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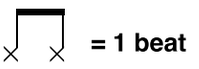
UNIT 1:
The Blues Shuffle

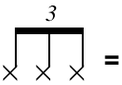
The most common rhythmic feel in the blues is called the shuffle. Unlike the typical rock 'n' roll song, which divides each beat into two equal parts, the shuffle rhythm has a lopsided feel. The shuffle is based on a triplet division of the beat. A triplet is three notes played in the space of one beat. The number 3 is placed above a group of notes to indicate a triplet.

rock 'n' roll



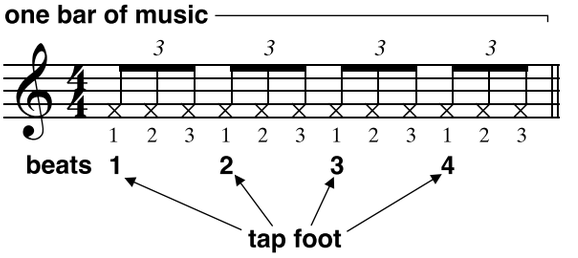
= 1 beat

shuffle



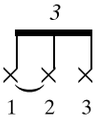
= 1 beat

To count these triplets, you simply divide each tap of your foot into three equal parts. The first note of each group of triplets will be when your foot hits the floor.



Even though each beat is divided into three equal parts, you don't actually hit all three. In the shuffle, you hit on the first and third parts. The first two parts are tied together with a little U-shaped symbol called a tie. A tie is like adding the value of two notes together to form one longer note.

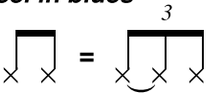
1st and 2nd notes tied together to form a longer note →



The shuffle is a rhythmic way of interpreting a song, just as bossa nova, samba, swing, rap, and hip-hop imply a certain feel.

The straight eighth note can be interpreted as a triplet feel in blues:

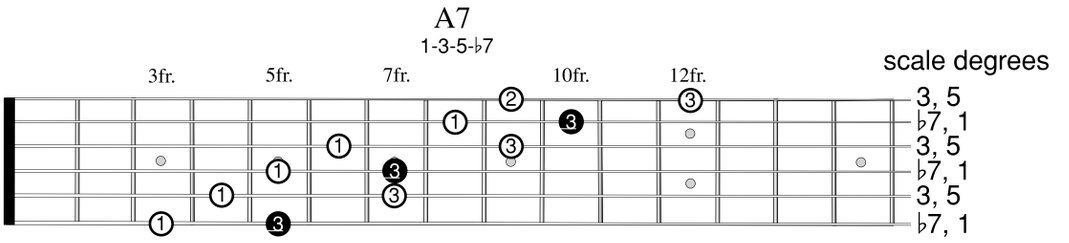
The straight eighth-note notation can be interpreted as a triplet feel in blues

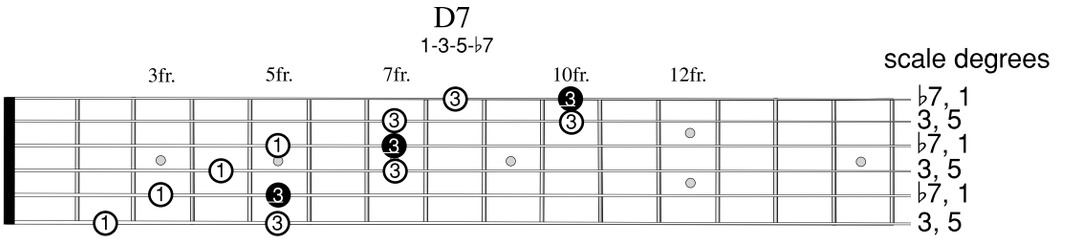


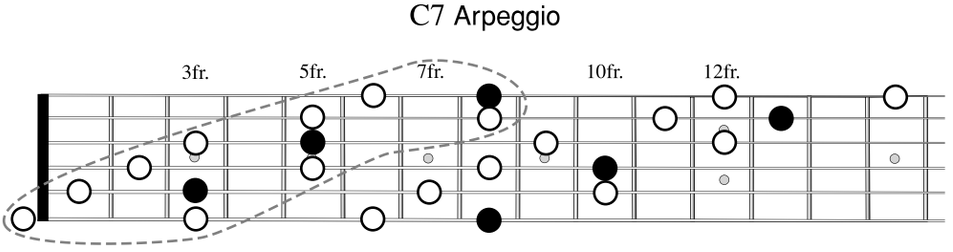
In most cases in this book, anything notated as straight eighth notes (two notes per beat) will be played with the uneven triplet feel. If no rhythms are indicated, you should play the chords with this shuffle rhythm. CD Track 3 is a good example of the shuffle feel.

UNIT 5:
CREATING EXTENDED FINGERINGS

Most blues players use fingerings that are comfortable. A strong tendency is to favor the third finger when starting on a riff or when executing a hammer-on, pull-off, run, or bend. This finger is best suited to this task since it can be supported by the first and second fingers. Because of this, certain pathways on the fingerboard have become well established. Notice how these extended arpeggio fingerings for the A7 and D7 chords favor the third finger. (The scale degrees for these arpeggios are what the numbers refer to beside each string.)







If the two patterns are combined they look like this.

These two arrangements of notes on the fingerboard are nearly the same. The first pattern has root notes on the 2nd, 4th, and 6th strings. The second pattern places the root note on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th strings. With these two patterns, you can span the entire fingerboard, as shown in the third diagram above.