

Sample of Version 2.0 of Swing & Jump Blues Guitar

The Charlie Christian Approach

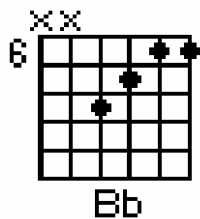
Charlie Christian (1916 – 1942) was one of the first real swing guitar players that had a lasting influence on all other swing and jump guitar players after him. Even more than 60 years after his death he sounds as hip as any other cat out there.

Being the guitarist of Benny Goodman's Big Band and jamming with the likes of Theolonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie, he can be called the Jimi Hendrix of his days.

His style of soloing was based around some surprisingly simple principles. The first one was that he played a lot of his solos based on chord shapes. As we know; the individual chord tones of any chord have the most 'gravitational' pull on that chord. They sound the most solid.

What Charlie would do is take one of the major or minor chord shapes and just play those chord tones.

Let's start out by playing major triads on a Bb blues and play this chord shape :



The individual chord notes are a
Bb ; tonic on fourth string
D ; third on third string
F ; fifth on second string
Bb ; tonic on first string

By just playing these notes you are outlining the chord. All these notes sound good when you play this chord. If you are playing these notes from bottom to top you are playing an arpeggio.

Moving them up 5 frets and 7 frets will give you the IV and V chord shapes

This is still pretty simple, but once the chords change (and in those days sometimes at breakneck speed) it becomes more challenging.

Note: we're just playing major chords, not dominant seventh chords. Yet.

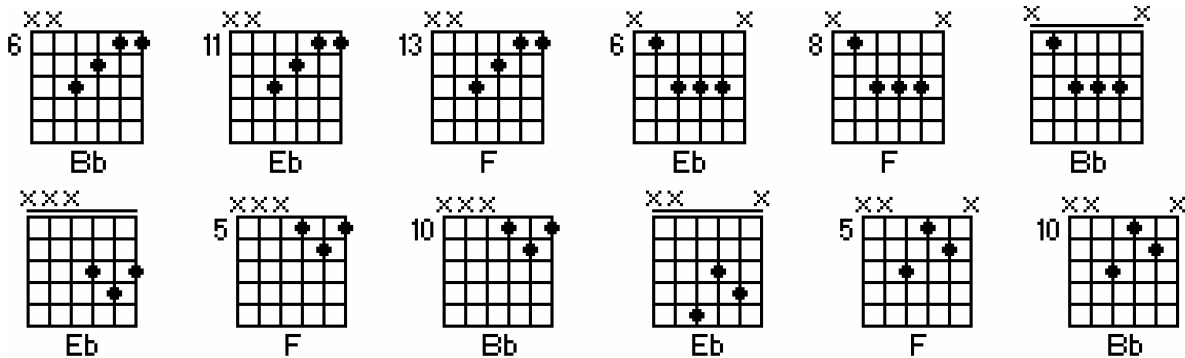
When we change chords we have to follow with the solo. We could keep soloing on the same shape going up and down the neck.

But you could also find some other shapes of the blues chords.

The chords in the blues progression are Bb, Eb and F.

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These are some of the shapes you could use:



