

How To Play The 3-String Cigar Box Guitar

With Rick McKeon



Right and Left Hand Techniques

The Steady Bass

Using The Slide

The Ten Mile Stomp

Playing Blues Licks And Creating A 12-Bar Solo

Applying All This In A

12-Bar Jam Session

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Closing Comments

Figure 1: Tuning The 3-String Guitar (1 5 1)

Standard Tuning For The 6-String Guitar

6	5	4	3	2	1
E	A	D	G	B	E

1 5 1 Tunings for the 3-String CBG Using Different Strings From a Standard Set

E Tuning
Using Strings
6 5 4

3	2	1
E	B	E

E Major Scale

E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

G Tuning
Using Strings
5 4 3

3	2	1
G	D	G

G Major Scale

G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

Notes:

1. Guitar strings are designed to have a certain amount of tension in standard tuning.
2. Too loose and they will be sloppy. They will buzz and not project well.
3. Too tight and they will break or put too much tension on the neck.
4. Therefore, we choose the strings and tuning somewhere near standard tuning. You can tune them up or down a whole step without problems.

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Figure 2: Steady Bass

Lick #1 Steady Bass

4 4

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Lick #2 Pinch On One

3

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Lick #3 Add A Syncopated Note

5

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 2 & 3 4 1 2 & 3 4

Lick #4 Rag Lick

7

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 & 2 & 3 4 1 & 2 & 3 4

Lick #5 Hammer On Lick

9

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 [H] 0 0 0 0 0 [H] 0 0 0 0

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

Figure 2: Steady Bass (cont.)

Lick #6 Banjo Roll

11

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

Lick 7: Ten Mile Stomp Lick

13

4 4 4 4 5 5 5 5

1 2 & 3 & 4 1 2 & 3 & 4

15

1 & 2 & 3 4 1 & 2 3 (4)

Figure 3: Licks

Lick #1

E 4 0 2 3 0 2 0
 B 4 0 2 [S] 2
 E [H] 1 & 2 3 (4) | 1 2 3 (4)

Lick #2

3 0 2 3 0 2 0
 [H] 1 & 2 3 (4) | 1 2 3 (4)

Lick #3

5 2 0 2 0 2 0 0 0
 4 & | 1 & 2 & 3 4

Lick #4

7 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
 1 & 2 & 3 4 | 1

Figure 3: Licks (cont.)

9 Lick #4

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

11

0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0

13

0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0

15

0 2 0 2 0 2 0 0

17

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Ten Mile Stomp

Part 1

Part 2

Ten Mile Stomp (cont.)

10

12

14

16

18

12-Bar Blues Chord Progression

The 12-bar blues is 12 measures arranged in three sets of four measures each. The following is a typical 12-bar progression (keep in mind there are plenty of variations on this theme):

I	IV	I	I		E	A	E	E
IV	IV	I	I		A	A	E	E
V	IV	I	V		B	A	E	B

E major scale = E F# G# A B C# D# E
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

The following example is in the “call-response” format where the lyrics call out in the first two measures and the guitar responds in the next two measures. The second line is a repeat of the first. The first two bars of the third line are the conclusion, and the last two bars are the turnaround.

Stranger Blues (Elmore James)

E	A	E	E
I'm a stranger here,	just blowed into your	town.	
← Verse = “call” →		← Response = fill →	

A	A	E	E
I'm a stranger here,	just blowed into your	town.	
← Repeat verse = “call” →		← Response = fill →	

B	A	E	B
If I ask you for a favor,	please don't turn me	down.	
← Conclusion →		← Turnaround →	

Stranger Blues
(Elmore James)

E A E

1. I'm a *stranger* here, I just *blowed* into your town.
2. Well, I wrote to my *mama*, *send* me some railroad fare.
3. Does my *good gal* know, does she know I'm here?
4. Well I wonder, why people treat a *stranger* so.

