

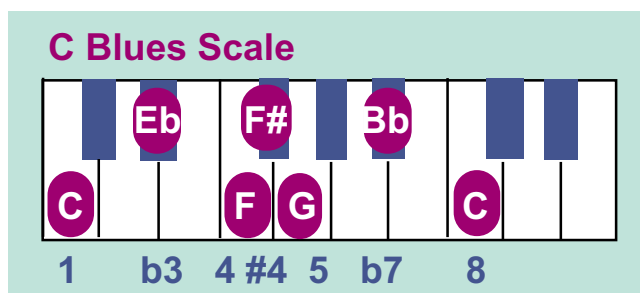
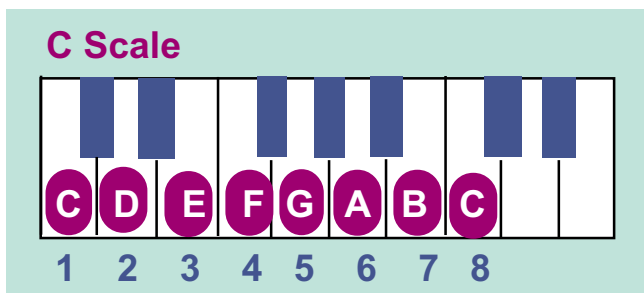


Music Musings No.10: The Blues Scale

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The Blues Scale -- the secret to cool improvising!

Learning the blues scale is the secret to creating impressive blues and jazz style improvisations. A blues scales alters a few notes of the major scale to make it sound a bit more feisty! Let's compare the C scale and the C Blues scale:



The C Blues scales leaves out the 2, 3, 6 and 7 notes, and adds a b3 (b =playing the note one key lower), #4 (raised one note higher) and a b7.

Scale "Formula": C Major Scale:

SCALE NOTE NUMBER:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(8)
NOTES OF THE C SCALE:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C

Scale "Formula": C Blues Scale:

BLUES SCALE NUMBERS	1	b3	4	#4	5	b7	(8)
C BLUES SCALE NOTES:	C	Eb	F	F#	G	Bb	C

Rock song melodies are often made out of notes of the Blues Scale:

Try playing the rock classic "Smoke on the Water" as shown below. Notice all those blue notes? Tricky, eh?

(Smoke on the Water, using notes of the Blues scale)

C	Eb	F	C	Eb	F#	F	C	Eb	F	Eb	C			
Bum	bum	bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum			
C	Eb	F	C	Eb	F#	F	C	Eb	F	Eb	C			
Bum	bum	bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum	Bum			
F	-	-	Eb	C	Eb	C	C	C	C	Eb	C	Bb	C	
Smoke			on	the	wa	-ter.	The	fi	-	re	in	the	sky	--
F	-	-	Eb	C	Eb	C								
Smoke			on	the	wa	-ter.								

(Iron Man, using notes of the Blues scale -- with one non-blues scale note)

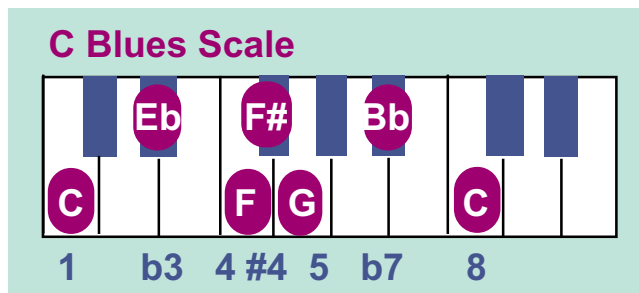
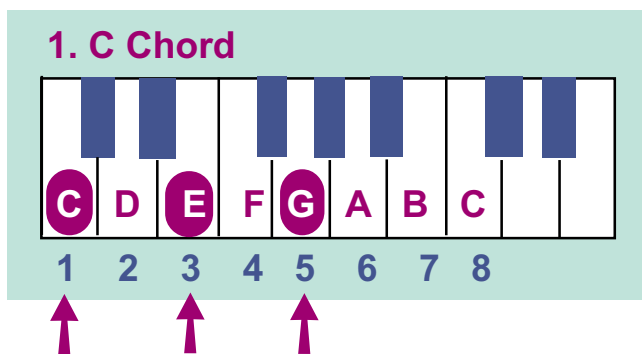
C	Eb	Eb	F	F	Ab	G	Ab	G	Ab	G	Eb	Eb	F	F
He's	an	i-	ron	man;	da	da	da	da	da	da	da	da	da	da.

