



Chromatic for Diatonic Players

Blues Chromatic, Part 4” Key of A

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Hi, sorry I’ve been away so long. I’ve been playing hooky to complete a new book project.

If you can remember all the way back to June 2008, I was taking you through blues in the sharp keys—keys with sharps in the major scale. I started with the key of B in the February and April issues, moved on to E in the June issue. This issue I’ll move on to A.

Why go through keys in this sequence? Because each new key uses chords (and licks, or characteristic melodic fragments) from the last key, making it easier to find things to play in the new key because parts of it are already familiar.

Here’s a map of the keys in this sequence and their overlapping chords, starting with the key of B:

Key of B		
V	I	IV
F#	B	E

Key of E		
V	I	IV
B	E	A

Key of A		
V	I	IV
E	A	D

Key of D		
V	I	IV
A	D	G

Key of G		
V	I	IV
D	G	C

In case this looks like gibberish, let me recap:

In B, the home chord, B, is called the I Chord (as in Roman numeral “one). The V chord (built on the fifth degree of the scale) is F#, while the IV chord (built on the fourth degree of the scale) is

E. The I, IV, and V chords are the most important chords in any key. For more on playing blues in B on chromatic, check out the February, 2008 and April, 2008 issues of HarmonicaSessions.com.

When you move on to the key of E, the B and E chords are chords you can carry over from the key of B. But E is now the I chord and B is the V chord. The new chord is A, the IV chord. For more on playing blues in E on chromatic, check out the June 2008 issue.

Now we're going to move on to the key of A. If you've worked out with the previous chapters, you will have gained some familiarity with playing over the E and A chords. You can add a new chord, D (the IV chord).

Getting from A to D

When you play blues in A, the first move from one chord to another is usually from A7 to D7. To move smoothly from one chord to the next, it helps to find your way from a note in the first chord to a note in the second chord.

The A7 chord includes the notes A, C#, E and G.

The D7 chord includes D, F#, A, and C.

This grid shows how the notes of the A7 chord flow UP to the nearest note in the D7 chord:

A7:	A	C#	E	G
D7:	C	D	F#	A

This grid shows how the notes of the A7 chord flow DOWN to the nearest note in the D7 chord:

A7:	A	C#	E	G
D7:	A	C	D	F#

Here are the notes of the two chords mapped on a note layout so you can see where you'd make your moves in either direction:

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DRAW	Slide In	D#	F#	A#	C	D#	F#	A#	C	D#	F#	A#	D
	Slide Out	D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B
BLOW	Slide In	C#	F	G#	C#	C#	F	G#	C#	C#	F	G#	C#
	Slide Out	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C

Let's map out some licks that would work going from A7 to D7. Here's the chord progression. It's like the first four bars of a 12-bar blues with an early IV—the IV chord puts in an early “teaser” appearance before its main appearance later on.

Click here to hear this progression, and use it to back you as you play the next two sets of licks that go from A7 to D7 and back. Click here to listen: Example 20-01.mp3

Here is a series of licks that go UP from a note in the A7 chord to a note in the D7 chord. Click here to listen: Example 20-02.mp3

A up to C and back

A7 D7 A7

↓ 3 ↓ 2 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 5 ↓ 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 4 ↑ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 2 ↓ 2

C# up to D and back

A7 D7 A7

↑ 5 ↑ 6 ↑ 5 ↓ 5 ↑ 5 ↓ 5 ↑ 5 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 2 ↓ 2 ↓ 3 ↓ 4

E up to F# and back

A7 D7 A7

↑ 6 ↑ 5 ↑ 6 ↓ 6 ↓ 5 ↓ 6 ↓ 6 ↑ 6 ↓ 6 ↑ 6 ↓ 5 ↑ 5 ↓ 5 ↑ 5 ↓ 5

G up to A and back

A7 D7 A7

↑ 3 ↑ 2 ↑ 3 ↑ 3 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 3 ↓ 3 ↑ 3 ↓ 2 ↑ 2 ↑ 1 ↑ 2 ↓ 2

Here is a series of licks that go DOWN from a note in the A7 chord to a note in the D7 chord. Click here to listen: [Example 20-03.mp3](#)

A stays on A

C# down to C and back

E down to D and back

G down to F# and back

Licks on a D chord – Pentatonic scale

The pentatonic scale is a versatile five-note scale you can use to build licks. If you work out with the pentatonic scale that goes with a chord, you can find licks you've already heard and make up new ones as well. I've shown you the A pentatonic scale in the June 2008 issue. Now it's time to show you the D pentatonic scale, which includes the notes D, E, F#, A and B.

