

BerkleeShares™

**FREE music lessons from
Berklee College of Music**

The Songwriter's Workshop: Melody

Jimmy Kachulis

Lesson 35
Major Blues

Click Play buttons to listen to
CD tracks from book.
Press ESC to cancel sound.

Check out Berkleeshares.com for more lessons
just like this one.



LESSON 35

Major Blues

Adding a “blue” note to a major pentatonic scale gives more of a blues/rock/r&b feel to the lyric. You can also use the major pentatonic blues scale over any one-major-chord groove to add a blues feel to your song.

Hit songs that use this technique include “Best of My Love,” “Heart of Gold,” “Every Day I Have the Blues,” “Sweet Little Angel,” and many others.

Listen



Listen to the first part of “Major Blues: Shakes Me...” (CD 62). Notice that the C Major Pentatonic scale you learned now has a new “blue” note in it: E-Flat.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a C chord diagram above it. The scale notes are C, D, E-flat, F, G, A. The E-flat notes are highlighted with a grey oval and labeled "Blue Note".

Listen again, and sing the scale along with the recording. Then sing the scale without the track. Did you feel the “bluesy” color of the new note, E-flat? You can use this scale to give any song a blues feel.

Now, listen to the whole track. These phrases are typical of a major pentatonic blues scale set over a one chord groove.

C6



Shakes me from my head___ way down to my toes___

Shakes me from my head___ way down to my toes___

Shakes me from my head way___ down to my toes___

Listen again, and sing along with the recording. Then try to sing it without the recording. Can you feel the new “bluesy” color in the lyrics? You can use this over any extended one-chord groove in a major key.

Writing Exercises



Sing the following exercises along with “Rhythm Track 25: Shakes Me...” (CD 61) or to your original track that uses one chord.

■ Practice



Reset the lyric “Shakes me from my head way down to my toes” three different ways using notes of the major pentatonic blues scale. Try to use both the E-flat and the E-natural in your melody. Refer back to the first part of “Major Blues: Shakes Me...” (CD 62) to review the notes.

■ Set Your Own Lyric

Create an original lyric, and set it using only notes of the major pentatonic scale. Include the blue note.

■ Rewrite the Hits

1. From the songs you know, find an example of a melody that uses the major pentatonic scale (with or without the blue note) over a major-chord groove.
2. Create your own major pentatonic blues setting of that lyric.

■ Write a Song

Create a song where the verse uses the major pentatonic blues scale over one chord and the chorus uses a different approach.