

# Ukulele Yes!

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## SNOW SHOVEL BLUES

By James Hill

### Teaching/Learning Notes (D6 Tuning: a, d, f#, b)

#### Focus On:

- Improvisation, Lyric writing, Harmonic Analysis

#### Key Points:

- Blues in the key of F# is wonderfully uke-friendly. Harmonically speaking, every chord in the 12-bar blues progression contains at least one open string (see score). So, while some chord shapes might be new to your students but they should be manageable and rewarding.
- When it comes to improvisation, the blues scale in the key of F# is a dream; it sounds great and it's easy to play. Focus on the scale notes that fall on the first, second and third strings. Note that the note **f#** is the root of the scale (even though it's not the first note of the scale).

The image shows the F# blues scale in treble clef on a five-line staff. The notes are: e (first space), f# (second space), a (third space), b (third space), c (fourth space), and c# (fourth space). Below the staff, the notes are labeled: e, f#, a, b, c, c#. To the right is a fretboard diagram with four strings and four frets. The notes are: f# (circled) on the 4th fret of the 4th string, b (circled) on the 4th fret of the 3rd string, c on the 2nd fret of the 3rd string, e on the 2nd fret of the 2nd string, c# on the 2nd fret of the 1st string, and a on the 1st fret of the 2nd string.

- Start by having students pick improvised rhythms on the note e (strum the 12-bar blues in F# while they do this). Then allow them to use the notes **f#** and **c#**. Expand in this way until they're using the entire scale as shown above. (Note: hold down an A chord and you've got half the scale under your fingertips!)

#### Suggestions for Extension and Enrichment:

- Offer students a choice of in-class assignment:
  - 1) Alone or with a partner, compose a new melody for *Snow Shovel Blues* using the notes of the F# blues scale.
  - 2) Perform, with a partner, an improvisation using the 12-bar blues in F# as your harmonic structure.
  - 3) Alone or with a partner, create two new end-lines for *Snow Shovel Blues* (i.e. replace "I'd rather be taking a tropical cruise" with new lyrics).
  - 4) Alone or with a partner, analyse the harmony of the 12-bar blues using Roman numerals I, IV and V. Then determine what the chords would be for 12-bar blues in the key of E.