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A Blues Scale Targeting I, IV, and V

Following is another take on target notes. In this exercise, we'll play the *blues scale* in a descending fashion. A blues scale is the same as a pentatonic scale except it includes an additional note, the $\flat 5$ th.

Swing 8ths

Ex. 30

Because the above lick lands on an A note, it would probably work best with the A7, which is the I chord.

Here's the same lick, but ending on a D note.

Swing 8ths

Ex. 31

Notice how this totally changes the flavor. Because this lick targeted the D note, it would sound best with the D7, which is the IV chord.

This next lick does all the same stuff, but targets the E note. It works best with the E7, which is the V chord.

Swing 8ths

Ex. 32

This is handy and useful stuff! Play all three licks in a row to really hear the difference. Then grab a friend and play these licks over a blues progression in A.

Phrasing Over a 12-Bar Blues

Now that we have a few phrases together, let's use them and a few new ones in a cool 12-bar solo.

Let's check it out, blow by blow. We're in the key of A Major. Over the first four measures, we'll use the phrases we learned in the previous lesson. Over measure 5, we play a new short phrase, and then answer it with a similar phrase in measure 6. Over measures 7 and 8, we play a phrase similar to the one we started with, only an octave lower. In measures 9–11, we use a repeating phrase throughout, changing only one note in each measure in order to target the chord roots as we learned in a previous lesson. Measure 12 has the same rhythm as the preceding three measures, but it uses different notes and does not involve the rake.

Ex. 78

Swing 8ths
A7

1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3

5 D7 A7

3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1

9 E7 D7 A7 E7

2 1 3 3 1 2 3 3 3 1 3 3 3 2 2 2

Remember, a phrase is your word. Phrasing is your sentence. Practicing these phrases will allow you to speak the universal language of music.

In the following exercise, we'll play something similar to the last exercise, only this time, we're going to stay in 5th position. You just play up the A Major Pentatonic Box #2, starting on the A at the 7th fret of the 4th string, then play down the A Minor Pentatonic Box #1, starting at the highest note C at the 8th fret of the 1st string.

Ex. 95

Swing 8ths

4 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1 3 1 3 1 3

Adding the Blues Scale to the Mix

Let's continue to find and add the blue notes to our go-to patterns at the 5th position. These two patterns will become very valuable to you, so spend some extra time with them. We have already covered the blues scale, in which notes are added to the minor pentatonic scale to give it that blues flavor. When blue notes are added to the major pentatonic scale, we get what is sometimes called the *country scale*.

Ex. 96

A Country Scale
Box #2

4 5 6 7 8 9

A Blues Scale
Box #1

4 5 6 7 8 9

This next exercise is almost the same as the last one, only this time, we add the blue notes to the boxes. We'll go up the A Country Scale Box #2 then down the A Blues Scale Box #1.

Ex. 97

Swing 8ths

4 1 2 3 2 4 2 4 1 4 1 4 3 1 3 1 3

Okay, very cool. Now, we're getting to the real essence of the blues sound: the interplay between the major and minor pentatonic.