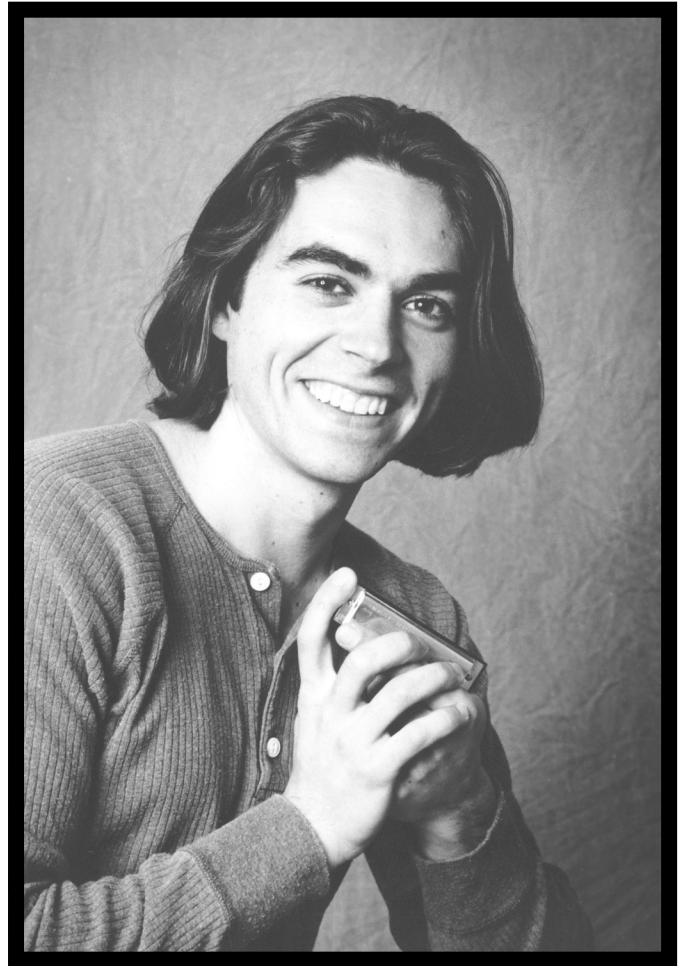


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About the Author

Rob "Fletch" Fletcher lives in a one-room country cabin in the foothills of the Shawangunk Mountains in New Paltz, New York. He teaches private music lessons and classes in environmental education. He has performed with Trey Anastasio of Phish and Ronnie Earl, among others, and is a teacher at the National Guitar Workshop. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance degree from the State University of New York at New Paltz. Fletch spends as much time as possible outdoors. He travels throughout the world whenever he can, and loves to find beautiful places and good people with whom to share his harmonica playing.



Track
1

A compact disc is available for this book. This disc can make learning with this book easier and more enjoyable. This symbol will appear next to every example that is on the CD. Use the CD to help insure that you are capturing the feel of the examples, interpreting the rhythms correctly, and so on. The track numbers below the symbols correspond directly to the example you want to hear. Track 1 will tell you how to use the CD. Have fun!

Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of blues harmonica! This book is written for YOU, the blues harmonica beginner. The harmonica, or "harp," which is its affectionate nickname, is an amazing instrument! It fits in your pocket and goes wherever you go. You can play it while walking around, whether in a forest or on a city street. Whenever you have a spare moment, pull it out, knock out the lint and the spare change and blow!

The harmonica is the only instrument on which both exhaling and inhaling are used to create different notes. It has a rich capacity for soulful expression because of its closeness to the human voice, both in sound and where it is physically held. It is a small, wind-powered instrument whose notes can be bent and shaped to express whatever feeling or longing is inside you. Plus, harmonicas are cheap! The humble harmonica can truly be called the people's instrument.

You will need a harmonica in "the key of C" for all the songs and licks in this book (and to play along with the optional CD). If you already have a harmonica, look to see what key it's in. The letter is stamped to the left or the right of the holes, or on the top of the harmonica (where the numbers 1 through 10 are printed). If it says "C," you're in luck! If it's in another key, you need to buy one in "C" but don't throw out the one you have. Later in the book you'll learn when to use harmonicas in other keys. Good harmonicas with which to begin learning are the Hohner Special 20, the Huang Silvertone and the Lee Oskars.

Your journey begins here. Savor each moment in the learning process. This is a great chance to have fun! Also, the songs and licks you'll be learning are ultimately just tools for you to shape and play in your own style as you progress and find your own unique "voice" on the harmonica.

Let's get started!

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Chris Burger for introducing me to the blues and to harmonicas; Jerry Mueller (my favorite sax player) for inspiring me to go further and deeper into this sweet life; Joseph Jastrab for guiding me through the wilderness; Ma and Pa Fletcher and the rest of the Fletcher clan for your love; Ronnie Earl for showing me the soul and the beauty of the blues; Kevin Doell for solid friendship; and Vanessa Hein for eight sweet years; "love is thicker than forget."

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Junior Wells, Little Walter and Howard Levy for playing the harmonica with fire and creativity, and Pat Bergeson for keeping my harmonica horizons open from the beginning. Also, thanks to Walter Hardy, Bruce Schnieder, Gwen Saylor, Chris White and Karen Schmieder. I carry your hearts with me.

