

# What's Between the Lines



## B.B. King "How Blue Can You Get?"

By Dave Rubin

**H**ow blue can you get? Obviously, a rhetorical question if directed at B.B. King. He is the link between the first generation of electric pickers in the early 1940s starting with T-Bone Walker, the guitar slingers in Chicago and Texas who followed his lead in the 1950s, and rock players who applied his principles of string leverage in the 1960s.

Riley B. King was born in Itta Bena, Miss., on September 25, 1925. Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lonnie Johnson would be early influences; T-Bone Walker and Django Reinhardt would also catch his fancy. He broke through in 1952 with "3 O'Clock Blues," and in 1970 crossed over from the chitlin' circuit with his biggest hit, "The Thrill Is Gone."

That same year B.B. recorded a live album at Cook County Jail in Illinois. Playing outdoors with a superb sound system afforded him the luxury of turning up his amp beyond what tone-deaf producers had been allowing him in the studio. Sweet, singing sustain pushed to the edge of feedback on his Gibson ES-355 "Lucille" created a timbre reminiscent of a blues-soaked clarinet. The effect was particularly expressive on this epic version of "How Blue Can You Get?," a song he originally cut in 1963.

mainly in the root position [Fig. 1A] and his "B.B. King box" at frets 2 and 14 [Fig. 1B]. He was one of the first blues guitarists to appreciate the versatility of the position, and he uses it with consummate skill to play the changes. Fig. 2 presents three typical licks from the "box," incorporating the 5th (A), 3rd (F#), and root (D) over the I (D) chord; the ♭7th (F), 6th (E), 5th (D), and 3rd (B) over the IV (G) chord; and the root (A), ♭7th (G) and 5th (E) over the V (A) chord.

B.B.'s genius lies in his southern-fried phrasing and jazzy note selection. In measure 6 over the IV (G) chord in chorus 2, he plays a G6 arpeggio (G-B-D-E) on beat 2 followed by a melodious bend of the 6th to the major 7th (F#). Not yet content with this foray into "legit" music, he bends the root to the ♭9th (A♭) before getting down with a classic bend of the ♭7th (F) to the root on beat 4.

### A MAN OF FEW CHORDS

B.B. claims not to be a rhythm guitarist, which is utter hogwash, though with few exceptions he is sparing with chords on record. In

measure 12 of chorus 1, he smacks a sophisticated D6 voicing that harmonizes with the dominant tonality of the band and eases the transition into chorus 2 where he repeats the D6 to establish the fresh start. On the more prosaic side, he plays a simple G triad in measure 5 (IV chord) of chorus 4, where it dynamically follows three beats of rest and a rush of notes in measure 4 of the I chord.

### STOPPING THE TIME

When B.B. delivers the punch line, "I gave you seven children, and

now you want to give them back!" audiences the world over understand just "how blue you *can* get." Fig. 3 shows a guitar arrangement designed to approximate the horn section accents in measures 1-8 (I chord) of the 6th chorus. ♪

### TONE ZONE

**GUITAR:** Semi-hollowbody

**PICKUP/POSITION:**

Humbuckers (neck and bridge together)

**GAIN:** 2-3 (just a hint of overdrive); 9-10 if you're overdriving a clean channel (as B.B. does)

**EQ:** Bass/Mid/Treble: 5/5/6

Fig. 1A



Fig. 1B

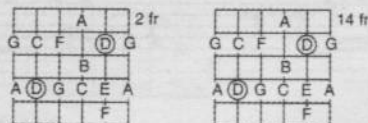
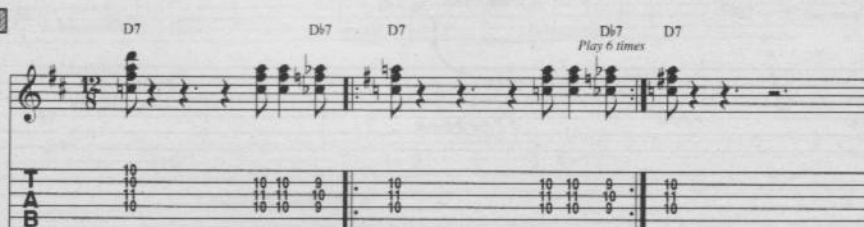


Fig. 2



Fig. 3





# HOW BLUE CAN YOU GET?

As Recorded by B.B. King  
(From the MCA Recording LIVE IN COOK COUNTY JAIL)

Wanna play the blues like B.B.? Then get the super-cool B.B. King iSong CD-ROM (00451045, \$24.95), featuring lessons using his original recordings, and the B.B. King Anthology (00690492, \$19.95), with tab transcriptions for 35 tunes. Contact Music Dispatch to order (800-637-2852, [musicdispatch.com](http://musicdispatch.com)).

Written by Jane Feather

Transcribed by Adam Perlmutter

## Intro-Guitar Solo

Slow Blues  $\text{♩} = 66$

D7

Gtr. 1 (slight dist.)

First system of the guitar solo, featuring a G7 chord and a *mf* dynamic marking. The staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The tab below indicates fingerings: 11, 10, 13, 12, 12, 10, 12, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12.

