Blues Harmonica Playalongs - Vol. 2 (English edition)

CD included

Bearbeitet von Steve Baker

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Steve Baker Blues Harmonica Playalongs Vol. 2 English edition

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STEVE BAKER

BLUES HARMONICA PLAYALONGS VOL. 2



2nd edition

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All songs and text written by Steve Baker

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About the author

Steve Baker was born and raised in London, England, and now lives near Hamburg, Germany. He took up the harp in 1969 and has been a full-time professional since 1975. Today he is considered one of the leading blues harmonica players on the European scene, and indeed one of the finest exponents of this instrument in the world. Among harmonica fans he has earned an international reputation for his outstanding and original playing as well as his excellent books on the subject. Over the years Steve has become a kind of harmonica guru for numerous up and coming young players. His unique style is a exciting fusion of traditional blues elements with innovative melodic ideas and showcases his mastery of dynamics and tone.

In addition to frequent live duo appearances with Hamburg's blues legend Abi Wallenstein and singer/guitarist extraordinaire Chris Jones (with whom he has toured successfully in Australia, Belgium, Germany, Holland, the USA and Russia), Steve gives regular harmonica workshops. He is also much in demand as a session musician, and his concise and distinctive playing can be heard on countless record productions, TV/film soundtracks, and jingles. He has been Hohner's international consultant for diatonic harmonicas since 1987 and is the author of *The Harp Handbook*, acclaimed as the most comprehensive work on the diatonic harp published to date (distributed worldwide by Music Sales Corp.). Apart from performing, recording, writing and teaching, Steve is also active as a harmonica journalist. He has written regular features for the leading German musicians magazines *Fachblatt* and *Soundcheck* as well as numerous articles for various international harmonica publications. His harmonica tuition CD-ROM *Interactive Blues Harp Workshop* was the first of its kind in the world.

Selected discography

1993: Have Mercy – "Have Mercy", CrossCut Records CCD 11039
1995: Steve Baker & Chris Jones – "Slow Roll", AMR 319.1070.2
1996: Abi Wallenstein – "Blues Avenue", Stumble Records CD ST 06/ET 11
1998: Chris Jones & Steve Baker – "Everybody's Crying Mercy", AMR 319.1147.2
2000: Abi Wallenstein & Steve Baker – "In Your Face", Indigo 1923-2 / EIS 03
2001: The Mudsliders – "Spirit's Gonna Rise"
2003: Abi Wallenstein – "Step in Time", NVN 03001
2003: Chris Jones & Steve Baker – "Smoke and Noise", AMR 319.1303.2

Bibliography

The Harp Handbook, Steve Baker, Edition Louis / Music Sales Blues Harping, Steve Baker & Dieter Kropp, Hohner Verlag Interactive Blues Harp Workshop CD-ROM, Steve Baker, Voggenreiter Verlag Blues Harmonica Playalongs Vol. 1, Steve Baker, artist ahead Musikverlag Blues Harmonica Playalongs Vol. 2, Steve Baker, artist ahead Musikverlag

Steve Baker's website

www.stevebaker.de - all infos at a glance!

About this book and the recordings

After *Blues Harmonica Playalongs Volume 1* was first published in Spring 2000, I received numerous requests for a sequel. One of the things I really wanted to do with this volume was to widen the musical spectrum to include a number of acoustic tunes, reflecting my abiding love for country blues, bluegrass and country swing. This music is absolutely seminal in its influence on subsequent developments and it's also great fun to play, so I hope that fans of modern blues won't be put off. There are also some more traditional blues numbers and a couple of classic electric Chicago blues pieces as well as excursions into rock and funk.

In order to realize this plan, I co-opted my old friend and musical sidekick Dick Bird to play guitar. Dick and I have been playing together for 30 years and his wide-ranging knowledge and experience of the various styles of music heard on this recording were invaluable, as was his expert assistance with the arrangements and of course his wonderful playing on National tri-cone, acoustic and electric guitars. Heartfelt thanks also to Rainer Dettling on drums and Rolf Breyer on upright and electric bass for their commitment and enthusiasm as well as their fine musicianship. You wouldn't think it to listen to them, but these guys don't usually play the blues, let alone some of the acoustic material heard here. They learnt and recorded these 12 tunes in a day and a half and managed to make it sound as though they'd been playing them all their lives. Finally I'd like to thank Stephan Keller for doing a great job of engineering and mixing the session as well as contributing piano and Hammond organ.

