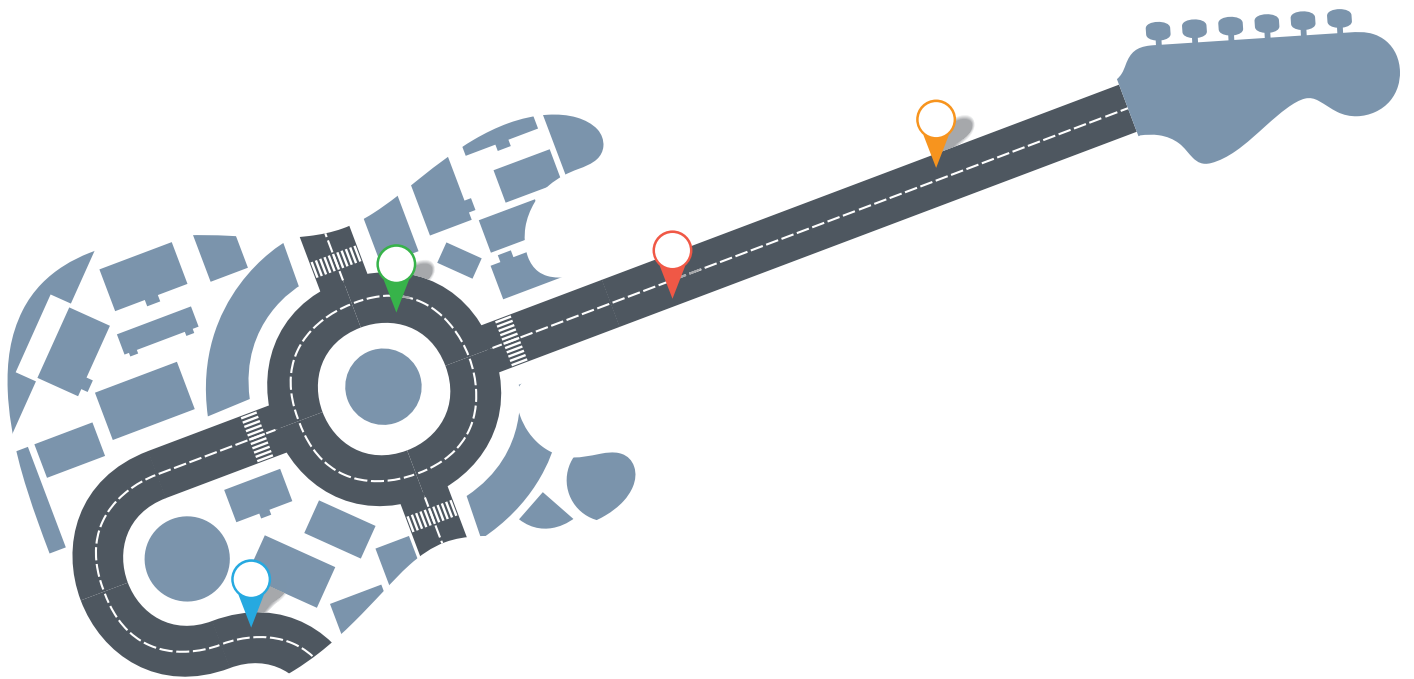


How To Jam

A Roadmap To Playing The Blues At A Jam



by **Griff Hamlin**
BluesGuitarUnleashed.com

In this special report, “**How To Jam**,” you’ll learn the fundamentals of playing the blues so that you could easily get up and jam on a long list of standard blues songs.

Now this isn’t for a brand new guitar player, and I will assume that you can already play some chords and if you can already play a song or two that will help, but it is not necessary.

But if you’re brand new to playing the blues then I’d like to welcome you and tell you that you’re in for a real treat!

But real quick, allow me to introduce myself, my name is **Griff Hamlin**. I’ve been a professional guitar teacher and performer now for 30 years.



And as a performing musician, one of my absolute favorite things to do is to get up on stage with some people I barely know and just play some blues. There is simply nothing like it! And I’ve been fortunate enough to have helped tens of thousands of other guitar players around the world (many who were probably where you are right now) share in that excitement and thrill.

Now what’s cool about the blues is that we have a lot of standard songs, often just called “standards.” You probably know of several off the top of your head:



1. **Pride And Joy**
2. **Stormy Monday**
3. **The Thrill Is Gone**
4. **Sweet Home Chicago**
5. **Key To The Highway**
6. **Dust My Broom**
7. **Crossroads**

And the list goes on and on.