Second system of the guitar solo, featuring a D7 chord. The staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The tab below indicates fingerings: 10, 12, 12, 10, 10, 10, 13, 12, (12).

Third system of the guitar solo, featuring a G7 chord. The staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The tab below indicates fingerings: 12, (12), 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12, 12, 10, 12, 10, 12.

Fourth system of the guitar solo, featuring a D7 chord. The staff shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The tab below indicates fingerings: 12, 10, 13, 13, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 0, 10, 12, 12, 10, 11, 12, 11, 12.

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# How Blue Can You Get?

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in two systems. The first system features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The second system continues the melody with a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and a key signature change to one sharp.



## How Blue Can You Get?

The second system of musical notation continues the piece. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a single staff, with various musical notations including eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. There are two trills marked with wavy lines. A bracket labeled '3' indicates a triplet of eighth notes. A chord symbol 'A7' is placed above the staff. A slur with a '1' above it covers a group of notes. The text 'grad. release' is written above the staff. The bottom staff contains a sequence of numbers: 7/11, 10 10, 12 10, 12/14, 10, 10, 12 11, 10 12, 12, (12) 10, 12, (12), (12), 10, 12, 12, 9, 9, (9), 10.

The musical notation for the guitar solo in "Sweet Home Alabama" is shown in two staves. The top staff is the melody, featuring a G7 chord, a D7 chord, and a loco section. The bottom staff shows the fretboard with fingerings and bends.

**Staff 1 (Melody):**

- G7:** Starts with a G4 note, followed by a series of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) and a dotted quarter note (F#4).
- D7:** Continues with a series of eighth notes (E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) and a dotted quarter note (F#4).
- loco:** Features a series of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) and a dotted quarter note (F#4).

**Staff 2 (Fretboard):**

- 16:** Fretted on the 16th fret.
- 15:** Fretted on the 15th fret.
- 17:** Fretted on the 17th fret, with a "grad. bend" (graduated bend) indicated by a curved arrow.
- 15:** Fretted on the 15th fret, with a "1/2" (half) bend indicated by a curved arrow.
- 10:** Fretted on the 10th fret, with a "1" (full) bend indicated by a curved arrow.
- 18:** Fretted on the 18th fret, with a "1/2" (half) bend indicated by a curved arrow.
- 15:** Fretted on the 15th fret.
- 16:** Fretted on the 16th fret.
- 15:** Fretted on the 15th fret.
- 17:** Fretted on the 17th fret, with a "1/4" (quarter) bend indicated by a curved arrow.
- 17:** Fretted on the 17th fret, with a "1" (full) bend indicated by a curved arrow.

G7  
8va

15 17 15 17 17 15 17 10 15 15 16 15

# How Blue Can You Get?

**D7**  
8va

**A7** 8va **G7**

**D7** 8va **D7**

**G7** 8va **D7**

8va **G7** *loco*

# How Blue Can You Get?

D7

A7 G7

D7

## Verse

D7 G7

1. You're ev - il when I'm with you, ba - by, and you are

\*Gtr. 1

\*1st time only

Gtr. 1 tacet

D7

jeal - ous when we're a - part. I've been down - heart - ed, ba - by, ev - er - since said, you

G7

the day we met. I say I've - been down - heart - ed, ba - by, You're so e - vil when I'm with you, ba - by,



# How Blue Can You Get?

D7

and you are jeal-ous when ev-er since the day we met.

A7 G7

You know all the love is noth-ing but the blues. The an-

How blue can you get, ba-by?

D7

Ba-by, how blue can you get? Ba-by, how blue can you get?

My swer's right here in my heart.

Verse  
Stop Time  
D7

3. I gave you a brand new Ford, but you said I want a Cad-il-lac. I

bought you a ten dol-lar din-ner, and you said thanks for the snack. I

let you live in my pent-house, you said it was just a shack.

