

Student composing project D1: Blues

Background

Blues has been one of the most influential musical styles of recent history. Historians can trace the development of popular music from beginnings in the Blues songs of the southern United States of America. With its distinctive Blues scale and emphasis on sad topics, the Blues has been a popular medium for expressive melodies and improvisation. Most famous amongst the Blues forms is the 12-bar Blues.

Your task

Create a composition in Blues form. Use the Tracker to help you construct and record your composition, always being careful to name your files clearly. Make use of any material you created in Student learning pathway A and refer to any other information pages in Compass that might help you develop your creative ideas.

Option I

- Use the classic 12-bar Blues structure for your composition, with or without vocals. Repeat it about 5 times. You should use at least 3 instruments.
- Create a signature motif (“riff”) as an introductory and connecting theme that you can also use as the basis for counter-melodies.
- Build a strong melody that makes use of the blue notes and focuses on expressing a “blue” mood.
- Ensure that you create changes in texture as you move between each 12-bar verse and allow space for an improvised solo in one of the verses.
- Make a clear note of the melodies you have created and explain how you have expressed a “blue” mood.

Option II

- Develop your own 8- or 16-bar Blues structure for your composition, with or without vocals. Repeat it about 5 times. You should use at least 3 instruments (and include 7th chords).
- Create a signature motif (“riff”) as an introductory and connecting theme that you can also use as the basis for counter-melodies.
- Build a strong melody that makes use of the blue note and focuses on expressing a “blue” mood.
- Ensure that you create changes in texture as you move between each 8/16-bar verse and allow space for an improvised solo in one of the verses.
- Make a clear note of the melodies you have created and explain how you have expressed a “blue” mood.

Extension

A great bass line and exciting chords can give a Blues composition real energy.

- Develop your own chord progression, including added note and suspended chords.
- Add a walking bass part that sounds interesting.
- Include a solo melody with a good melodic contour.
- Make a clear note of the chords you have used and anything to notice about the walking bass.