

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Guitar-X
Guitar & Bass School

Joe Bonamassa



“The Kid’s potential is unbelievable”. So said BB King, upon hearing him when he had yet to reach his teens! **John Wheatcroft** finds out whatever happened next for Smokin’ Joe Bonamassa!

ABILITY RATING



Moderate/Advanced

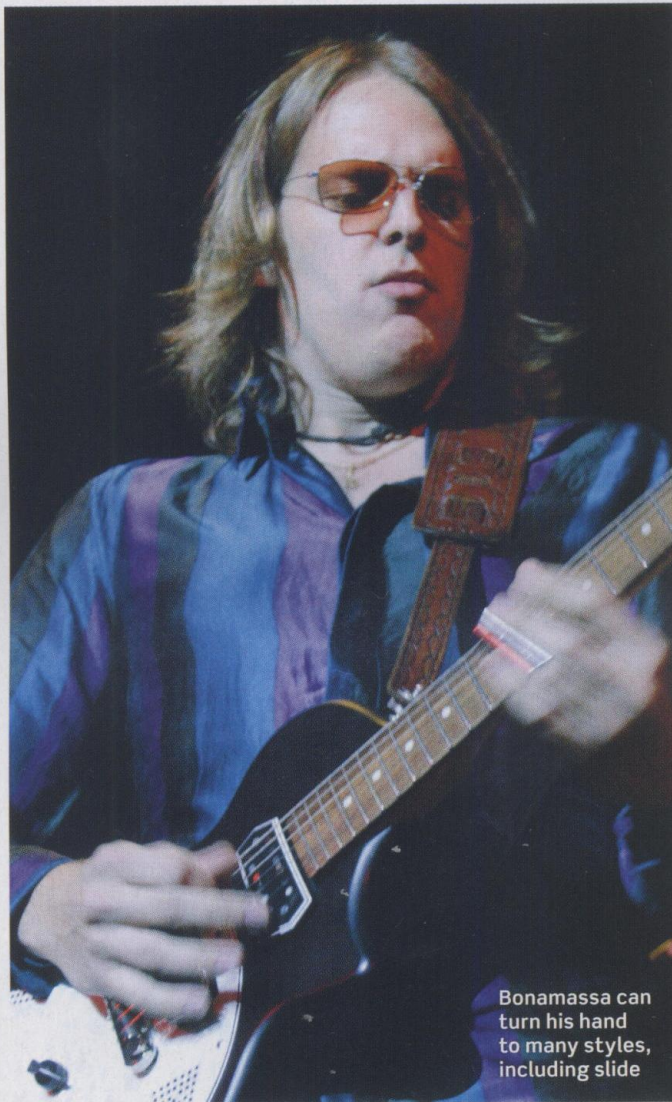
Will improve your:

- ✓ Position shifting
- ✓ Use of colour tones
- ✓ Use of both major and minor vocabulary against a dominant tonality

NOW JUST TURNED 30, Joe Bonamassa is one of the rare performers who found initial success as a child, and who has actually continued to develop and expand as an artist, realising the potential seen in him as a kid and achieving both critical and commercial acclaim as an adult.

Born into a musical family, his father both a guitarist and guitar dealer, Bonamassa Junior got his first guitar at age four, and by six he’d not only mastered Jimi Hendrix’s Voodoo Chile, but could perform a mean Stevie Ray Vaughan impersonation too!

Telecaster-touting genius Danny Gatton became aware of Bonamassa’s talent at around the age of 11, with Gatton being so impressed to take him under his wing, exposing him to jazz and country styles and performing live with him on numerous occasions. Within a year Joe had opened



Bonamassa can turn his hand to many styles, including slide

Robby Krieger and Berry Oakley, bassist from The Allman Brothers.

By 21, Bonamassa released his first solo record in the classic power-trio format, with Joe taking on the role of lead vocalist after realising that he could dramatically expand upon his impact as an artist if he could sing. His style is a captivating mix of authentic blues and classic rock influences, with a touch of jazz and country added for good measure. He’s an incredibly dynamic and exciting player and I urge you to check him out. You won’t be disappointed!

The three musical examples that follow touch on just some of the concepts Joe’s mastered and absorbed into his stylistically broad soloing style. Bonamassa’s also quite outspoken about his conscious decision to achieve a unique voice on the instrument, and to keep the music in a continual state of evolution. With this in mind, treat these examples as merely the beginning, taking any of the concepts or techniques and experimenting with them until you find some equally effective ideas of your own. Good luck! **GT**

TRACK RECORD



■ All of the examples for this month’s article were inspired by Joe’s most recent DVD release, *Live At Rock Palast* (Pinnacle 2006). This is a wonderful way to experience Bonamassa in full flight. There’s some fantastic video footage on YouTube too. Readers should beware, as YouTube is highly addictive! We’d also like to recommend any of Joe’s studio releases. His most recent release, *You And Me* (Premier Artists 2006), is excellent.

GET THE TONE

■ The son of a guitar dealer, it seems a passion for instruments is hereditary, with Joe’s collection numbering close to 200 instruments at last count. For live use Joe currently favours an aged ‘59 Les Paul Historic re-issue, a signature Gigliotti Tele-style semi-solid and a ‘61 Strat. Any good quality electric through a medium sized valve amp should do the trick, with drive coming from a combination of amp overdrive and one of the more natural sounding stomp-boxes such as the Ibanez Tubescreamer or Boss Super-Overdrive. Joe’s personal preference is for the Carl Martin Hot Drive’n Boost.

for BB King, an association that continues to this day. Joe’s playing, even at such an early age, was sophisticated, mature, expressive and controlled.

Joe’s first taste of worldwide fame came whilst still in his teens with the band Bloodline, the remaining line-up featuring the sons of Miles Davis, The Doors’

“He’s young, he’s got great ideas, just great. He’s a real one-of-a-kind” BB King

EXAMPLE 3

ON THE CD  Track 47

Our final example takes three distinctly separate Bonamassa soloing concepts and presents them within a single eight-bar study. The first four bars are based around a repetitious 'ostinato' figure spelling out predominantly a D major triad (D F# A), with occasional 4th (G) and 6th (B) suspensions. This melodic fragment is repeated across the changing harmony of D, C and G/B. The second approach (bars 5-7) is the more conventional horizontal

improvisational concept of using D minor pentatonic for all three harmonic events (D F G A C). Our final device is the use of country-influenced oblique bends, found in bar 8. The challenge here is to maintain pitch accurately with the bend from A to B on the second string, whilst pedalling between the notes D and C on the first string. Good luck and take your time; it's worth all the effort!

1

D

♩ = 85

E B G D A E

(D Mixolydian)

3

G/B

D

E B G D A E

5

D

C

E B G D A E

7

G/B

D

E B G D A E