

# Jon's Jam Room

by Jon Gindick



## Rock n' Blues Harmonica Volume III

Guide to  
Improvisational  
Blues Harmonica



# Important Warning!!!!!!!

Harmonica playing can be habit forming. It can start with a halting “Red River Valley” and before you know it, turn into full-blown harpitis. Early signs: you’re dreaming blues riffs, blowing the salary on CDs, and carrying that harp every place you go. Life becomes a ceaseless search for jamming time and jamming knowledge.

If this describes you, welcome to Jon’s Jam Room. This is a CD you can study and groove to at the same time. The idea is to give you a sonic space where you can jam again and again. A space that gives you information, inspiration and experience. A space where you can train for the “real world of jamming.”

Here are five backing tracks in major and minor keys. Each track is presented with me jamming, then giving a lesson, then as a track that’s yours alone for your jamming pleasure.

Pull out your C harp and let’s get started! And remember, you’re getting better and better every time you play that harmonica.

Throughout the text, the following notation will apply.

b=blow    d=draw

\*=bend    \*\*=double bend    \*\*\*=triple bend

When referring to notes by name “f” refers to flat and # means sharp.

Dedicated to my daughters, Sylvia and Georgia

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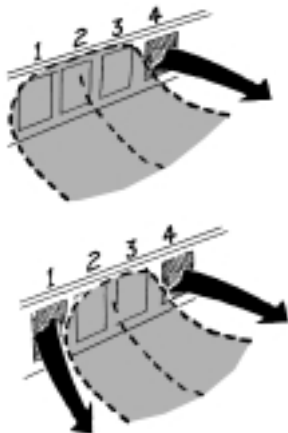
# Your Tone, Your Embouchure, Your Breath, Your Tongue, Your Body

Far more important than the note you play is how the note you play *sounds*. Repeat after me: TONE IS KING. What makes for great tone? Harp incredibly deep between relaxed, yet focused, puckered lips and a channeled, pressured, throbbing air stream that comes from the **ka** place in your throat.



**Please don't set bending notes as a goal until you have achieved rich, solid tone on the unbent single note.**

When learning to bend, I recommend the Big Pucker embouchure. That's because bending is usually faster to learn in a big, deep pucker. On the other hand, **every harp player should also be a tongue blocker**. Switching the tongue from side to side, placing it on and off, requires a relaxed, muscular, practiced tongue. Whether puckering or tongueblocking, the main rule is: put the harmonica as deeply as possible in your mouth.



# 2nd Position Improvisation

Review: When you play 2nd position or cross harp, you're playing your C harp in the key of G. Cross harp allows you play harp with the accent on the draw notes, the notes that really wail. It also plays a great blues scale, and can also represent most of the chords that you find in most contemporary music.

The key concept about improvisation is there are certain notes that you emphasize because they fit through all the chord changes of the piece you are accompanying. These notes are often called "Safe Notes", "Common Tones", "Target Notes", or "Pedal Points". In *Rock n' Blues Harmonica*, I call them "Harmonizing Notes" and describe two specific types: "Wailing Notes" and "Notes of Resolution".

When I teach, I always start with Harmonizing Notes, 4 draw and 2 draw. You can play them at any point in the jam and make them fit with the music. These are often the two most accented and wailed-upon notes in any blues harp solo. End any riff on either of these two notes with good tone and good timing, and the odds are excellent you will have played exactly the right note.

The other Harmonizing Notes are important too.

# 2nd Position Harmonizing Notes

1 draw

2 draw bent\*\* (when playing blues)

2 draw (G note on a C harp)

3 blow (same note as 2 draw)

3 draw bent\* and\*\*

3 draw unbent (except in minor key)

4 draw bent\*

4 draw (D note on a C harp)

5 draw (when playing blues)

6 blow (G note on a C harp)

6 draw

7 draw unbent (unless playing minor key music)

8 draw

8 draw (D note on a C harp)

9 blow (G note on a C harp)

# Basic Riffs

Since we know there are certain notes that we can accent or wail on, let's use them to build the structure of our music. For instance, go from 2 draw to 4 draw, using the notes in between as steppingstones.

