

The Voodoo Blues Scale

BY STEVE TROVATO



IF THERE'S ONE FISTFUL of notes that never gets old, it's the blues scale. Once it finds its way into the hands of a young, inspired guitarist, it typically stays there for a lifetime. Though the blues scale is timeless, many players yearn for ways to import new melodic colors into their blues-based solos. The simplest way to do this is to change one note of the blues scale, resulting in a soulful sound you may have heard in the playing of Hollywood Fats, Duke Robillard, Charlie Christian, and Larry Carlton—a sound often referred to as the “voodoo” blues scale.

In **Ex. 1a** you'll find a typical *E* blues scale—a pentatonic scale with the bluesy $\flat 5$, or *B \flat* , added. Morphing this universal shape into the voodoo blues scale is easy: Just lower each $\flat 7$ to the natural 6 by

replacing every *D* with a *C \sharp* , as shown in **Ex. 1b**. Play through this mutated blues scale a few times, and see if you can come up with alternative fingerings such as **Ex. 1c**, a pattern Stevie Ray Vaughan used in his immortal blues extravaganza, “Rude Mood.”

Ex. 2 is an SRV-approved voodoo maneuver that uses **Ex. 1c**'s fingering and sounds mean over a swingin' *E7* shuffle—even though it doesn't actually tag the $\flat 7$. (Instead, it nails the 6, *C \sharp* —remember?) And for yet another voodoo fingering, try **Ex. 3**. It has a similar flow to the previous example, but occurs lower on the neck and features a Charlie Christian-style slide from the $\flat 3$ up to the 3 (*G* to *G \sharp*) on the first string's 3rd and 4th frets.

When you're ready for the ultimate voodoo blues lick, try **Ex. 4**. In the key of *E*, this phrase contains



Acoustic cowboys—Trovato (left) and Johnny Hilland mesmerize a crowd at the B-Band booth, Winter NAMM 2003.

elements of voodoo blues, country, and jazz. Begin in the fourth position. Follow the fingering and string markings closely. Robben Ford—another master of the voodoo blues scale—showed me

the meaty *E9,13 \sharp 11* grip that closes this example, and I've been playing it ever since.

For more wicked Steve Trovato licks, click to stevetrovato.com.

Ex. 1a Standard E Blues Scale

Ex. 1b E Voodoo Blues Scale

Ex. 1c E Voodoo Blues Scale

Ex. 2

$\text{♩} = 116$ *E7*

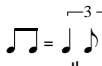
Ex. 3

$\text{♩} = 144$ *E7*

audio version available!
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Ex. 4.

♩ = 144

 E7

E9,13#11

