

Keys To The Highway

A Classic Blues In 12 Keys

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Keys To The Highway

"Key To The Highway" is a classic Blues with a distinct 8 Bar form. I've returned to this tune often to learn how to express blues chord changes with clarity and also to get in touch with how vocal melody connects the harmony together.

Listen to the original version by Big Bill Broonzy and try and emulate some of his vocal lines.

It's ~~rough~~ tough to capture all the melodic and rhythmic nuances. Trying to express a melody like a vocalist will open up your ability to articulate phrases and intonate in subtle ways that are difficult to notate. Use your ear and your intuition.

If you need to learn more about scales, intervals, chord voicings, key orientation etc. I'd

~~again~~ recommend going through some of the lessons we've had in the past.

The "Mr Charlie" Blues lesson / Learning fundamentals with Little Wing / Theory on A String. All of these will help you with your guitar fundamentals.

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Let's start with The Big Bill Broozy version.

We can say it's a Blues in "E" but Blues aren't really in a key in the traditional sense.

There is no traditional key that contains three dominant 7th chords in the typical relationship you find in a basic Blues.

But we say it's in "E" because that is the tonality that we return to as "Home."

Here is the basic chord progression.

12/8
feel

E ⁷ / / /	B ⁷ / / /	A ⁷ / / /	A ⁷ / / /
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E ⁷ / / /	B ⁷ / / / (A ⁷ /C#)	E ⁷ / / /	E ⁷ / B ⁷ /
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* a few interesting thing you will hear

When he is singing is the inclusion of

The A⁷/C# on the 3rd and 4th beats of Bar Six.

He doesn't add this chord in instrumental sections.

He also usually extends bar 4 by at least 2 beats. Again it's not extended during instrumental sections.

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Here is our basic progression again.

12 | E⁷ / / / / | B⁷ / / / / | A⁷ / / / / | A⁷ / / / /

8

Feel

turnaround

E⁷ / / / / | B⁷ / / / / | E⁷ / / / / | E⁷ / B⁷ /

(A⁷ / C⁺)

Here is a very rough approximation of the melody. Study the vocal phrasing and intonation. It is very difficult to copy exactly but I think there is a lot to learn by trying. This approximation will be very "stiff" compared to an actual vocal.

A⁷ / / / / | E⁷ / / / / | B⁷ / / / / | A⁷ / / / /

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

A⁷ / / / / | E⁷ / / / / | B⁷ / / / /

2 4 2 4 | 0 1 0 1 2 2 2 | 4 0 1 2 2 2 2

turnaround

E⁷ / B⁷ /

listen and try the best you can to get some of the

nuance of the vocal phrase. There is a lot of variation

I Feel like the first chord of the tune leans a little more to a straight Major chord (TRIAD)



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To my ear the ~~these~~ melodies he sings lean towards the major side of the Blues spectrum. However, the tension between the fully minor third to the fully major 3rd is where a lot of color can be found. Experiment with major blues, minor blues and even mixolydian sounds over the chord flow.

Big Bill Broonzy's Rhythm style is more of a Country Blues style. Try and learn a few of his moves.

Try and explore the whole instrument.

Try playing a chord flow and solo in each position. Or play freely across the entire instrument.

Sometimes it's good to explore a little out of strict timing. Be loose and explore melodic, Rhythmic and Harmonic relationships.

Then bring the groove back into it.

Hang with it until your playing reflects the form and flow of the changes.

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One of the points of our study is to take this form and play it through all 12 keys. Let's move it up a fourth and look at how Clapton arranged it on The Derek and The Dominoes album. They use more of a straight Blues rock groove.

Handwritten musical notation for a blues progression. The first system shows a sequence of four measures: A major (fingering 2 2 4 4, 0 0 0 0), E major (fingering 2 2 4 4, 0 0 0 0), D major (fingering 2 2 4 4, 0 0 0 0), and D major. The second system shows a sequence of four measures: A major (fingering 2 2 4 4, 0 0 0 0), E major (fingering 2 2 4 4, 0 0 0 0), A major with a 'turnaround' annotation, and A major followed by E major.

Explore the ways in which changing the key influences the ideas you play. Again, use the entire instrument.

As you progress through all the keys you can try different grooves for variety as well.

Let's continue to move the progression up in 4ths until we have explored all twelve "Keys".

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We've tried "E" and "A" lets go up a 4th to "D"

D⁷ | A⁷ | G⁷ | G⁷

D⁷ | A⁷ | D⁷ ^{turnaround} | D⁷ A⁷

up a 4th to "C"

G⁷ | D⁷ | C⁷ | C⁷

G⁷ | D⁷ | G⁷ ^{turnaround} | G⁷ D⁷

up a 4th to "C"

C⁷ | G⁷ | F⁷ | F⁷

C⁷ | G⁷ | C⁷ ^{turnaround} | C⁷ F⁷

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up a 4th to "F"

F⁷ | C⁷ | B^{b7} | B^{b7}

F⁷ | C⁷ | F⁷ ← turnaround → F C⁷

up a 4th to "B^{b7}"

B^{b7} | F⁷ | E^{b7} | E^{b7}

B^{b7} | F⁷ | B^{b7} ← turnaround → B^{b7} F⁷

up a 4th to "E^{b7}"

E^{b7} | B^{b7} | A^{b7} | A^{b7}

E^{b7} | B^{b7} | ~~A^{b7}~~ ← turnaround → E^{b7} B^{b7}

Keep to The Highway

8

up a 4th to "Ab"

Ab7

Eb7

Db7

Db7

Ab7

Eb7

Ab7

turnaround

Ab7

Eb7

up a 4th to "Db"

Db7

Ab7

Gb7

Gb7

Db7

Ab7

Db7

turnaround

Db7

Ab7

up a 4th to ~~Gb7~~

lets use an enharmonic and call it F#

F#7

C#7

B7

B7

F#7

C#7

F#7

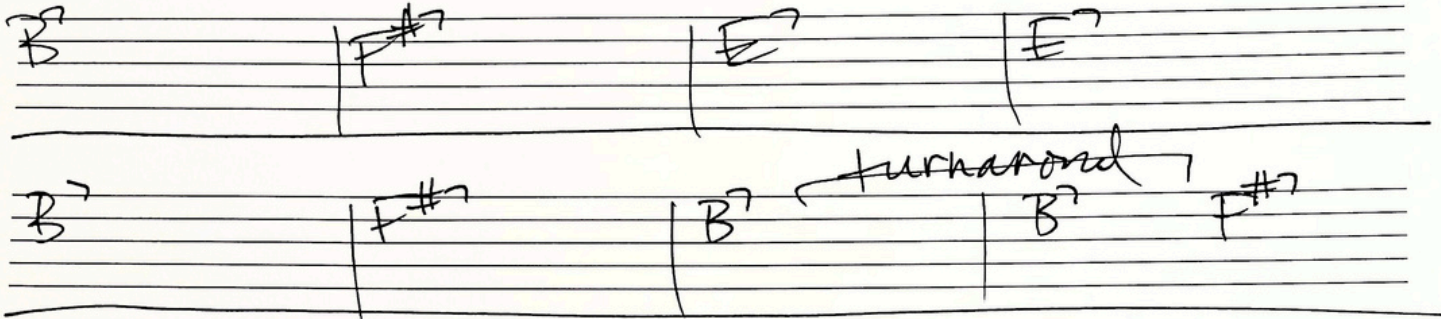
F#7

C#7

Keep B The Highway

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up a 4th to "B"



and up a 4th would bring us back to

"E"

Playing a fundamental form like this in
all 12 keys should open the instrument
up considerably over time.

Have fun!!!

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