As you gain confidence and ability, you will develop a feeling for making music with **big draw/small blow/big draw** breath patterns.

Here are some of the riffs you'll use in this lesson. Because each begins and ends on a **safe note**, by adjusting the timing, you can make these patterns fit with almost every style of music and almost every chord progression. As you see on page 8, by matching the last note of the riff with the root note of the chord that's being played by accompanying instruments, these riffs will express the chord as well as fit in with it.

**The Up Riff:** 2d 3d 4b 4d

**The Down Riff:** 4d 4b 3d 2d

**4 Draw Surprise:** 4d 4b 3d 4d

**Blues Scale Down:** 6b 5d 5b 4d 4b 3d 2d

**The Good Morning Riff:** 1d 2b 2d

**3d Bent and Blow Jam:** 2d 3d 2d 3d\*\*

**9 Blow Down:** 9b 9d 8b 8d 7d 6d 6b

**5 Draw Slider:** 5d 4d 5b 4b 4d 3d 4b 3b 3d 2d

**Jazz Riff Up:** 3b 3d\*\* 3d 4b 4d\* 4d 5b 6b 6d\* 6d

**Q: How do you put it all together?**

**A: By repetition, and letting the chord progression do the work.**

Harp solos that go all over the place, jumping from note to note, are usually boring. Tame the wild beast of too many possibilities by repeating one groovy thing, and letting it change *in the music*. The same riff, sometimes altered slightly, sounds different and, yet the same, against each changing chord. This repetition allows a tension to grow, a *melodic expectation*. Because the riff ends on a Safe Note, you can be confident that, unless the chord progression does something really strange, the riff will be effective. All you have to do is believe in it, and let the music do the work.

To let the music do the work, lay off a bit, play the riff minimally, with precise timing. Make it fit, adapt it. What do your instincts begin to tell you? What do you begin to hear in your head? This process is how you build a melody. Before it gets boring, change what you're doing, and repeat that.



# Play Chordally

Integrating chord knowledge into your style is a step toward professionalism. Do this by playing riffs that express the chord that is being played.

When the music goes into the IV chord, play a riff that expresses the IV chord (ends on 4 blow). If the bridge moves to the VI degree chord, start or resolve a riff on 2 blow or 5 blow. Below is a chart that tells you the location of the 1st degree Notes of Resolution and the 5th degree Wailing Notes for each chord degree. As you come to understand the chord progressions on this CD, break away from the 2 draw/4 draw learning approach, and begin thinking and playing chordally.

In your more advanced jammings, you probably won't play chordally all the time, but when you do, it will add another level of freedom and sophistication to your style.

	<b>Note of Resolution</b>	<b>5th Degree</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>2d 3b 6b 9b</b>	<b>1d 4d 8d</b>
<b>II</b>	3d** 6d	2b 5b 8b
<b>III</b>	3d 7d	2d** 5d 9d
<b>IV</b>	<b>1b 4b 7b 10b</b>	<b>2d 3b 6b 9b</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>1d 4d 8d</b>	<b>3d** 6d 10d</b>
<b>VI</b>	2b 5b 8b	3d 7d
<b>fVII</b>	2d** 5d 9d	1b 4b 7b 10b

# Ule Bule

by Jon Gindick

(key of G, for C harp, 2nd position)

*Chords: I-G7/IV-C7/I-G7/V-D7/IV-C7/I-G7/V-D7*

- 1. Lesson:** 2d 4d
2. 4d 3b
3. Up and Down Blues Riff  
3b 3d 4b 4d 4d 4d 3d 3b  
The Down Riff: 4d 4b 3d 3b
4. Four Draw Surprise: 4d 4b 3d 4d and 4d 4b 3d 4b 4d
5. Six Blow Down: 6b 5d 4d 4b 3d 2d
6. Good Morning Riff: 1d 2b 2d
7. The Three Draw Bent: 3d\*\* and 3d\*  
6b 3d 6b 3d
8. 4d\* and 4d articulated with tonguing
9. Headshake: 4d-5d
10. Bending Two Draw: 2d\*\* and 2d
11. **Jon Track** Jon plays electric harmonica using many of the riffs featured in the lesson.
12. **Jam Track** Jon sits this one out while you play the harp.  
Hey! You be wailing!

