

THE INFINITE GUITAR

The complete roadmap for exploring the boundless contemporary guitar

BOOK PREVIEW

RANDOM EXCERPTS FROM "THE INFINITE GUITAR"

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EXCERPTS FROM CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Playing vs. Practicing

At a recent guitar seminar held at the school I run in Tokyo, Jennifer Batten said this when asked about practicing and practice routines; "Practice as much as you possibly can stand without it turning into something you hate to do."

Practice should be fun but challenging. Practice should be done with specific goals in mind. I know tons of guitarists who think they are practicing but what they are really doing is just playing. Playing is important too but practice is something different. What you practice should come out in your playing. If it doesn't, you're not practicing efficiently. Before you sit down to practice, make sure you know what goals you are trying to reach by practicing, short term and long. It may even help to keep a log of your practice sessions. When, how long you practiced, what specifically you practiced and why you practiced it. The goal must come before the process is determined.

Continuance

Just like going to the gym, the important thing is to practice just about every day. Four hours today and nothing else for a week will amount to close to nothing. If you can only stand practicing an hour or so, that's fine, just as long as it is almost every day. Let it become a habit.

Vision

Remember the dreaded F chord? You almost gave up didn't you? Me too. After you got it under your fingers, it was smooth sailing for a while until the next hurdle came up. More so than any other instrument, the guitar will challenge you this way. That is why it is important to set realistic goals with specific time limits for yourself. Always remember, nothing can be learned in an hour or so. The goals you set should be for weeks or months. Some of the things that I am currently practicing will take me a year to get together. Don't get discouraged; anything worth learning will take time.

Balance

The way you practice should change with time. I've been playing for twenty somewhat years, so what I practice these days, is completely different than what I worked on my first few years. I know all my scales and have enough technique that I don't need to work on those very much. I usually work on improvising over really hard chord changes. Stuff like John Coltrane's

"Giant Steps" or a Wayne Shorter song. I may sequence my own chord changes and try playing over them. I also find that working on the tunes for the gigs I do often turn into a good learning experience. For that reason I never turn down gigs that I know are going to be a real pain in the butt to get the tunes together for.

In the Beginning

If you are just starting out, you should dedicate a lot more time to technique than I do nowadays. But don't let that be the only thing you work on. If I could change anything about the way I practiced when I first started out, I would cut down the time I worked on technique and would have dedicated more time to rhythm playing and reading. When I think back, it kind of cracks me up because I was working on scales and arpeggios for about five or six hours every day. I was sure that I was destined to be the fastest guitarist in the universe.

When I went to MI in the eighties, I was shocked because every student around me was really, really fast. You have to recall, this was about the same time Yngwie Malmsteen and Joe Satriani were at their zenith and Paul Gilbert was just getting his start in Mr. Big. Everyone was lightning fast and it dawned on me that I had been focusing on something that was soon to be in little demand. I completely failed to shine amongst my fellow students. I have to admit, all the scales and arpeggios I worked on in my younger days left me with chops that I still have today but there was a time that I struggled because I didn't have my rhythm and reading chops together. I realized that I was way more likely to get a gig because I could play great rhythm or could read anything upside down than because I have fast fingers. It is now a whole different era of music and chops don't count as much any more. That's because the eighties was one big guitar sporting event.

I actually notice a whole different trend going on with young guitarists these days. It seems a lot of aspiring guitarists have no interest in getting their chops together at all, which is a whole different problem. The point I'm trying to make here is that balance is the key to good practice. Work on your technical expertise, your reading and comping skills, your ears and your theory knowledge.

EXCERPTS FROM CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3: CHORDS AND THEIR SYMBOLS

Chord symbols and music theory in general is a subject that can bring us mild mannered guitarist to fits of rage. For that exact reason, before we start, I feel I must explain a few certain points. The notation of chord symbols varies slightly from player to player depending on what circles he runs in and where he studied. My opinions are the direct result of my experiences as a studio and session player in LA and also based on my educational experience. Music theory is not written in stone and your ear is the final judge of what is right and wrong, there is nothing musically illegal. Music theory is simply a guideline for what the ear generally accepts in respect to certain genres, and as these genres evolve so will chord symbols and music theory in general. I personally believe that harmonic theory should be studied and understood so that the very same guidelines can be questioned and manipulated to ones liking. I don't think any two musicians can 100% agree on this subject so it is important to do some more research on your own and keep an open mind.