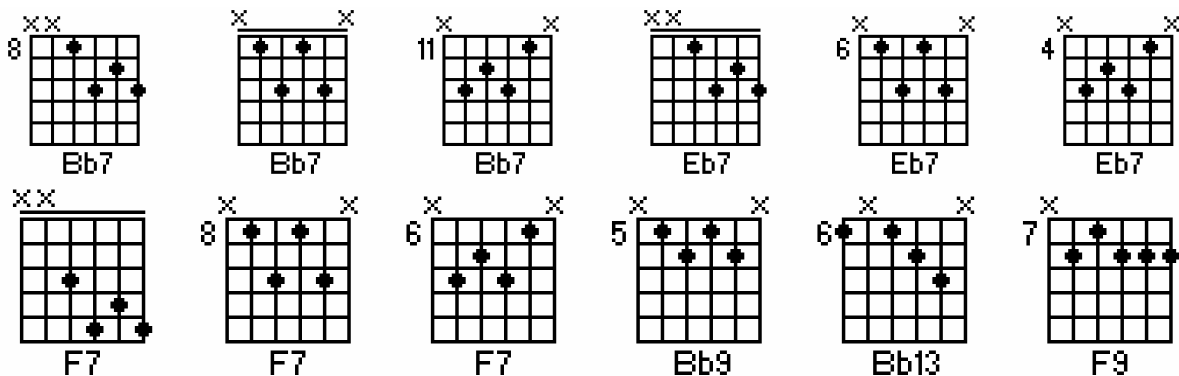
As you see; more choices which means less movement but also more shapes to remember.

Practice this way of soloing by using JUST chord tones over a blues progression.

Dominant chords

As we use mostly dominant seventh chords in jump blues, we will be adding those shapes to the mix.

These are some of the shapes you could be using in a jump blues progression.



Whoaaa, that's a lotta shapes.

Remembering all these shapes is a lotta work. This is what jazz players have to do; learn all these arpeggios and know when to play them.

Charlie Christian knew all of these shapes inside out, top to bottom, bottom to top and used these as these base for his solo.

And we're not there yet. His solos used 6th chords, 9th chords and 13th chords too. And there's some diminished chords thrown in, etc, etc.

Don't try to learn all these shapes at once. Pick a few simple ones and try to get a sense of what they sound like and how you can incorporate them in your jump blues solo.

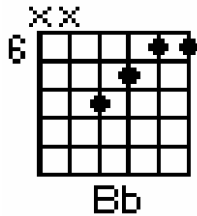
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Major chords plus added notes

Finding all these shapes can be a challenge. You could also take one of the major chord shapes and locate all the extra notes relative to that shape.

And because we are using mostly dominant chords in jump blues, we end up playing the mixolydian scale on top of that chord shape.

Try to visualize the major chord and "see" all the other notes as added colors.



(MP3 – 01 Bb Exercises)

Outlining the Bb major scale

Adding the 6th and 9th from the scale

Adding the 6th below the tonic

Adding the flat 7th

Outlining a Bb9 chord

Adding b7 below the tonic & 13th

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The image shows a musical score for guitar. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff with fret numbers (5, 6, 7, 8) indicating fingerings for the notes. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line.

T			
A	6	5	6
B	5	6	6

		7	6
	8	6	8

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Adding chromatic approach notes

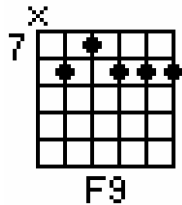
As an added technique Charlie used approach notes.

He would outline chord shapes like the ones we've seen and add the notes from the major or mixolydian scale.

But to get from one note to the other he would often make chromatic lines.

The passing notes would sound "off" if you landed on them and stayed there.

But they work great as a connection between chord / scale notes.



The mixolydian scale that come with this F9 chord looks like this:

(MP3 – 02 F Exercises)

F mixolydian scale

F7 chord tones

Musical notation for the F mixolydian scale and F7 chord tones. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef, 4/4 time, with notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. The bottom staff shows the F7 chord tones: F4, C5, G4, Bb4. The guitar part below has three measures. Measure 1: Treble clef, notes F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. Bass clef, notes 8, 10 on the B string and 7, 8, 10 on the A string. Measure 2: Treble clef, notes 8, 10, 11, 13. Bass clef, notes 8, 10, 11, 13. Measure 3: Treble clef, notes 8, 11. Bass clef, notes 8, 10, 11.