The outside temperature reached nearly 40°C while we were recording these tunes and ozone levels soared; fortunately, Stephan's basement studio was pleasantly cool in comparison. It consisted of only two rooms and all the playbacks (guitar, bass and drums) were recorded live. Dick overdubbed some of the guitar solos, but otherwise the backing tracks are all single takes. Recording an acoustic guitar using a sensitive microphone isn't possible in the same room as the drummer, so we put Dick in the control room with the door closed, while the rhythm section played in the other room. Meanwhile, Stephan used headphones instead of the studio monitors and I kept very quiet and counted verses to ensure that the arrangements were of the right length. Not only did we have no eye contact while recording, but this also meant that on the acoustic titles I was unable to record the harp at the same time (this would have necessitated a third room). The harmonica on these tracks was all overdubbed. On the electric numbers, Dick set up his amp in the same room as the bass and drums, so I was able to play harp at the same time in the control room. Most of the electric tunes are absolutely live and several are first takes.

I hope that the high quality of the performances on these recordings will increase your enjoyment both in listening to them and in using them as accompaniment. I certainly wish I could afford a band like that, and I hope that you'll have as much fun listening to and working with these tunes as we did recording them!

Steve Baker, Summer 2002

Introduction

Like its predecessor, *Blues Harmonica Playalongs Volume 1*, this collection of instrumental titles is directed at the intermediate level diatonic harmonica player who is seeking practice material in a variety of styles. Though quite a number of the tunes found here are not strictly speaking blues, they are all closely related to it and employ similar playing techniques. The harp themes are chosen to illustrate typical approaches to these styles and will help you to understand how the top players create their exciting sounds.

This is not a book which purports to teach you how to play the harmonica, however. In order to play these tunes as written, you will need to be able to play single notes cleanly and with the correct intonation. It's also necessary to know how to bend and how to hit bent notes directly, without bending them down first. A knowledge of overblowing is not really necessary – I've used quite a few in the solos, but they don't occur in the themes. For detailed explanations of these and other techniques, see *The Harp Handbook* (Music Sales), *Blues Harping 1* (Hohner / Schott) or *Interactive Blues Harp Workshop CD-ROM* (Voggenreiter), all available in English or German.

Every song on the cD can be heard in two versions: the full mix with my original harp as the lead instrument, and a playback version without harp for you to jam along to. In the book, the harp themes and endings are transcribed using tablature and musical notation plus chord charts. Each song is given a chapter to itself, with a brief description of the piece, plus detailed explanations of the tricky bits and relevant background information, to help you to get a handle on the stuff more easily. Practicing tips for each song are designed help you to master the specific techniques involved. One frequent request by readers of *Blues Harmonica Playalongs Volume 1* was for transcriptions of the solos, and I've tried to accomodate this by including at least partial transcriptions from each piece. Special thanks are due to Udo Tschira and Hans-Jörg Fischer from artist ahead for their invaluable help in transcribing the music and putting it into tablature – it'd have taken me years on my own!

As in *Blues Harmonica Playalongs Vol. 1*, I decided to fit the key of the harp to the character of the tune, rather than playing everything on one harp. You will need harps in A, C, D and F (the four most commonly used keys) in order to play everything on this CD in its original key. This reflects musical reality more closely, and helps you get accustomed to the different feel and response of harps in various keys. Most of these numbers are played in 2nd position (cross harp), but there are also examples in 1st, 3rd and 5th positions.

At least in the case of the electric blues and rock numbers, many players would tend to choose an amplified harp sound, using a tube amp and bullet mic. I decided against this for these recordings, as it would make the sound harder for the reader / listener to duplicate without the appropriate equipment. All the harmonica on this CD was recorded acoustically, using Hohner Marine Band Custom Classic harps in standard Richter tuning and a Beyerdynamic M160 microphone on a stand, without any effects beyond a little compression and reverb. Of course, if you want to jam along to the playbacks through an electric rig of any kind, go ahead. But don't forget that tone is created in the first instance by the player. Your equipment only comes a very distant second.

