

The 12 Bar Blues

The **12-bar blues** started in the **American South** in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It grew out of the songs that **enslaved African people** and their descendants sang while working in the fields. These were called **work songs** or **spirituals**, and they helped people keep a steady rhythm while they worked hard all day. Even though life was very difficult, these songs were a way to share **feelings of sadness, hope, and strength**. After slavery ended, the music changed and mixed with other styles, creating what we now call the **blues**. The 12-bar blues uses a simple pattern of 12 bars that repeat, making it easy to sing about everyday life. It's one of the most important roots of modern music like **rock, jazz, and pop!**

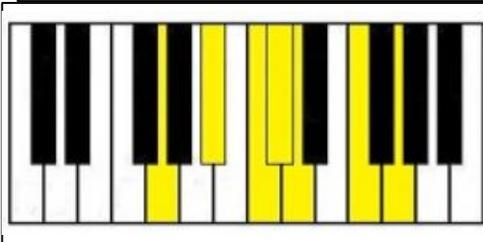


Key Vocabulary



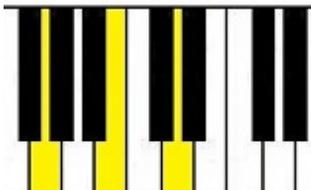
- **Chord**- A collection of 3 or more notes played together at the same time
- **G major** - all the notes belong to the scale of G major (including F#)
- **Major chord**- sounds happy and uplifting
- **Primary Chords** - chords I, IV and V (G, C and D)
- **Beats** - the steady pulse you can feel through the music, what you tap your foot to
- **Harmonic rhythm**- How many beats are played on each chord. (eg the chord progression has a harmonic rhythm of 4 beats)
- **12 Bar Blues chord progression** - The repeated chords played one after another throughout the 12 bars
- **Blues Scale** - the notes used to create a Blues tune/melody
- **AAB lyric/melodic structure** - tune A, tune A repeated, tune B
- **Walking bass** - the bassline that plays on every beat of the bar, played on piano or bass guitar/double bass
- **Improvisation** - Making up a tune 'on the spot'
- **Worksong** - songs sung by the enslaved people to help them through a long, tiring day.
- **Rehearsal discipline**- being able to work productively and make progress
- **Audience etiquette**- showing respect and kindness to the performers

Blues Scale Notes G Bb C C# D F G



Chord 1 (I)

G Major



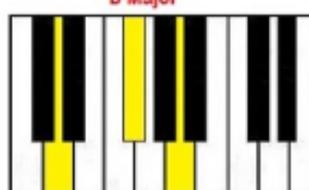
Chord 4 (IV)

C Major



Chord 5 (V)

D Major



12 Bar Blues Chord Progression

G	G	G	G
C	C	G	G
D	C	G	G