FREEBIES - ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK
Solo by Danny Cedrone

Level: Advanced
Jul 2014
Rock Around The Clock

Simply put, this is one of the most important guitar solos of all time. A list of notable guitarists who have openly cited it as a major influence include Jimi Hendrix, Pete Townshend, Danny Gatton and Brian Setzer. The man who played it, Danny Cedrone was an important figure in the birth of rock and roll and played lead on the 1951 recording of 'Rocket 88' which is widely considered to be one of the first acknowledged rock and roll recordings. Interestingly whilst rock around the clock was recorded in 1954 the solo first appeared in 1952 on a song called ‘Rock this joint’ (itself often cited as the first Rockabily recording). The earlier song sounds uncannily like the later one and the story goes that when it came to record Rock around the clock they asked Danny to reproduce the solo he had already played on Rock this joint. He happily obliged and the rest is quite literally rock and roll history: the song became the biggest selling vinyl single of all time and is still today the quintessential rock and roll song.

The solo itself is a technical tour de force and will push your alternate picking forward several notches. It was the Eruption* of its day and in some ways should be even more infamous. It features a fierce 182bpm tempo with a guitar line playing 16th notes (4 notes to a beat) practically the whole way through with little more than a clean channel, so nowhere to hide any sloppiness. If you want to honour the late Danny Cedrone, grab your favourite P90 equipped Gibson Hollowbody, and play it through a top of the line (in 1946) 18 watt Gibson BR-1 amplifier. Make sure your action is high and grab the thickest strings you can find, preferably as thick as telephone wire. I used my Gibson ES-175 with gauge 13 flatwounds through my ever trusty Cornford Carrera.

* 1978 recording by Eddie Van Halen, a groundbreaking solo that broke the mould

Danny Cedrone
BREAKDOWN

The backing is a straightforward 12 bar blues in A with a heavy swing feel.

We start off with a frantic line on the B string that is repeated in the second bar. The notes for much of this solo are drawn from the ‘Mixolydian mode’ which is essentially a major scale with the 7th note flattened. The 16th note groupings are actually perfect here for breaking it down into small self contained chunks to work on individually, treat each one as a mini exercise.

In bar 3 we continue with the same note choice finding new ways to mix up the notes. The climax of this idea comes in bar 4 where we drop down to a 1 bar pattern that is repeated four times. Even though the tempo is unchanged the extra movement in this bar will make it feel like you’ve sped up considerably. Don’t lose track of the beat and try and keep the timing consistent with the previous three bars.

Tips for building speed
• Ensure strict alternate picking
• Try and keep your movements down to a minimum, only lift your fingers as much as absolutely necessary
• Use a metronome and start slow, it’s crucial you’re practicing the lines perfectly, even if they’re slow your fingers are developing the skills they need to play fast.
On we go to a lovely slinky little bending section. We’re repeating the same idea four times so you will have plenty of practice. Make sure you make the line as smooth as possible and master the rhythm. Along with the swing feel we have a tied eighth-note triplet to deal with so it can be a difficult rhythm to understand. Your best bet if you’re not confident with such things is to listen carefully to the rhythm as I play it on the video.

Next up in bars 7 and 8 we have some more A major lines this time with some chromatic notes played to fill the runs out. This is a particularly Jazzy idea and indeed early rock and roll playing often pulls ideas across from the Jazz age which is only just winding down as the popular music style.

Last frantic dash to the finish line, we have a lightning fast descending chromatic line. Practice this run religiously with the tips at the end of page 3. The last note in bar 10 should be player with an upstroke and actually anticipates the last riff that is repeated in bars 11 and 12:

Standard Rock n roll fun!
Need some help?

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

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