I hope that these titles will provide you with interesting and stimulating practice material and that the choice of styles may motivate you to explore areas which you might otherwise have neglected. Remember, though, that there's no substitute for going out and playing with other musicians. If you can get to grips with the verse forms and the rhythmic and harmonic structures used here, you'll be a lot better prepared for what you might encounter when you do. That's the beauty of the blues – once you get the hang of the basics, you can devote your time and energy to filling them with emotion and content, rather than getting hung up in endless technicalities. If you don't feel like learning the titles as played, you can just use the playbacks as backing tracks to play whatever you want to – of course they'll also work for any other instrument as well as the harmonica.

How to use this book/CD package

Though it's not absolutely necessary to approach the tunes presented here in any particular order, you may find it easier to start at the beginning due to the more detailed explanations of the grooves and verse structures found in the earlier chapters. Musically speaking, some titles are slightly easier or more difficult than others, but there's no clear starting point. Before starting to learn any of them, I suggest you listen to the whole thing a couple of times first.

Select a number that appeals to you and which you feel comfortable with. Then take a look at the tablature while listening to it, to see which harp you need and where the notes are to be found. It's a good idea to begin by playing the theme through slowly on your own at first, without using the playback as accompaniment. The text is designed to help you here by taking you through the theme step by step and explaining the more difficult parts. Take your time, and refer to the CD version every now and then to check your phrasing and intonation if you're unsure. When you feel that you've more or less got it down, try playing along with the playback. Each playback has a short count-in (usually 2 bars in length, e.g. I - 2 - I 2 3 4) before it starts, to lead you into the piece. You may need to listen to this once or twice to get the hang of it.

As is so often the case, the songs first really took shape during the recording session. When arranging them, we used standard devices such as repeating the last line a couple of times at the end, or starting a song with an 8 bar intro where the band play alone before the harmonica theme comes in. Wherever something like this occurs, it's mentioned in the text as well as in the notation/tabs.

At the head of the text after each transcription I've noted the running order for the song, so that you can see how many times I played the theme, the number and sequence of the solos and so on. In most cases I play the theme once or twice at the beginning, then do a couple of solos. These are followed by a short guitar or piano solo to add variety, then another couple of harp solos (hey, this *is* a harmonica instruction CD!) before returning to the theme at the end. The endings are noted separately in the transcriptions. Below the running order is a listing of exactly which verses (theme, solos, ending) have been transcribed, so you know which solo you're looking at. One thing which this package will not prepare you for is backing up a singer, as there are no vocals on the CD. It's intended to help you familiarize yourself with the verse forms and learn how to build solos over them. Accompanying singers, however, is a totally different ball game. In real life situations, it's what you'll probably find yourself doing more often than not. The main thing to remember is that it's vitally important to avoid stepping on their vocal lines, which means you can't just play any old thing which fits to the chord sequence. The first priority of any accompanist is to listen to the singer and then play things which complement the vocal without getting in the way or distracting from it. In the immortal words of Dr. John, "You got to listen to learn, you got to learn to listen"!

What harps do I need?

All these tunes are played on 10-hole Richter harmonicas. No special tunings are used, so you can use whichever model you prefer as long as it's tuned to the Richter system. I recommend the Hohner Marine Band Classic, Special 20 Classic or Big River Harp MS. All of the other harps in the Hohner MS series are also suitable. The tempered tuning of the Hohner Golden Melody or Tombo Lee Oskar may make them sound a little rough on some of this material due to the frequent use of double notes or chord fragments, but if you feel good playing them then go ahead! The Marine Band is often considered a difficult instrument for the beginner, because you need more air and the wooden comb can swell when wet. It has the best tone of all once you've gotten used to it, however.

The key of the harp and the position in which it's played is noted above the tablature for each title. Whichever model or models you choose to use, you'll need them in the keys of A, C, D and F.

About the tablature

Writing music for the diatonic harp demands a tablature in addition to musical notation, as the same note is found in different channels in harps of different keys. In this book I use a similar tablature to that found in The Harp Handbook and other publications (see table below). Breath direction is indicated by arrows pointing up (blow) or down (draw), and bends are denoted by bent arrows, the number of heads indicating how many semitones the note is bent. Overblows and overdraws are denoted by arrows with a diagonal slash through the shaft. Like most tablatures, this is an approximate system, but it's serviceable when used in combination with musical notation. The note and channel number are also given.