(Indagadavida riff, using notes of the Blues scale)

C	C	Eb	D	Bb	C	G	F#	F	Bb	C	C	Eb	D	Bb	C
Bum	bum	ba	da	bum	bum	bam	bam	bam	bum	Bum	bum	ba	da	bum	bum.

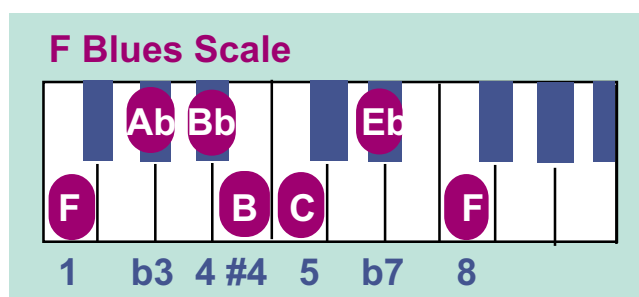
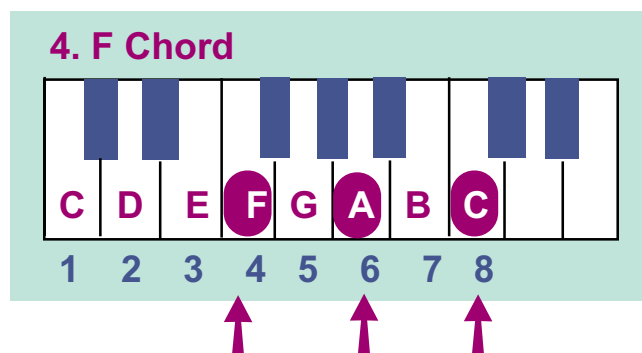
Now let's try playing 3 different blues scales - based on the 1, 4 and 5 chords in the key of C!

With the left hand, play the C chord and hold. Meanwhile, play the notes of the C Blues scale, from the bottom note to the top one and back again.



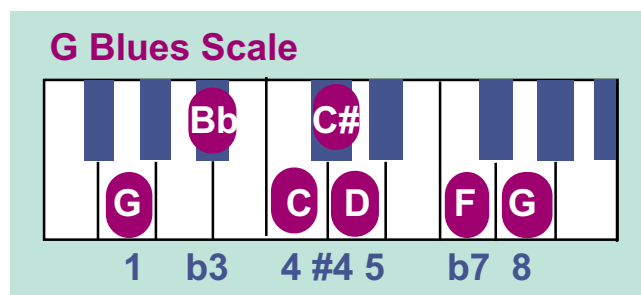
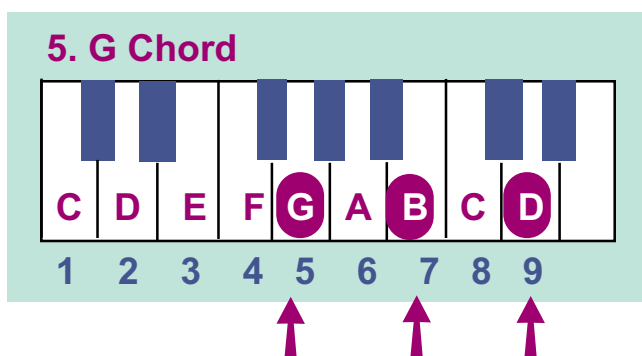
... and now the F Blues scale

The tricky thing here is that the F Blues scale is built on notes of the F scale, not the C scale. So the 1 note is an F, not a C. Play and hold the F chord in the left hand while playing the F Blues scale notes, from bottom to top and back again.



... and the G Blues scale

The notes of the G Blues scale are built on the G scale (not the C). So the "1" note is G. Play and hold the G chord in the Left Hand while playing each note of the G Blues scale, from bottom to top and back again.



THE BLUES SCALE notes that go with the C, F and G chords:

BLUES SCALE NUMBERS	1	b3	4	#4	5	b7	(8)
C BLUES SCALE NOTES:	C	Eb	F	F#	G	Bb	C
F BLUES SCALE NOTES:	F	Ab	Bb	B	C	Eb	F
G BLUES SCALE NOTES:	G	Bb	C	C#	D	F	G