Chord Symbols

The goal of the chord symbol is to simply tell the guy playing the chords exactly what you want him to play, what he is allowed to include in the chord and what he is not. When dealing with certain genres such as Jazz, a lot of liberties can be taken with the voicings. Not so with other genres such as Pop and Rock, a C chord written in a rock chart generally means play a C chord, while the same C chord written in a Jazz tune can be enhanced with a 9th, #11th, 13th or various other extensions or combinations of extensions without much second thought. A good working knowledge of music theory plus some experience is essential in making these decisions. The melody line will also give you clues on what to include or exclude in chord voicings.

Writing Chord Symbols

You don't want to confuse the guy comping either. You'll realize this the first time you have to read a chart in a dark, smoky bar or on some stage where the lighting is less than adequate (which is the majority of the time). Chord symbols should be direct and to the point. The last chord symbol I want to read is one that I have to think about for more than a millisecond, they should be easy to read. I'll give you one example of a chord symbol that comes up from time to time and makes me crazy: **CM7**. The reason I dislike it is because I have to look twice at it to make sure whether it is major or minor. Especially when written by hand, **CM7** and **Cm7** can look a lot alike. The other chord symbols that get used a lot are the simple minus mark to denote a minor chord and

triangle meaning major. These are widely accepted and they don't bother me but I prefer the simple, easy to read symbols: **Cmaj7** and **Cmin7**. Sometimes the symbols **maj7** and **min7**, get replaced with the shorter versions: **ma7** and **mi7**. These are okay too but **maj7** and **min7** seem the best choices to me, it's hard to confuse them on a gig.

These are some common ways to notate the same **Cmaj7** chord. All are correct but some easier to read than others:

Cmaj7 *CMAJ7* *Cma7* *CMA7* *CM7* *CΔ7*

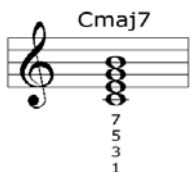
Playing Chords

It is more important for you to understand how to build your own chords than to memorize hundreds of chord shapes. For that reason I have only included the most common voicings or voicings of particular interest, but suggest you spend more time experimenting and finding voicings that suit your style and the style of the music you may be playing. You are free to leave out certain notes also. I have included the roots, but if you are playing with a bassist they are not necessary to include in the voicing. Fifths, unless altered, are also not necessary. The notes that determine the quality of the chords are 3rds, 7ths and the upper extension if one is given in the chord symbol. The voicing you use for a particular chord should be determined by the voicing for the chord that came before and comes after.

Understanding the Notated Examples in this Chapter

All of the notated chords are written in the key of C. The numbers on the bottom show you the intervals contained inside of the chord. These are only the theoretic voicings, the notes can be doubled and/or stacked in any order. More so than the common chord voicings that I will give you, it is more important for you to understand the rules of how to construct the chord and experiment building your own chord voicings.

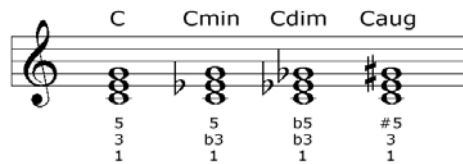
Using the previous guideline you would know this about the following chord:



The chord is a C major 7th chord and the chord symbol is commonly notated as: **Cmaj7**. The major 7th chord contains a root, major 3rd, perfect 5th and a major 7th but does not necessarily have to be voiced in that order.

