

Preface

Hello and welcome to "Blues Guitar Rules"! Rules for the blues? I guess this title could seem a bit paradoxical for some people, since the blues is, after all, the very epitome of feeling-oriented music. Aside from the fact that "feeling" just might be the single most important rule in this book, a closer look at the blues offers more than just a change of pace or an alternative to eight finger tapping. But what meaning could the blues have for a skinny white boy like myself?

As I was studying at GIT in Los Angeles in 1989/90 there were more or less regular concerts featuring guest artists every Thursday. One Thursday Albert Collins and band were advertised in the program. Now I must say quite honestly, that I'd heard the name before but that was about all I knew about Albert Collins. That this evening would be one of the most important events of my entire stay at GIT was something that didn't even occur to me until the first encore. The concert was pretty good, but as Mister Collins' playing was not exactly the apex of technical wizardry, it didn't really knock me out. Up to that point, I'd always associated the term blues more with people like Robben Ford, etc.. That all changed, however, with the last song of the evening as Albert Collins began to walk, through the audience (as he did every evening, as far as I know) with a ca. 200 meter long Guitar cord personally "bluesifying" every single listener in the hall. And although I had been standing somewhere where I was hoping he would miss me, I suddenly found myself face-to-face with the "Iceman". Being not much more than a foot away from him, I was pretty much trapped - escape was impossible. So I looked the persuasive bluesman right in his well worn face as he played right at me and shouted "C'mon skinny white boy, get the god damn blues!". I was transfixed, but Collins had already moved on to deliver the blues to the next soul.

Now this experience didn't quite affect me like the light in the church did blues brother Jake, but it gave me a kick that led me to a more "real" contact with the music and the meaning of the term blues. Obviously, this feeling was so strong and important for Mr. Collins that he didn't hesitate to preach the blues, even to a unknowing white kid.

A part of my research on blues and the influence that it's had on rock guitar can be found in my first book "Masters of Rock Guitar". As in the book that followed it, "Rock Guitar Secrets", I'd like to go in depth into the practical and theoretical concepts of blues guitar.



A look at the table of contents will show that I've covered all the important technical, rhythm and improvisational concepts; I hope that "Blues Guitar Rules" will serve you well as a comprehensive learning tool for blues guitar.

I've started with stage 1 – Easy Blues, in which I've described the development and basis of blues guitar. This part of the book is – on account of its simple but authentic sounding examples – particularly good for beginners..

Stage 2 – Blues and Rock Styles – goes off more in the rock direction and gives you, with authentic-sounding rhythmic figures and blues solos in the style of Clapton, Hendrix, Robben Ford, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Gary Moore and others, an insight into the concepts and licks of these guitarists.

The more I have to do with the subject, the clearer it is to me that the Blues is not only the feeling and groove basis for every style of rock and pop, but that you can use this fundamental musical form to explain just about every jazz and harmonic theory. I couldn't resist being pulled in this direction, "closet jazzer" that I am, so the result was stage 3 – Jazz Blues. In this section a number of concepts that come from jazz can be found, that can also be used in the context of a Strat and a turned up Marshall.

This brings me to the next point, the accompanying CD. On the CD you'll find a great number of examples and blues jam tracks. To experience the optimal benefits of this book, you should work with both the book and the CD. Unfortunately written music is sometimes only half the truth. Particularly with the blues the ears have to be used in order to really understand the phrasing of the examples. The same goes, of course, for intensive listening to blues recordings, without which the much sought after blues feeling is unattainable.

Blues Guitar Rules? Rules for Blues Guitar.. fortunately there's another way to look at this phrase. "To rule", as you may know, is also ghetto slang for to "reign", to be the best or coolest. That sense of the phrase expresses my basic feeling. So ...

At this point I'd like to thank a number of people that made my life and the writing of this book easier: Birgit Fischer, Olaf Krüger, Mark Skerra, Harald von Falkenstein (Peavey) and Dieter Roesberg (Gitarre & Bass).

For the most diverse kinds of inspiration I'd like to thank Albert Collins, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Carl Schroeder, Steve Vai, Paulo Gilberto, Steve Lukather, Peter Paradise as well as all my guitar students.

Stay tuned, play hard, be real!

Peter Fischer

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The Forms of Blues

As the blues is basically a type of folk music, musicians in different regions tended to have a common understanding of blues feeling, but often used different song forms. Thus the so-called blues forms vary in length and chord structure. Here are a few blues forms; all of them are used today and have their own qualities (all examples in A) :

Blues Forms for the Dominant Blues

The standard 12 bar blues.

Here is the classic 12 bar blues that's most commonly.

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The standard 12 bar blues with a "quick change".

Note, in this form, the second and last two measures. The chord change in the second measure to the IV chord is referred to as a "quick change".

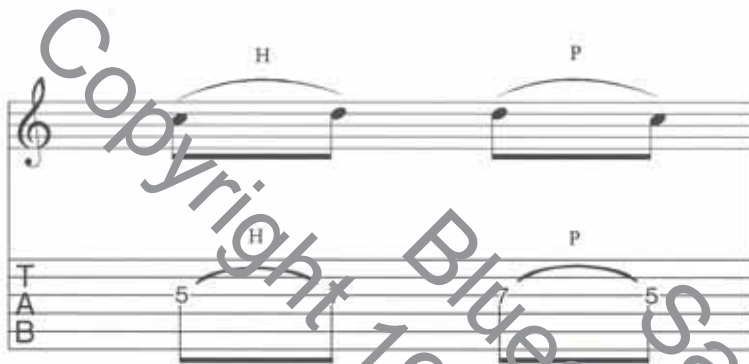
The 12 bar "King Bee" blues.