Charlie's favorite F9-F13 position

Adding approach notes

Musical notation for Charlie's favorite F9-F13 position and adding approach notes. The top staff shows the F9-F13 position in treble clef, 4/4 time, with notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. The bottom staff shows the F9-F13 position: F4, C5, G4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. The guitar part below has three measures. Measure 1: Treble clef, notes F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. Bass clef, notes 8, 10 on the B string and 7, 10 on the A string. Measure 2: Treble clef, notes 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10. Bass clef, notes 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10. Measure 3: Treble clef, notes 10, 9, 8, 7, 10, 8. Bass clef, notes 10, 9, 8, 7, 10, 8.

More approach notes

Approach notes before each chord note

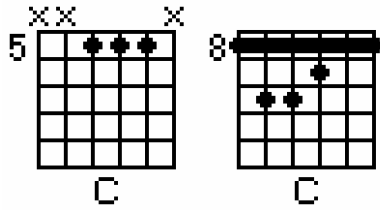
Musical notation for more approach notes and approach notes before each chord note. The top staff shows the F9-F13 position in treble clef, 4/4 time, with notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. The bottom staff shows the F9-F13 position: F4, C5, G4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5. The guitar part below has three measures. Measure 1: Treble clef, notes 8, 9, 10, 8, 10, 9, 8, 10, 8. Bass clef, notes 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 9, 8, 10, 7. Measure 2: Treble clef, notes 7, 8, 7, 8, 7, 8, 7, 8. Bass clef, notes 7, 8, 6, 7, 7, 8, 7, 8. Measure 3: Treble clef, notes 7, 8, 10, 8. Bass clef, notes 7, 8, 10, 8.

As you can see you can get away with a lot when playing these approach notes as passing note.

This principle was a very important ingredient in Charlie Christian's solo's.

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Solo 2 starts off with a sequence that incorporates approach notes like the one we've seen in solo 1, bars 8 and 9. It features blues position 5 between these two C chords:



The mixolydian scale that's being used is right beneath our fingertips.

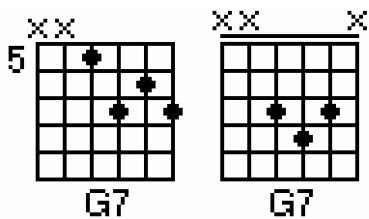
C Mixolydian scale

F7 chord riff

Tablature for C Mixolydian scale and F7 chord riff:

T	1	7	5	6	8	5	6	8	8	8	10	8	8	10	8
A	5	7	8	5	7	8	5	7	8	5	7	8	5	7	8
B	8	5	7	8	5	7	8	5	7	8	5	7	8	5	7

And on the F7 we're playing chord tones, that sound very sharp. That's because the interval we are playing is a tritone (aka "the devils' interval")



On the G7 chord we're playing another favorite of Charlie Christian. Try to see the G9 arpeggio in it and the mixolydian scale above that. The riff is completed by adding chromatic approach notes.

G9 chord Arpeggio

Chromatic approach of chord notes

Tablature for G9 chord arpeggio and chromatic approach:

T	5	4	7	6	5	7	5	6	7	4	7	5	3	5	5	5	5	6	7	6	5	6	7	6	5	4	5	
A	5	4	7	6	5	7	5	6	7	4	7	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	6	7	6	5	6	7	6	5	4	5
B	5	4	7	6	5	7	5	6	7	4	7	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	6	7	6	5	6	7	6	5	4	5

Note that the progression we are playing in bar 9-12 does not contain the IV chord.

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Charlie Christian Solo 2

(MP3 – 04 – Charlie Christian Style Solo 2)

$\text{♩} = 110$ (♩-♩-♩-♩)
C7

Gtr I

T	5	6	5	5	6	
A	5	7	5	7	5	6
B	5	7	5	7	5	8

sl.

F7 C7

T	7	8	10	8	10	
A	7	10	8	10	8	10
B	8	10	8	10	9	8

sl.

G7 C7

T	5	6	7	6	7	4	7	4		
A	5	4	3	4	4					
B	5	8	7	8	7	5	7	5	7	5

sl. sl.