

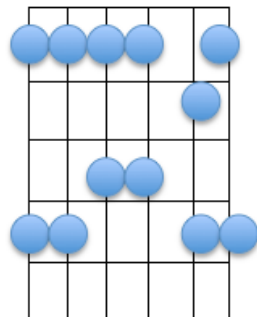
## **Thinking Theory: The BB King Blues Box**

All right, we've had our fun. We've had a good nine weeks of talking pedals, and guitars, and which amp we think helps us sound like that lost B-side Radiohead recording from the early 90's best. But the powers that be have told me that enough is enough, theory must be taught. We don't want a generation of all gear and no idea now do we? (It rhymes caus its true)

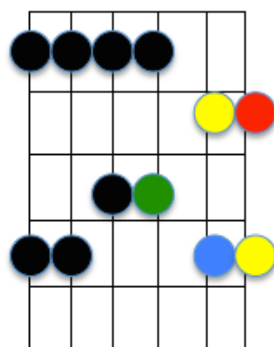
So what are we going be looking at today? Well I thought I'd go easy on ya and not dive straight into anything too intense so we can shake of those easy gear chat hats and get our much more serious and committed theory hats on. So naturally we're doing Blues. Why? Because you can apply pretty much any scale at its most basic form to Blues, and its format demands a degree of taste. You aimlessly wail over a Blues people are going to know, and we can't have that. So we're going to be taking influence from one of the most simple, yet timeless players: BB King.

Lets ignore the fact that BB had a voice that could melt an igloo in conditions that only existed back before we began killing our planet (shots fired) what BB brought to the world of guitar playing was something all guitarists should endorse and implement into their playing; restraint. He had so much restraint and simplicity in his playing that you can pretty much play 85% of his licks in one tiny little box on the pentatonic scale, known as the BB Blues box.

So where is that box Dan I hear you cry? Well calm down I'm about to show you obviously. Take a look:



This, is position three of the major pentatonic scale (or position four of the minor pentatonic) depicted by my dope drawing. Marvel before its beauty. The only problem with this picture is that it just kinda looks like a bunch of notes with no direction or vibe whatsoever. But things are not always as they appear:



Boom. Did that just blow your mind? Suddenly there's a whole breadth of colour in this scale, both musically and literally. What I've done is alter one note of the scale, and then pick out pretty much the only five notes you'll need to get your BB king on. Lets talk actual theory to make this a bit clearer.

Essentially what you're doing by highlighting these five notes is picking out the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> notes of the scale you're playing in. In the key of C, that would be A, C, D, F, and G. Or Green, Yellow, Blue, Red, Yellow on the chart.

You're reading that and probably saying 'That just sounds like random notes of the scale Dan', but let's consider this over a blues in C (Chords 1, 4, 5, or C, F, G). If you think about it, you've basically got your root and fifth of chord 1 (C and G) and of chord 4 (F and C) AND of chord 5 (G and D). You can also consider F to be the 7<sup>th</sup> of your chord 5, or your A to be the 6<sup>th</sup> of Chord 1, and so on.

The trick with playing in this blues box, and soloing in general, is picking your moments. Try just playing the 1 and 5 of each chord over the changes of a blues, and you'll begin to hear that you're suddenly playing some pretty tasty licks without even really doing anything. Once you're more confident, start experimenting with other notes. Bend your 2<sup>nd</sup> up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> over chord 4 and you've got the 3<sup>rd</sup> of that chord, or the most classic BB sounding lick, 6<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup>.

Tasteful soloing is all about finding your own licks, but being aware of the chords you're playing over. Less is always more in this case. It will take some time to get confident playing with, but remember; BB always took his time!

Happy shredding!

By Dan Tredgold