Double notes and intervals

I make use of a lot of double notes (also known as double stops) on these recordings – instead of directing the air through only one channel opening, I widen my embouchure to allow a controlled amount of air to also pass through the next channel up. Usually the upper channel receives about half the amount of air as the lower of the two, so it's not as loud. This creates an interval or double stop, but because the lower note is louder, the ear tends to interpret the sound as a fattening up of this note, rather than as an interval or chord fragment. The notation and tabs usually indicate this and I've also tried to point it out in the text. You don't have to play the tunes like this, but it does make them sound more authentic. I play double notes completely unconciously, especially with country blues numbers, and didn't want to deliberately falsify my style by simplifying things too much. I hope this doesn't confuse readers. I've also made a lot of use of intervals, played by blocking 1, 2 or 3 channels with the tongue and allowing the air to pass through the channels on either side. This is indicated in the tabs and notation as well as in the text.

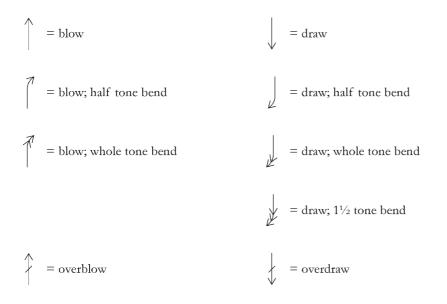


Fig. 1: Chart of symbols

Playing techniques and styles

Though I've done my best to ensure that the harp themes are reasonably easy to play, I made extensive use of vibrato, hand effects and so on while performing them, just as I normally would. There is no "dumbing down" here, so it may be difficult for you to exactly duplicate the sound. In the solos I simply went for it and played what I felt. In comparison to *Blues Harmonica Playalongs Vol. 1*, I notice that I've made considerably more use of overblows here. This wasn't deliberate and probably just reflects how my playing has changed over the last couple of years. I hope readers will excuse me if this presents a problem when trying to learn the solos. We also performed the tunes at tempos which suited the material, which may make some of them a bit fast for you. The problem is, if you slow down the tempo, the song often doesn't work any more. We decided to go for the right feel rather than make compromises here. I hope this doesn't prove frustrating for you when playing along.

The range of styles represented on this recording is fairly wide, making the question of choosing a running order correspondingly difficult. In the end we decided to retain the order in which we originally recorded the tunes, starting with the acoustic material and moving on to the electric stuff. This seems to me to give a feeling of continuity and also makes things easier for the listener who has distinct preferences for one style or the other.

Titles 1–6 feature acoustic guitar and range from straight country blues to bluegrass, country and early post-war Chicago blues; 7–12 all feature electric guitar and range from Chicago-style electric blues to rockabilly, rock and funk. Stylistically I haven't always stuck with the way that harmonica players would have played at the time – there is more than a hint of jazz influence in some of the solos and I've borrowed heavily from anything which seemed to be appropriate. I'm not a music historian and am more concerned with whether something sounds good than if it's stylistically "correct".

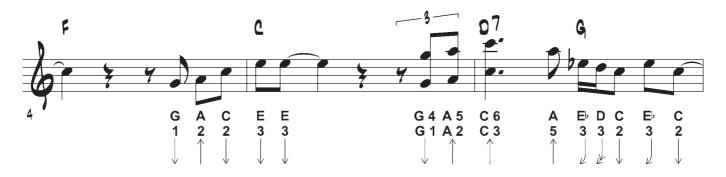
Note on the transcriptions of the solos

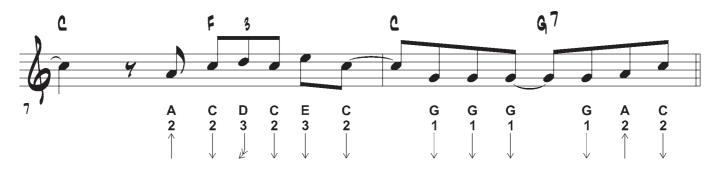
Please bear one thing in mind when working with the transcriptions of the solos in this book:

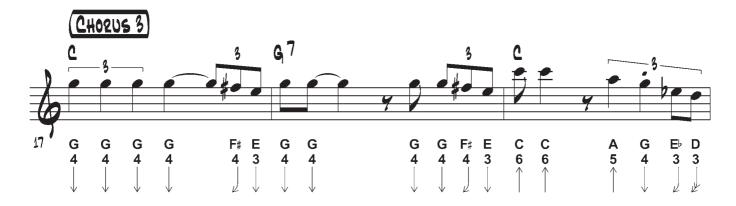
We have made every effort to ensure that the transcriptions shown here are as accurate as possible. In the text, I've tried to explain exactly what is going on in order to (hopefully) make the solos easier for you to understand and reproduce yourself. This may give readers the impression that they were planned that way, so I'd like to make it clear that none of the solos heard here were arranged in advance. They emerged while we were performing the tunes and were not thought out in detail beforehand. Often I had a rough mental sketch of where I wanted to go, but sometimes I didn't have the faintest idea what I was going to play. It's a strange experience to dissect your own music note for note and can make the whole thing appear very academic, when in actual fact it simply happened that way. The analysis took place after the fact and is aimed at making the material accessible to the reader.