A E

1. I'm a *stranger* here, I just *blowed* into your town.
2. I wrote to my *mama*, *send* me some railroad fare.
3. Does my *good gal* know, does she know I'm here?
4. Yes I wonder, why people treat a *stranger* so.

B A E B

1. If I ask you for a favor, please *don't* turn me down.
2. But if my *mama* *don't* send it, I *don't* mind walking there.
3. Well, if she *does*, She sure *don't* seem to care.
4. They're gonna' find out, You reap just what you *sew*.

Figure 4: I IV and V Chords

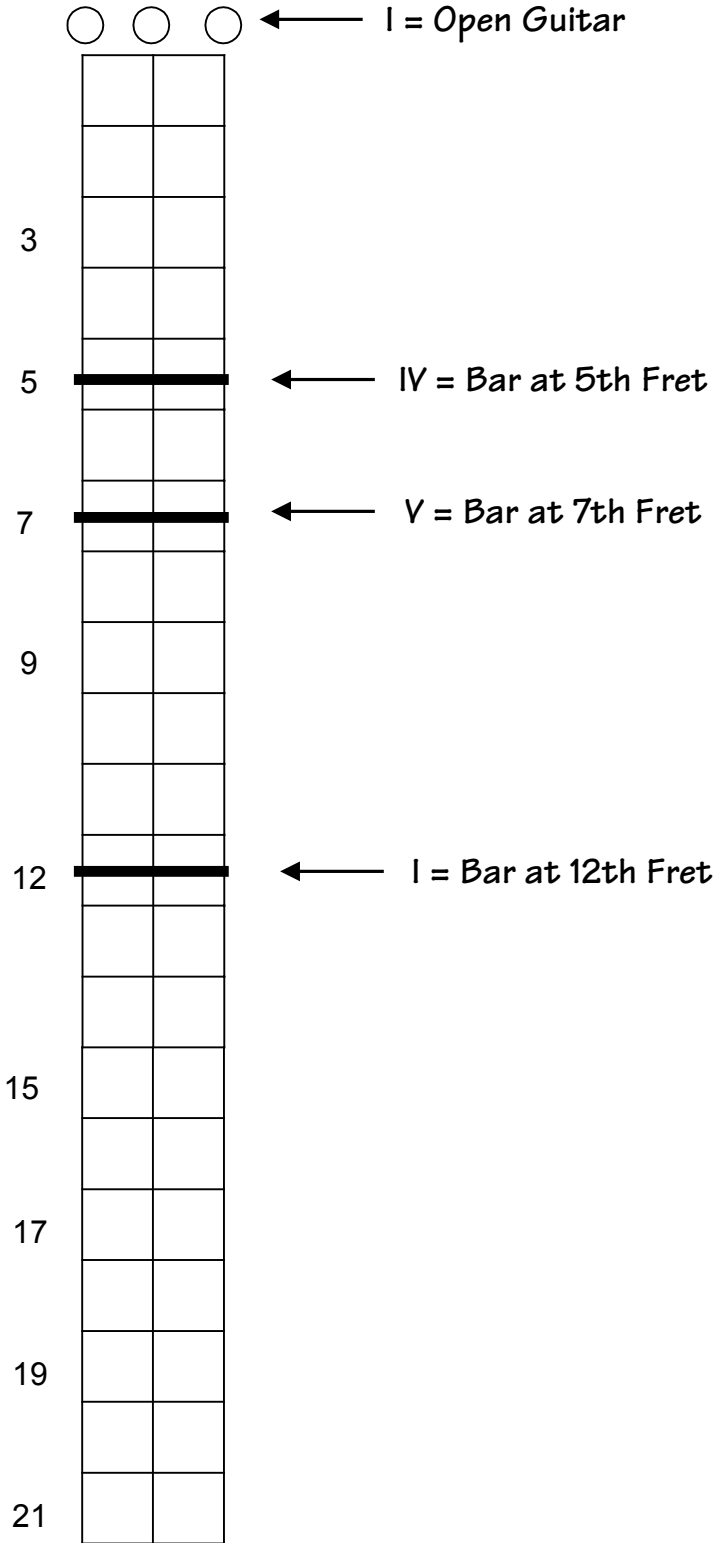


Figure 5: 12-Bar Licks

