



V-IV-I Licks

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This month we'll finish what has turned into a series identifying common areas in the twelve bar blues progression that players tend to play too cliché. This area of the twelve bar blues progression can get old if the same licks are used. This month I've notated 24 examples of cool V-IV-I licks to add to your repertoire. All examples include a common turnaround to help give you a feel for where the licks fit in time. V-IV-I licks start on the 9th measure (V), travel through the 10th measure (IV) and resolve on the 11th measure (I). After the V-IV-I lick the turnaround starts.

There are four common ways to treat the V-IV-I area:

#1 - Two-Measure Lick

The easiest way to treat this area is to just play a two-measure lick that resolves on the downbeat of the 11th measure. Example 22 is a good example of this.

#2 - One-Measure Lick Played Twice

Another effective way to play this area is to play a one-measure lick and repeat it. Example 3 is a good example of this.

#3 - Arpeggio Based

In this approach instead of playing just any lick, you're choosing to play a lick constructed from the notes of each chord. Example 1 plays the 1 draw, which is the root of the I chord, to the 1 blow, which is the root of the IV chord. This is a very simple example. Example 4 plays for the V chord: root (1 = D), root (1 = D), 3rd (2' = F#), 5th (A = 3''), octave (D = 4), octave (D = 4), flat-7th (C = 4+), flat-7th (C = 4+). For the IV chord we have: Root (C = 1+), root (C = 1+), 3rd (E = 2+), 3rd (E = 2+), 5th (G = 3+), Flat-7th (B-flat = 3'), etc... Examples 6, 7 and 8 are also arpeggio based. These are the type of licks you'll see the better blues harmonica players use.

#4 - Sequence

The last way to treat the V-IV-I area is very similar to the Arpeggio Based treatment. The difference in a sequence is that whatever is played on the V chord is transposed and played note-for-note on the IV chord. Example 2 is a perfect example of this. Simply stated, if you play the root of the V chord, you need to play the root of the IV chord in the IV chord lick. If you then play the 3rd of the V chord, you need to then play the 3rd of the IV chord in the IV chord lick. This called a sequence.

C Harmonica in 2nd Position (Key of G)

Ex. 1 V7 IV7 I7 V7

1 1 1' 1+ 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 2 V7 IV7 I7 V7

1 1 4 4 4+ 4 1+ 1+ 4+ 4+ 3' 4+ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 3 V7 IV7 I7 V7

3' 3'' 2 2'' 1 2 3' 3'' 2 2'' 1 2+ 2 3'' 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 4 V7 IV7 I7 V7

1 1 2' 3'' 4 4 4+ 4+ 1+ 1+ 2+ 2+ 3+ 3' 2 2'' 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 5 V7 IV7 I7 V7

4 5 4 4 5 4 4+ 3 4 5 6+ 5 4 4+ 4 2'' 1 1+ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 6 V7 IV7 I7 V7

1 2' 3'' 3 4+ 3'' 3 4 5 5 4 3 4+ 3 3' 3 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 7 V7 IV7 I7 V7

1 2' 3'' 3 4+ 3'' 2'' 1 1+ 4+ 4 3' 2 1 3'' 2'' 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 8 V7 IV7 I7 V7

1 2'' 2 2'' 1 1 1' 1+ 2+ 4+ 3' 2'' 2 3' 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2' 3'' 1

George "Harmonica" Smith

Ex. 9

V7 IV7 I7 V7

3+ 3 4 4 5+ 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 10 V7

IV7 Magic Dick I7 V7

5 5 5+ 4 4 4+ 3' 2 2'' 1 1+ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 11 V7

IV7 Walter Horton I7 V7

5 5 5+ 5+ 4 4 4+ 4+ 6+ 6+ 5 5+ 4 3 2 3' 3'' 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 12 V7

Jerry McCain IV7 I7 V7

1 4 4+ 4 4' 4 2+ 4+ 3' 2 2'' 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 13 V7

Jerry McCain IV7 I7 V7

1 5 5+ 4 3 4 3 2 2+ 1+ 5+ 5 4 4+ 3' 2 1 1+ 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 14 V7

Paul Butterfield IV7 I7 V7

5 5 2 2 2'' 2 5 5 2 3' 2 2'' 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 15 V7

Little Walter IV7 I7 V7

5 4 4+ 4 4' 3' 2 1 2+ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 16 V7

Gary Smith IV7 I7 V7

1 2'' 2' 3 2'' 1 1+ 4+ 4 3' 3'' 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2'' 1 2' 3'' 1

Ex. 17 V7 IV7 Kim Wilson I7 V7

4 4 3 2 5+ 6+ 6 6+ 2 3' 3' 2 3' 2" 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 18 V7 1 IV7 Kim Wilson I7 V7

1 2" 2 3" 3 4 5 6+ 5+ 4 2" 2 3' 4 2 1 2" 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 19 V7 Kim Wilson IV7 1 I7 V7

3" 3 4 5+ 4 4' 3' 3 4 5+ 1 2" 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 20 V7 IV7+ Little Walter I7 V7

4 4 5+ 5 4 5+ 3 2 2 2 2" 1 1+ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 21 V7 1 IV7 Little Walter I7 V7

1 2" 2 4+ 4 2 2 3' 3 2 2" 1 1+ 2 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 22 V7 IV7 Little Walter I7 V7

5 4 5 4 5+ 4+ 3' 2 2" 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 23 V7 IV7 George "Harmonica" Smith I7 V7

4 1 4 1 4 1 4 4+ 4 3 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

Ex. 24 V7 Gary Smith IV7 I7 V7

1 2' 3" 3" 2" 1 1+ 2+ 3+ 3+ 2+ 1+ 4' 4+ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2" 1 2' 3" 1

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