



Dario Cortese

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Blues turnaround
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by Dario Cortese

• Index	1
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 01 - Key of A	4
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 02 - Key of C	4
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 03 - Key of E	4
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 04 - Key of E (Delta Blues)	5
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 05 - Key of C (Ray Charles Piano Style)	5
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 06 - Key of D (Muddy Waters)	5
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 07 - Key of E (SRV)	6
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 08 - Key of Bb (Jazz Walking Bass)	6
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 09 - Key of G (Memphis)	6
• Rhythm Turnaround: Ex 10 - Key of C	7
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 11 - Key of G (Robben Ford)	7
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 12 - Key of C (Buddy Guy)	7
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 13 - Key of A (Chuck Berry)	8
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 14 - Key of C (B.B. King)	8
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 15 - Key of G (Larry Carlton)	8
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 16 - Key of E (Gary Moore)	9
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 17 - Key of E (Eric Clapton)	9
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 18 - Key of G (Eric Clapton)	9
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 19 - Key of Dm (Robben Ford)	10
• Lead Turnaround: Ex 20 - Key of D (Duane Allman Slide)	10
• Tone Settings	11

GT156

Blues Turnaround

Rhythm & Lead

Fancy learning some new blues turnarounds? Dario Cortese shows some lick ready-to-use for your summer jams!

Blues is probably the most common contemporary style. The reason is that is quite simple to play, it's fun and it reveals quite a lot about the personality and skills of the players. In fact, probably because there aren't too many notes to play (blues is based on the pentatonic scale which, by definition, has five notes only), this style is all about expression and creativity which makes it a perfect candidate for jams.

Although its nature is quite simple and doesn't require incredible techniques to get good results, it's the care of details that makes all the difference between an average player and a great one. Turnarounds are one of those areas where you can really tell the difference between the two. How smooth did he/she go through that section? Did he/she make clear what's the next step is? There is much to say but the bottom line is that turnarounds are a crucial part of blues and require some focused work.

Let's step back for a while and have a look at what a turnaround really is and what function it has.

Turnaround is a term referring to a passage at the end of a section which leads to the next section or to the end of the song. There are a few different types of turnaround which work differently and have different lengths.

TYPE 1

This turnaround can be used as intro or in-between-the-choruses. The basic idea of this turnaround is that it goes from the I chord of the key to the V chord. This creates a tension at the end that will be resolved only with the beginning of the next section when the I chord comes. Usually this turnaround is in the last two bars of the blues and leads you back to the beginning.

TYPE 2

This is usually used as ending. It goes from the I chord of the key and finishes again on the I chord. This creates a definite resolution which declares the ending of the song. The length is again two bars.

These two types of turnarounds can be harmonic (rhythm guitar) or melodic (lead guitar). It's crucial to work on both as the understanding of the harmony movements will make clear what melodic approach is best to take.

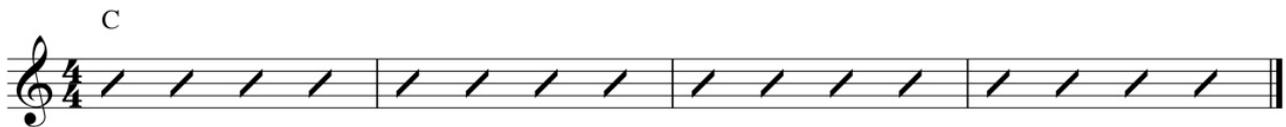
Nowadays blues players have found many different approaches to the harmonic and melodic turnarounds. Sometimes this incorporates elements borrowed from jazz where the turnaround has a role as big as in blues even if harmonically more demanding.

There is one more type of turnaround often known as long turnaround.

TYPE 3

This turnaround is usually 4 bars long and often used as intro for a song. This turnaround has two harmonic variations. Let's have a look at them in the key of C:

Type A



Type B



A: The first is a static turnaround on the I chord of the key and can be heard on songs like 'Sweet Home Chicago' by Blues Brothers or 'Pride and Joy' by SRV.

B: The second one starts from the V chord of the key and it appears exactly as the last four bars of the 12 bar blues (V – IV – I – V). This can be heard on songs like 'I'm Tore Down' by Freddy King or Eric Clapton.

All these turnarounds required specific work also because they are often used as crossroad points when swapping soloist. It's very important to make ourselves perfectly clear when playing a turnaround in a band situation. The other band members should instantly understand if you want to take another chorus of solo or if that's the end of it.

Hopefully in the next couple of pages you'll find some ideas to cover most of the situations you'll be dealing with in a blues band or jam. Learn any lick you like in the indicated key and then transpose it, change the rhythm, play around with it and make it part of your vocabulary. I can guarantee that this approach it's well worth taking.