Well what most of those tunes share in common is the 12 bar blues form...

That 12 bar form means that if you know the key to the song (A-G,) and you know the feel (slow blues, shuffle blues, straight feel,) then you really know all you need to know to play the blues!

I know, it sounds pretty simple when I put it like that... and in theory it is that simple. But, of course, in practice there's a little more to it.

In order to play the blues you're going to need 3 things:

- ① **A rhythm idea to play over the 12 bar form**
- ② **A way to take a solo when it's your turn (don't worry, it can - and probably should - be simple.)**
- ③ **A way to start the song, end the song, and fit together the other pieces in the middle.**

So let's get started with the first stop on our "road trip" through the blues – the rhythm.



How To Play Blues At A Jam Session.



You Are Here

STOP 1: RHYTHMS & CHORDS

- * Common Blues Chord Shapes
- * The 12 Bar Blues Form
- * Common Blues Rhythm/Strumming Pattern
- * Blues Intro (to start the song)
- * Blues Ending (to end the song)

STOP 2: SOLOING

- * What Note And Beat To Start Your Solo On
- * Minor Blues Scale, Box 1
- * The 4 Note Solo Pattern (Box 2)
- * Lead Techniques (Bends, Hammer-Ons, Pull-Offs)
- * Licks!

STOP 3: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

- * Stringing together your Intro, Rhythm, Solo, And Ending
- * Using Licks Or Single Notes As Fills Between Vocal Lines

**You have reached
your destination!**



STOP 1

Rhythm And Chords



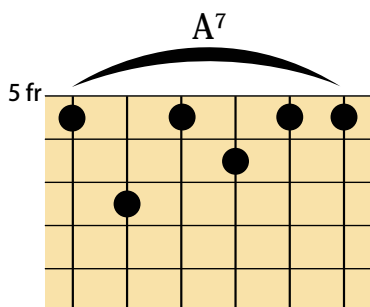
In order to play some blues rhythm you're going to need a few things...

1 – Blues Chords

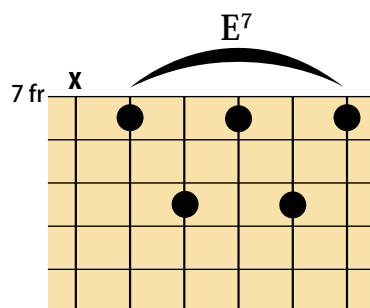
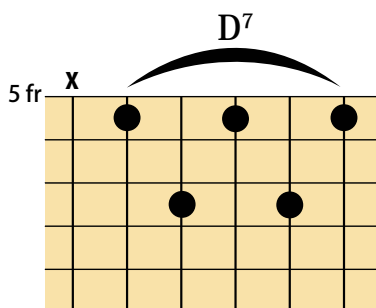
Blues revolves around 7th chords. Officially they are called dominant 7th to distinguish them from major 7th or minor 7th which are considerably different both in sound and usage.

You want to use moveable chord shapes (chords without open strings) whenever you can so that you can change keys by simply moving up or down some number of frets.

The first, and most common, shape is sometimes called an “E” shape because in open position it's an E7. I call it a “root on the 6th string” shape as well.



From there, you'll want a “root on the 5th string” shape (sometimes called an “A” shape.) So we'll use this one for D7 and E7



As you'll see in the video, don't worry if you can't play these chords such that all the notes ring out!

Most of the time we won't use more than 2 or 3 of the notes anyway.

2 – The 12 Bar Blues Form

A 12 bar blues consists of 3 chords called the I chord, IV chord, and V chord. To explain this concept further, we have to step away from the blues for a minute. The concept of a I chord, IV chord, and V chord is simple, but it comes from a major scale, not a blues scale.

Simply put, if you build a chord off of the first note in the major scale, it's called a I chord. Similarly, if you build a chord off of the 4th note in the major scale, it's called the IV chord, and if you build a chord off of the 5th note in the major scale, it's called the V chord.

To find the I, IV, and V chords in any key on your guitar:

I chord: Find the note on the 6th string that matches the key you're in. In the key of A, you would find the A on the 5th fret of the 6th string.

IV chord: Use the same fret as the I chord, but on the 5th string. In the key of A, the IV chord would be D on the 5th fret of the 5th string.

V chord: Go up 2 frets from the IV chord. In the key of A, the V chord is E on the 7th fret of the 5th string.