☐ Triads - Three Note Chords

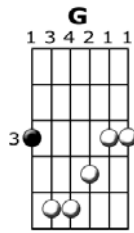
Triads are three note chords, "Tri" as in tricycle or tripod. While Jazz favors "bigger" chords such as 7th and 9th chords, rock is based mostly (but not exclusively) on triads. These chord symbols are the easiest to read and write. Nothing too confusing here, to notate a C major triad, a simple C will work fine. For a C minor chord: **min** as in **Cmin**. A diminished chord generally gets written as **dim** while an augmented triad gets notated as **aug**. Check the triads and their intervals below:



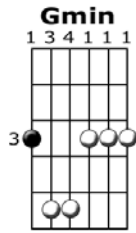
Common Triad Voicings

The following shapes can be moved up and down the neck. After learning the shapes, try moving them to different positions on the fingerboard:

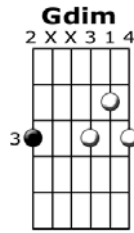
6th string root forms



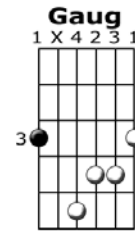
Voicing: 1,5,1,3,5,1



Voicing: 1,5,1,b3,5,1

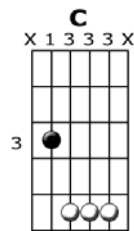


Voicing: 1,b3,b5,1

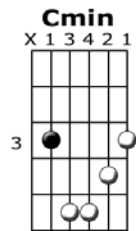


Voicing: 1,1,3,#5,1

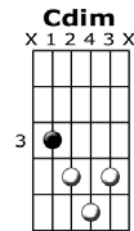
5th string root forms



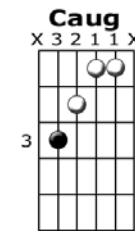
Voicing: 1,5,1,3



Voicing: 1,5,1,b3,1

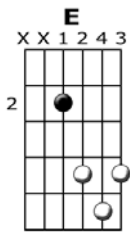


Voicing: 1,b5,1,b3

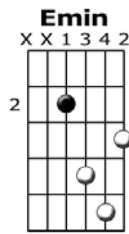


Voicing: 1,3,#5,1

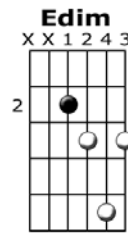
4th string root forms



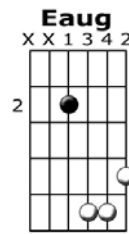
Voicing: 1,5,1,3



Voicing: 1,5,1,b3



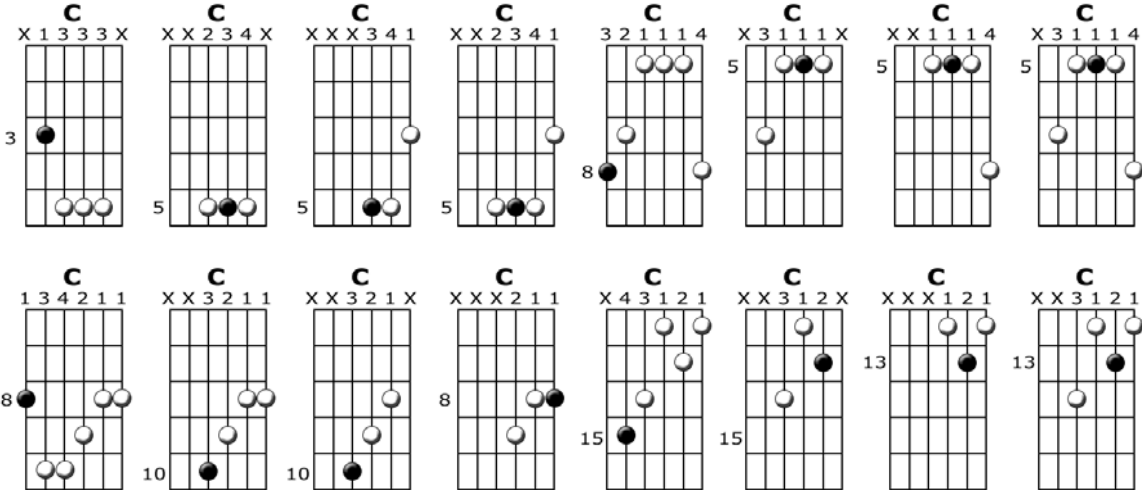
Voicing: 1,b5,1,b3



Voicing: 1,#5,1,3

Learning triad forms

Learning all the triad shapes is important no matter what style of music you play. They are common in most genres and are the foundation for the "big" chords that we will get to later. Don't settle only for the standard voicings I've given above, learn every shape. When you get done learning all the major shapes, see if you can figure out the minor, diminished and augmented ones too:



Try the following chord progression using the major triads given. Notice how some notes stay the same while others move up and down. This is called voice leading, a subject that I will cover at the end of the section on harmony (page 97). Try playing the same chord progression somewhere else on the fretboard. This use of triad voicings is what made Jimi Hendrix a genius at playing chords. Don't worry if all the chords do not have the roots as the bass notes, the bassist takes care of that:

The diagram displays eight major triad voicings on a guitar fretboard:

- G:** Fret 3, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 4, 3, 1, 2. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- D:** Fret 2, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 3, 1, 1, 1. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- F:** Fret 1, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 1, 3, 3, 3. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- C:** Fret 1, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 1, 4, 3, 2. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- Eb:** Fret 6, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 1, 3, 3, 3. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- Bb:** Fret 5, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 1, 4, 3, 2. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- C:** Fret 5, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 3, 1, 1, 1. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.
- D:** Fret 5, strings 2, 3, 4. Fingering: 1, 3, 3, 3. Muting: X on strings 1 and 5.

Below the diagrams is a blank musical staff with a treble clef.

Points to remember about triads

1. Triads, especially the major triad, are used often in slash chords. A slash chord is simply a chord over a specific bass note. For example, a **C/E** slash chord would mean a C triad played over an E bass note. Some common slash chords: **C/E**, **C/G**, **C/Bb**, **C/D** (more on slash chords on page 66).
2. Sometimes the diminished triad gets notated with a small circle as in **C^o** and the augmented triad with a plus mark as in **C⁺**.

EXCERPTS FROM CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4: SLASH CHORDS

A slash is this: /, so a slash chord should have one of them in its name. These are all slash chords: **G/B, C/Bb, F/G, Cmaj7/E**. The symbol on the left of the slash is a chord and the symbol on the right is the bass note. So the slash chord **G/B** means that you have to play a G triad over a B bass note. If I wanted you to play this chord, I would probably say; "Play G on B" or "play G over B." There are basically two types of slash chords: one is an inversion of the chord itself, this makes the bass note (notated on the right of the slash) the 3rd, 5th or 7th of the chord. In the other type of slash chord, the bass note functions as the actual root of the chord. There is a gray area where these two types of slash chords overlap.

Triad Inversions

The first type of slash chords we will deal with are just simple triad inversions. Simply by voicing any triad with the 3rd or 5th in the bass will yield a slash chord. Ex: a common C major triad voiced with the third, E as the bass note will yield a **C/E** slash chord, voiced with the 5th, G as the bass note will yield a **C/G** slash chord. When the triad has as the bass the root, it is said to be in root position. With the 3rd in the bass, 1st inversion and with the 5th in the bass, 2nd inversion.

Bass Note	Inversion
1	root position
3	1st inversion
5	2nd inversion

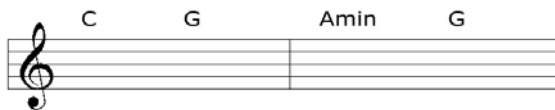
Play each inversion below. The roots are in black for reference:

<p>C</p> <p>X 1 3 3 3 X</p>	<p>C/E</p> <p>X 3 1 1 1 X</p>	<p>C/G</p> <p>1 X 3 3 3 X</p>
root position	1st inversion	2nd inversion

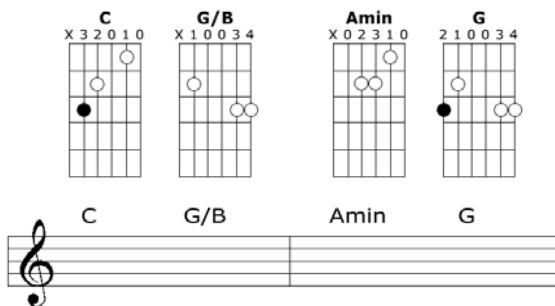
The previous chord examples are just a few of the many triad voicings that can be constructed, see if you can come up with some more voicings of major triads. After you figure some more of the major voicings out, try to come up with the minor shapes also.

