

Dieter Kropp

# Blues Harp Basics

Incl. CD



>> *Harmonica course for beginners*

>> *For all ages*

>> *Notation and tablature*



*Dieter Kropp*

# **Blues Harp**

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# **Basics**

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# Preface

The harmonica, especially the Blues harp, is a fascinating musical instrument. Although originally intended for the playing of mostly simple melodies and traditional folk songs, its extraordinary sound can be found in almost every musical context today, such as pop music, folk songs, children songs, gospel, jazz, blues, rock'n'roll or country music. Its distinctive sound is at home everywhere. The different playing techniques allow the Blues harp to be used in a very variable manner and still keep its complete independence of style. The Blues harp is always among the first choices when it comes to creating an intense atmosphere or big emotional moments in film music.

Blues Harp Basics offers a first small step into this world. The book wants to give you the opportunity of learning the first basic playing techniques in a brief and easy-to-understand form so that anybody interested in the instrument will get an idea of what is possible. I've always made sure that I was not going beyond the scope of this publication because this book is about getting into the possibilities of the Blues harp. Like I said, it is about the basics.

By occupying yourself with the instrument, the Blues Harp Basics and some hours of practice, you will be able to get some nice sounds. Starting with how to correctly hold the instrument, the proper embouchure and the playing of single notes and melodies of some specifically chosen songs, you will be getting into the Blues playing style and of course the bending. You will as well realize that the creation of a tone and tremolo have a lot to do with the shape of the hands around the instrument. Oh, that's what you already thought? Good.

The songs and examples from the book are included on the accompanying CD. You should listen to it every now and then just so that your ears will get used to the sound and you can memorize the melodies.

But for now have much fun playing!

Dieter Kropp

# Inhalt

## 1. The instrument ..... 7

---

<b>“Blues harp” – what is that?</b>	8
<b>Note range</b>	11
<b>Holding the instrument</b>	12
<b>Playing single notes</b>	14

## 2. The first songs ..... 21

---

<b>There you go!</b>	22
<b>Merrily we roll along</b>	24
<b>Row, row, row your boat</b>	25
<b>This old man</b>	26
<b>Twinkle, twinkle, little star</b>	27
<b>Schneeflockchen, Weißrockchen</b>	29
<b>Auf der Mauer, auf der Lauer</b>	31
<b>Mein Hut, der hat drei Ecken</b>	32
<b>Alle Vogel sind schon da</b>	33
<b>For he’s a jolly good fellow</b>	34
<b>Camptown races</b>	36
<b>Bound for the rio grande</b>	38
<b>X-tra: add color to your playing</b>	40

### **3. The Blues . . . . . 45**

---

<b>12-bar Blues progression . . . . .</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Go for it . . . . .</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Straight harp / 1st position . . . . .</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Blues playing / Blues sound . . . . .</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Checkin' it out . . . . .</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>... something else on breathing . . . . .</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Blues with a bending . . . . .</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Bending – the technique . . . . .</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>The cross harp table . . . . .</b>	<b>57</b>

### **4. Appendix . . . . . 59**

---

<b>Closing remarks . . . . .</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>CD tracklist . . . . .</b>	<b>64</b>

## Mein Hut, der hat drei Ecken

A quite simple traditional and I hope you are familiar with the melody. Then it will certainly be easier for you to find the notes on the Blues harp. It is even possible to trace the song origin far back. The melody goes back to a Neapolitan canzonetta from before 1816: "Oh cara mama mia". Classical Niccolò Paganini played variations of this melody in his concerts as the "Carnevale di Venezia", Opus 10. Based on this, Chopin composed his Rondo No. 1 as a variation opus under the title of „Souvenirs de Paganini“.

The text of "Mein Hut, der hat drei Ecken" emerged for the first time in the Saarland in 1886. The same melody is used for the songs "Ein Hund kam in die Kuche" and the erotic song "Ich lieg im Bett und schwitze". Often this song is part of a game or round, which makes it harder to play the Blues harp at the same time. Well, that's where decisions have to be made.

Nena seems to be very fond of this piece, too. The song is included on her children songs CD "Unser Apfelhaus" with an additional second verse "Mein Schuh, der hat drei Locher".

