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UNIT I

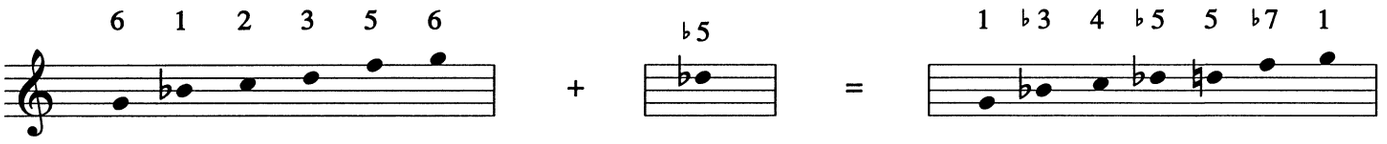
BLUES FUNDAMENTALS

The very essence of jazz music is rooted in its many forms of the blues. Blues moods are happy, sad, slow or fast and its melodies and harmonies can be simple or complex. The blues is fundamental to jazz music. Like many other art forms in America, the blues has experienced its own evolution. Today, the blues is **WORLD MUSIC** and it represents the freedom so important to us all.

BLUES MELODIES

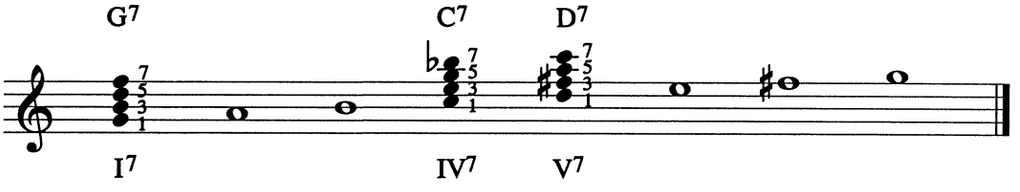
Traditional blues melodies are based on a special scale called the blues scale. The blues scale is a combination of two elements, a five note minor pentatonic scale and the lowered fifth scale step of the key. The result is a six note blues scale that is usually related to a major scale as shown below.

G MINOR PENTATONIC **LOWERED FIFTH** **G BLUES SCALE**



BLUES HARMONIES

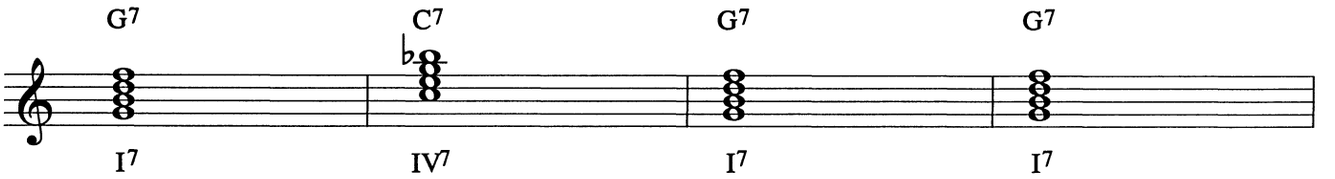
Three dominant seventh harmonies formed on the root (I), fourth (IV) and fifth (V) scale steps of a major scale are used in the traditional blues form. The roots (1) and sevenths (7) of each dominant chord are also found in the blues scale.



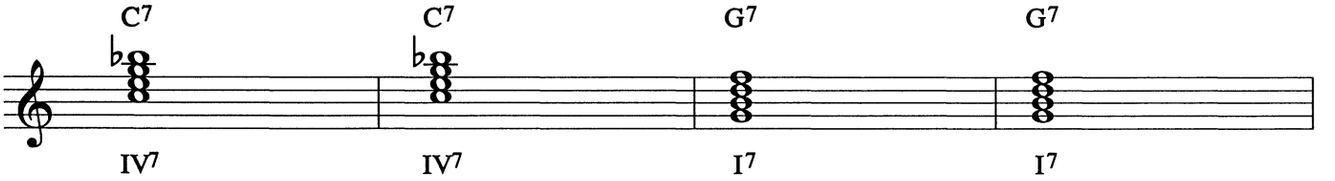
BLUES FORM

The following example shows the organization of these three dominant seventh chord harmonies (I7, IV7, V7) in the traditional twelve measure blues form. The blues is a three part song form. Part one is the **STATEMENT (A),** part two is the **RESTATEMENT (A1)** and part three is the **ANSWER (B).**

