FREEBIES - GOOD TIMES BAD TIMES

Main solo by Led Zeppelin

Level: Intermediate- Advanced

Sep 2014
Good Times Bad Times

Welcome to Led Zeppelin. That's what this song is all about, quite literally, as this was the first track on the band's debut album, and so was most people's very first encounter with one of the most important bands of all time. In my opinion it is a fitting entrance to the album (named simply Led Zeppelin and released in 1969), and band, full of catchy, thunderous riffs and an absolutely hair raising and frantic solo. That solo and the ensuing run are the topic of this freebie.

Jimmy Page is most associated with the classic rock setup of a Gibson Les Paul and a Marshall stack, however like several of his famous solos (and this entire first album) he recorded this solo with a Fender Telecaster run through a Supro amplifier, and also noticeably used a special speaker cabinet called a 'Leslie' which creates a wobbling tremolo sound by placing a rotating paddle in front of the speaker. I opted for a Les Paul for the classic Jimmy Page look straight into my trusty Cornford Carrera and I think it sounds pretty good still so a Tele is by no means a required item.

I decided to split the main solo up into six chunks which I have time-coded to the original song, and also included the frantic descending pentatonic run you hear several bars after. We're in E minor, grab your guitar and let's go!
If we look at the first three notes we see a classic blues phrase (marked P1 above) played at the top of the pentatonic box consisting of a bent note on the G string followed by two 12th fret notes on adjacent strings. Play these with a small first finger bar. You repeat this pattern twice before chiming out the barred notes individually before returning to the pattern once more. We then have a fast and fluid bend up into a pull off to the 12th fret, before playing 14 on the D string and rolling back onto the G string. Rolls can be fiddly at speed so practice that part separately till it feels natural. We end with a bluesy quarter tone bend with your first finger at the 12th fret on the G string.

On to the D string with a straightforward pentatonic lick for most of the bar. More interesting is the 14th fret bend on the B string which I have underlined above. Execute this bend with your 3rd finger and whilst the bend is still up play the 15th fret B string note with your 4th finger before re-picking the bent note and releasing it. As the note descends you need to smoothly pull off to the 12th fret before continuing the line. Another interesting feature of this bar is the open G string at the end of the line. Im unsure if this note was intentional but Page has done similar things in other solos (noticeably on Stairway to Heaven) either way the note G is in the key so he’s gotten away with it if it was a mistake and provided an interesting detail for us to include.
MAIN SOLO - CHUNK 3 (1.35)
Two bars to look at here in chunk 3. Nothing massively out of the ordinary in either but a couple of noteworthy features, first up a large bend:

I talk at length in the video as to my own theories about this bent note and also other ways of achieve the sound. The tab above shows something that will work just fine without being too difficult to achieve; bend the 17th fret and release the bend slowly jumping straight to the 12th fret as you near the bottom.

Nothing too radical here in the next bar, more E minor goodness with an interesting/fiddly roll which I have underlined. A few nice mutes at the end to help steady your nerves before the crazy ascending run to come. I position my hand around the 9th-12th fret area for the mutes so I’m below the E minor pentatonic, ready to slide into.........
The scary bit! We’re sliding in from below with our third finger to the 14th fret on the A string and then re-picking the note. After this the fast fun begins, ascending up the pentatonic scale, zig zagging between two notes in a pattern of 3 like so:

Take your time with this, learn it in chunks of 3 then pair them up so you have 6 note patterns. Use a metronome and aim for quality, slowly building up the speed. Believe me I know it sounds less fun this way but you will thank me in the long run. If ever there was a shortcut for building real speed on the guitar its this approach.

On we go....
We start chunk 5 with some nice bends at the top of the pentatonic box including a few tasty quarter tone bends. The really interesting part comes in the second half of the bar where we hold a bend at the 17th fret and move between two bent notes. We have the full tone bend and then a slightly released bend that Jimmy moves between. Hard to describe on paper so check it out on the video. Its a great, emotive idea to steal for your own soloing as most people either play a full tone bend or don't, so it shows you there's lots of fun and expression to be had if you vary your bending approach. We end this phrase with a straightforward bend into into a pull off played at the top of the second pentatonic box.

**MAIN SOLO - CHUNK 6 (1.45)**

Great note choice here using a major 3rd (underlined) giving the phrase a dominant pentatonic feel (see scale box on next page). The timing of this part is very strange and if your ear isn't too strong you might struggle to pin it down. Its always a great idea to try different rhythms to spice up your playing otherwise you will fall into predictable, neat subdivisions. The above is a great example of finding unpredictable rhythms to mix it up.
Dominant pentatonic box 1

This is a great scale to use with the blues as it suits the most common blues chord (the Dominant 7, or 7 for short). It includes a major 3rd (underlined) that separates the scale from the Minor pentatonic. Blues is all about this push and pull between a major and minor tonality and its one of the reasons our ears love it so much!

**CHUNK 7 - FINAL DESCENDING RUN (2.02)**

Superficially this resembles the ascending run in chunk 4 and it is indeed based around the same scale and is also in groups of 3 notes. It is subtly different however but can be learnt with the same approach of memorising groupings and then combining them into larger 6 note chunks. Watch out for the second group of 3 notes as its something of an odd one out compared to the rest of the sequence. The run ends on the 10th fret of the low E string and Jimmy holds this note before sliding down to the 9th fret, applying copious amounts of vibrato and then bending the string up to sound like the 12th fret. Try and time this bend so that it hits the note to coincide with the first beat of the next bar.

Rock history!

FREEBIES - GOOD TIMES BAD TIMES 7
NEED SOME HELP?

Not sure about some of the chords, scales or techniques in this lesson?
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