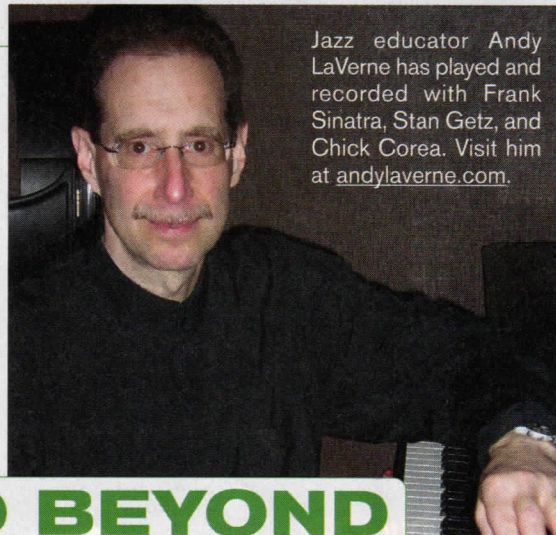


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Jazz educator Andy LaVerne has played and recorded with Frank Sinatra, Stan Getz, and Chick Corea. Visit him at andylaverne.com.

Andy LaVerne

BLUES BASICS AND BEYOND

Blues is not only a genre of music, it's also a *form* that has permeated nearly every other genre. The blues' origins can be traced to late 19th-century African-American communities of the Deep South. As a direct result of slavery, a fusion of work songs, spirituals, chants, and narrative ballads evolved into the blues. The form was an outgrowth of these songs, and became a musical structure most commonly known as 12-bar blues. This progression is the basis of countless songs. Here's how to put the sound and structure of the blues to work in your own playing.

Ex. 1 is a traditional 12-bar progression made up of three phrases of four bars each. There are only three chords, all dominant sevenths, built on the I, IV, and V of the key. The left hand's roots and fifths provide the bass foundation for the triads in the right hand. Notice the "blue notes," which are grace notes of flat thirds. Also, the rhythms aim for the off-beats, keeping things moving forward.

Ex. 1.

♩ = 95

1 F7 B7#11 Bb7 Gb7 F7 Ab7 Dbmaj7 E7 Amaj7 C7#9 F7 B7#11

5 Bb7 Bdim7 F7/C Bb7 Am7 D7b9

9 Gm7 D7#9 Gm7 C7b9 F7 F7/A Bb Bdim F/C D7#9 G7 C7

Ex. 2. Add chord extensions such as ninths and 13ths, and a more modern sound emerges. Tritone substitutions and dominant seventh approach chords provide more harmonic interest as well. Measures 4 and 5 contain the famous "Coltrane changes"—the basis for the seminal Coltrane tune "Giant Steps"—which are considered a benchmark of any jazz player's prowess. The left-hand octaves and right-hand tritones, triads, and sevenths in measures 11 and 12 demonstrate a common blues turnaround with a gospel flavor.

Ex. 3. Voicings in fourths, chords derived from the diminished scale that move in minor thirds, chromatic approach chords, and triad pair voicings all give this chorus a modern jazz flavor. The progression is based on Charlie Parker's "Blues for Alice." Again, many of the rhythms are off the beat, which creates a strong forward momentum. **K**

Continued on page 34

Ex. 2.

♩ = 95

1 F7 B7#11 Bb7 Gb7 F7 Ab7 Dbmaj7 E7 Amaj7 C7#9 F7 B7#11

5 Bb7 Bdim7 F7/C Bb7 Am7 D7b9

9 Gm7 D7#9 Gm7 C7b9 F7 F7/A Bb Bdim C D7#9 G7 C7

Ex. 3.

♩ = 95

1 F7 F7#9 E7#9 A7 Dm7 G7 C#m7 Cm7 Bm7

5 Bb7 Bbm7 Eb7 A7alt D7alt Eb7alt D7alt

9 Gm7 C7alt F7 Eb7alt D7alt G7alt C7alt