This trick will work for any key, but I'll make it even easier. Here's a chart of every key with it's corresponding IV and V chords

Key	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab
I Chord	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab
IV Chord	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db
V Chord	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb

Here's what to remember:

- Bars 1 – 4** use the I chord.
- Bars 5 and 6** use the IV chord.
- Bars 7 and 8** return to the I chord.
- Bars 9 and 10** are the V chord, and IV chord.
- Bars 11 and 12** are called the turnaround. The simplest turnaround is to use the I chord for both bars 11 and 12.

The most common variation of this pattern is called a Quick Change Blues, where bar 2 uses the IV chord and all other bars are the same. It is also common to go to the V chord on bar 12.

3 – A Common Blues Rhythm...

Obviously you have to strum the chords somehow... you can't just hold it, right?

So here's a really easy rhythm that you can use over all of the chords in the form.



How To Start The Song...

There are 2 most common ways to start a blues song, "from the top," and "from the V."

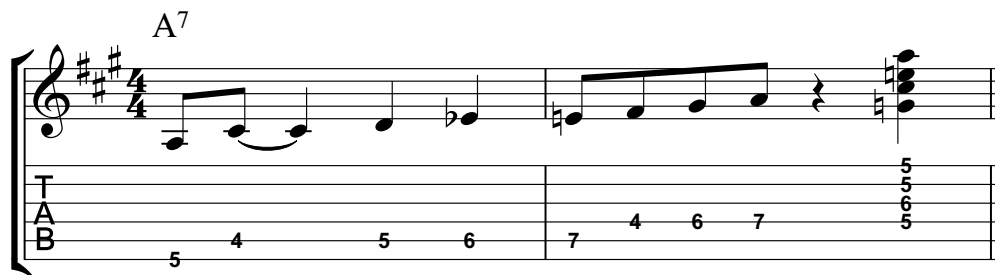
Taking it "from the top" just means you start right off at the top of the 12 bar blues form.

Taking it "from the V" means you start on bar 9 of the form at the V chord. Then you go through to the end of the form and continue "from the top."

How To End The Song...

One of the easiest and most common endings is commonly called a "**Basie**" Ending (or some people call it an "**Ellington**" ending but I've always heard the former.)

It comes it at the last 2 bars of the form the last time through and goes a little something like this in the key of A:



The Whole Enchilada...



If we put that all together it looks a little something like this:

[illegible]



STOP 2

Blues Soloing



Blues soloing is undoubtedly the most misunderstood thing – EVER!

Fancy guitar teachers everywhere like to make it seem so mysterious and difficult... and it just ain't like that.

Sure, you can make it hard, and you can do some pretty terrifying things if you want to... but that won't necessarily make it sound any better... it'll just make it harder.

Now I'll admit freely that I LOVE soloing... shoot, to me the words are just placeholders between solos. And I hope that after you've seen just how easy it can be, you'll feel the same way because it's a real blast.



- ① What note to start your solo on
- ② When to start your solo (what beat)
- ③ The minor blues scale (box 1 pattern)
- ④ The 4 Note Solo/House/Box 2 pattern
(you'll see what I mean when we get there)
- ⑤ When you can use bends and other techniques
- ⑥ Licks... you gotta have something to say before you can say anything.



This is super important – I’m going to give you a bunch of rules throughout this little road trip, and they can all be broken and will be broken regularly.

What I’m going for are things that are **guaranteed to work**. Not things that work sometimes but not others. As you get more experience you’ll have the knowledge to handle things that only work sometimes. Right now, you want to be assured that whatever you play isn’t going to crash and burn.

1 - What note to start your solo on...

Simple... the tonic, or root of the I chord. (Remember, this is guaranteed to work. It’s far from the only option.)

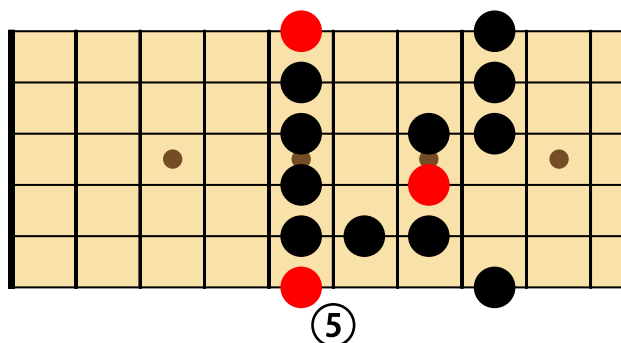
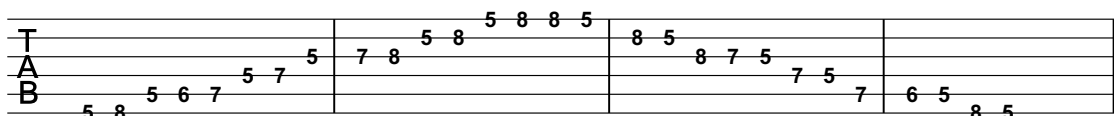
2- When to start your solo...

