

CHAPTER 6

$\frac{12}{8}$ Slow Blues and Minor Blues

Many slow blues tunes are written in $\frac{12}{8}$ time. In $\frac{12}{8}$ time, there are 12 eighth notes in a measure and, technically, the eighth note gets one beat (see the section on time signatures on page 6). The truth about $\frac{12}{8}$, though, is that we feel it in four beats of three eighth notes each, with the dotted quarter note effectively getting one beat. We call this a *compound meter*, specifically in this case, a *quadruple compound meter*. Try counting "1-&-a, 2-&-a, 3-&-a, 4-&-a," with an emphasis on the first part of each beat, and you've got it. Here is an example of one bar of $\frac{12}{8}$ time:

42 

Count: 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a
or 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Often, tunes are written in $\frac{4}{4}$ time but counted with a $\frac{12}{8}$ feel.

43 

Count: 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a

The blues below has a common turnaround used in $\frac{12}{8}$ slow blues tunes. Notice the slow tempo: a dotted quarter = 64. It uses the I-IV-I-V turnaround in the last two bars.

44
ack 39

$\text{♩} = 64$ $\frac{12}{8}$ G7 I C7 IV G7 I I



T
A
B
3 3 3 3 0 2 3 3 3 3 0 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 0 2

5 C7 IV IV G7 I I

T
A
B
3 3 3 3 3 1 3 3 3 3 0 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 3

9 D7 V C7 IV G7 I C7 IV Common Turnaround G7 I D7 V

T
A
B
5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 0 1 3 3 0 2 3 3 0 1 3 3 2 3 0 0

4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 0 1 3 3 0 2 3 3 0 1 3 3 1 2 0 0