



## Minor Blues Progression

### Example 1

Am7 Dmi7 Am7 Dmi7

Am7 E7 Dmi7 Am7 E7

### Example 2

Am7 A7 Dmi7

Am7 Fmaj7 E7 Bmi7b5 E7

In NZM's August/September 2009 issue I wrote about how important it was to know the form of music called a Twelve Bar Blues progression. That lesson discussed the major and dominant 7th forms of the progression. It would be preferable to get that lesson and use it in conjunction with this one as this lesson follows it on. It can be viewed online through both [www.nzmusician.co.nz](http://www.nzmusician.co.nz) and my website [www.guitar.co.nz](http://www.guitar.co.nz).

Every good musician needs to have a good working knowledge of the 12 bar blues song form, but not many beginning/intermediate guitar students I come in contact with are well versed with it, and even fewer know the minor versions.

One of the first things musicians like to play when jamming is a blues form tune to get things started, as it helps warm up and get in the groove with the other players. An important reason to know the minor blues form is that it contains the three primary chords of the minor key that are used most of the time in minor key songs, so they will get your ears quickly hearing their distinct quality.

Now you know learning this song form is so important it is a matter of learning to play it, memorising it, and most importantly, being able to hear it. One of the quickest ways to physically memorise this progression is to play it with bar type chords because all the chords are close to each other and form a little visual

playing pattern. If you don't know bar chords yet, don't worry, Example 1 is easy enough to remember using open chords.

**Example 1** contains two chord progressions – the ones above the staff and another below. The progression above contains the most basic 12 bar minor blues form. Quite often the blues is coloured with minor 7th chords like in the progression below the staff. Also, there are variations in this progression – the change to Dmi7 in bar two is called the 'quick change' the Dmi7 in bar 10 is a common variation, while the last two bars are called the 'turnaround'. Keep your ears open for those variations. When practising use any strum pattern you wish. You will hear experienced players talk about quick changes and turnarounds, make sure you memorise those terms so you know what they are talking about.

**Example 2** is a blues progression heard in jump and jazz tunes. It is a little more complicated than the previous two, but worth learning once you know the others. It is relatively easy to memorise, but there are a few different chords you will need to remember.

In bar 4 the Am7 chord changes to an A dominant 7th chord, which sets up the change to Dmi7 perfectly. In bar 9 there is an Fmaj7, which is the 6th chord of the key and flows gracefully down to the 5th chord E7. The turnaround in bar 12 uses a common 11-V chord sequence to turn the song back to the

beginning again. Experienced players could use cut down or triad versions of the chords written here.

Although this is written in a common guitar key, you will need to get used to playing it in non-guitar keys like Bb, Eb, Ab, etc. if you want to play with jazz musicians. Playing this with a swing style strum will sound best. If you want to solo while jamming with your friends, the minor pentatonic and blues scale with their associated licks will fit over the three chord examples easily enough.

Here are some popular songs that use a minor twelve bar blues format similar to Example 1: *Black Magic Woman* by Santana; *Help The Poor* by B.B. King and Eric Clapton; *All Your Love* by Clapton and John Mayall. Of course there are millions of others. Here are two songs that use a 12 bar blues format similar to Example 2 – *Mr P.C.* and *Equinox* by John Coltrane.

Once you know the sound, can play the progressions well and have them memorised, you should be able to figure out many other songs yourself and be able to jam with mates without the need for written music. I hope this helps you have more fun with your guitar.

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