

## **AG105 – Cool Blues**

Just when you thought it was cool, Wes made it cooler!

Blues guitar is cool, but no one in my opinion evolved the style more rapidly and with such creativity than Wes Montgomery. It has taken me years of noodling around and analysing to truly understand how Wes approached a blues. I mean, his more complex stuff made more sense to me, in that you can do many interesting things over and interesting progression. But what truly impressed me with Wes, was how he can play over a blues progression using so much more than just the minor pentatonic blues. Even when he does, he has his own angular approach with wider intervals that truly opens up the fretboard. For this issue, I wanted to provide an interpretation of how Mr. Montgomery would approach a blues. I've kept it as simple as possible and maintained a fairly strict blues form.

It's also worth noting that Wes used his thumb and used a lot of octaves. While these things were prevalent, they are not in my opinion the things that truly define his genius. His single lines are smooth, flowing and incredibly colourful and inventive. If you haven't checked out Wes Montgomery, do it right now. NOW!

### **Bars 1 - 4**

A simple concept that's seldom used by the common blues player nowadays, chord outlining is a huge part of Wes' playing. Dominant 7 chords lend themselves well to a blend of major and minor notes. Here I outline an A9, using the root note, third, fifth, flat seven and ninth. You'll spy notes that are consistent with typical blues amongst the chord tones. If you aren't familiar with arpeggios and chord tones, it's worth reading up on. Take note of the shapes being used in reference to the chords that are marked above, and use it as a reference point for moving keys. Bars three and four apply a similar idea utilising a few different notes to help setup the shift to the D7 in bar 5.

### **Bars 5-8**

For bars 5 - 8, I play around with the chord tones that you'll find in a D9 chord: D, F#, A, C and E. Not the little triplet in bar six - very jazz and very cool, it's also just straight A minor pentatonic for a moment there! In bars seven and eight, I leave some space before playing a cliché pentatonic lick -this will give you an idea of where we are in the grand scheme of things if you are familiar with pentatonic blues licks.

### **Bars 9-12**

We now get to the famous 'Five' or 'IV' chord in the blues. The best way to explain this still requires some theoretical knowledge, but here goes: Over and E dominant 7, we can play the notes from a B Minor 7. That's the concept I've applied here. You could apply E min 7 over A dominant 7, D min 7 over G dominant 7 and so on and so forth. If that doesn't make sense, learn it anyway, comprehension might come to you harmonically (by ear). This B minor 7 arpeggio flows into cool blues lick based around A minor pentatonic and a the use of the F# from the D9 chord, before resolving with a lick much like the lick in bar 1. The E7 at the end is played late, to add 'cool'. Also note the #9#5 in the brackets, that little chord you play is a tense little guy, but really sets up the return home.

### **Summary**

Although you could say there's a lot going on in this short lead break, it's generally based around the arpeggios of each chord. You could say there's some A mixolydian, A dorian concepts etc. but I choose to see it chord by chord, and look at the relevance of the tones you can play against each one. It's a more jazz approach and yields more interesting ideas as

opposed to playing one scale throughout your blues. One's not better than the other, but in combination you can create some pleasant variety. Wes was a master of this and really pushed the envelope whilst always remaining musical – something I feel is lost on many modern jazz players. I mean really, can it get much cooler than this?

# COOL BLUES

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS COOL, WE MADE IT COOLER!

BY ADRIAN WHYTE

STANDARD TUNING

♩ = 120

E-GT

A7

mf

TAB

5

D9

A7

E7

D7

A7

A7

E7(#9#5)