Lick #1

E 4
 B 4
 E 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Lick #2

3

4 0 3 0 2 0 0 0 0 0

1 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 4

Lick #3

5

7 6 5 4 4

1 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 2 3 4

Lick #4

7

12 12 12 12 12 12 12 9

1 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 2 3 4

Figure 6: The Major Scale

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

Tuning = E B E (1 5 1)

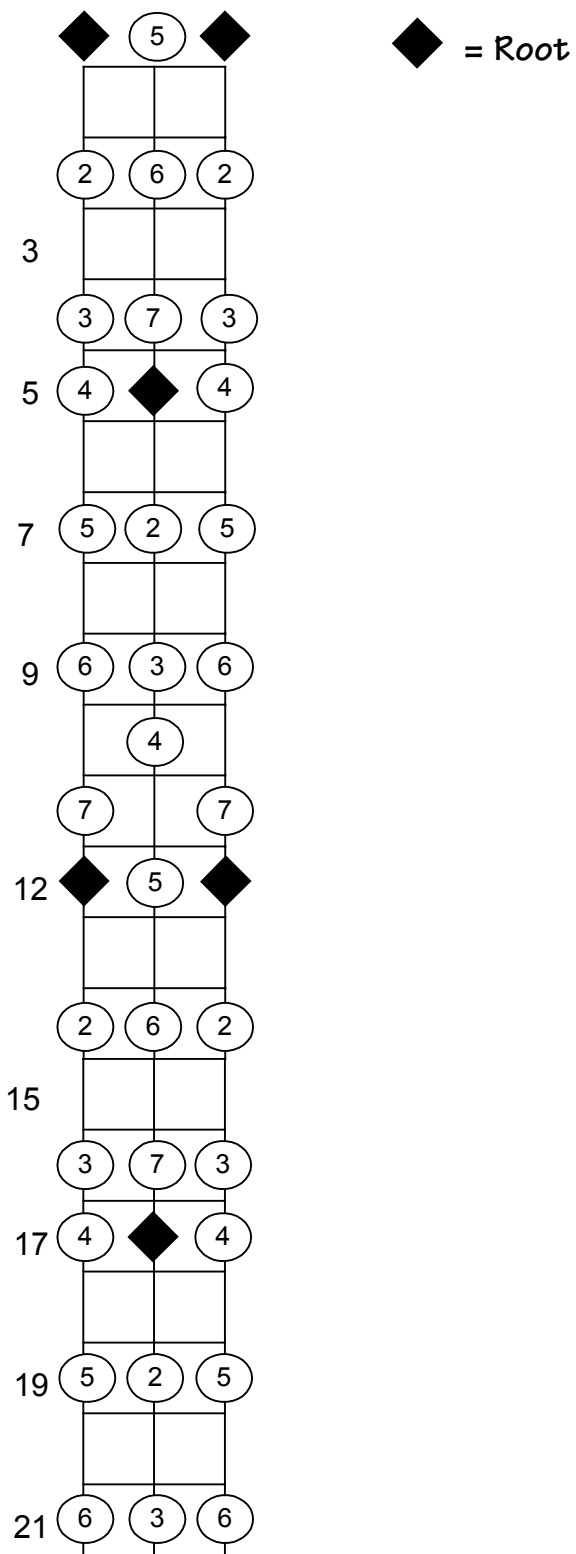


Figure 7: The Blues Scale

1 b3 4 (b5) 5 b7 1

Tuning = E B E (1 5 1)

