

TAGS & TURNAROUNDS

A couple of features that have come into widespread use in playing the blues are "tags" and "turnarounds."

TAGS

A tag is simply a section, generally four bars, that's repeated in order to prolong the blues, often to build excitement prior to the ending. In a live situation, tags can sometimes go on practically forever. Singers and instrumentalists alike use tags all the time.

A typical performance (live or recorded) will adhere to the following sequence of events:

1. Introduction
2. Melody (played or sung)
3. Solos (generally the longest section, especially if it's a large band)
4. Repetition of melody
5. Ending

As a bass player, you need to be on your toes, watching (and listening!), especially after the reprise of the melody. If there is a tag, it's going to be just before the ending. Sometimes there's just no telling how long it will last. You need to be alert here, too, because you never know when the leader or singer will be ready to end the song. (Sometimes you may even wonder if they'll ever be ready!)

Here are a few tags to give you an idea of how they are used. The first four bars in each of the following selections represent the last four bars of a twelve-bar blues, in other words, measures 9-12. The tag section is played an indefinite number of times. See if you can get a friend to play the chords on guitar or keyboard so you can jam along. Make sure you play them in different keys, too.

Tag No. 1

9 G7 F7 C7 (tag set-up) A7

13 (tag) D7 G7 C7 A7

17 D7 G7 C

FENDER PLAYERS CLUB BLUES BASS

Tag No. 2

9 *Dm7* *G7* *(tag set-up)* *Em7* *A7*

13 *(tag)* *Dm7* *G7* *Em7* *A7*

17 *Dm7* *G7* *C*

TURNAROUNDS

A turnaround is a device that provides harmonic movement in order to make the music more interesting. Its most practical application is at the end of a twelve-bar blues (bars 11 and 12), where playing only one or two chords could sound, shall we say, "uninspiring" (though there are plenty of cases where it works just fine, and is even preferable). In those instances where the music just needs something else to move it along, a turnaround perpetuates that harmonic movement, keeping the interest level high for the player and listener alike. A turnaround is actually a progression of chords that leads the music, harmonically, to the next section, usually the top of the form. * It is this function that gives the turnaround its name. Here are some examples of turnarounds.

Remember: no matter how long a blues lasts, almost invariably, it is made up of the same twelve-bar form repeated over and over again.

FENDER PLAYERS CLUB BLUES BASS

Turnaround No. 1

C7 A7 D7 G7 C

T
A 3 1 0 4 | 5 4 3 2 | 3

B

Turnaround No. 2

C7 E \flat 7 A \flat 7 D \flat 7 C7

T
A 3 5 6 5 | 4 3 4 2 | 3

B

Turnaround No. 3

C7 E \flat 7 D7 D \flat 7 C7

T
A 3 3 6 6 | 5 5 4 3 | 3

B



This lesson is from:
Blues Bass (Bass Builders)
 by Jon Liebman.

The best single source for learning to play the blues for bass! Styles covered include: Delta blues, Texas blues, New Orleans blues, West Coast blues, Chicago blues, boogie woogie blues, jazz blues, and more. Also covers 12-bar blues, 8-bar blues, 24-bar blues, minor blues, tags & turnarounds, 12/8 feel, swing, shuffle, jazz, pop, slow blues, funk blues and R&B.

The CD includes 74 full-band tracks.

Inventory # HL 695235. **Book/CD pack \$17.95 (US).**