



# Joe Bonamassa

## ★ PRIVATE LESSON ★

**Want to cop Joe's best blues licks? Who better to teach you how to play them right than the man himself?**

**A**fter we chatted with Joe about his forthcoming album, he talked us through some of the go-to licks that define his hot, high-energy style of blues guitar. He didn't have any of his touring electrics with him, but a gorgeous Gibson Collector's Choice '57 Goldtop Les Paul, kindly provided by Peach Guitars in Essex, saved the day. It sounded stunning through the Lazy J combo we borrowed from John Henry's for the

occasion. Also joining the fun was Bernie Marsden from Whitesnake, who brought some of his stunning collection of vintage guitars (see p66) along, too. Talk about choice! Once Joe was plugged in and warmed up, he explained some of his best blues moves for us, lick by lick. We've transcribed those lessons below for you to learn, and you can follow every note of each lesson with the accompanying video. Hopefully, they'll help you explore some *Different Shades Of Blue...*

## ★ LESSON ★

### Epic Doublestop Bend

**"THIS IS** a great way to start a blues if you're with your jamming buddies, and maybe they say, 'Hey, you kick it off'. Try this little lick out for size – it's great for starting a blues, because you get these ominous kind of half-bends within the chord. It's a lot of fun if you can get your hands trained to anticipate the changes and bend down. And the real trick with that is making sure that the intonation's right, because if you don't get that right it just sounds like you're making a lot of mistakes!"

**Ex 1a** **JOE DEMONSTRATES** a cool way of adding thickness to bluesy doublestops by using a wider interval. The minor 3rd (top note) is pushed up to the major 3rd, creating a partial major chord, and the rest of the lick uses a G blues scale (G B $\flat$  C D $\flat$  D F). This would work well on the last four bars of a 12-bar blues.

The musical notation for Ex 1a is in G major, 12/8 time. It consists of two systems of guitar notation. The first system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 11th and 12th frets, bending the 11th fret note up to the 12th fret. The second system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 12th and 13th frets, bending the 12th fret note up to the 13th fret. The third system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 11th and 12th frets, bending the 11th fret note up to the 12th fret. The fourth system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 12th and 13th frets, bending the 12th fret note up to the 13th fret. The fifth system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 11th and 12th frets, bending the 11th fret note up to the 12th fret. The sixth system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 12th and 13th frets, bending the 12th fret note up to the 13th fret. The seventh system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 11th and 12th frets, bending the 11th fret note up to the 12th fret. The eighth system shows a G7 chord with a double stop on the 12th and 13th frets, bending the 12th fret note up to the 13th fret. The notation includes fret numbers and bend indicators.



**Ex 1b** IN THIS example, Joe applies the same doublestop technique to all three chords from the I-IV-V progression. Also, note the E<sub>b</sub> chord leading down into the D at the end and the A<sub>b</sub> chord at the start... the neighbouring chromatic chord is used for temporary tension.

## ★ LESSON ★

### Cascading Blues Licks

“ONE OF the most commonly asked questions is how you get from point A to point B when you’re soloing, such as when you’re starting high [among the upper frets] and you want to go lower down on the fretboard. So I think about the fretboard in terms of blocks. So if you want to do a cascading lick down the neck, you pull [blocks of notes] from every one of these areas. That also helps you in mid-solo to just look down and then if you’re in danger of getting stuck [for where to go next], you can kind of right the ship once it starts listing.”

**Ex 2a** THIS LESSON is about the importance of learning notes all over the fretboard, so you’re not restricted to single-box positions. Joe plays some descending E minor pentatonic lines in various positions, sneaking in a C# note from the Dorian mode (E F# G A B C# D) in bar four.

**Ex 2b** **ANOTHER DORIAN** note (F#) creeps in here and adds melodic interest. This is the simplest form of what Joe is demonstrating here, but don't just play complete descending scales in your own solos; there's a whole lot more you can do besides...

**Ex 2c** **FOR A** start, you can add little 'kinks' in the melodic contour, so the notes don't just go straight down or up. If you're a feel player, this might seem a deliberate, studied way of working, but the more ideas you feed into your brain during practice sessions, the more variety you can call on when you're really playing.

**Ex 2d** **NOW JOE** opens up, adding more position shifts and those 'kinks' within each melodic contour. You might not think that a single position shift would do much to your playing, but just applying comfortable patterns to a different part of a scale can create melodies you wouldn't normally play.

★ LESSON ★

## Super-Heavy Chord Inversions

**"I USE** a lot of these low chord inversions that make it sound almost as if the guitar's tuned down. I'm not a fan of tuning the guitar down, because the guitar sounds brighter, more powerful and heavier in A440. Natural E, natural A. These days, guitars get tuned down not only to D but down to B and A, and I've even heard of people tuning down to F#. So in that case you either have a baritone octave guitar, or you have a bass! So, how do you get the heaviness without having to tune your guitar down? Well, try this. It's nice to throw this kind of lick in during the course of a blues or something up-tempo."

**Ex 3a** **IN THIS** lesson, Joe shows how a knowledge of chord inversions can help you get thick, meaty sounds, even when the current chord's root note isn't particularly low on the guitar. When the chord moves from G to C (bar 3), he plays a 2nd inversion C chord (with G, the 5th, at the bottom), keeping things low and pungent!

**Ex 3b** **HERE, JOE** isolates the I-V-IV chords, using chromatic neighbouring chords to lead into each one.

**Ex 3c** NOW JOE uses the inverted chords within the context of a full 12-bar progression in G. As well as using the inversions to mark the main chord changes, he's using them to create nice chromatic doublestop lines.

The diagram shows a 12-bar guitar progression in G major, divided into four systems of three bars each. The progression is marked with chord changes and includes chromatic doublestop lines. The fretboard is shown with fingerings and doublestop lines.

**System 1 (Bars 1-3):** G7, A♭/E♭, G/D, G7. Fretboard shows chromatic doublestop lines: 5-3-5, 3-5, 3-5, 10-9-3-5, 6-5-4-5-3-5.

**System 2 (Bars 4-6):** A♭/E♭, G/D, D♭/A♭. Fretboard shows chromatic doublestop lines: 10-9-X-5-3-5-3-5, 6-3-5-6-5-3-5-3-5-5-3-X-5-3-X-3-4.

**System 3 (Bars 7-9):** C/G, A♭/E♭, G/D. Fretboard shows chromatic doublestop lines: 2-3-2-5-3-5-3-6-3-6, 8-6-8-10-8-9-8-11-8-10-12-11-10-9.

**System 4 (Bars 10-12):** C7, Csus4, C, G, E♭/B♭, D/A, E♭/B♭, E/B, F/C, C/G, G, D7. Fretboard shows chromatic doublestop lines: 5-3-5-3-2-0-3-2-0-0-3, 2-0-3-0-1-2-3-3-6-5-6-7-8-3, 2-2-3-5-3-3, 5-10-9-9-8-8-7-X-3-5-3-5-5. A "Let ring" instruction is present in the final bar.

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