

What's Between The Lines

John Lee Hooker Boom Boom

The same sociological, cultural, and technological forces in 1948 that led to Muddy Waters' epochal recording of "Can't Be Satisfied"/"Feel Like Going Home" contributed to John Lee Hooker's butt-shaking, million-selling "Boogie Chillun"/Sally Mae. The vast migration of Southern blacks to the North, their desire for a taste of down home music, and advances made in electrical amplification created the perfect milieu for blues innovation. While Muddy was developing the notion of the blues combo in Chicago, Hooker was turning the clang of postwar industrial Detroit into raw, stark, emotional music all by his lonesome. Between 1948 and 1953, armed on the best tracks with just his brutally distorted guitar and stomping foot, he boogied and confessed the blues, his deep, resonant vocals expressing joy, despair, and more than a hint of menace. As the '50s rolled on he would have his eccentric timing and arrangements constrained by group situations, and by the end of the decade would be relegated to the world of folk blues, performing politely at low volume in coffeehouses.

In the '60s, his music took a turn toward R&B at Vee-Jay Records, and the Hook had a hit with "Boom Boom" in 1962. Though, by necessity, he had toyed with 12-bar blues in the past when confronted with an ensemble, on this outing he composed a "hooky" 12-bar head in a "call and response" fashion, followed by regular verses and solos. Tours of England had solidified the idolatry bestowed upon him by British Invasion musicians, and the Animals turned in an energetic cover version in 1964.

Encroaching old age and poor health have slowed John Lee Hooker's performing career, but, as one of the most

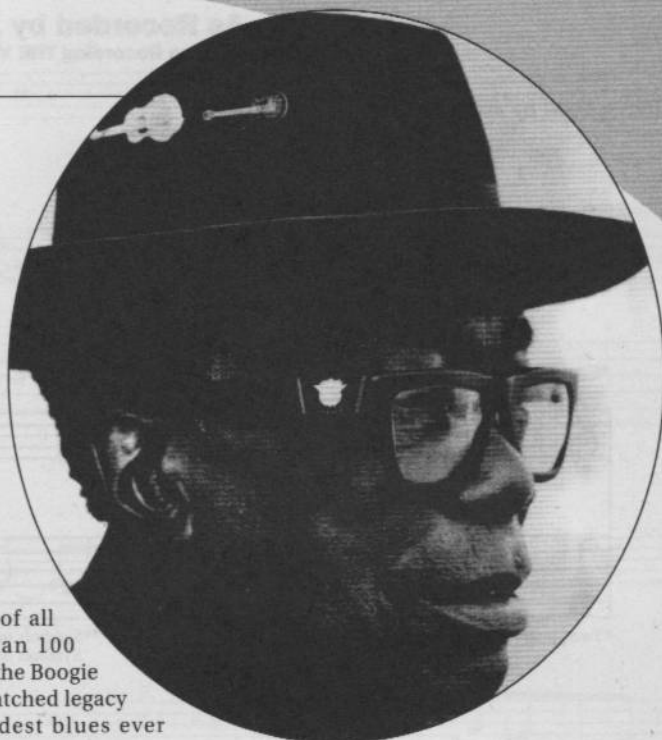
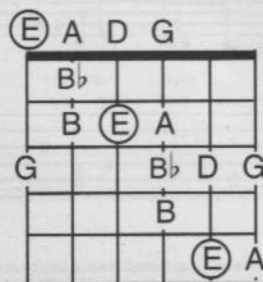
recorded bluesmen of all time, with more than 100 albums to his credit, the Boogie Man has left an unmatched legacy of the deepest, hardest blues ever pounded out of a guitar.

THE HEAD AND VERSE

Hooker conjured up classic riffs with his bare fingers from the most fertile of sources, the blues scale, for his stop-time head and verses. **Fig. 1** shows the E blues scale in the extended position. (Note: Though the song sounds in the key of E, Hooker plays in the key of E with a capo at the 1st fret.) There are five main riffs denoting the I-IV-V chord changes, including one slight variation. The pick up and measure 1 contain the signature riff (riff #1) of the I chord and the tune. It would not be an overstatement to call it one of the most fundamental of blues licks as it moves via a blues-approved slide up to the $\flat 7$ th (D), for tension, resolving to the root (E). Measure 2 (riff #2) has the alternate I-chord riff that boasts the hip $\flat 5$ th (B \flat) and spills over to fill up measure 3.