The hardest thing to get a new soloist to do is wait to get started... but you really need to.

Coming in on the very first beat just generally doesn’t work well. It’s just not the sound you’re looking for. Wait for beat 2 and start there and you’ll never be wrong. (Again, we’re going for a guarantee.)

3 - The A minor blues scale (box 1)...

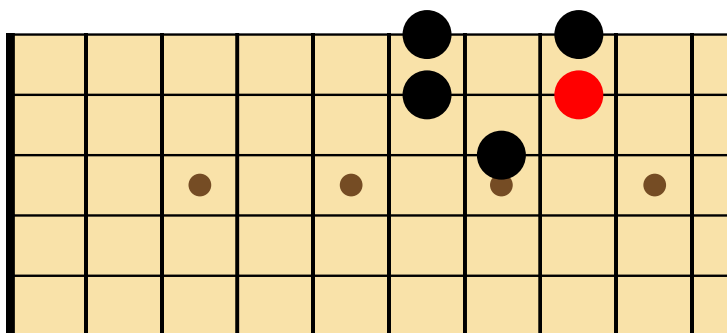
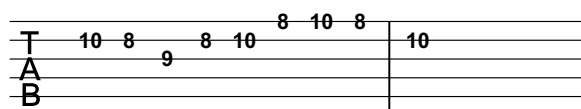
If you choose the root on the 1st string, this is the scale that goes with it:



4 - The “House” Pattern...

If you choose the root on the 2nd string, then the “house” pattern (also just 1 note more than the 4 Note Solo box and it’s the top end of box 2) is a great choice.

Here’s what it looks like on the fretboard with the root shown. Put your 3rd finger on that root and it all falls into place.



5 - When you can use bends, hammer-ons, etc...

Most of these things come from notes within the boxes that, when bent, go to another note of the scale 1 whole step away.

For example, in box 1:

- The 8th fret of the 1st string
- The 8th fret of the 2nd string
- The 7th fret of the 3rd string

And for the box 2/house pattern, it’s the 10th fret on the top string.

Licks!

What follows is the whole solo I played and I’ve labeled each lick. You’ll notice I took them out of order from how I demonstrated them... that’s on purpose to show you that you can probably mix and match these into several solos that will all sound unique despite having the same licks in them.

Jam Track starts from the V to give time to get ready...

A musical staff in 4/4 time, key of A major (two sharps). The staff contains four measures, each with a whole rest, indicating a 4-measure introduction. Below the staff is a three-line TAB system with the letters 'T', 'A', and 'B' on the first, second, and third lines respectively.

A musical staff showing two licks. Lick 1 is marked with an A7 chord and Lick 3 with a D7 chord. The staff contains four measures. Below the staff is a three-line TAB system with fret numbers: 5 8 5 7 5 8 8 5 8 for Lick 1, and 10 10 8 10 8 10 10 8 10 8 for Lick 3. Arrows labeled 'full' point to the 7th fret in the first measure and the 10th fret in the third measure.

A musical staff showing two licks. Lick 2 is marked with an A7 chord and Lick 4 with an E7 chord. The staff contains four measures. Below the staff is a three-line TAB system with fret numbers: 5 5 8 5 7 8 for Lick 2, and 10 10 8 10 for Lick 4. Arrows labeled 'full' point to the 10th fret in the fourth measure.

A musical staff showing Lick 5, marked with a D7 chord. The staff contains three measures. Below the staff is a three-line TAB system with fret numbers: 10 10 8 10 9 for the first measure, and 8 10 8 10 8 for the second measure. An arrow labeled 'full' points to the 10th fret in the first measure.



STOP 3

Putting It All Together




On this, our last stop of the tour, we'll tie it all together and stretch out just a little bit...

First, we're simply going to mash the rhythm part and the solo together into a full song.

