

The Blues Curl

Better blues solos



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Key: Blues in A (but applies to all keys)

Video Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nk-F4t6747g>

Some theory is required to understand this, we must first examine the A7 chords, the notes that make it, and the intervals that correspond to each note. Intervals are the way we measure distance between notes (like we use kilos or pounds for weight, and miles or kilometers for distance)

A - Root
C# - 3rd
E - 5th
G - b7th

When jamming blues in the key of A we use the A blues scale, which is the A minor pentatonic with adding the b5th as a passing tone, so let's look at the scale and it's intervals. Notes in scale are color coded. Note the Eb, or the b5th, should only be used as a passing tone.

A - Root	A -----0-3-
C - b3rd	E -----0-3-----
D - 4th	C 0-2-3-----
E _b - b5th	G -----
E - 5th	
G - b7th	

The next step we should do is examining the notes in our chord when compared with the notes in our scale. We see that 3 of the 4 exist. We also see our chord has a C# and our scale has a C, when played at the same time, for example the C in a solo and the A7 in the harmony, this half step creates a lot of dissonance, or unpleasant tension (note using dissonance to create tension and release is what makes solos interesting, don't be scared of dissonance, just aware of what creates it). This little difference between notes is where we can add our blues curl.

Essentially the blues curl is just a $\frac{1}{4}$ bend, so in A blues it is bending the C note up towards the C#, but only half way, never fully arriving at the note, just implying the note, very tasty. Let's look at an example lick. Blues curls are highlighted red.

*Note this lick is one bar, so it also functions great as a one bar fill for a blues in A, it is also worth noting the power of hammer-ons and pull-offs in quicker licks and how much they can add to a solo as well.

1 e & 2 & 3 & 4 &
 A7
 A|0h3p0-3b-0---0-3b-0-|
 E|-----3-----|
 C|-----|
 G|-----|

Good news! This works in all keys, you just have to be able to identify it. In the minor pentatonic it will always be the b3rd that you curl, which is always the note after the root. So let's look at a couple of example shapes and how to identify them.

The first is E minor pentatonic (shape 4) Root in Blue, b3rd in Red

A|-----2-5---|
 E|----3-4-----|
 C|2-4-----|
 G|-----|

The second is C minor pentatonic (Shape 5) Root in Blue, b3rd in Red

A|-----1-3---|
 E|----1-3-----|
 C|0-3-----|
 G|-----|

The third is B minor (shape 2) Root in Blue, b3rd in Red

A|-----5-7---|
 E|----5-7-----|
 C|4-6-----|
 G|-----|

The fourth is G minor (shape 3) Root in Blue, b3rd in Red

A|-----3-5---|
 E|----3-6-----|
 C|2-5-----|
 G|-----|

Lastly, in a blues progression, blues curls should only happen over the I and V chords, not the IV. The IV contains the b3rd, so for example in A (A7-I, D7-IV, E7-V) the blues curl should only take place over the A7 and E7 chords because the D7 (IV chord) contains the C note.