Why would you want to use the inversion anyways?

These kinds of slash chords are often used to simply create chromatic bass movements in your chord progressions. Take a look at the chord progression below; all the chords are in root position:



Although the bass movement works fine, we can create a smoother bassline by playing the first G chord in 1st inversion. This will make the bassline for the first two chords descend chromatically. The bassline will also descend through the diatonic scale for both measures:



Lets take this concept a step further. Play the "before" version...

Cmin G Eb F G

And now the "after" version. Check out how the bassline is completely chromatic for the first four chords:

Cmin **G/B** **Eb/Bb** **F/A** **G**

X 1 3 4 2 1 X 1 0 0 3 4 X 1 1 3 4 X X 0 3 2 1 X 2 1 0 0 3 4

Cmin G/B Eb/Bb F/A G

The first inversion major chord (3rd in the bass) is probably the most commonly used of the inversions. While triads in root position and in their inversions are the rule in pop and rock, you aren't likely to find triads in root position very often in Jazz, the 1st inversion major triad however can be found from time to time as in the example below:

Fmin9 **C/E** **Ebmin9** **Abmin7**

X 2 1 3 4 X X 3 1 1 1 X X 2 1 3 4 X 2 X 3 3 3 X

Fmin9 C/E Ebmin9 Abmin7

EXCERPTS FROM CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER 9: SEQUENCES

Building Technique

Now that you have the major scale under your fingers, it's time to move on to the next step, which is to start building technique. We will do this by working on various sequences and patterns until they become effortless. I must admit, sequences are and sound very mathematical which, by the way, is exactly what good improvisation shouldn't sound like. But by learning and practicing the various sequences I'm about to show you, you should eventually be able to forget them while retaining a high level of technique that will allow you to play practically anything your ear tells you to. Each sequence you learn will pose a different technical challenge and that is where true learning begins. The ultimate goal of this section is to gain technical fluidity.

What exactly is a sequence?

It is a musical equation or formula in a sense, one that generally repeats itself from each of the consecutive notes of a scale. It is math, musical math. Although there are various variations and combinations, there are basically two different types of sequences: the "intervallic" and "group of" sequence.

"Intervallic" Sequences - This type of sequence jumps directly from the starting note of the scale (C, in the example below) to the designated interval without sounding the notes in between (in the example given below, a 4th). We then play the next note of the scale (in this case a D note) and jump to the diatonic 4th of that note (G in the example). The process continues from every consecutive note in the scale. The example given below is an ascending intervallic 4ths sequence:



"Group of" Sequences - "Group of" sequences rather than jumping directly to the interval, the player plays the diatonic notes between the starting note and the interval in question (4ths in this example). The process continues from every consecutive note in the scale. The example below is an ascending group of 4 sequence:



How to practice these sequences

All the sequences I've written out are written out using only one scale pattern and in one key (C major scale, pattern 4), the simplest rhythmic notation and ascending only. What you need to do:

1. Practice them in using all scale patterns and in all keys.
 2. Practice them using different rhythmic figures such as triplets, sixteenth notes and various combinations.
 3. Figure them out descending as well. Just do the same thing in reverse, high to low rather than low to high.
 4. Practice them to backing tracks as much as you can or with a friend.
 5. When you have the major scales under your fingers, move on to the other scales such as the harmonic and melodic minor scales.
-

□ Diatonic 3rds

1. Intervalllic 3rds sequence - No real technical problems here except for the F to A interval on the third to second string (third measure, third beat). You'll have to use your pinky to play both notes but since there is no jumping over strings, it doesn't pose too much difficulty. What we are basically doing with this sequence is simple; we play the first note of the scale (C in this case) and then play the note that is up a diatonic third from it, not playing any of the notes in between. We then do the same with the next note of the scale (in this case, from D):

8 7 10 8 7 10 8 7 10 9 7 10 9 7 10 9 7 10 9 8 10 8 7 10 8 7 10 8 7 10 8

2. Group of 3 sequence - No real technical difficulties with this one either. As it is a "group of 3" sequence it may sound more natural using triplets, I've simply notated it using eighth notes to make it as simple as possible. It actually "rubs" a little bit played this way, which is to my liking:

8 10 7 10 7 8 7 8 10 8 10 7 10 7 9 7 9 10 9 10 7 10 7 9 7 9 10 9 10 8 10 8 10 8 10 7 10 7 8 7 8 10 8 8

EXCERPTS FROM CHAPTER 11

CHAPTER 11: INTRODUCING THE MODES OF THE MAJOR SCALE

The Modes

Now we can go on to the modes of the major scale. If you are new to using these modes you should work on each mode one at a time until you have it under your fingers. You must be completely familiar with the major scale before starting. If you are ready, start by memorizing the names and order. This is the basic formula; if we take a major scale (let's say a C major scale) and write it from the root to the root (C) we will get the ionian mode. Write it from the 2nd degree, D to D in this case, we'll get the dorian mode. E to E, the phrygian mode. F to F, the lydian mode. G to G, the mixolydian mode. A to A, the aolian mode. And last but not least, B to B will give you the locrian mode. I used the C major scale as an example but it works the same for all the major scales.

1. Ionian (the major scale)
2. Dorian
3. Phrygian
4. Lydian
5. Mixolydian
6. Aolian (the natural minor scale)
7. Locrian

The order of the modes will never change even when the key does. Examine the chart below. By checking the very bottom column of the chart you can find out what chord the mode works over. Ex. the D dorian mode is the same as the C major scale and works over an **Dmin7** chord.

Key	ionian	dorian	phrygian	lydian	mixolydian	aolian	locrian
C	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
G	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#
D	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#
A	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#
E	E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#
Chord	maj7	min7	min7	maj7	7	min7	min7b5

Warning!

This is where a lot of players get confused. They ask; "How come when I play the D dorian scale it sounds the same as the C major scale?" Of course it does, cause it is! It's not the scale; it's the chord that counts. If you play a C major scale, D to D, over a C major chord, it's going to sound like a C major scale because that's what it is. You have to use the mode over the appropriate chord to get the modal effect. In this case, you have to play the D dorian mode over a D minor chord. Matter of fact, you don't even have to play it D to D, you just have to play a C major scale over a D minor chord to get the dorian sound.

Remember: It isn't where you start and stop in the major scale; it's the chord or chord progression you play over. The C major scale played over a D minor chord is a D dorian scale whether you start on the C note or not.

Analyzing the Dorian Mode

Now we are going to get into the dorian mode; how to find it and how to use it. First of all, let's examine it closely. If we compare it to the D major scale below it we can see the difference. It looks like the major scale with a minor third and a minor seventh. As it also contains the major 6th, it has more of a bright sound compared to it's minor brothers the aolian and the phrygian mode, which both contain the minor 6th making them sound darker.

D dorian scale

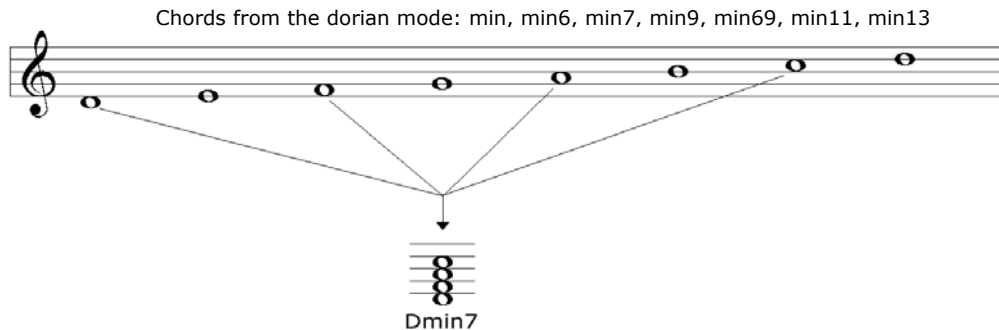


D major scale



Harmonizing the Dorian Mode

If we start making chords from the scale, by stacking it by the root, third, and fifth we first get a minor triad. If we add the seventh, we get a Dmin7th chord. If we continue, a min9th and min11th chord. This is the important thing to remember; the 6th (or 13th) is major. Therefore we get a min13th and/or min6th chord. Remember this too; a **min6** chord has a major sixth not a minor one: 1-b3-5-6. Same with a **min13** chord: 1-b3-5-b7-13. The only difference between a **min6** and **min13** chord is, a **min13** chord contains a seventh (b7) while the **min6** chord doesn't. No other minor mode from the major scale contains a major 6th, therefore, if you run into a **min6** or **min13** chord in a chart, your only mode choice is really the dorian mode.