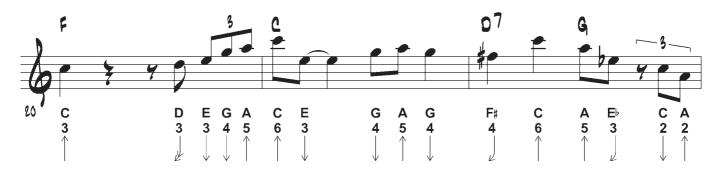
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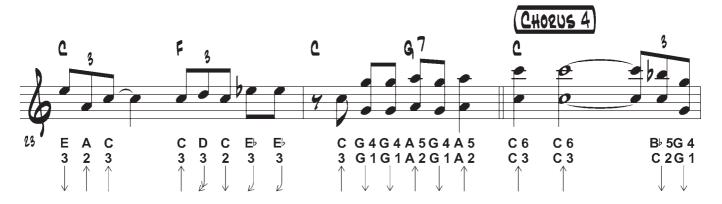


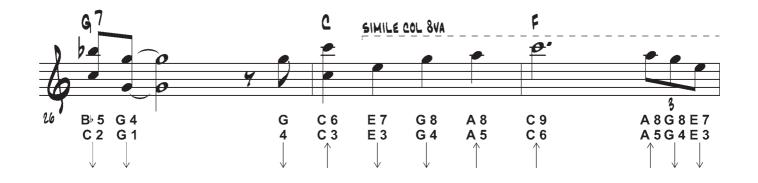


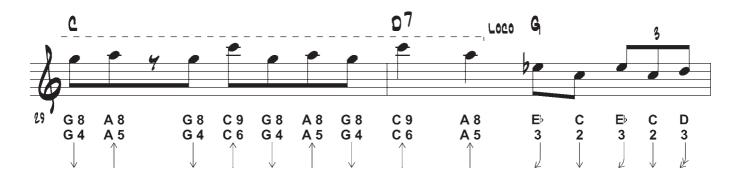


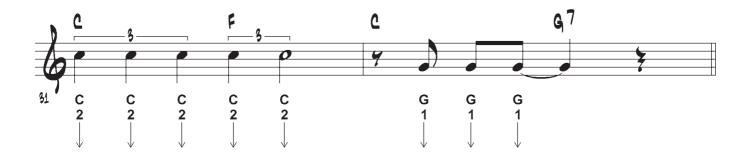


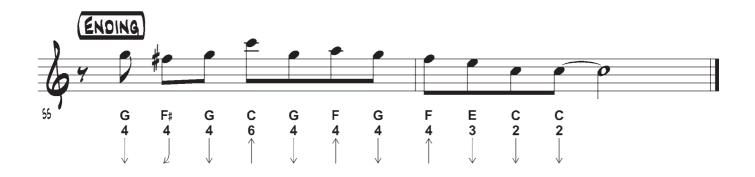












Headed for Home

Form:	theme (transcribed),
	theme,
	harp solo (transcribed),
	harp solo (transcribed),
	guitar solo,
	harp solo,
	theme,
	ending (transcribed)

– Steve Baker

	full version: playback version:	track 01 track 13
Description:		Harp:
8-bar medium tempo country blues shuffle in C		F harp, 2 nd position

The first tune we recorded doesn't use the familiar 12 bar form. *Headed for Home* is a country blues shuffle reminiscent of Big Bill Broonzy, but the verse is only 8 bars in length. It can be broken down into two 4-bar segments, where the first 4 bars make the initial statement, which is then resolved in the 2^{nd} 4-bar block. As with most shuffles, you need to remember that the phrasing sticks closely to the 12/8 rhythm. This means that the basic "I 2 3 4" beat is broken down into daaa-da-daaa-da-daaa-da, with "daaa" being twice the length of "da".

