

Newark Ukuleles

LESSON 12:

12 Bar Blues

Okay, we're now getting down to the serious stuff. The Twelve Bar Blues is a musical structure which is the basis for a lot of Jazz, Blues and Rock and Roll. It features three basic chords and it's very much like riding a bike. Once you've got it, you've got it for life.

There are different types of 12 bar, but fundamentally they are the same.

1. The first four bars are played with the root or tonic chord.
2. The next two bars are played with the subdominant chord and are followed by two bars played with the root chord.
3. The next two bars are played with the dominant chord finishing with two bars played with the root chord. Sometimes usually when the song continues the last bar forms what is known in the trade as the turnaround. These are transition chords to set up the next verse, and usual consist of a dominant chord followed by a seventh in the dominant chord.

Example: -

Deep [C]down in Louisiana, close to New Orleans, *(1st two bars played with the root chord)*
Way back up in the woods among the evergreens, *(2nd two bars still with the root chord)*
There [F]stood a log cabin made of earth and wood *(3rd two bars with the subdominant chord)*
Where [C]lived a country boy named Johnny B. Goode *(back to the root chord for the next two bars)*
Who [G]never ever learned to read or write so well, *(Next two bars are with the dominant chord)*
But he could [C]play the guitar just like a ringin' a bell. *(resolved back to the root chord).*

The whole point about understanding the circle of fifths is so that you can throw yourself into the twelve bar blues with a vengeance.

A good song to practice with is Chuck Berry's Johnny B Goode – [Song Sheet Number 8](#)