

Jump Blues Guitar, Part 2

We conclude our lesson on this uptempo style with extended musical examples inspired by Brian Setzer, Hollywood Fats and Jeff Beck

BY PHIL CAPONE

LAST MONTH, I presented the first part of our lesson in jump blues, an uptempo cousin of the blues that directly preceded the rock and roll explosion of the 1950s. In this second part of our two-part lesson, I offer a trio of extended musical examples inspired by three great jump blues practitioners — Brian Setzer, Hollywood Fats and Jeff Beck — that epitomize the signature techniques of their individual styles.

As I noted in part one, jump blues has a strong backbeat groove that makes it closer to rock and roll than blues. Note and chord choices can range from simple “box”-pattern licks and stock dominant-

BRIAN SETZER IS AMONG THE MOST POPULAR MODERN-DAY PRACTITIONERS OF JUMP BLUES

seventh and -ninth chord “grips” to sophisticated melodic lines and jazzy voicings. But to sound authentic, it’s essential that you control your swing and even, or “straight,” eighth-note phrasing at swift tempos.

Famed for his early 1980s work with the Stray Cats, Brian Setzer is among the most popular modern-day practitioners of jump blues guitar. During the early '90s swing revival, he formed the Brian Setzer Orchestra, highlighting his skills as a swing and jump blues guitarist extraordinaire. Setzer’s style is a tantalizing mix of be-bop licks and

Scale Diagrams

A Mixolydian Shape 1



D Mixolydian Shape 4



E Mixolydian Shape 3

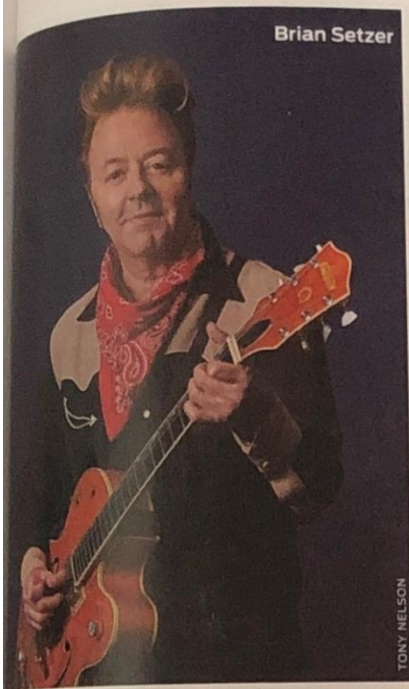


Technique Focus: Scale choices

Many jump blues guitarists also play jazz and are often inclined to approach blues changes with a wider range of harmonic tools. You’ll need to ensure that you can switch effortlessly between parallel major and minor pentatonic scales (built from the same root note). Ideally both in shape 1. This will enable you to better acknowledge the tonality of the IV chord of the blues and play phrases across the changes and bar lines. You should also experiment with the minor-six pentatonic and the corresponding Mixolydian modes for the I, IV and V chords. Also, don’t forget the importance of outlining chord tones with arpeggios, as this too is a very effective melody-building approach.

rock and roll swagger, punctuated by chord dips and wobbles, courtesy of his trademark Gretsch’s Bigsby tremolo bar, techniques that are demonstrated in **Ex. 1**, which is played over a jazzy blues progression in the key of C with an extended turnaround tag and ending. Notice how the double-stop lick over the F9 continues through the chord change into bar 7, where the Eb returns

to E natural, reflecting the return to the tonic chord, C7. In bars 9 and 10, begin the ascending single-note line in 8th position, reaching back to the 7th fret with your first finger, then shift up to 10th position when you get to the high E string by moving your third finger to the 12th fret at the start of bar 10. These are great licks to incorporate into your own vocabulary and would



excite any blues or rock and roll solo. Hollywood Fats worked as a sideman with blues legends such as John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Albert King and Jimmy Witherspoon. He released only one self-titled studio album with his group, the Hollywood Fats Band, before his career was cut tragically short by a heroin overdose at the age of 32. Fats made the old-school style sound new and exciting, and his timing was impeccable. Single-note lines would often be punctuated with jazzy chord stabs or interspersed with boogie-woogie style riffs, as in **Ex. 2**, which is in the key of F. Here, carefully controlled fingering is required to shift seamlessly between upper-register solo licks and the low boogie riffs in bars 1, 3, 7 and 8. Shifting to 3rd position after the opening pick-up lick to finger the low A note avoids the use of the open string and keeps the F boogie riff tight and controlled. The use of a double chromatic approach to the tonic major third, A, in bar 13 (G - Ab - A) highlights the 13th of the V chord, C7. This is followed by an "answer" phrase that reverses the melodic contour on the last two notes and features the use of sixth intervals. Finally, notice the smooth voice-leading

Ex. 1 Brian Setzer style, key of C

Shuffle ♩ = 200

C7

1

T
A
B

7 8 8 10 8 8 11 8 11 10 8 11 10 8

4

F9 w/bar C7 C9 w/bar

10 8 8 8 (8) (8) (9 8) 8 8 10 7 8 8 10 8 9 8 10 8 8 7 8

8

Dm7 G7

10 7 10 8 9 10 8 10 8 12 13 12 10 11 12 13 10 12

11

C7 Eb7#9 D7#9 D7#9 C9 Eb13 D9

8 7 6 5 6 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

14

D#13 G D#9 C9

P.M.-----1

5 6 4 4 3 4 5 8 8 7 7 8 8 9 9 10 8 9 8 9 8 7 8 7