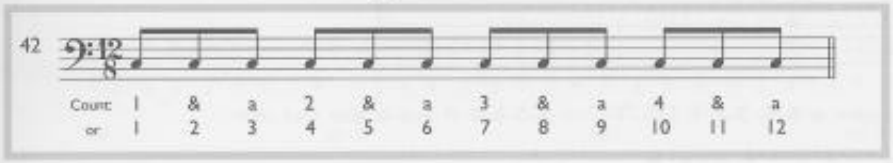
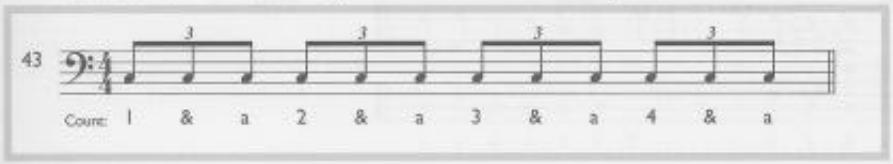
CHAPTER 6

$\frac{12}{8}$ 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:



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



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.