Playing the Dorian Mode

The next step here is to get you to be able to play any dorian scale anytime you want quickly. The point is; to figure out on the spot what major scale you need to be playing. Remember what I said before; it's not where you start or stop, it's what chord you are playing over that counts. Let's say you're jammin' with these guys and it's your turn to take a solo. You look down at the chart where it has written "guitar solo" and it's got a big **Dmin7** chord symbol sitting there for eight measures. You decide you are going to go for that big jazz sound and use the D dorian scale. All you have to do is determine what major scale you have to play. This is what you do; you use the dorian mode rule which is: **dorian mode = major scale down a major 2nd**. What does that mean? It may help you to remember what a major 2nd interval looks like; it is simply the interval two frets above or below another note on your fretboard. D is on the tenth fret on the 6th string, C is a major second down (two frets below) from that note. All you have to do is play a C major scale over the D minor chord and everything will work out ok.

Dorian mode	} down a major 2nd.
Major scale	

Practicing over Chord Progressions

One of the most common chord progressions for the dorian mode is the typical **ii - V**. Carlos Santana does it all the time. You will need to play a D dorian scale over the chord progression below. Once again, what major scale is the same as the D dorian scale? Remember our rule? The major scale that is a major 2nd below D is the name of the major scale we will need to play. C is a major 2nd below D, so C major is the major scale that we are looking for. Play a D dorian scale (C major scale) over the following chord progression. Oh yeah, a hint: try mixing up a D minor pentatonic scale with the dorian scale to get a Santana type vibe:

A musical staff in treble clef with a 4-measure chord progression: Dmin7, G9, Dmin7, G9. Below the staff, a bracket spans all four measures with the label "L D dorian".

Now that you should be able to play the dorian scale at the drop of a hat, it's time to get you improvising over some different chord progressions. The first four bars are all D minor. What major scale are you going to play to get the D dorian mode? Remember you need to play the major scale that is down a major 2nd from D. The answer is? C major. How about the next four bars of F# minor? The major scale that is a major 2nd down from F# is? E. You'll need to play an E major scale over the F# minor chord. When you become comfortable improvising over the following progression, try to make up some chord progressions of your own using two or more unrelated minor chords:

A musical staff in treble clef with a 4-measure progression: Dmin9, followed by three measures each containing a slash symbol (/). Below the staff, a bracket spans all four measures with the label "L D dorian".

A musical staff in treble clef with a 4-measure progression: F#min9, followed by three measures each containing a slash symbol (/). Below the staff, a bracket spans all four measures with the label "L F# dorian".

Making Music

The goal is to make music. Simply by playing the proper major scale over the modal chord, although theoretically correct, will not necessarily make your solo musical. You must use your ears and pay close attention to the strong notes in the chord you are playing over. Try to think of your solo as a separate composition all together, a song inside a song.

EXCERPTS FROM CHAPTER 14

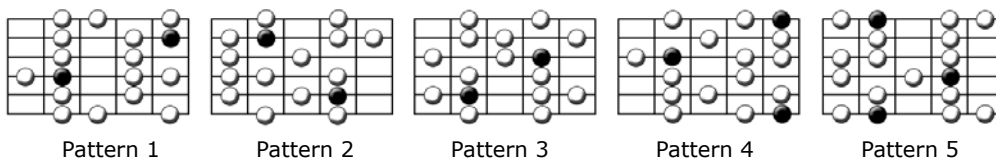
CHAPTER 14: INTRODUCING THE MODES OF THE MELODIC MINOR SCALE

The Modes from the Melodic Minor Scale

Knowledge of the melodic minor scale and its modes are a necessity if you want to play serious jazz or fusion. Just like the modes of the major scale, each mode of the melodic minor scale has a distinct personality.