In this example, it's "from the V, key of A in a shuffle."

We've left 2 choruses for singing (there isn't any vocal... yet, you could add words from most popular blues songs) then we'll pretend that we get the nod for our solo, then it's back to the final vocal chorus and our "Basie" ending (or Ellington... depends on who you ask.)

There should not be anything new here... just play what you played from the last 2 stops and you're good to go.



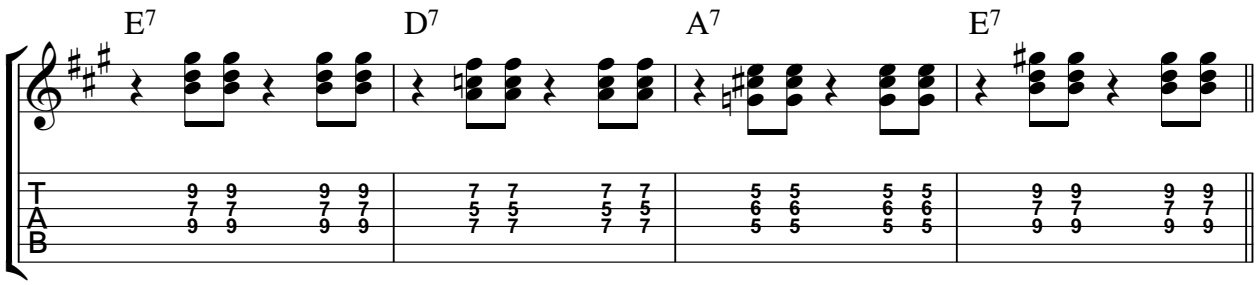
But just in case, I've
notated the whole thing
on the next page...

