

Turnarounds

A turnaround is a short musical phrase (or lick) that you hear in the last two measures of a blues progression, and with blues progressions making a big part of the modern music repertoire you will come across them often. Turnarounds are designed to turn the previous twelve bars around to resolve into the first bar of the next sequence so to make it sound like the progression wants to keep going, rather than end.

Many turnarounds feature one static line played against a moving line, they often start on beat two of measure eleven, and the energy comes from the tension and release aspect of the music. If you listen closely to your favourite performers you will hear that they weave these types of musical lines into rhythm and lead parts effortlessly, and of course you need to be able to do this as well.

Ex 1 is a very common turnaround in the key of E that uses oblique motion. You can pick it or fingerpick it all the way through, or use your pick for the third string and middle finger to pick the first string. The phrase ends on a C7 triad sidestepping to a B7 which is the V chord of the key.

We are still in the key of E for Ex 2, but this line uses what is called a similar motion approach in that the descending lines intervals are all the same before the final C7 to B7 resolution again.

Ex 1

Ex 2

For Ex 3 we jump to the key of A for another common turnaround which is easy enough to play. The last two chords are F7 descending to E7.

Ex 4 uses contrary motion, which is when the two lines move in opposing directions. It is best to fingerpick this line or play with a pick and finger approach like in Ex 1.

5

Ex 3

Ex 4

The two parts are over an octave apart in Ex 5 so it is demanding to get this one right. It can still be totally flat picked if you have a good command of the pick or use fingerstyle to master this one.

Ex 6 is a country or rock-n-roll sounding turnaround that uses parallel motion. This one could be strummed by muting the second string with the side of your finger playing the third string.

Ex 5

Ex 6

9

T
A
B

Once you have these turnarounds practised and memorised there are a few more things to complete before inserting them into your favourite songs. You need to learn and play them in a few more keys, especially the keys you play in the most, but they are not difficult to shift. Get used to playing them in different tempos and with differing rhythms as well. With many turnarounds the single notes can be played backwards so experiment with that also because now you will have twice as many as before. The most important thing is to listen out for the millions of others that you will hear on your favourite recordings.

Happy Practising
Kevin.

To hear the music for this lesson visit http://www.guitar.co.nz/free_lesson.php?id=34

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