Fig. 1

E Blues Scale



In measure 4, Hooker repeats the riff from measure 1 with a variation (riff #3), cleverly resolving on the last note to the root of the IV (A) chord in measure 5. Measures 6 and 7 duplicate measures 2 and 3, while measures 8 and 9 (riff #4) imply the V (B) chord with emphasis on the $\flat 7$ th (A). Definite resolution to the tonic chord (E) is provided in measures 10 and 11 (riff #5) with repetition of the root (E) note.

THE SOLO

John Lee takes three pithy, 12-bar choruses using the same blues scale position as the head. Could he be more minimal and incisive? In the first chorus, he plays exclusively on the top two strings, with a handful of notes emphasizing a quarter-step bend to the "true blue note" between the $\flat 7$ th (D) and the major 7th (D \sharp).

For the second and third choruses he works his hypnotic magic by flicking inventive variations on the head licks, all the while subtly acknowledging the chord changes with his note selection. Notice how the rhythm switches from a driving shuffle in measures 1-24 of the solo to what feels like "half-time" in measures 25-36, due to a throttling down from a brisk, walking bass line to a dynamic, R&B-type pattern.

THE OUTRO

The stop-time ceases, the walking bass takes off again, and Hooker commences riffing like he did in measures 1-12 of the solo in a burst of energy. How! How! How!

BOOM BOOM

As Recorded by John Lee Hooker
(From the Rhino Recording THE VERY BEST OF JOHN LEE HOOKER)

Transcribed by Adam Perlmutter

By John Lee Hooker

Capo I

Intro
Fast Blues ♩ = 160

*Gtr. 1 (clean)

F7
**(E7)

T
A
B

*Two guitars arranged for one.

**Symbols in parentheses represent chord names respective to capoed guitar.
Symbols above reflect actual sounding chord. Capoed fret is "0" in tab.

Bb7
(A7)

2 2 4 2 0 2 0

F7
(E7)

2 0 3 2 0 2 2

C7
(B7)

Bb7
(A7)

F7
(E7)

2 0 2 0 2 0 2

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Verse

F7
(E7)

1. Boom boom boom boom. how. Gon - na shoot you right down, —
Mm, — mm.

End Riff A

Riff A

0 1 2 4 3 4 2 0 2 2 2

Bb7
(A7)

mm. right off — of your feet. hm. hm.

2 4 3 4 2 0 2 2 2 0 3

F7
(E7)

Take you home with me. Put you in my house.
I love to see you strut up and down the floor.

2 4 3 4 2 0 2 1 2

C7
(B7)

Bb7
(A7)

F7
(E7)

Boom boom boom, — boom.
when you talk - in' to me,

1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 2 1

Boom Boom

1.

2.

2. How how how that ba-by talk.

I like it like that. Ho, yeah.

Guitar Solo

F7
(E7)

Bb7
(A7)

F7
(E7)

C7
(B7)

Boom Boom

B \flat 7 (A7) F7 (E7)

F7 (E7)

B \flat 7 (A7)

F7 (E7) C7 (B7)

B \flat 7 (A7) F7 (E7)

F7 (E7)

Boom Boom

Bb7 (A7)

F7 (E7) C7 (B7)

Bb7 (A7) F7 (E7)

3. Would you walk that

Verse

Gtr. 1: w/ Riff A (3 times)

F7 (E7)

walk and talk that talk

Bb7 (A7)

and whis - per in my ear? Tell me you got your

F7 (E7) C7 (B7)

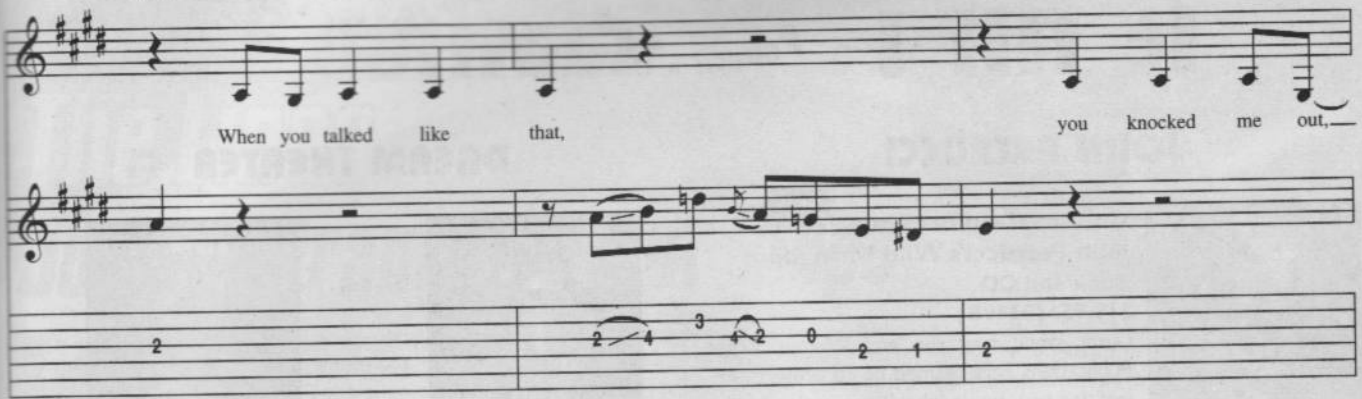
long - in'. I love that talk.