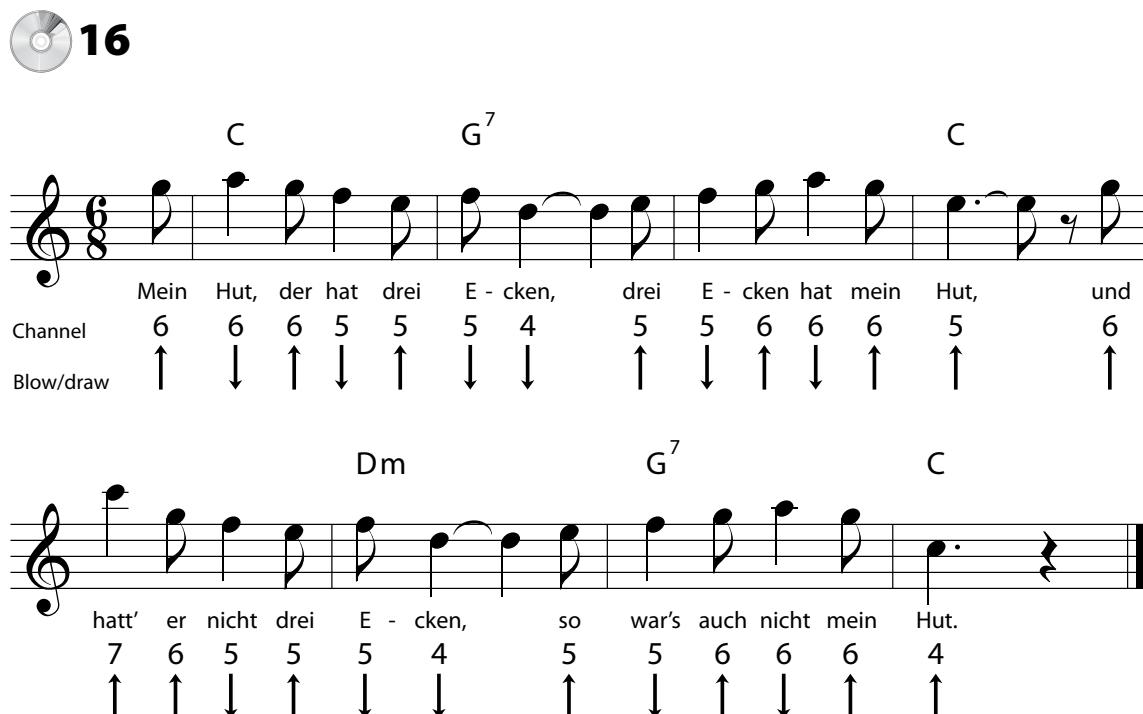
 16

Mein Hut, der hat drei Ecken, mein Hut, und  
hatt' er nicht drei Ecken, so war's auch nicht mein Hut.

Channel: 6, 6, 6, 5, 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 5, 5  
Blow/draw: ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↑

C G<sup>7</sup> C

Dm G<sup>7</sup> C



## Blues with a bending

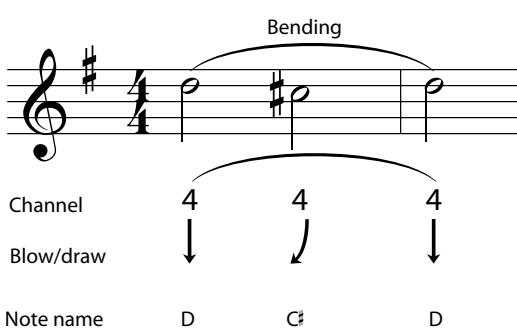
Now there's just the bending left as a playing technique for notes, and not just the bending. It simply is the most difficult playing technique on the Blues harp because it lets us play notes that are not on the instrument, which for now works best for the lower draw notes.

But let's get to it as generations of musicians did before you: You learn by listening, feeling it, experimenting and playing. For example with the song below. A Blues that combines our two essential playing techniques for the Blues harp, bending and cross harping. Listen to it (CD track 26).

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Channel 4 Draw changes its original pitch. We lower note D and make it then glide up again. This effect is achieved by playing the bending technique. So bending is what you have to do when you want to hear this sound.

In our tablature, the symbol for bending is: ↗

Take a look at the first bar of the next song:



**25** ... and this is how it sounds.

We make the first note (D) glide down to the next one (C♯, the second note) ... to make it then glide back up to the D.

Later you will find out and learn that it is of course possible to hit the lower notes accurately and to play even more additional ones in some channels. This will then be indicated in the tablature by means of several checks at the arrows.

## CD tracklist

1	First notes, C and D .....	17
2	First notes, E and F .....	17
3	First notes, G and A .....	18
4	First notes, B and C .....	18
5	C major scale .....	18
6	Exercise 1 on the core octave .....	19
7	Exercise 1 on the core octave .....	19
8	Exercise 1 on the core octave .....	19
9	There you go .....	22
10	Merrily we roll along.....	24
11	Row, row, row your boat .....	25
12	This old man .....	26
13	Twinkle, twinkle, little star .....	27
14	Schneeflockchen, Weißrockchen (German traditional) .....	29
15	Auf der Mauer, auf der Lauer (German traditional) .....	31
16	Mein Hut, der hat drei Ecken (German traditional) .....	32
17	Alle Vogel sind schon da (German traditional) .....	33
18	For he's a jolly good fellow .....	34
19	Camptown races .....	36
20	Bound for the Rio Grande .....	38
21	Sound variations Channel 4 blow note .....	40
22	Go for it! .....	48
23	Rhythmic figure.....	51
24	Checkin' it out .....	52
25	Bending (Channel 4 draw note) .....	54
26	Blues with a bending .....	55
27	For he's a jolly good fellow, rock style.....	60