This variation sounds a little bit more "cheerful" in the middle than the other forms, and is already a step in the direction of jazz blues (see stage III p. 113).

Playing Techniques

Hammer-ons and pull-offs.

The alternative to "normal" playing technique in which every note is picked is legato technique. With this technique, as many notes as possible are sounded by means of hammer-ons and pull-offs instead of being produced by strokes from the right hand.



H = hammer-on

P = pull-off

Basically, anything that can be played with the right hand can also be played using legato technique only; the resulting sound is softer and more fluid.

By the way, if you're interested in exercises for perfecting this technique check out my book "Total Guitar Technique".

Slides

A simple but always good sounding technique for the electric guitar is the use of slides. Instead of directly playing the note, you can also slide into it from above or below.



SL = slide

Chapter 7

Bluesrock of the 60's and 70's

As we've seen in chapter V the blues began pretty simple, although you've certainly noticed that it is not easy to sound like one of the old blues masters or to reproduce their groove and tone. These aspects of blues guitar are certainly the most difficult and as I've often said, using your ears and playing a lot of blues are really the best learning methods available.

The following chapter is another unit on blues styles; this time, however, we will be concentrating on a number of the more modern guitar hot-shots.

We'll begin with the guitarists of the 60's and 70's all of who, in their youth, were influenced by the musicians that we encountered in Chapter V.

The basic difference between these guitarists and their idols was that they were often white and developed blues in more of a rock direction; they experienced blues as an extremely important source but were influenced by many other styles as well.

This second generation of strongly blues influenced guitarists, are players like Jeff Beck, Michael Bloomfield, Peter Green, Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Duane Allman, Richie Blackmore, The Rolling Stones, Carlos Santana and many others offer a musical experience that's well worth a listen.

As representatives of this era I've chosen three guitarists with quite different styles: Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton and Duane Allman.

Besides the licks that appear in this book another important element in this style was the use of repeating patterns, a number of which can be found in my first book "Masters of Rock Guitar".

Jimi Hendrix

Style Solo

Playing the Red House Blues

Jimi Hendrix can certainly be considered to be the inventor of modern rock guitar. His playing, his relatively short but meteoric career as well as his effect on his audience and the following generation of guitarists have never been equalled, with the possible exception of Eddie van Halen.

After three hit albums that were, by the standards of the times and today's as well, guitaristic milestones and a number of historical concert appearances (for example Woodstock) he fell into a musical and personal vacuum. On the 18th of September, 1970, Hendrix died in Kensington, England; the causes of his death are still unclear.

Example
»44«



8 *tr* *loco*

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), with a tempo marking of 8 *tr*. It features a series of triplet eighth notes in the treble and corresponding chords in the bass. The second system continues with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, with a tempo marking of *loco*. It includes various techniques such as BU (bend), SL (slide), H (hammer-on), P (pull-off), and SM (shred). The third system continues with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, with a tempo marking of *loco*. It includes various techniques such as BURB (bend, release, bend, release), BU, P, and SM. The bass clef part of the score shows chords and fret numbers for the strings.

Discography: Besides the bestsellers: "Are you experienced?", "axis:Bold as love" and "electric Ladyland", you should definitely have this record: Jimi Hendrix Reference Library - Variations of a theme: Red House.

Chapter 16

Jazzblues Licks and Lines

So now we get into the good stuff! In stage 1 and 2 of this book, I've gone pretty much into detail about different improvisational concepts for the blues. These apply to the jazz blues as well. What we looked at in terms of improvisational structure, (A-A-B structure, etc) ... it all still holds. The big obstacles to fluent improvisation over the dominant blues are, in my opinion, the little harmonic pitfalls, such as II-V progressions, secondary dominants and turnarounds. The following section deals with these difficult situations. In many areas learning music is quite similar to learning language. And just as in learning a foreign language it is always a good idea to have a few special phrases in store which help in certain situations. For example, such critical items as "Yesterday at the dentist's" or "Lately at the Hairstylist's" for occasions where one has to know just the right expression.

It is also a good idea to have a few appropriate licks to play over the harmonically difficult parts of the jazz blues.

Licks for the II-V-I progression

In the course of the third section of "Blues Guitar Rules", we've covered almost all the common scale material that can be used to jam over the different chords. Now we'll look at a few licks where this information is put into practice, together with a short harmonic analysis. All licks are intended to be played with a swing feel.

II-V-I licks in major

The following licks all work over a II-V-I progression in C major, Dm⁷, G⁷, C^{maj7} or their extension.

Lick 1

The interesting thing about this lick is the E major triad over G⁷ in bar 2.

- Dm⁷ : D-dorian with chromatic passing tones
- G⁷ : E-maj triad (G^{13b9} sound)
- C^{Δ7} : C-ianian

Example
» 104 «

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The musical notation for Lick 1 consists of three measures. The first measure is over a Dm⁷ chord and contains a melodic line with notes D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, and C5. The second measure is over a G^{13(b9)} chord and contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, and F#4. The third measure is over a C^{Δ7} chord and contains a whole note C5. The guitar tablature below shows fingerings: bar 1 (5, 2, 3, 5), bar 2 (2, 5, 2, 3), bar 3 (4, 5, 4, 7, 4, 7, 4, 5).