End Stop Time

I gave you sev-en child-ren, and now you wan-na give 'em back. 'Cause I've been

G7

down-heart-ed ev-er since the

D7

day we met. I said

A7 G7

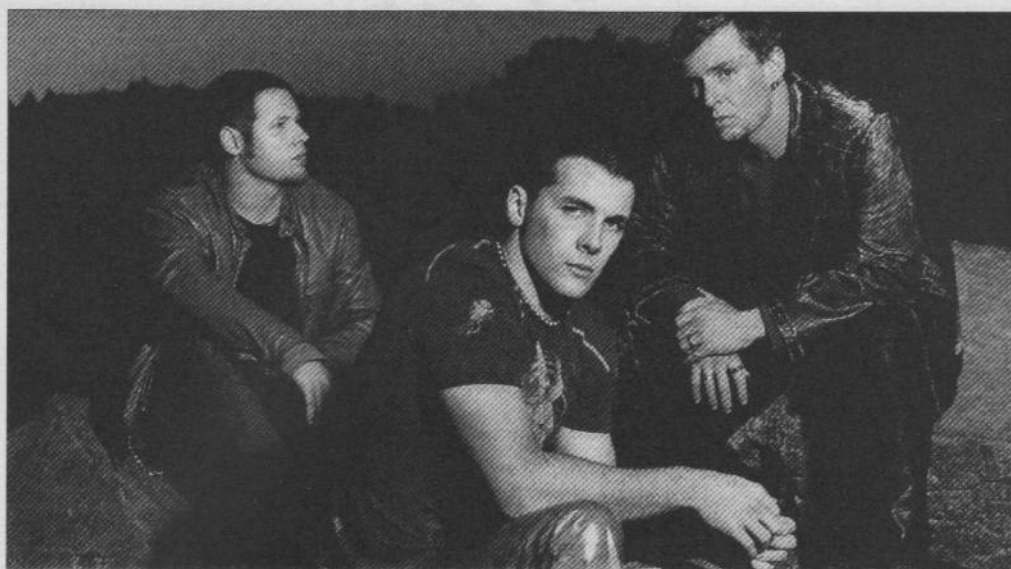
the love is noth-in' but the blues. Ba-by, how

D7

blue can you get?

Free Time

# What's Between the Lines



## Course of Nature "Caught in the Sun"

By Douglas Baldwin

**C**ourse of Nature (Mark Wilkerson, rhythm guitar/vocals; John "Fish" Mildrum, lead guitar; and Rickey Shelton, drums/backing vocals) takes great pride in bringing a strong melodic sense to a hard rock/metal foundation. Their debut album, *Superkala*, was co-produced by the band and Matt Martone (3 Doors Down, Breaking Point), mixed by Randy Staub (P.O.D., Nickelback), and features epic string arrangements conducted and arranged by Suzie Katayama (Train, Bon Jovi). "Caught in the Sun," the debut single from the album, displays this team's talents in a powerful ballad that integrates tasteful and complex chords, clever key changes, and a majestic sense of melody that all add up to a surefire radio hit. Just let nature take its course.

### CHORDS OF NATURE

Although the acoustic guitar that opens "Caught in the Sun" is played in open D tuning (tuned down to D $\flat$ ), the part is a bit more sophisticated than

the simple, one-finger-across-the-strings technique that many open-tuned six-stringers employ. In fact, the opening chords require some full-fisted and flexible fingerings as shown in Fig. 1. Yes, each chord is built upon a parallel shape on the three lowest strings, but each has a twist that serves the music. The Bm7 sets

up a drone on the note D found on the 3rd string at the 8th fret, which requires the three parallel notes to

be played with the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings. (Interestingly, the chord could have been played with that 3rd string open. It would have remained Bm7, but the following chords wouldn't have worked as effectively.) The Asus4 uses an index finger barre, but retains the droning D note along with the two open drone strings. This requires you to back-bend the index finger so that the two highest strings ring freely. Finally, the Gsus2/add#4 and the Gsus2 require a legitimate one-finger-per-fret stretch in order to target their melodic C $\sharp$  to D motion.

Dig the transition to D minor in the bridge, outlined by the B $\flat$ 5, C5, and D5 chords. Also, watch out for the way cool one-measure progression

(B5-C $\sharp$ 5-D5-E5-D5-E5) that kicks back into the chorus after the guitar solo. It provides some hip harmonic ambiguity.

### SOLAR POWER

Apart from the solo, the electric guitar's chord chores in "Caught in the Sun" are largely workmanlike, providing requisite muscle to the radio-friendly mix. Gtr. 2 employs power chords (see this month's Basic Training column on page 168) with the obligatory high-gain, scooped-mid tone (see the Tone Zone sidebar) that propels much rock these days.

The solo, played by Gtr. 3, focuses on the C $\sharp$  to D motif first stated by the acoustic guitar in the intro and reiterated by the vocal melody—proof once again that if you want to record a hit with a solo in it, learn the song's melody. Gtr. 3 marks its territory with the D major scale played on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd strings as in Fig. 2. Note how the fingering stays conveniently in the 17th position before sliding down to the final A note at the 14th fret of the 3rd string.  $\text{D}$

### TONE ZONE

**GUITAR 1:** Acoustic  
**GUITAR 2:** Solidbody electric  
**PICKUP/POSITION:** Humbucker/Neck  
**GAIN:** 8-10  
**EQ:** Bass/Mid/Treble: 8/2/8  
**GUITAR 3:** Solidbody electric  
**PICKUP/POSITION:** Humbucker/Bridge  
**GAIN:** 8-10  
**EQ:** Bass/Mid/Treble: 6/6/8

Fig. 1

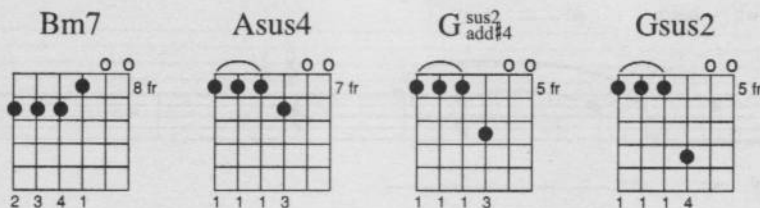


Fig. 2