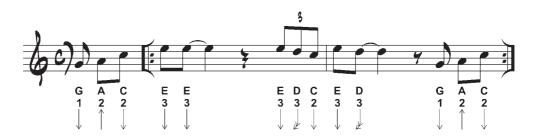
This can be heard straight away at the start of the song, where the harp lead-in starts on the "da" after the count-in "I 2 3", playing "da daaa da" before the first beat of the actual opening bar. If you listen to the playback you'll hear Dick count this and then the drums play a lead-in on the final "da daaa da". You just have to start right together with them. The first notes of bar 1 are double stops – I don't only play channel 3, but also allow some air to pass through channel 4 - and are accented by hand "wahs". I also hit both notes slightly bent and slide quickly up to the natural pitch. The next notes leading into bar 2 are also double stops, but the whole tone bend on 3-draw is a regular single note. The first two bars are played with a pucker. Bars 3 & 4 (also some double stops) are played with a tongue block, as there are no bends and the rhythmic feel is better that way. In bar 5 I repeat the phrase from bar 1 and then resolve the theme in bar 6 over the D_7/G_7 chord progression by playing a phrase which starts in octaves (Cc in 3-&6-blow, this is the 7^{th} in the D7 chord) and then returns to the root note in 2-draw for the turnaround in bars 7 & 8. In verse 2 the theme is repeated with slight variations, but the phrasing remains pretty similar.

The first harp solo (*see transcription*) uses mostly single notes. It starts with rhythmic bends on 4-draw (I hit the note already bent down and let it slide back up to pitch), accented by hand "wahs". Notice the direct semitone bend in 4-draw followed by 6-blow in the first half of bar 6 – these two notes are the major third and the 7th in the accompanying II chord D7. The second solo is largely played in octaves and uses both lower and upper registers. Check the run leading up to the IV chord in bars 3 & 4, which starts with blow octaves in holes 3&6 and proceeds up to the blow octaves in the upper register in 6&9. In order to play the draw octaves which lie in between, you need to form a 3-hole block so that you can play 3&7 and 4&8 as intervals. I find the best way to do this is to use the middle of the top of the tongue to cover the channel openings, rather than the tip, as it's wider *(see exercises)*. Passages containing both blow and draw octaves require the player to switch from a 2 hole block to a 3 hole block and back again as needed. I continue playing octaves on the way back down in bars 5 & 6, returning to single notes in the lower register for the turnaround in bars 7 & 8.

After the guitar solo the harp comes back in a similar vein to the first solo, playing double notes on 4-&5-draw (this chorus is not transcribed). Notice the run-up to the IV chord at the end of bar 3, where I play the overblow in hole 4 (A^b) to lead from the G in 4-draw up to the A in 5-blow (the major 3rd in the IV chord, F). This solo is followed by the final theme and the ending, which is played in straight 8th notes across the shuffle rhythm.

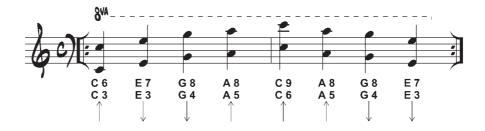
Practising Tip:

I) The transition from bar 1 to bar 2 in the theme involves bending 3-draw down a whole tone on two separate occasions. The first time the bend is short (one 8th beat triplet) and connects the E in 3-draw to the C in 2-draw. The second time, I play a double note on 3- & 4-draw, immediately followed by the whole tone bend as a single note, which is held for most of bar 2. On both occasions I articulate the natural note and the bend in hole 3 with the tip of the tongue against the ridge of the hard palate behind the upper teeth, like a half-swallowed "d" or "t", to give them definition. The last two notes are accented with hand "wahs". Try playing this slowly as a cycle



until you feel comfortable with it.

2) Here's a 2-bar cycle using upper register octaves, like I play in the 2nd solo verse:



The blow octaves require a 2 hole block, but you have to switch to a 3 hole block for the draw octaves. Take your time and concentrate on getting both notes to sound clearly every time, without unwanted additional tones. The 3 hole block is not only useful when playing this kind of thing on the diatonic harp, it's also the basis of much blues chromatic playing. On the chromatic harp, all octave intervals can be played as 3 hole blocks and learning this technique is essential if you wish to become proficient in the style of playing exemplified by George Smith, William Clarke, Rod Piazza and others.