# He's Here

by Jon Gindick

Verse chords: I-G / fVII-F / I-G / V-D / IV-C / I-G

Bridge chords: II-Am / V-D7 / II-Am / III-Bm / IV-C / V-D / I-G

13. **Intro:** 2d, 3d, 4d, 5d, 6d, 6b turnaround V 4d, IV 4b, I 1234d
14. 5 Draw Slider: 5d 4d 5d 5b 4b 5b 4d 3d 4d 4b 3b 4b 3d 2d 2d
15. 1234d
16. 5 Draw Slider Down
17. 1-4d / 3-6b 1-4d 1-4b / 2-5b 1-4b 1234d
18. Bridge
19. Six Blow Down: 6b 5d 4d 4b 3d 2d
20. Good Morning: 1d 2b 2d
21. 9 Blow Down: 9b 9d 8b 8d 7d 6d 6b
22. 9 Blow Surprise: 9b 9d 8b 9b
23. 4 Draw Bending Headshake, 6 Blow Down Bending Headshake
24. 2 Draw Bent
25. 6 Draw Down
26. **Jon's Track** "He's Here"  
Dedicated to Dad, who passed on in 2001. God Bless you, Dad!
27. **Jam Track**

# Murder on Minor

by Jon Gindick

Chords: I-Gm/IV-Cm/I-Gm/V-Dm/IV-Cm/V-Gm/V-Dm

2nd position: C harp, 3d must always be at least slightly bent

Alternative Positions: F harp, 4th position, B flat harp, 5th position

**28.** 2d 3d\* 2d

**29.** 4d

4d 4b 4b 4d

6b 5d 4d resolve on 2d

**30.** Bends of 2 Draw: 2d\*\* 2d\* 2d

**31.** 6b 5d 4d 4b 3d 3b

6b 5d 4d 4b 3d 4d

**32.** 1-4d, 3-6b

**33.** Six Blow Overblow Down (ob=overblow):

(6d) 6bob 6d 6b 5d 4d 4b 3d 2d

**34.** 6d\* 6d 6d\* 6d

Bent 6 Draw Down: 6d \*6d 6b 5d 4d 4b 3d 2d

**35.** B flat Harmonica 4th Position: 3d\*\* 3d 4b 4d\* 4d

**36. Jon Track**

**37. Jam Track**

# Gee Whiz Country Waltz

by Jon Gindick

Verse: I-G/I-G7/IV-C/IV-Cm/I-G/VI-Em/IV-C/V-D/I-G

Bridge: III-Bm/II-Am/III-Bm/VI-Em/IV-C/IV-Cm/V-D/I-G

38. 2d 4d

39. Bridge

40. 3 Blow and Draw Jam: 3b 3d\*\* 3b 3d

41. Four Draw Surprise: 4d 4b 3d 4b 4d

42. Little Melody (/ = articulate)

G

G7

3b 3d\*\* 3b 3d

3b 3d\*\* 3b 3d

C

Cm

3b / 4d / 4b

4d 4b 3d 2d

G

Em

3b 3d\*\* 3b 3d

3b 3d\*\* 3b 3d 4d 5b 4d 5b 3d 2d

C

G

3b 3d 4b 3d 2d

3d 3d\*\* 3b

43. Bridge: 9 Blow Down

9b 9d 8b 8d 7d 6d 6b 5d 5b 4d 4b 3d 2d

44. Jon Track

45. Jam Track

# A Minor Cha Cha for G Harp

by Jon Gindick

Chords: I-Am/ VI-F7/ V-E7/ I- Am

Harmonica: G harp 3rd position

Alternate Positions: D harp 2nd position, C harp 4th position

## 46. Lesson

47. Third position on your G harp

48. 4d 5d 6b 6d or 6d 6b 5d 4d or 4d 5b 5d 6b 6d

49. 6 Draw Surprise: 6d 6b 5d 6d

5 Draw Surprise: 5d 5b 4b 5d