Ex 1: This turnaround creates a union line with one of the most popular turnaround bass lines. First time ending represents the 1st type of turnarounds (intro, turnaround) while the 2nd time ending is the 2nd type (ending). This example is built around the common A Minor Pentatonic shape so it should be quite easy to transpose. The lick finished with two 6/9 chords. If you struggle with those positions just play a standard dominant 7th chord or even block chords (triads). [back to index](#)

♩ = 120

1. | 2. B^b6/9 A6/9

A F⁹ E⁹

T
A
B

7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 | 7 8 7 | 6 5 |
5 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 7 8 7 | 7 5 4 |
7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 | 7 8 7 | 7 5 4 |
5 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 7 8 7 | 7 5 4 |
7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 | 7 8 7 | 7 5 4 |
5 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 7 8 7 | 7 5 4 |

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Ex 2: This is 'other' turnaround bass line that often bassists play. 1st and 2nd time ending work in the same way as before. This example is not in position but as soon as you play it a couple of times you'll see that the distance between these notes is quite easy to remember and becomes very easy to transpose. [back to index](#)

♩ = 120

1. | 2. D^b9 C⁹

C G⁷

T
A
B

10 10 8 8 7 7 6 6 | 5 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 3 3 |
8 8 6 6 5 5 4 4 | 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 5 4 3 3 |
10 10 8 8 7 7 6 6 | 5 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 3 3 |
8 8 6 6 5 5 4 4 | 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 5 4 3 3 |
10 10 8 8 7 7 6 6 | 5 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 4 3 3 |
8 8 6 6 5 5 4 4 | 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 5 4 3 3 |

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Ex 3: This lick combines the previous two licks in one 'contrary motion' turnaround. This has always been one of my favorite turnarounds because it always works regardless which line the bassist plays. The ending of this lick is a typical rockabilly ending often used in blues. [back to index](#)

♩ = 120

1. | 2. E6/9

E C⁹ B⁹

T
A
B

7 7 5 5 4 4 3 3 | 2 3 2 | 2 4 6 7 |
0 0 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 2 3 2 | 2 4 6 7 |
7 7 5 5 4 4 3 3 | 2 3 2 | 2 4 6 7 |
0 0 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 2 3 2 | 2 4 6 7 |
7 7 5 5 4 4 3 3 | 2 3 2 | 2 4 6 7 |
0 0 4 4 5 5 6 6 | 2 3 2 | 2 4 6 7 |

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Ex 4: This example should be played fingerstyle and features the Holy Grail of the Delta Blues turnarounds. In the first bar instead of playing always the chords as a whole, try to pick one string only (e.g. the G or D strings) and you'll see how many possibilities and combinations this turnaround incorporates. [back to index](#)

♩ = 80

E7

1. E C⁹ B⁹ | 2. E F⁹ E⁹

T 0 0 0 | 0 1 3 2 | 0 1 8 7

A 4 4 3 3 2 2 | 2 3 2 | 2 8 7

B 6 6 5 5 4 4 | 2 3 1 | 2 7 6

5 5 4 4 3 3 | 2 3 2 | 2 8 7

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Ex 5: This is another fingerstyle turnarounds and it's in the style of Ray Charles. This lick works quite well in different keys and it's a great choice for a duo situation. [back to index](#)

♩ = 80

C⁷ G7(♯5) C⁹

T 8 10 7 8 | 4 3 |

A 8 10 8 9 | 4 3 |

B 10 7 8 9 10 | 3 3 |

8 3 3 | 3

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Ex 6: One more fingerstyle turnaround that can be played with either acoustic or electric. This one has a few interesting positions and works smoothly in a duo as well as full band situation. Mr. Muddy Waters played this line a few times. [back to index](#)

♩ = 80

D⁷

1. B^b9 A⁹ | 2. E^b13 D¹³

T 10 10 10 10 10 10 | 10 6 5 | 10 8 7

A 7 7 8 8 9 9 | 10 3 2 | 10 8 7

B 7 7 8 8 9 9 | 10 5 4 | 10 10 9

10 6 5 | 10 11 10

11 10

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Ex 7: How can we live without a SRV turnaround? Stevie played this one in almost every medium shuffle in E. Note the 2nd time ending and unusual chords choice. [back to index](#)

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Ex 8: And what about a jazzier turnaround? This one is played fingerstyle and combines chords with a walking bass line. Focus mainly on the bass line and hold the chords shortly as indicated. This one proved to be a smart choice if you want to spicy your blues up in a duo situation. [back to index](#)

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Ex 9: This turnaround is often associated with the Memphis Style. Has a '50s vibe which makes it quite unusual. The chords at the end can be block chords (as indicated) or 6/9 chords (as in EX 1). Try to keep a nice staccato sound for most of the lick and let ring the chords only. [back to index](#)

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Ex 10: This is the last turnaround from a rhythm guitar prospective. This type 3 turnaround shows how you can combine some of the ideas showed earlier. [back to index](#)

♩ = 120 G⁷

T													
A	12	12	14	12	15	12	14	12	10	10	12	10	13
B	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	8	8	8	8

