



BLUES SCALES & TIPS

Lesson by
Mark Stefani

C Minor Pentatonic (5-tone) Scale (8th fret "bar" position - two octaves):

Musical notation for the C Minor Pentatonic Scale (8th fret "bar" position - two octaves). The scale is shown in two measures. The first measure contains the notes C, Eb, F, G, Bb, C, Eb, F. The second measure contains the notes G, Bb, C. The fretboard diagram below shows the scale on the 8th fret, with fret numbers 8, 11, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 11, 8.

C Blues Scale (8th fret "bar" position - two octaves):

Musical notation for the C Blues Scale (8th fret "bar" position - two octaves). The scale is shown in two measures. The first measure contains the notes C, Eb, F, Gb, G, Bb, C, Eb. The second measure contains the notes F, Gb, G, Bb, C. The fretboard diagram below shows the scale on the 8th fret, with fret numbers 8, 11, 8, 9, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 11, 11, 8, 11, 8.

Above are two scales that are critically important for successful blues improvisation. They both have a minor personality, are close cousins, and can be used for minor chords (Cm7) or dominant chords (C7) in a blues. Keep in mind that blues music is "key" oriented, so when using scales you'll only use one scale bearing the same name as the key of the song (i.e. C minor pentatonic or C blues for the key of C or Cm). Once you have the positions shown above memorized, play the scales in all possible positions on the fingerboard.

Blues Guitar Tips You Should NEVER Forget:

- 1) Play blues, even briefly, with or without accompaniment, every day for the rest of your life!
- 2) Memorize standard blues progressions, and know where you are at all times during rhythm or solo.
- 3) Remember that the "root" note of the key (C) is the most important "money" note. Use it a lot!
- 4) Make extensive use of vibrato, especially on the root. There's no such thing as "too much" vibrato!
- 5) Be extremely liberal with guitar-oriented slurs: hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and trills.
- 6) Bend any note in the scale. The strongest notes to bend are traditionally the 4th (F) and the b7 (Bb).
- 7) Use double-stops, rakes (sweeps), range (high/low), and speed (slow/fast) to generate dynamics.
- 8) Blues is a "language" best learned through imitation. Transcribe the works of other artists.

About the Author...



Mark Stefani, son of noted West Coast jazz trombonist Roy Stefani, has devoted most of his life to music. He began playing guitar in 1969, and was inspired by his father along with Bay Area jazz guitarist Eddie Duran. Mark received his early jazz education while studying with guitarist Dave Smith, and later began his classical training under the guidance of George Sakellariou at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Stefani is a highly eclectic guitarist, though best noted for his skill in the rhythm & blues and jazz idioms. Throughout his career, his influences have been guitarists George Benson, Wes Montgomery, and Kenny Burrell, jazz pianist Oscar Peterson, saxophonists Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, plus numerous other legends of jazz and blues. On the acoustic guitar, Mark has amassed a repertoire of over 700 instrumental classical, popular, jazz, and latin standards. In 1986 he began composing original music in a variety of styles to match his diverse background. To date, he's written hundreds of compositions.

Mark has taught music full-time for over 34 years, and his talent as a music coach has been felt by top professionals the world over. In 1987, his career was spotlighted in *Guitar Player Magazine* ("versatile style on both electric and acoustic guitars" -- "a master's touch"). In 1996, Mark and saxophonist Dennis Marcellino released a jazz duo CD entitled "An Evening To Remember," which charted well and sold over 40,000 copies that year. It was later re-released as "[Tenderly](#)" (Lighthouse Music).

In 1997 Stefani combined his early love of writing and art with his long musical background by designing the highly popular Vision Music educational website (www.visionmusic.com), now over 900 pages deep and serving the needs of almost 4000 different players each day. Just one year after inception, it had already received top magazine reviews and accolades from numerous professional musicians and instructors. The site recently topped the five million total visitor mark.

Besides the valuable lessons and inspiring articles, one of the greatest features of interest to improvisers is the innovative [Jam Central Station](#) page, where players of all instruments have access to a "virtual" band around the clock, complete with high-quality rhythm charts shown on screen while the music plays. Currently there are over 165 selections available, spanning blues, jazz, rock, and latin styles.

Shortly after the JCS launch, Stefani began inviting notable guitarists and educators, such as George Benson, Hank Garland, Jimmy Bruno, Robert Conti, Joe Giglio, Liona Boyd, Chris Standring, Steve Laury, David Tanenbaum, Joe Diorio, Henry Johnson, Wolf Marshall, Muriel Anderson, and others, to share their knowledge at Vision Music's [Teacher Feature](#) page.

Recently, Mark began collaborating with TrueFire.com in developing [Jazzed Blues](#) and [Chord Melody Cafe](#), two highly-effective video learning products for aspiring guitarists. Nowadays, in addition to expanding the website and conducting the popular [Lessons by Mail](#) program, Mark keeps busy performing, composing, arranging, and teaching in the Portland (OR) area. He also writes regularly for both *Just Jazz Guitar* and *Jazz Improv Magazines*. Email contact: mark@visionmusic.com.