The notes D, F#, A, and B lie in a line as draw notes. However, you have to press the slide button for F#. If you add E in the same hole as F# you have an easy pathway for licks over a D chord. This spells out the D pentatonic scale.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DRAW	Slide In	D#	F#	A#	C	D#	F#	A#	C	D#	F#	A#	D
	Slide Out	D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B
BLOW	Slide In	C#	F	G#	C#	C#	F	G#	C#	C#	F	G#	C#
	Slide Out	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C

Here is a simple exercise for getting familiar with the D pentatonic scale. Click here to listen: Example 20-04.mp3

D

Let's map out some licks that would work going from A7 to D7. Here's the chord progression.

Click here to hear this progression, and use it to back you as you play the next two sets of licks that start on D7 and go back to A7. Example 20-05.mp3

Here are some licks based on the D pentatonic scale played over the middle 4 bars of a 12-bar blues in A. Click here to listen: [Example 20-06.mp3](#)

D7 A7

3 4 3 5 6 5 6 6 5 4 3 2 3 4 3 5 6 5 4 3 2 2 2 2

D7 A7

2 3 4 5 6 6 7 6 6 5 5 5 6 5 6 5 4 3 2 2 2

D7 A7

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

D7 A7

6 6 5 4 3 2 2 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 2 3 4 5 6 6 6 7 6 6

Licks on a D7 chord

For a harder-edged sound over a D chord, you can add C, the 7th of the chord, and also play from the A blues scale. Here are some licks that do that, again played over the middle 4 bars of a 12-bar blues in A. Click [here](#) to listen: Example 20-07.mp3

D7 A7

6 6 7 8 8 9 9 9 8 7 8 7 7 6 7 6 5 5 6 6

D7 A7

8 8 7 7 6 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 6 5 6 6 7 6 7 7 7 8

D7 A7

10 9 9 8 7 8 7 7 6 5 5 4 3 3 3 3

D7 A7

1 2 1 2 3 3 3 4 3 4 5 5 6 7 6 7 7 7 9 9 9 8 7

Getting from E7 to D7

The last 4 measures of a 12-bar blues in A go from E7 to D7, then back to A. That quick move from E7 to D7 can be tackled by looking at how the individual notes of an E7 chord go to the individual notes of a D7 chord.

E7 UP to D7:

E7:	E	G#	B	D
D7:	F#	A	C	D

E7 DOWN to D7:

E7:	E	G#	B	D
D7:	D	F#	A	C

Here's the map on the note layout of the harp:

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DRAW	Slide In	D#	F#	A#	C	D#	F#	A#	C	D#	F#	A#	D
	Slide Out	D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B
BLOW	Slide In	C#	F	G#	C#	C#	F	G#	C#	C#	F	G#	C#
	Slide Out	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C

Here's a simple form of the chord progression of the last four measures of a 12-bar blues.



Click [here](#) to hear this progression, and use it to back you as you play the next two sets of licks that complete the 12-bar verse. Example 20-08.mp3

Here are some licks going UP from notes of E7 to notes of D7. Click here to listen: [Example 20-09.mp3](#)

E up to F#

E7 D7 A7 E7

↑ 2 ↑ 3 ↑ 2 ↑ 3 ↑ 2 ↓ 2 ↓ 3 ↓ 2 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↓ 2 ↓ 3 ↑ 3 ↑ 2

G# up to A

E7 D7 A7 E7

↑ 3 ↓ 3 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↑ 3 ↓ 3 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 4 ↓ 5 ↓ 5 ↑ 6 ↑ 6 ↓ 6 ↑ 7 ↑ 6 ↑ 6

B up to C

E7 D7 A7 E7

↓ 4 ↑ 3 ↑ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 4 ↑ 4 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↑ 4 ↓ 5 ↑ 4 ↑ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 2

D stays on D

E7 D7 A7 E7

↓ 5 ↓ 4 ↓ 5 ↓ 5 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↓ 4 ↓ 5 ↑ 5 ↓ 3 ↓ 5 ↓ 4 ↓ 3 ↑ 5 ↓ 5 ↑ 5 ↓ 4 ↑ 5

Here's the complete chord progression for blues in A. Click here to listen and play along using some of the licks you've learned: Example: 20-11.mp3

The image displays three staves of musical notation for blues in A. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature (C). The notation consists of rhythmic patterns represented by diagonal slashes within measures, with chord names positioned above the staves.

- Staff 1:** A7, D7, A7. The first measure contains a double bar line and repeat dots. The staff is divided into four measures.
- Staff 2:** D7, A7. The staff is divided into four measures.
- Staff 3:** E7, D7, A7, E7. The staff is divided into four measures and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Next Time

Blues in D!

Notation Key

Please visit <http://www.harmonicasessions.com/feb05/ChromaticTab.pdf> for a notation key.