



# Guitar Player

## 50 BADASS BLUES SOLOS YOU MUST HEAR!

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## Cover Story

### 50 BADASS BLUES SOLOS



#### ELVIN BISHOP

##### "Red Dog Speaks"

How about some greasy slide playing over a slow blues in E? That's exactly what Elvin Bishop dishes up on "Red Dog Speaks" (from the album of the same title) and as a bonus, he describes his ax (Red Dog) in the song's lyrics. Want to hear a 1959 Gibson ES-345 Stereo really wail? Wait for Bishop to say, "Speak, Red Dog," and hang tight, as he unleashes a soulful solo that combines fretted notes and fluid slide playing in a relaxed, in-the-pocket manner that puts style and class ahead of showboating. —TG

#### MIKE BLOOMFIELD

##### "Albert's Shuffle"

When Michael Bloomfield appeared on the scene with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band in 1964 no one had ever heard guitar playing quite like that, nor did any previous blues album have a printed exhortation to "play this record loud." Indeed, Bloomfield's excitable, ahead-of-the-beat soloing had more to do with rock energy than blues mystery. It wasn't until 1968's *Super Session*, featuring Bloomfield with Al Kooper and Steven Stills, that Bloomfield settled into this pocket of more traditional blues playing, while

retaining the desperate energy that set him apart from the traditionalists, and gave him his distinctive voice in the first place. —MR

#### JOE BONAMASSA

##### "Blues Deluxe"

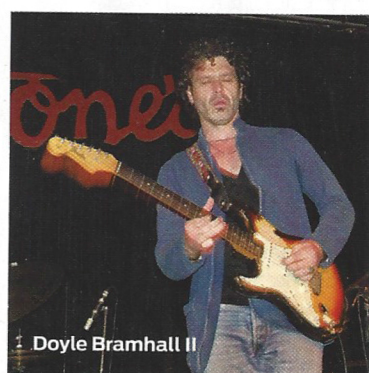
Bonamassa began his professional career when many lads are being Bar Mitzvahed. His early blues work was that of an impressionist: his solo on "Long Distance Blues" from 2003's *Blues Deluxe* is Joe doing Eric Clapton, much like Fred Armisen doing Obama. In the decade since, Bonamassa has melded his influences and made them his own, honing a style of diamond precision playing and to-die-for tone. This slow blues from Jeff Beck's first solo record (itself a cover of B.B. King's "Gambler Blues") starts off with three minutes and fifty seconds of soloing that take you from B.B., through Clapton and Eric Johnson, all inflected with a heavy dose of Bonamassa. —MR

#### DOYLE BRAMHALL II

##### "Cry" Welcome

If ever there was a guy to get a handle on the SRV attitude and fire without copying Stevie's licks, it's Doyle Bramhall II. On this slow 12/8 number, Bramhall gets all kinds of righteous Strat tones, including spooky tremolo, clanging semi cleans, and a positively massive, exploding-amp lead tone. He does a killer, thematic break

mid-tune but saves his best stuff for the end of the song. For the outro solo he coaxes awesome, howling feedback before leaning into his powerful bends that are jam-packed with emotion. His note choices and phrasing as fresh as always—due in part to playing lefty-strung-righty—but Bramhall's super-deep pocket might be his greatest asset. —MB



#### CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN

##### "Okie Dokie Stomp"

You can hear echoes of the big-band era in Brown's recordings from the 1940s and early '50s. It's in the instrumentation—with an ensemble of horns, upright bass, and a drummer driving spang-a-lang on his ride cymbal. Rock-and-roll was about to happen, but hadn't quite. Music from this in-between period is sometimes called "jump blues," and Brown's instrumental "Okie Dokie Stomp" is a first-rate example. T-Bone Walker's influence is apparent here, particularly in a lick that Brown repeats: an up-bent 4 on the third string followed immediately by a 5 on the second string. Still, Gate had his own thing, and it's a whole lot of fun to listen to. —AL