

Swift Guitar Lessons

The B.B King Box & Beyond



Hello friends,

Welcome back to Swiftlessons for another lead guitar tutorial. In today's session I'll be breaking down how to use "B.B King box" and adjacent soloing positions to create licks that are perfectly suited to each chord in the major 1.4.5 blues progression. Let's get started!

Section #1 - Locating the BB's Box

The simplest approach to finding the B.B's box is to first locate root note of the key you're working in on the B string. For example, if you are jamming in the key of C major, you would find a C note on the 13th fret of the B string. From there, you will have access to a useful 'house shaped' box consisting of the 6th, 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th notes of the major scale that we commonly refer to as "BB's Box."

Musical notation for the BB's Box in C major. The top staff shows a treble clef, 4/4 time signature, and a melodic line with notes labeled 1, 2, b3, 4, and 5. The bottom staff shows the guitar fretboard with strings T, A, and B, and fret numbers 14, 13, 15, (16), 13, and 15 corresponding to the notes above.

Section #2: Adjacent Chord Shapes

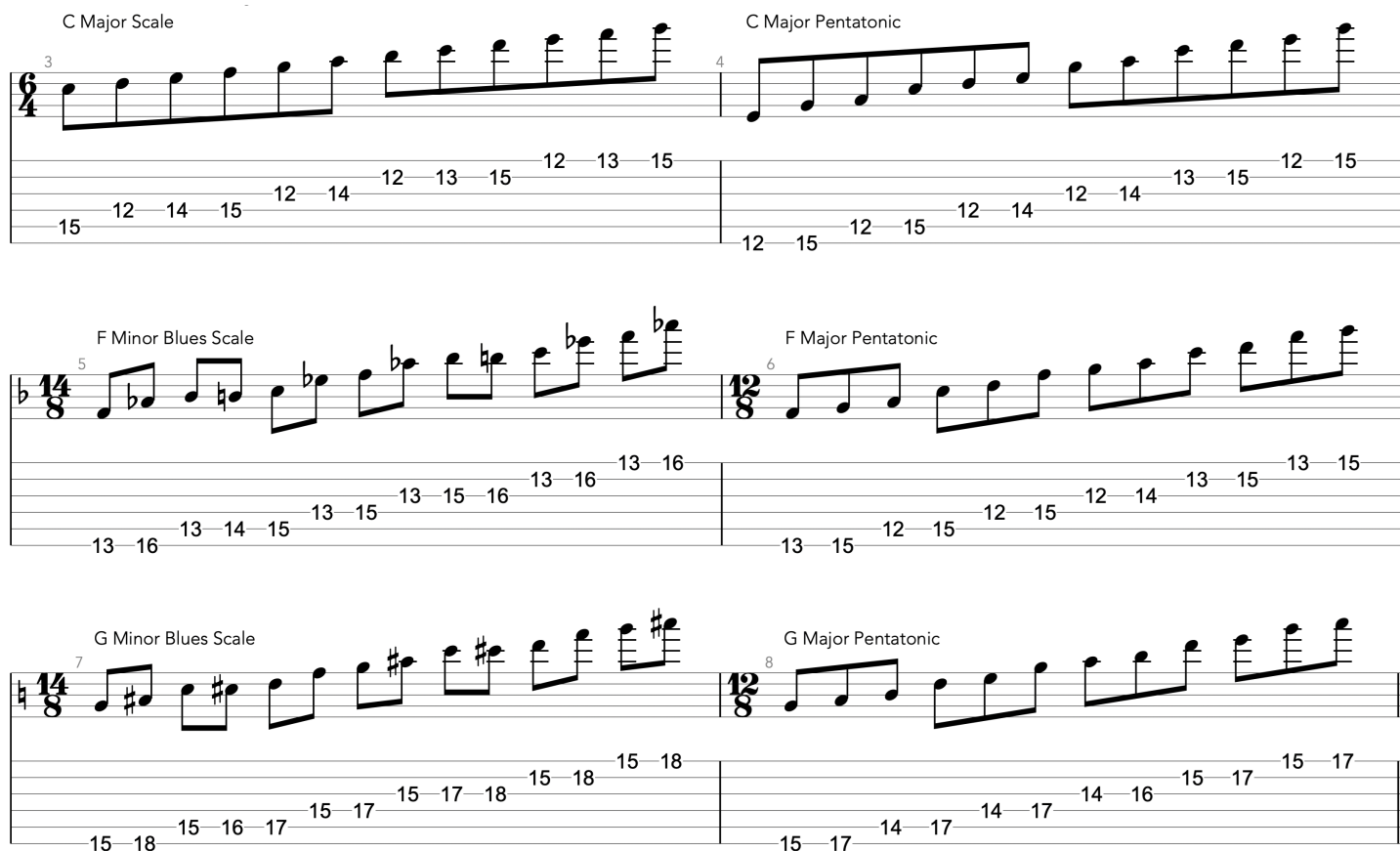
Before attempting to write a solo, I take the time to establish where the chords I'm soloing over are in relation to my go-to scale positions. This reveals the majority of "safe notes" I can use to play over each chord, and also lends toward visualizing the connection between chords and overlapping scale patterns.

When I'm jamming in the BB's box, I like to visualize my one chord (Cmaj) played in it's C shape barred position and the 4 and 5 chords (Fmaj, and Gmaj) played in their E shape barred positions. Take some time to practice these shapes, and experiment with different ways of arpeggiating their notes, as this will be crucial to creating lines that work well for each chord.

Diagram showing chord shapes for C, F, and G. The C chord is shown in a barred position at fret 12. The F chord is shown in a barred position at fret 13. The G chord is shown in a barred position at fret 15. Below each chord shape is a diagram of the fretboard showing the notes of the scale in that position.

Section #3: Adjacent Scale Patterns

Now that we have established the nearest location of my 1.4.5 progression, I can begin utilizing scale positions that belong to each chord. For the 1 chord, I like to stick with the B.B.'s box. When the 4 chord comes around, I can easily switch to playing combinations of the F minor blues and major pentatonic scales, which can be transposed up 1 whole step (two frets) to accommodate the 5 chord, G major.



The image displays three rows of guitar scale diagrams, each consisting of a musical staff and a corresponding fretboard diagram. The fretboard diagrams use numbers 1-5 to indicate fingerings and lines to show fret positions.

- Row 1:** C Major Scale (3 fingers) and C Major Pentatonic (4 fingers).
- Row 2:** F Minor Blues Scale (5 fingers) and F Major Pentatonic (6 fingers).
- Row 3:** G Minor Blues Scale (7 fingers) and G Major Pentatonic (8 fingers).

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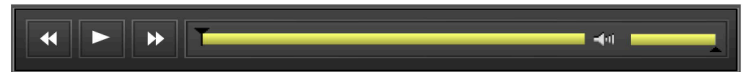
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Section #4: Practice Routine

Now, let's put these tools to work by learning a complete solo over a 12 bar blues in C major. Each lick is tailored to the chord it is being played over, simply by adjusting the scale pattern and borrowing notes for the chords themselves. Once you have mastered this solo in the key of C, I recommend recording some backing tracks for yourself, and applying what you've learned across all 12 keys.



C

F **C**

G **F** **C**