Boom Boom

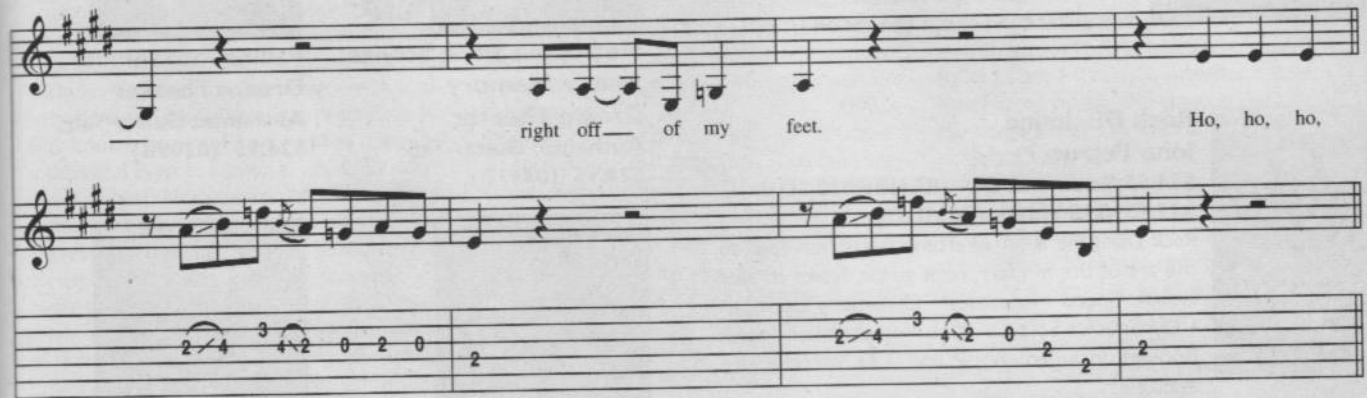
Bb7
(A7)

F7
(E7)

When you talked like that, you knocked me out,—



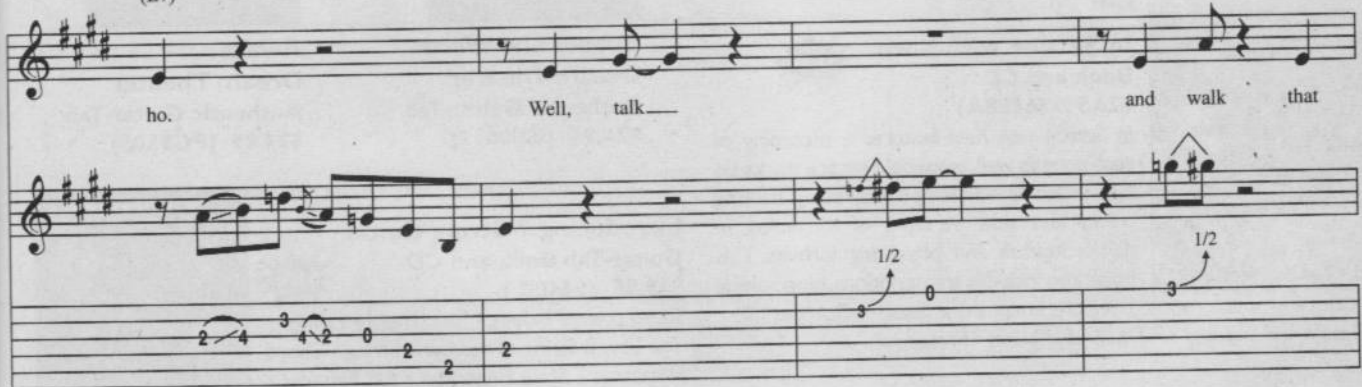
right off— of my feet. Ho, ho, ho,



Outro

F7
(E7)

ho. Well, talk— and walk that



Begin fade

Fade out

walk. Whoa, yeah.— Whoa, yeah.— Talk that talk.

