

One-Chord Boogie Grooves

By Keith Wyatt

Blues has always been a stylistic sponge, soaking up the sounds of other, more popular musical trends and incorporating them into its timeless framework. Over the years elements of rock, Latin and funk have all been added to the blues vocabulary. Of course, the influence goes in the other direction too, sometimes in ways that are less obvious. B.B. King and Snoop Doggy Dog, of course, would seem to be unlikely candidates for a duet album, but there's another side of blues, predating rap by 30 years, in which - much like rap - melody and harmony, take a back seat to verbal wit and rhythmic drive. Two names associated with blues and R&B, John Lee Hooker and Bo Diddley, could in fact team up very well with a beat box, since each first hit the charts with what were essentially spoken word lyrics over a hypnotic, one chord grooves, "Boogie Chillun" and "Bo Diddley," respectively. In this column and the next, we'll look at the one chord boogie, based on these classics and others like them.

Young players often assume that the fewer chords there are in a tune, the easier it is to play. This is true only on the level of fretboard shape shifting. On a one chord tune, like "Boogie Chillun" the complexity lies in the feel and dynamics. This involves very close coordination between the hands, and a very strong sense of time and development. FIGURE 1 is a rhythm figure like "Boogie Chillun." The original is played in open A tuning; this example is adapted to standard tuning. The emphasis falls on the upbeats of the shuffle, rather than the downbeats a common feature of "boogie" riffs, as they have come to be known. It can be played with the pick alone, thumb and fingers, with the pick playing the downbeats and the fingers (middle and ring) playing the upbeats.

FIGURE 1

```
|-----|-----||
|-----|-----||
|---2---2-----2-----2-----|---2---2-----2-----2-----||
|---2---2-----2-----2-----|---2---2-----2-----2-----0h1h2-||
|---0-----0-----0-----2h3h4-|---0-----0-----0-----||
|-----|-----||
```

FIGURE 2 adds a simple bass figure, like that found on Slim Harpo's boogie classic, "Shake Your Hips." Here you can add accents on the second and fourth beats of the bar, slapping the strings with the pick to lend the effect of a drummer playing a snare drum backbeat.

FIGURE 2

```
|-----|-----||
|-----|-----||
|---2---2-----2-----2---2-----2---|---2---2-----2---2-----2-----||
|---2---2-----2-----2---2-----2---|---2---2-----2---2-----2-----||
|---0-----3-----0-----|---0-----3-----0-----||
|-----3-----|-----3-----||
```

FIGURE 3 is another bass line variation, like that heard on Magic Sam's instrumental boogie tour de force, "Lookin' Good" (he also cut a more melodic version of "Boogie Chillun," titled "I Wanna Boogie"). Here again, accent the backbeats (two and four) for extra dynamic punch, keeping the wrist completely loose with a steady down and up motion.

FIGURE 3

```
|-----|-----||
|-----|-----||
|----2----2----2----2--|----2----2----2----2----||
|----2---4---2----2---4---2--|----2---4---2----2----||
|-0-----3-----|0-----3-----||
|-----|-----0h3-----||
```

FIGURE 4 shows a slightly more complex version of the boogie groove, implying a chord change - similar to ZZ Top's "La Grange." Though all these examples are shown in the key of A, they can easily be transposed to other keys by means of a capo.

FIGURE 4

```
|-----|-----||
|-----|-----||
|----2---2---2---2---|--2---2-----0---2---0--||
|----2---2---2---2---|--2---2-----0---0---0--||
|-0-----|-----3-----||
|-----|-----||
```

The key ingredient in making a boogie happen is hypnotic drive. There are no other chords to go to, so it's all a matter of locking into the pocket and creating interest through dynamics and intensity. One chord boogies, like rap grooves, are the perfect setting for spoken word lyrics, since by stripping down the harmony and melody, they focus attention on message and personality. From Mississippi to Compton, boogie to rap, it's the poetry of the street.

```
=====
h = hammeron Judy Letostak
p = pulloff Internet letostak@ix.netcom.com
/\ = slide Fidonet 1:202/762
x = ghost note MetalNet 666:666/2
t = tap (right hand) The Music Shop BBS (619)423-4970 24hrs
~ = vibrato * = picked harmonic
bf = bend full tr = trill
rb = release bend p.s. = pick scrape
dive = dive with bar b = bend / step written over note
=====
```

The Music Shop BBS (619)423-4970 24hrs Guitar Tab, Bass Tab, Lyrics, Sound Files, Pictures, BRE...LORD...FidoNet... MetalNet...In a band? Want some exposure? I have a file area for bands will take anything that can be put on a computer...Lyrics, pictures, sound files, gig ads...email me or call my bbs. It's free, and access is free. Also have a menu for band to put up Biographies, reviews of shows, demos, gig advertisements, and you can sell your demo/CD here as well...And it's absolutely FREE!