3 C⁷ 1. G⁷ 2. C⁶

T														
A	10	10	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	4	4	4	4	4
B	8	8	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3

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Ex 11: The first melodic turnaround has been played by many blues legends including Robben Ford and Muddy Waters. It easily combines the Major and Minor Pentatonics around the common pentatonic box. (Type 1) [back to index](#)

♩ = 120 G D

T													
A													
B													

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Ex 12: This is one of the most traditional lines often used as an ending. Buddy Guy, Freddy King and Otis Rush have all used this line quite a few times. (Type 2) [back to index](#)

♩ = 100 C C⁷

T													
A													
B													

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Ex 13: This lick shows how the Blues is tied up to the classic Rock'n'Roll legends like Chuck Berry. This one is quite effective as intro. (Type 1) [back to index](#)

♩ = 100

T
A
B

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Ex 14: The King of the Kings. This lick is in the style of B.B. King who played extensively in his "Live At The Regal". The focus in this lick should be on the vibrato expressivity: small and fast. (Type 3) [back to index](#)

♩ = 140

T
A
B

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Ex 15: This line shows a completely different side of blues. This one is more West Coast and was very common amongst players like Larry Carlton or Robben Ford. The sound here has to be very tidy and only the care of details will give the desired results. (Type 2) [back to index](#)

♩ = 70

T
A
B

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Ex 16: This one is in the style of blues rock legend Gary Moore. It's simple, aggressive (1 ½ bend) and easy to use. Really make those bends sing and when you get to the last note open your wildest vibrato. (Type 1) [back to index](#)

Musical notation for Ex 16. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 140. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The guitar line starts with an E7 chord and features a series of eighth notes with bends. The first three bends are labeled 'full' and the fourth is labeled '1 1/2'. The line ends with a B7 chord and a heavy vibrato. The TAB below shows the fretting: 10, 10, 10, (10), 8, 9, 7, 9.

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Ex 17: The late Eric Clapton and SRV both played this line extensively. This lick outlines the chord changes and works perfectly as intro or in-between-choruses. (Type 3) [back to index](#)

Musical notation for Ex 17. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 140. The key signature has three sharps. The guitar line features a series of eighth notes with triplets. The first triplet is marked with a '3' and the second with a '1/4'. The line ends with an A7 chord. The TAB below shows the fretting: 7, 8, 7, 7, 10, 7, 9, 7, 8, 7, 10, 7, 5, 6, 5, 5, 8, 5, 7, 6, 5, 8.

Musical notation for Ex 17, showing the bass line. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 140. The key signature has three sharps. The bass line features a series of chords. The first chord is E7 and the second is B7. The TAB below shows the fretting: 0, 5, 5, 3, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 0, 3, 2, 3, 2.

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Ex 18: This line is in the style of Eric Clapton (Cream era). Use a strat with bridge pick-up and tone completely rolled off. You can also use a fuzz pedal and a long reverb to add authenticity to this line. Work on the expression of bends and vibratos. Again the care of details will pay off at the end. (Type 1) [back to index](#)

Musical notation for Ex 18. The piece is in 12/8 time with a tempo of 60. The key signature has three sharps. The guitar line features a series of eighth notes with bends and vibrato. The first bend is labeled 'full' and the second is labeled 'full'. The line ends with an A7 chord and a heavy vibrato. The TAB below shows the fretting: 8, 5, 5, 8, 7, 5, 5, 8, 5, 5, 7, 5, 8, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7.

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TONE SETTINGS

In blues there are no rules regarding which guitar or amp you should use. It seems that most of blues players prefer a quite small valve amp which is easy to turn all the way up giving you all the dynamic so important in this style.

For the Audio recordings I've use Tele, Les Paul, 335, Strat, Music Man Luke and Timberline 80 D acoustic through the POD XT.

[back to index](#)

	<p><u>GT146: Larry Carlton & Robben Ford - Video Masterclass</u></p> <p>This is a video Masterclass I did on the style of Larry Carlton and Robben Ford. Check out the page so hear the solo and see a free sample.</p>
	<p><u>GT152: Jeff Healey Homage</u></p> <p>This lesson was a homage to Jeff Healey. It features two solos in his style. The first one is more rocky whereas the second one is bluesy. This is FREE lesson on the website.</p>
	<p><u>GT132: 50 Licks To Go</u></p> <p>5 Licks in 10 different styles. This is a FREE lesson on the website. There are lots of cool licks in this one.</p>
	<p><u>GT175: 20 Country Licks</u></p> <p>In this lesson you'll find 20 country licks. Country and Blues are very related to each other. Learning some country licks will expand your vocabulary and provide your blues with new flavors.</p>
	<p><u>GT175: 20 Rock Licks</u></p> <p>In this lesson you'll find 20 rock licks. If you're looking in to Rock Blues phrasing then I would suggest to check this one out. Lots of cool licks in the style of Page, Hendrix, Slash, Timmons, Knopfler, etc.</p>