9 Blow Surprise: 9b 9d 8b 9b

50. 9 Blow Down to 6 draw to 4draw

51. 3rd Position Scale Down Riff: 4d 4b 3d\*\* 2d 2d\*\* 1d

52. 4 Blow Up: 4b 4d 5d 6b 6d\*

53. 6 Draw Bent and Unbent, 6 Draw Slider Down: 6d 5d 6b 5b 5d 4d

54. Second position D harp in A minor play cross harp, always bend 3d

55. Fourth Position, C harp in A minor

Resolution: 3d\*\* 6d 10d

5th Degree Wailing Notes: 2b 5b 8b

4th Position Up Riff: 3d\*\* 3d 4b 4d 5b 5b 4d 4b 3d 3d\*\*

5 Blow Surprise: 5b 4d 4b 5b

## 56. Jon Tracks

## 57. Jam Tracks

# Position Playing

Position playing is using your harmonica's ability to play in different keys. Each position has a different scale and a different musical feeling. Pages 199 to 206 of *Rock n' Blues Harmonica* explain and teaches the positions. Tracks 33, 43 and 54 provide lessons and examples of 3rd position and 4th position playing. *Rock n' Blues Volume IV* will focus on position playing.

To Play in Key of	Use These Harps for These Positions						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	12th
C	C	F	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	G
D	D	G	C	F	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A
E	E	A	D	G	C	F	B
F	F	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D $\flat$	F#	C
G	G	C	F	B $\flat$	E $\flat$	A $\flat$	D
A	A	D	G	C	F	B $\flat$	E
B	B	E	A	D	G	C	F#
Notes of Resolution	1 blow 4 blow 7 blow 10 blow	2 draw 3 blow 6 blow 9 blow	1 draw 4 draw 8 draw	3 draw bent 6 draw 10 draw	2 blow 5 blow 8 blow	3 draw 7 draw	2 draw bent 5 draw 9 draw

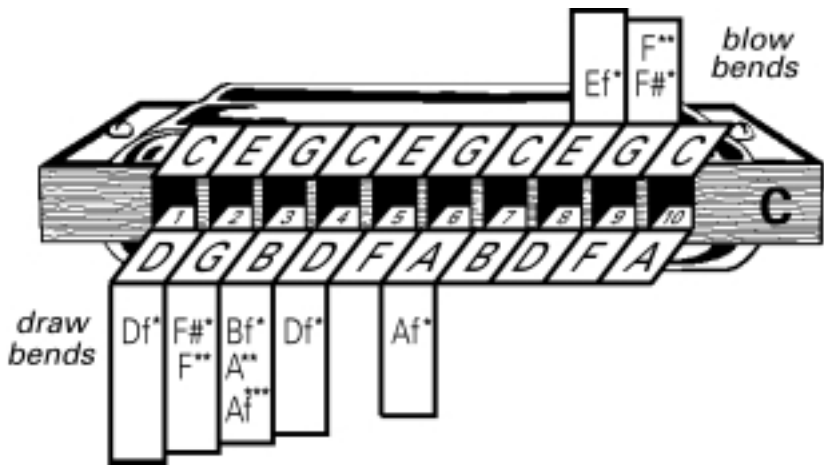
Work best when music is  
in a minor key

# Amplification

The lessons are played acoustically, with the harmonica about six inches off the microphone. This allows Jon to close and open his hands to get a wa wa type of effect.

Jon Tracks are electric harp, with the harp cupped in Jon's hands with a microphone plugged into a tube amp for the electrified sound.

## Notes Available Through Bending





Jams, Backing Tracks and Lessons for beginning through advanced harmonica players. For C harp.



If you want to really start jamming on that old C harp of yours, this is the CD Lesson and booklet for you.

73-Minute Stereo CD and  
16-Page CD Booklet