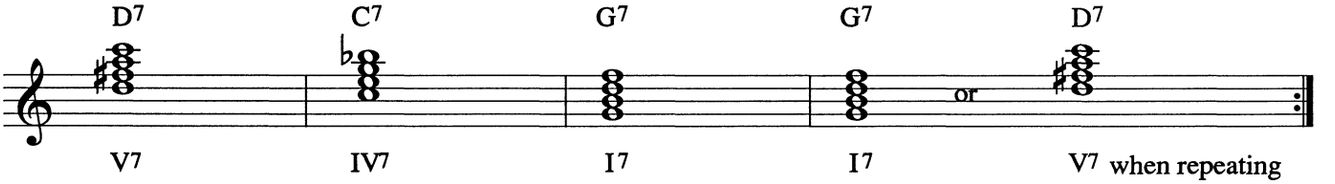
(A) STATEMENT



(A1) RESTATEMENT



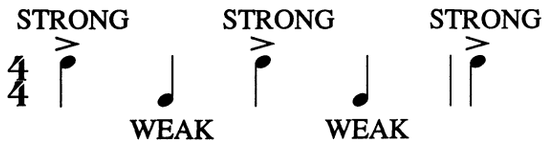
(B) ANSWER



SYNCOPATING THE BEAT

Early musical training often teaches us to feel the down-beats or strong beats as the most important beats in the measure. In jazz rhythm, accents move the weak beats (pick-ups) to the strong beats across the bar line and within the measure to create an ongoing **SYNCOPATED BEAT LINE.**

CLASSICAL MUSIC

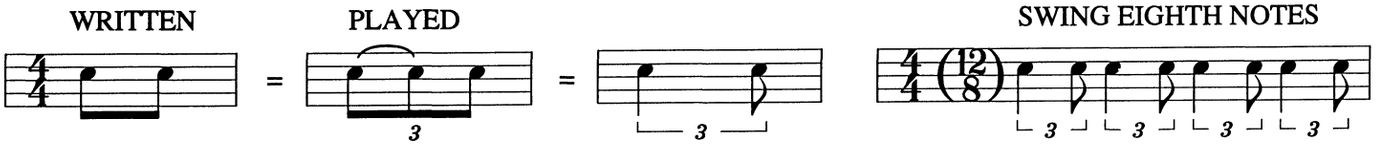


JAZZ MUSIC

DOWN-BEATS ARE ALSO ACCENTED

SWING STYLE JAZZ

Swing style jazz rhythms are not played the way they are written. In swing style, even eighth notes are played with a triplet feeling (12/8 meter) to create the swing eighth notes shown in the example below.



