

Happy
BLUESMAN

Week 10
Blues College
Practice Plan



Shuffle Practice (10 / 15 / 20 mins)

This week we dive deep into the blues shuffle.

At first sight, the shuffle might seem simple and barely worthy of practice.

But there is a huge difference between a tight shuffle where you are absolutely locked into the groove, and one which is loose – both in terms of timing and also articulation.

So I'd recommend spending some time just practicing your shuffle. At first, just get the movement and rhythm under your fingers. From there, focus on muting and articulation and practice playing through a full 12 bar blues progression. If you feel confident to do so, you can also move the pattern around the neck and into different keys.

If you feel very comfortable with this, then you can amplify the difficulty in two ways:

- Alter your muting across the shuffle so that you accent certain notes and parts of it. This isn't so relevant for "I'm Tore Down" but will make a massive difference when you are playing over slower shuffle tracks.
- Practice over a metronome at an increasingly slow pace (working down to 30-40 BPM). The lower you go, the harder it is to play in time and hold the groove. It's challenging but will do a huge amount to improve your rhythm and sense of timing.

Mixing major and minor (10 / 15 / 20 mins)

When playing over a shuffle you have the opportunity to play either the major or minor pentatonic scale, and you can of course mix the two flavours in your playing.

As such, this is a great chance for you to practice weaving the different scales together and listening for the impact that this has on the feel and vibe of your soloing.

To begin with, focus on mixing the two scales in the first and second shape of the minor pentatonic scale. Target just a few notes from the major pentatonic scale, and bring them to life through technique and phrasing.

From there, you can then start to be more ambitious in your approach, and shift this idea out to other parts of the fretboard.

Practice going purely minor pentatonic, then very heavily major pentatonic, and finally try to solo in a way that appeals to you and which you think works well over the context of this track.

The Shuffle Challenge (10 /15/ 20 mins)

It's performance time!

Bring all of these concepts to life over "I'm Tore Down".

Work on tracking the shuffle, playing the breakdown and really locking into the groove of the track.

When it comes to the lead side of things think about and work on:

- Using a lead turnaround to get you into the track
- Mixing major and minor pentatonic ideas
- Digging in and using dynamics, expressive bending and vibrato to bring the playing to life

Don't worry about the pace of the track, and instead build the confidence to leave space, let your phrases breathe and for the shuffle to keep driving on beneath you.

As in previous weeks, continue with the "sandwich" approach we have been focusing on during the programme - playing the rhythm part for a few rounds through the chord progression, before soloing, and then dropping back into the rhythm part.