Thanks to the Blue Rays (bassist Robert Burd, drummer Gary Schwartz and guitarist Chris Vitarello) for their playing on the CD.

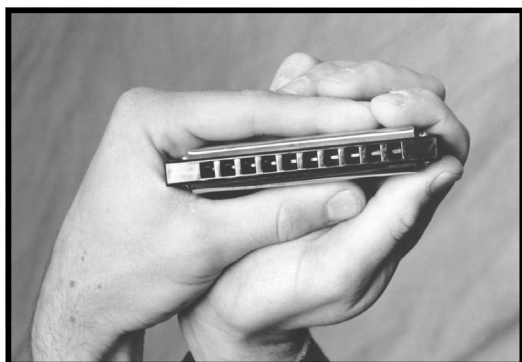
Special thanks to Hohner, Inc. for their generous photographic contributions to this book.

Chapter 1

Beginning the Blues

Holding the Harmonica—The Harmonica Sandwich

Place the harmonica in your left hand as if it were a sandwich, with the thumb on the bottom and the index finger on the top cover plate. The middle finger is nestled against the back. The numbers 1 through 10 are embossed on the top. Number 1 is to the left as you are playing, 10 is on the right and the sounds go from low (left) to high (right). The right hand thumb is next to the left thumb, both thumbnails are facing you and the palms are together. The rest of the fingers of the right hand curl over the left hand. Make sure your hands feel relaxed and comfortable.

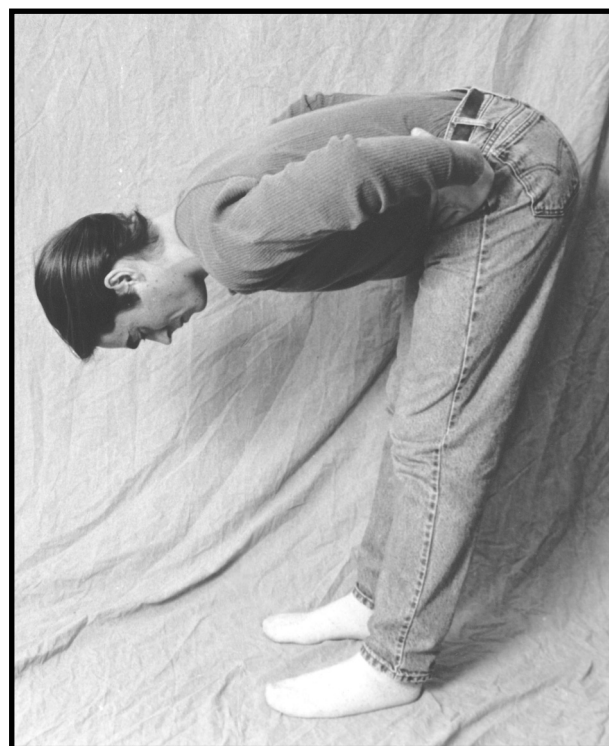


Breathe Easy

Put the harmonica in your mouth, being as careful as possible to hold it correctly. Breathe in and out anywhere on the instrument. As long as you're hearing some kind of sound, you're doing well. Keep breathing without taking the harmonica out of your mouth. If you can last a full minute without feeling strained from lack of air, you have discovered the secret of harmonica breathing.

Open your throat and allow the air to flow deep into your belly. The chest should be relaxed and seem to be only a passive observer watching as the air flows deeper into the stomach. The stomach expands outward to let air in and then pushes inward to send air up and out.

Here is an exercise that will help you learn what this action feels like. Bend over as if to touch your toes. Put your hands on your sides and with your head still down, breathe. You'll feel your stomach and sides fill up and then contract. Your chest feels completely bypassed. The secret to a good harmonica tone lies in breathing in that same way when standing up.



Chapter 4

Straight-Harp Blues

Straight harp is a very simple concept. In straight-harp, you play in the key of your harmonica. So, with your C harp you will be playing a blues in C!

The focus in straight-harp is on a new area of the harmonica, the top half. This is where most of the great straight-harp virtuosos play. Two great players to listen to for inspiration are Jimmy Reed and Stevie Wonder.

Let's start out with some easy licks. Examples 13 and 14 are in the style of Duke Ellington's famous song, *C-Jam Blues*. Notice the use of the 8^{va} sign to make reading the high notes a bit easier (see page 15).

13
Track 23

Swing
♩ = 92

8^{va} -----

6 6 6 7
↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

14
Track 24

Swing
♩ = 92

8^{va} -----

8 8 8 9
↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Here are some that will get you moving around the harp a little more. Also, notice that tied notes (see page 10) are very important aspects of the rhythm.

15
Track 25

Swing
♩ = 92

8^{va} -----

8 9 7
↑ ↑ ↑

16
Track 26

Swing
♩ = 92

8^{va} -----

6 6 7 7 (7)
↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑

17
Track 27

Swing
♩ = 92

8^{va} -----

7 8 9 10 10 (10)
↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑

18
Track 28

Swing
♩ = 92

8^{va} -----

7 8 9 10 9 (9) 7 8 9 10 10 10 10
↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