

# STEVE TROVATO'S BLUES RHYTHM GUITAR

## How to use this Book

Blues rhythm guitar is the heart and soul of blues music and should be an essential part of every guitarist repertoire. In this book you'll learn several rhythmic variations on some of the most popular blues styles. These styles include:

- The Medium Blues Shuffle (ala Stevie Ray Vaughan)
- Straight 1/8 Blues Rock (ala Chuck Berry)
- The Blues/Rock Shuffle (ala Eric Clapton)
- The Uptown Blues (ala B.B. King)
- The Slow Blues (ala Jimi Hendrix)
- The Mambo Blues (ala Albert King)

In the DVD every example is demonstrated with burning blues backing tracks.

The book is divided into two sections.

### SECTION ONE:

In section one you'll examine basic blues guitar devices such as the blues form, blues feels, and the blues progression.

### SECTION TWO:

In section two you'll examine many different examples for each of the six blues styles. The examples progressively increase in difficulty from fairly simple to quite challenging, both rhythmically and harmonically. Each blues style incorporates typical and popular chords that best enhance the presented styles. For example, the Uptown Blues would sound best with fuller and more complex chords than those used in a three chord Medium Blues Shuffle. Each style features different keys and a wide range of tempos which will make this book a challenging and exciting practice tool.

## A Brief History of the Blues as a Style

When most people think of Blues guitar we think of greats such as Eric Clapton, B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Jimmy Page but let's look back to the beginning to see where it all comes from. Blues guitar as a style is an outgrowth of the work song and field holler traditions of the African slaves at the turn of the 19th Century. Africans were captured and brought to America against their will. They were sold to plantation owners and put to work as common workers. Their job was to clear the land to prepare it for an incoming railroad system being built throughout the American south. Chained together in groups of 4 or 5, they would be brought to a location and made to work from dawn until dusk 6 days per week. Their pay would be about 25 cents a day. Slaves were watched closely to prevent escape and were not permitted to speak because plantation owners feared escape plots were being hatched. They were however permitted to sing. To pass

the time slaves would sing for hours on end. Their work was hard and to conserve energy their songs needed to be short. They also followed the African tradition of Call and Response, where slaves would sing back and fourth to each other, usually with a leader singing a short phrase and a group answering it in unison. This Call and Response tradition has become one of the backbones of the blues. As railroads were beginning to be seen crossing the southern countryside, the southern field workers would hear the train wheels clacking over the gaps in the tracks. This sound was heard as a musical rhythm by early slave musicians and they began using it as a rhythmic device in their songs. This rhythmic feel was to become what is known the Blues or "Shuffle" feel that we know today. This feel along with call and response have become the essence of blues. In this book we will concentrate on these two essential elements as they are used in blues guitar.

# THE MEDIUM SHUFFLE

The Medium Shuffle is by far the most common blues feel. Variations of it can be heard on virtually every blues CD ever recorded! The Medium Shuffle has a forward – propelling, loping feel reminiscent of “Pride and Joy” by Stevie Ray Vaughan.

The examples in this Chapter are in the key of E. The examples range from fairly simple and become progressively more challenging.

## Example 1: Guitar Boogie Shuffle

This is a basic boogie blues rhythm. Strive for accuracy and mute the bass notes using the heel of your picking hand.

♩ = 100 (♩ =  $\overset{\sim}{\sim}$ ♩)

E7

A7 E7

B7 A7 E7 C7 B7

E7

It sounds best when:

- It is played using only downstrokes
- The bass strings are muted near the bridge.
- The “loping” feel of the shuffle is maintained throughout.
- Turn up the bass on your amp to help thicken the sound.
- Use the neck pickup.
- Play using a clean guitar sound.

\* The symbol  $\overset{2}{\parallel}$  means to repeat the previous two measures.

## STRAIGHT EIGHTHS

Another popular groove for the blues is the straight eighth note feel. The straight eighth-note feel is generally geared toward Blues/Rock or Rhythm and Blues. Mary had a Little Lamb by Stevie Ray Vaughan comes to mind as a great example of straight eighth-note blues/rock. You'll also find examples of this feel in classic songs by: Gary Moore, Wilson Pickett, The Butterfield Blues Band, Creedence Clearwater, ZZ Top, and more.

The basic feel is set up with the drummer playing a basic rock beat with the snare drum on beats 2 and 4. The bass player and guitarist then double the single-note rhythm. The guitar will usually play in the lowest register possible.

All the examples in this Chapter are in the key of C except examples 1 and 8 which are in the Key of E. The examples range from fairly simple and become progressively more challenging. Each example however contains within it an objective and is designed to demonstrate a specific aspect of blues guitar rhythm.

### Example 1: On The Lamb

This example is in the style of Mary Had a Little Lamb by Stevie Ray Vaughan. It is a call and response type rhythm. The guitar will play a single-note rhythm and then answer it with chords.

♩ = 88

The musical score for Example 1: On The Lamb is presented in three systems. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. Below the treble staff are three staves labeled T (Treble), A (Acoustic), and B (Bass). The first system starts with an E7 chord diagram and a tempo marking of ♩ = 88. The second system starts with an A7 chord diagram. The third system starts with a B7 chord diagram. The score includes single-note rhythms in the treble and bass staves, and chordal accompaniment in the acoustic and bass staves. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

It sounds best when:

- You use all downstrokes for the single notes.
- Use a clean sound.
- Use your neck pickup to create a "boomy" sound.
- Use a bit of reverb if you like.

## THE BLUES/ROCK SHUFFLE

In this chapter you'll learn how to play the Blues/Rock Shuffle rhythm. The key element to this style is using overdrive and distortion to create a blues with an attitude. Artists that commonly play this style include Johnny Winter, John Mayer, George Thorogood, Eric Clapton, Eddie Van Halen, Gary Moore, and Ted Nugent.