E7

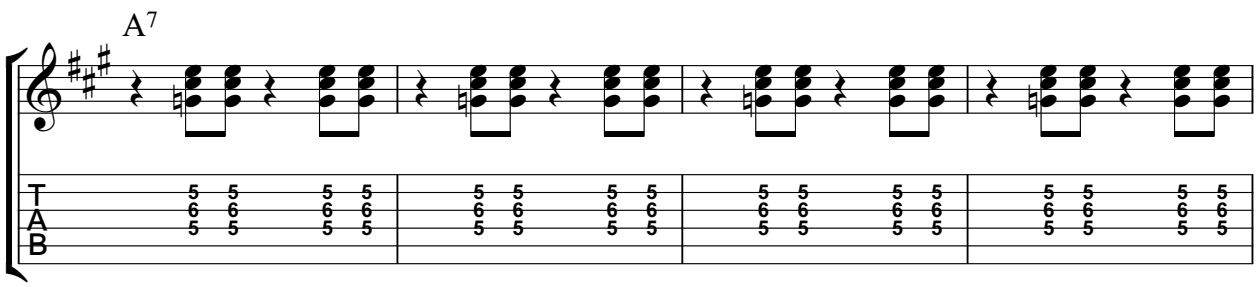
D7

A7

E7

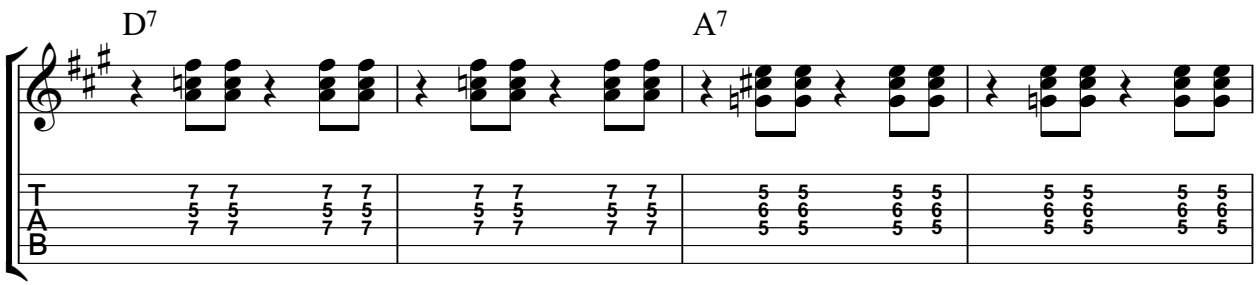


A7



D7

A7

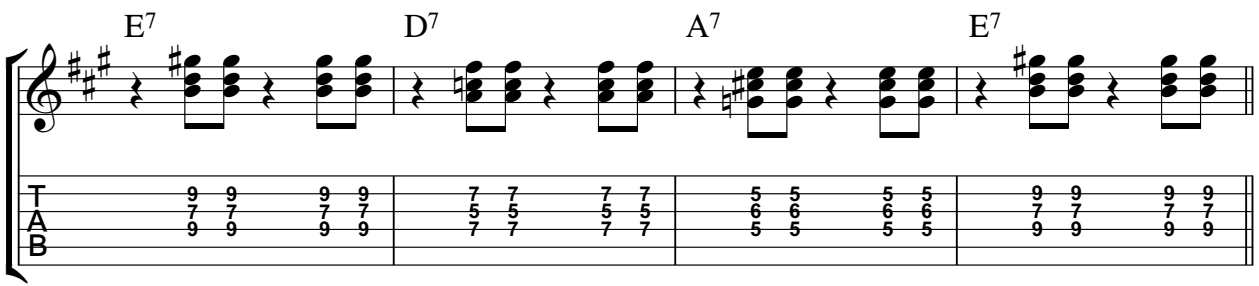


E7

D7

A7

E7



A⁷

First system of music for A7 chord. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The staff contains four measures of music, each starting with a quarter rest followed by a dotted quarter note and an eighth note, all beamed together. The notes are A, C#, and E. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with two staves labeled 'T' (treble) and 'B' (bass). The tablature shows the following fret numbers: Measure 1: 5 5 5 5; Measure 2: 5 5 5 5; Measure 3: 5 5 5 5; Measure 4: 5 5 5 5.

D⁷ A⁷

Second system of music. It starts with a treble clef staff in F# and C# key signature. The first two measures are for D7 (notes D, F#, A) and the next two measures are for A7 (notes A, C#, E). The notation is the same as the first system. The guitar tablature shows: Measure 1: 7 7 7 7; Measure 2: 7 7 7 7; Measure 3: 5 5 5 5; Measure 4: 5 5 5 5.

E⁷ D⁷ A⁷ E⁷

Third system of music. It starts with a treble clef staff in F# and C# key signature. The first two measures are for E7 (notes E, G#, B), the next two for D7 (notes D, F#, A), the next two for A7 (notes A, C#, E), and the final two for E7 (notes E, G#, B). The notation is the same as the previous systems. The guitar tablature shows: Measure 1: 9 9 9 9; Measure 2: 7 7 7 7; Measure 3: 5 5 5 5; Measure 4: 9 9 9 9.

A⁷ D⁷

Fourth system of music. It starts with a treble clef staff in F# and C# key signature. The first two measures are for A7 and the next two for D7. The notation includes melodic lines with slurs and accents. The guitar tablature shows: Measure 1: 5 8 5 7; Measure 2: 8 8 5 8; Measure 3: 10 10 8 10; Measure 4: 10 10 8 10. There are also 'full' markings above the tablature.

Now once you start adding in some words, you need to remember that the blues is based around “call and response.”



That means that the vocal line is really the “call,” and usually some instrument has to be the response. And since it’s just you playing, you get to do that.

So when the vocal finishes a line, feel free to throw in a few notes of your own to fill in the space before the next vocal line – that’s the response.

There’s no right answer here, sometimes a “lick” as simple as stinging the root note sound fantastic and fits right in. Sometimes you have more space and you’ll feel like you need to add a bit more...

The blues is about you and what you’re feeling, so don’t let anyone tell you it ain’t right if you’re feeling it.



Here’s What To Do Next...

I hope you enjoyed this report as much as I enjoyed putting it together for you. Playing the blues with friends and family is something that has brought an enormous amount of joy to my life over the years and I hope it will do the same for you.

And if you got some value from this and you’d like to learn more, you’ll probably want to check out my top selling Blues Guitar Unleashed course.



Blues Guitar Unleashed covers everything you’ll need to jam with any blues band, anywhere, and at any time.

You’ll learn classic and modern blues rhythms, lead patterns and techniques, and how to solo over any blues that comes your way.

Just visit <http://BluesGuitarUnleashed.com> and click the “Course Catalog” link at the top to see all of the premium courses that are available. They all come with my iron-clad 365 day guarantee so you have nothing to lose.

I hope you’ve enjoyed this report and the accompanying videos, and that you are able to put them to use in your own playing right away.

If you have any questions, or need to contact us for customer service, please email helpdesk@bluesguitarunleashed.com.