

## **The 12 Bar Blues**

The name 12 Bar Blues comes from the number of measures or bars in most blues songs - twelve. Here's the basic 12 bar blues (Chicago blues) in the key of A.

**Further On Up the Road** - basic 12 bar blues

*/ A7 / A7 / A7 / A7 / D7 / D7 / A7 / A7 / E7 /  
D7 / A7 / E7 /*

## **The 'Quick Change'**

A quick change is just that, changing chords in the 2nd measure and then back to the first chord.

**Sweet Home Chicago Chords**

*/ A7 / **D7** / A7 / A7 / D7 / D7 / A7 / A7 / E7 /  
D7 / A7 / E7 /*

## **Chord - Number System**

Blues musicians often refer to chord changes by Roman numerals after the steps of the scale. Below are the scale steps in the key of A and the

chords associated with them.

**I** A (the key of the song)

**II** Bmi

**III** C#mi

**IV** D

**V** E

**VI** F#mi

**VII** G#dim

## **Blues and the I, IV, V Chords**

Many blues songs have just three chords, the I, IV and V chords. In the key of A, that's A, D and E. Here's **Further On Up the Road** by chord name and Roman numerals.

**/ A7 / A7 / A7 / A7 / D7 / D7 / A7 / A7 / E7 /  
D7 / A7 / E7 /**

**/ I / I / I / I / IV / IV / I / I / V /  
IV / I / V /**

And the quick change in **Sweet Home Chicago?** It's to the .... IV chord .... Right!

**/ A7 / D7 / A7 / A7 / D7 / D7 / A7 / A7 / E7 /**

D7 / A7 / E7 /

/ I / IV / I / I / IV / IV / I / I / V /  
IV / I / V /

## The Turnaround

1) The last 2 bars of the song are called the **turnaround**. The basic turnaround is  
... / A7 / E7 /

2) There are many variations of the turn around. Here's a common one

... / A7 D7 / A7 E7 /

## Eight Bar Blues

**Key to the Highway** - uses the turnaround variation (#2 above)

/ A7 / E7 / D7 / D7 / A7 / E7 / A7 D7 / A7 E7 /  
/ I / V / IV / IV / I / V / I IV / I V /

## Minor Blues

/ Am / Am / Am / Am / Dm / Dm / Am / Am /  
Em / Dm / Am / - /

/ I / I / I / I / IV / IV / I / I /  
V / IV / I / - /

A minor 12 bar blues usually has a repeated rhythm pattern and no chord in the 12 measure.

### **Take It Down From The Fifth**

The chord number system comes in handy on a gig. If the band leader says "take it down from the fifth", that means start the song from V chord in the 9th measure.

... / **E7 / D7 / A7 / E7 /**

... / **V / IV / I / V /**

And if someone points at you and holds up 4 fingers, it means play the IV chord now!

### **Bridge (B part of song)**

Some blues songs have a "B" part or bridge. You'll find this one in many songs.

/ **D7 / A7 / D7 / A7 / D7 / A7 / B7 / E7 /**

/ **IV / I / IV / I / IV / I / II / V /**

The 'unexpected' "IV" chord (instead of the I

chord) creates tension and interest. Usual format - AABA.

## **Stormy Monday**

Allman Bros. style layed back triplets

G9 / C9 / G9 G#9 / G9 /

C9 / C9 / G9 Ami7 / Bmi7 A#mi7 /

Ami7 / Cmi7 / G9 C9 / G9 D+ /

## **Rock - Blues Compared!**

### **#1 Tempo / 8th Notes**

Blues is usually slower - medium shuffle - played with dotted eight notes

*Rock is usually uptempo - played with even eight notes.*

### **#2 Changing Chords / Beat**

Blues chords usually change on the 1st beat of a measure

*Rock chords change on the ' & ' of the 4th beat in the previous measure- gives rock incredible*

*drive.*

## **#1 Rhythm Guitar / 1 Note or 2?**

Blues- the rhythm guitar usually plays two notes together.

*Rock- the rhythm guitar alternates between playing two notes together and a single 'bass' note*