The examples in this chapter are in the key of A. The examples range from fairly simple to progressively more challenging.

### Example 1: Blues for breakfast

This example is certainly an essential blues/rock rhythm. It should be played using a nasty overdrive or distortion. Play the rhythm with no palm muting and let the strings ring. It should sound a bit sloppy. This is what gives it attitude. Notice the single note turnaround in measure 11.

$\text{♩} = 100$  ( $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^{\text{3}}$ )

**A7**  
5fr.

**TAB**

7 7 9 9 7 7 9 9  
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

7 7 9 9 7 7 9 9  
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

9 9 11 11 9 9 11 7 7 9 9 7 7 9  
7 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

7 10 7 10 9 7 9 8 8 7 5 6 7 (7)  
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

It sounds best when:

- Dial in a distorted rock tone on your amp.
- Use the bridge pickup.
- Allow all strings to ring rather than using a palm mute.
- It is strummed from the wrist and not the arm.
- Pick hard.

# UPTOWN/JUMP BLUES

The uptown swing “jump blues” is a fairly sophisticated feel. It is usually played quite fast and is reminiscent of B.B. King’s “Everyday I Have the Blues”. Other artists that have popularized the feel are Brian Setzer, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Reverend Horton Heet, Big Sandy and the Flyright Boys, Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers, and the Fabulous Thunderbirds. The basic feel is set up with the drummer and bass player playing quarter notes on the downbeat. The drummer plays quarter notes on the kick drum, and the bass player will double it, playing a boogie-woogie style rhythm part.

The examples in this Chapter are in the key of G. The examples range from fairly simple and become progressively more challenging

## Example 1: Back Home Blues

This is an interesting rhythm using two note chords or diads. Diads are when two notes are played simultaneously. The rhythm is played using two eighth notes on the back beat of each measure. Back beat means beats two and four. The first four measures outline the I chord. Move the diad down a half step on measures five and six. This will outline the IV chord. Moving the dyad up a half step in measure nine will outline the V7 chord.

♩ = 100 (♩ = ♪<sup>3</sup> ♪)

**System 1:** G7 (3fr). Rhythm: ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4).  
**System 2:** C7 (2fr). Rhythm: ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4).  
**System 3:** D7 (4fr), C7 (2fr), G7 (3fr), D7 (4fr), G (3fr). Rhythm: ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4), ♪ ♪ (beats 2 & 4).  
**Final Chord:** G (3fr). Fret numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 3.

It sounds best when:

- Loosen your grip between each strum to make the chords sound “staccato.”
- Keep your right hand moving in time to the pulse of the music to ensure a good time feel.
- Use the neck pickup for a smooth warm tone.

# SLOW BLUES

In this chapter you'll learn how to play variations on a Slow Blues. Slow blues is perhaps the most expressive and emotional blues feel. It can be heard by listening to the Allman Brothers version of "Stormy Monday Blues", "Texas Flood" by Stevie Ray Vaughan or "Red House" by Jimi Hendrix.

The slow blues is usually played over the standard 12-bar form. Some of the examples use a "quick change", which means to replace the "I" chord with the "IV" chord in measure 2 and then go back to the "I" chord in measures 3 and 4.

The examples in this Chapter are in the key of A. The examples range from fairly simple and become progressively more challenging.

## Example 1: When The Levy Breaks

Here we have perhaps the most common rhythm for the slow blues: The Chord Slide. This rhythm is well suited to the slow blues and is essential repertoire for any blues guitarist. It consists of whole step slide on each chord. Play the first chord and then slide down to the second.

♩ = 66 (♩ =  $\overset{\sim}{\underset{\sim}{\text{♩}}}$ )

A6 6fr. A9 4fr.

D6 7fr. D9 5fr. A6 6fr. A9 4fr.

E6 9fr. E9 7fr. D6 7fr. D9 5fr. A7. E7. A9 4fr.

TAB

TAB

TAB

It sounds best when:

- The chord prior to the slide is played using a down stroke.
- The chord slide is played by moving the first chord shape down a whole step without releasing pressure on the strings. If this is done correctly, the second chord of the slide should sustain for the remainder of the measure.
- You don't allow your fingers to come apart when you slide.
- Only one pick stroke is used per measure.
- A clean or slightly overdriven sound tone is dialed in. Too much distortion will muddy the chords.

# MAMBO BLUES

The mambo rhythm feel derived from the straight eighth note rather than the shuffle. It has a sound all of its own. A great example of it can be heard on "Cross Cut Saw" by Albert King. The mambo is a swampy groove and is a must-know rhythm feel for guitarists. What sets this feel apart from the standard straight eighth-note feel is the drums. The mambo is a dance beat that has been adopted by blues artists. Mambo feels may be played as single note or chord rhythms. This chapter contains examples of each.

The examples in this Chapter are in the key of G. The examples range from fairly simple and become progressively more challenging. Each example however contains within it an objective and is designed to demonstrate a specific aspect of mambo/blues rhythm.

## Example 1: Chordy

This one is played on the backbeat (beats 2 and 4 of each measure). The part should sound like a sharp, percussive "chick." Use only the top four strings. Since the part is essentially doubling the snare drum, it should approximate the same sharpness, duration and timbre.

$\text{♩} = 110$  (♩ =  $\overset{\sim}{\text{♩}}$ )

Chord diagrams shown: G (3fr.), C9, D9 (4fr.), G (3fr.), D7 (3fr.), G (3fr.).

It sounds best when:

- You use a clean tone.
- Add a bit of reverb.
- You use the bridge pickup.
- You play the part with your pick using an upstroke.

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