LESSON 1

JAZZ STYLE

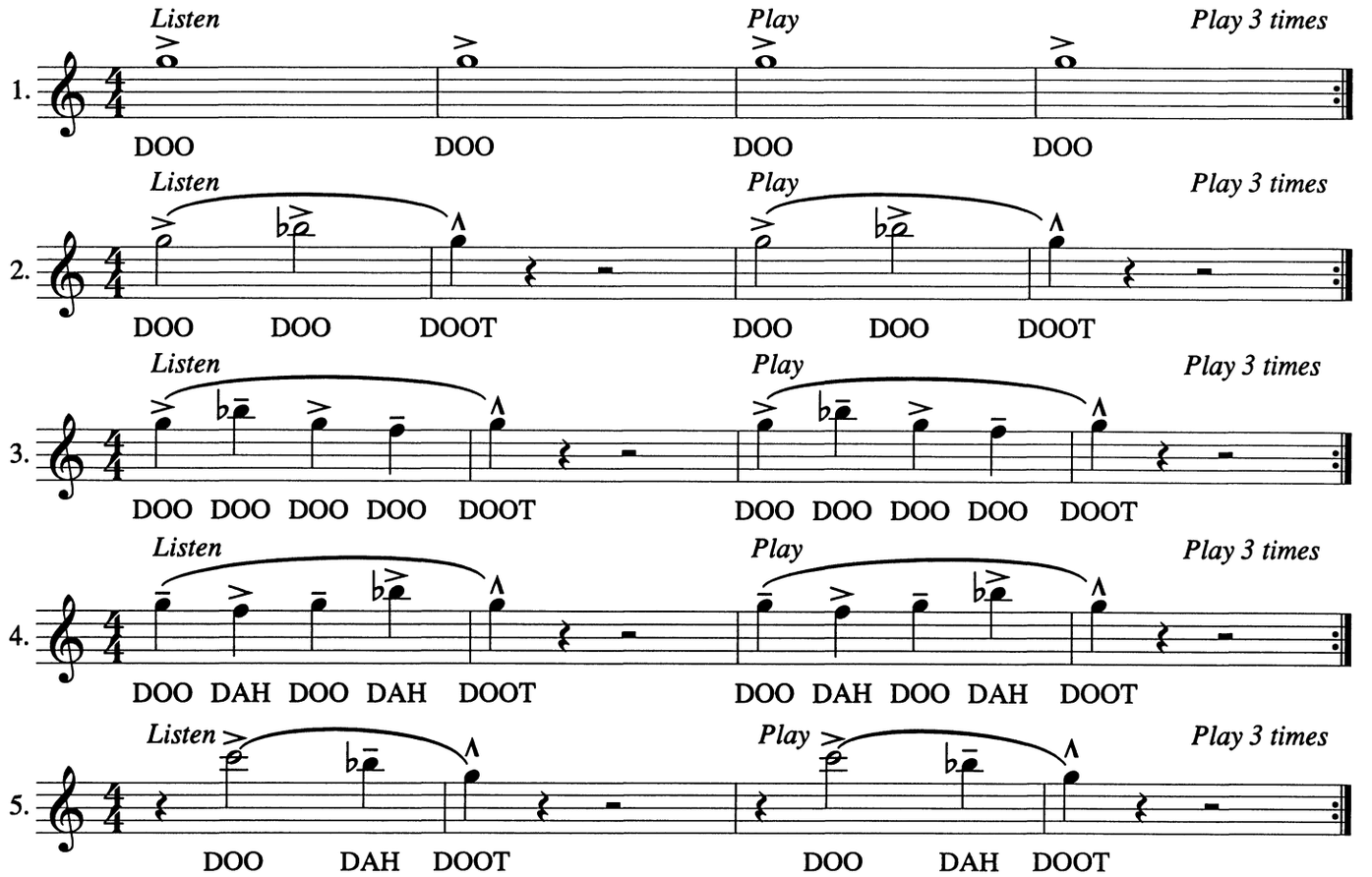
Symbols are placed over the notes in jazz music to indicate how they are played. Four of these special markings have been identified below with a brief description of how each is played in the jazz style.

LEGATO NOTES ( ) should be started with a "D" attack and played smoothly with plenty of air. DO NOT SEPARATE legato notes from other notes. Think about the syllable DOO as you play legato notes.

BREATH ACCENTS ( ) should be started with a "D" attack and played as a SFORZANDO (sfz) with plenty of energy. Breath accented notes are NOT SEPARATED from other notes. Think about the syllable DOO or DAH as you play the breath accent.

HOUSE-TOP ACCENTS ( ) are played shorter than a breath accent but longer than a staccato. House-top accents are started with a "D" attack, ended with the tongue, and played with real energy! Think about the syllable DOOT when you play a house-top accent.

STACCATO NOTES ( ) are played as short as possible. They are started with a "D" attack and ended with the tongue. Think about the syllable DIT when you play staccato notes.

JAZZ TRACK #1 PLAYING THE BLUES

After you read the special information on style, let's **PLAY AND LEARN** some simple blues vocabulary. After you hear each pattern played by the horns, imitate the pattern in the open measures that follow. Try to play each vocabulary pattern exactly the way it is played.