taking the example of E-A-B combination, the 12 bars can be divided in E/E/E/A/A/E/E pattern. Lyrics us the first chord. Taking the example of E-A-B combination, the 12 bars can be divided in E/E/E/A/A/E/E pattern. Lyrics us the first chord. Taking the example of E-A-B combination are also to be placed in blues music
in a different manner. The verse of a conventional blues song comprises three lines. The first two lines are more or less the same, followed by the third. Most of the time, the first two lines are the same, and have question-like lyrics. The third line, is the response to the first two lines. So, the lyrical structure becomes in the AAB pattern. Singing first
two lines is divided among eight measures in a 12-bar, whereas the rest four measures consist of singing the third line. Thematically, blues lyrics concentrate more on sadness and disappointing stories; such as poverty, lost relationships, death, violence, racism, and so on. Hence, verses are in a question-answer format. Musical Instrument
Sounds Earlier, the banjo was prominently used as the main instrument for blues music. However, in the early 1900s, quitar and piano were added. Nowadays, as this music has become so innovative, many other instruments have been added as a standard. Basses, drums, and harmonica are included in the blues scene today. Using various instruments
is the chief reason why there are many branches in blues music found today. This type of music has been through many modification phrases with regards to lyrics, instruments, and harmony; which is evident in most types of music in
R&B, hip hop, and rock and roll genres are also related to blues music. Many of the heavy metal music is based on the roots of blues.
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Blues music style. What is the structure of the melody in blues music.	. Typical blues song structure. What is the lyrical structure of most blue music. Blues muziek.	es music. Blues song structure. What is the lyrical structure of blues