

# HOW TO PLAY BLUES LIKE JIMMY PAGE

*The Led Zeppelin icon's influence on rock guitar is impossible to overstate, but at the core of his signature style were some classic blues fundamentals.*

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Lead guitarist for Led Zeppelin, Jimmy Page, performs at Ronnie Lane's ARMS benefit concert on 1 December, 1983, at the Cow Palace in Daly City, CA. Image: Ross Marino / Getty Images

From an in-demand session man and **Clapton's** replacement in **The Yardbirds**, to redefining rock music as the creative fulcrum of **Led Zeppelin**, **Jimmy Page's** contribution to guitar playing has been as seismic as it is enduring.

But whether he was strapping on a **Telecaster**, his iconic '59 **Les Paul**, or even the famous Gibson EDS-1275 double-neck, Page's guitar style has always remained fundamentally rooted in the blues.

Indeed, if it wasn't for a young Page hearing Lonnie Donegan's 1955 hit *Rock Island Line*, he might never have picked up a guitar in earnest at all, and a huge part of his musical education came from tracing back the origins of some of his favourite Elvis tracks to their blues roots.

Of course, what Page would go on to do with those blues fundamentals would change the landscape of rock music forever, so here we're going to take a look at five examples of how he fused the blues with rock to create something different altogether.

## Lick 1

The notation for Lick 1 consists of a guitar staff and a tablature staff. The guitar staff is in 4/4 time and shows a fast flurry of triplets in the first measure, followed by a single note on the E string and a single note on the B string in the second measure. The tablature staff shows the fret numbers for each string: 20-17-17 for the first measure and 20-20-20 for the second measure. The strings are labeled T, A, and B from top to bottom. The notation includes a 'full' label with an arrow pointing to the 20th fret on the B string in the second measure.

This first lick uses the A minor pentatonic up at the dusty end of the guitar, starting at the 17th fret. This is a fast flurry of triplets (three notes per beat) made up of a pull off on the E string and a single fretted note on the B string.

## Lick 2

The notation for Lick 2 consists of a guitar staff and a tablature staff. The guitar staff shows an ascending run in the first measure, followed by a descending run in the second measure. The tablature staff shows the fret numbers for each string: 14-12-12-15-12-15-14-12 for the first measure and 14-15 for the second measure. The strings are labeled T, A, and B from top to bottom. The notation includes a 'full' label with an arrow pointing to the 12th fret on the B string in the first measure and another 'full' label with an arrow pointing to the 15th fret on the B string in the second measure.

Here we have a rock lick using the E natural minor scale. The natural minor scale is a pentatonic minor with two additional notes added. In the case of this lick, the additional note is the 15th fret on the G string. The lick starts with an ascending run before coming back down through a series

of pull-offs. Watch out for the three-note pull-off on the G string, this can be tricky to do at speed.

### *Lick 3*

5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 5 7 5 3 5 3 7

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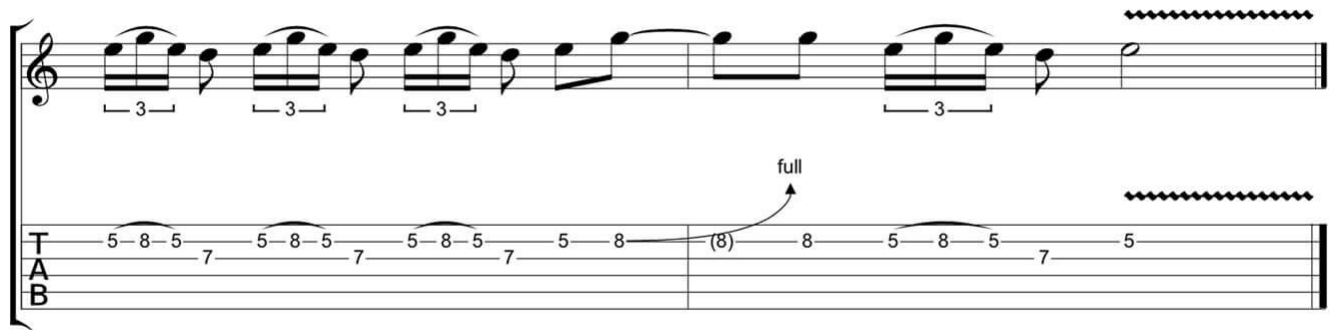
This lick is a typically 70s Page-style lick. Using the A minor pentatonic. You'll notice that the first bar is all 16th notes, which should mean it's straight, but pay attention to the groupings of the notes. It's split into three groups of six that each descend before jumping back up slightly. The descending groups of six notes across a four-beat bar can be tricky to master so start slow. The final two notes of the last grouping cross into the second bar.

### *Lick 4*

11 10 8 10 8 9 9 8 10 10 8 7 8 10

In this lick we are moving to the key of C and using the Natural Minor scale again. You'll notice the 10th fret on the E, ninth fret on the B and seventh fret on the G are all notes that would fall outside the standard C Minor Pentatonic shape. This is a blues ballad-style lick that should be played with plenty of feel. The first bar is descending triplets with a few doubled up notes over the last two beats. Don't worry about the triplets being razor sharp, go for feel over precision here.

## *Lick 5*



This final lick is another up-tempo A minor lick that uses some fast 16th note triplets. In the first bar, the 16th note triplets occupy half a beat while the fretted seventh fret note occupies the other half. You're fitting four notes across each beat, but the triplet gives it a more frantic feel.

## *Try it yourself*

Each lick in this lesson is based in the minor pentatonic or natural minor scales in a range of keys. They are all transposable and work well at a range of tempos. These are licks that can be put to a huge range of applications. Put them into your own leads today and channel a bit of Page!