AG115
Blues and Beyond
Bebop Blues Part 2

Last issue I took you through the chord progression that accompanies the lead part to this blues I have written in close conjunction with the bebop idiom. Bebop is not only a sound that robots make- it's a style of music made popular in the 50s. Consider bebop a form of exploration, of finding notes and melodies within chord structures that may not be obvious within the basic confines of contemporary music theory. Hopefully in the parts you'll be learning today, your ears will be opened to a few ideas inspired by bebop, and some of my own.

Now, believe me when I say this- at 120bpm- is a soft introduction to bebop. Stylistically, it's often high tempo stuff, and back in the day noone was going to slow it down for you. I've taken the middle road of recording at this laid back tempo in order to make it easier, but at the same time there is no slow alternative to hand it to you on a platter with! Get a metronome and build up the speed gradually before attempting the backing track. I've intentionally kept the rhythmic phrasing simple to facilitate this.

Track 1 is the entire track, track 2 is the backing track for this study piece.

Bars 1-4
Theoretically, this stuff can be quite complex or simple. I'll speak with the relation to the chords and basic major scale ideas as best as I can. Bar one consists of simple B flat major, that's right! Whilst the second chord goes to a B diminished, I ignore it. Jazz is all about following the chords right? Well, sort of. But not always– I call this playing what sounds good! In bar two the notes quite strongly outline the C minor 7, with a little bit of chromaticism (stepping fret to fret) before resolving to the flat nine of the F chord- a typical bebop device. Think F, play F#! Sounds tense, which is the point!
Bars three and four see more B flat major with a little slide into the 7th fret, the third of B flat, and the last bar is simply B flat blues riffing

Bars 5-8
In your regular blues, this is the change to the 'four' chord, that first big shift. A chance to tell listeners you're well aware, I start by outlining the E flat with a simple E flat triad, before jumping around a little. I start start

setting up by six early with chromatic steps to fret six (..4,5,6).. see that? From here I'm literally walking up an E diminished arpeggio, as the chord above suggests! Bars seven and eight we have more B flat major noodling before playing a G mixolydian flat 2 idea. Ok, that sounds complex- how about, we play notes in B flat mixolydian, and grab a B natural because that matches the third of a G7? Think of it as blending the key of the song whilst matching notes of the clashing chord. If you thought hard about that, have a rest now, you've earned it!

Bars 9-12
See, it really is a 12 bar! The last bars here are really just a Bflat major blues- I stopped thinking about the chords at all here and just try and 'sing' out the last four bars. You'll find it quite vocal. If you don't know what a major blues is, it's simply a major pentatonic with an extra note between the second note and the third note. Ask google what a major blues is, then use your smarts to do the other thing I told you. The last two bars are just good old B flat major phrasing and I finish on a mean little note at the end to set up interest for the beginning, once again with an F# where an F might seem normal.

Summary
If you have the knowledge to follow what I've been saying hopefully you can see some of the devices that are commonly employed in this style- if not, use your ear and enjoy the various sounds you may not be familiar with. Listen extensively to the recording so you can get the feel and the phrasing right. Bebop represents the playground of the most driven and practicing musicians, so if you enjoyed this, you may well be one of them!