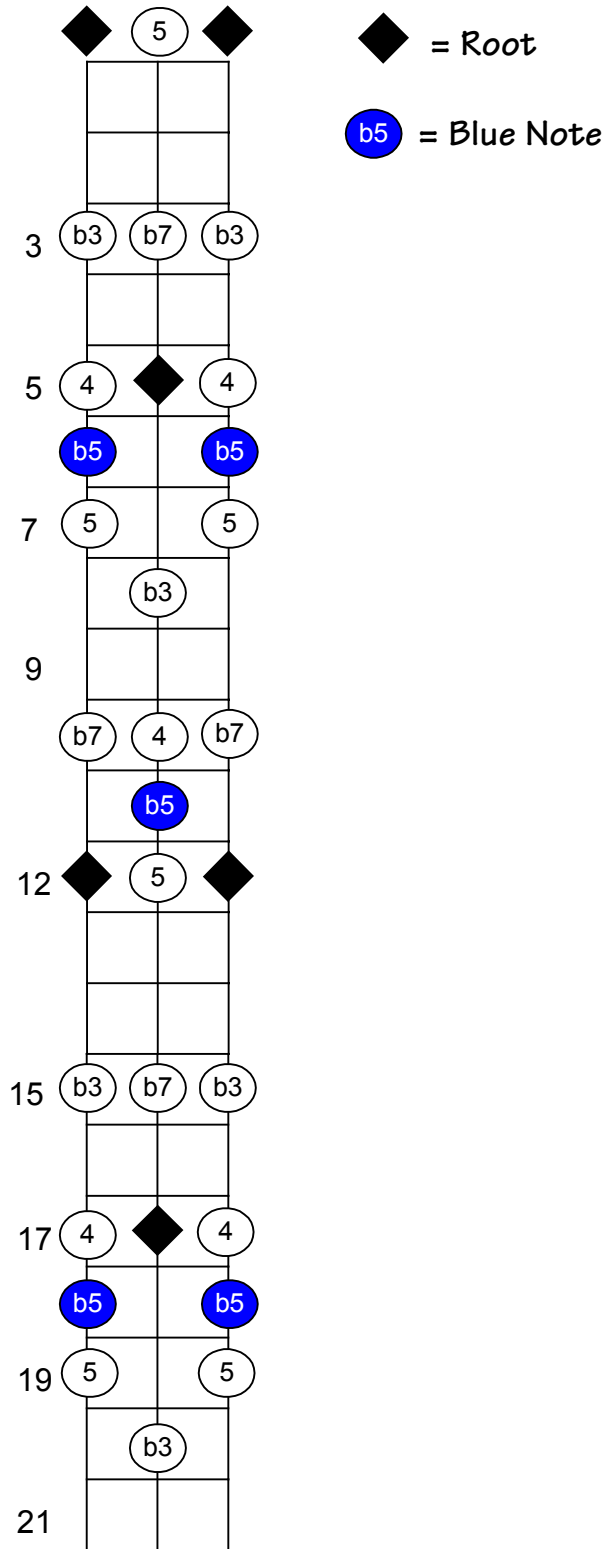


Figure 8: Blues Licks

Lick #1 Major Sound

E 0 2 0 2 0 0 0 4 2 0
 B 4 4 2 0 2 0 0 0 4 2 0
 E 1 6 5 6 1 5 5 3 2 1

Lick #2 Minor Sound

B 0 3 0 3 0 0 0 3 0 0
 E 4 3 0 3 0 0 3 0 0
 1 b7 5 b7 1 5 5 b3 1 1

Lick #3 (Lick # 2 an octave higher)

B 12 15 12 15 11 12 12 15 12 12
 E 7 5 5 b3 1 1
 [S]

1 b7 5 b7 1 5 5 b3 1 1

Lick #4

B 14 14 11 12 12 14 12 14 12 14 12 12
 E 10 7 5 6 1 6 5 b3 15 1
 [S]

2 2 7 5 6 1 6 5 b3 1

Figure 9: 12-Bar Solo