To be able to use and understand the melodic minor scale modes, it is important to know all five of the scale patterns. Take some time and learn the patterns if you are not already familiar with them. Oh yeah, I need to warn you about something here; this scale may sound wrong to you. I first learned about it when I got into jazz in my early twenties and I could not get this scale to work for me. No matter how I played it, it sounded awful to my virgin ears. Don't give up, take my word for it, when you get it together, it will become one of the most, if not the most important scale you will know. You might want to get your ear going ahead of time by buying a John Scofield CD like; "Still Warm" or something similar.

Melodic Minor Scale Patterns



History Lesson

The melodic minor scale is built by raising the 6th and 7th degrees of the natural minor scale (the aolian mode). In the old days the rule of this scale was that while ascending you raised the 6th and 7th scale degrees but when descending you lowered them back to the natural pitches. Why do you think they did this? I have heard different theories, one being that the scale is simply easier to sing that way, and also that passages that ascend tend to favor the raised pitches while descending passages favor the natural pitches, but regardless, the final result is a whole new set of diatonic chords to work with. As I described in Chapter 13, about a few hundred years ago, the composers didn't like the way the minor ν chord sounded (from the natural minor scale), it doesn't resolve strongly to the tonic or i chord. So they just added a G sharp (raised 7th) note to the A

minor scale and everyone was happy because they all of a sudden got a dominant **V** chord. That's how the harmonic minor scale came in to existence. After a while maybe they just wanted more chord choices than the harmonic minor scale could give so they and added the raised 6th to match the already raised 7th. With the creation of the melodic minor scale, a whole new set of diatonic chords came into being.

Harmonizing the Melodic Minor Scale

Don't let this ascending, descending thing confuse you; nobody plays it like that anymore. Nowadays, musicians are more interested in the upper chord extensions we get from the melodic minor scale and the modal choices it supplies. When used for improvisation it would be pointless to play it differently ascending and descending. Some musicians call it the "Jazz Melodic Minor" scale to differentiate it from the melodic minor scale used in a classical setting. Anyway, check out all the interesting 7th chords we get when we harmonize the scale:

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Above the staff, seven diatonic 7th chords are listed: Amin(maj7), Bmin7, Cmaj7#5, D7, E7, F#min7(b5), and G#min7(b5). Below the staff, the notes for each chord are written as vertical stems with circular heads, representing the chord voicings. The notes are: Amin(maj7) [A, C, E, G], Bmin7 [B, D, F, A], Cmaj7#5 [C, E, G, B, D], D7 [D, F, A, C], E7 [E, G, B, D], F#min7(b5) [F#, A, C, E], and G#min7(b5) [G#, B, D, F].

If you were to harmonize the diatonic chords as 9th, 11th and 13th chords from the scale you would see why the melodic minor scale becomes of particular interest to the modern day musician and composer.

The Modes of the Melodic Minor Scale

Now we can go on to the modes of the melodic minor scale. Memorize the names and order. This is the basic formula; if we take a melodic minor scale (let's say an A melodic minor scale) and write it from the root to the root, we will get the melodic minor scale. Write it from the 2nd degree, B to B in this case, we'll get the dorian b2 mode. C to C, the lydian augmented mode. D to D, the lydian dominant mode. E to E, the mixolydian b6 mode. F# to F#, the locrian #2 mode. And last but not least, G# to G# will give you the altered mode (sometimes referred to as the super locrian mode). I used the A melodic minor scale as an example but it works the same for all the melodic minor scales.

- 1. Melodic Minor**
- 2. Dorian b2 Mode**
- 3. Lydian Augmented Mode**
- 4. Lydian Dominant Mode**
- 5. Mixolydian b6 Mode**
- 6. Locrian #2 Mode**
- 7. Altered Mode (Super Locrian Mode)**

The Answer is in the Name

While the names may seem intimidating, they are easier to understand than you may think. If you remember the terms, the meaning and use of the individual modes will fall into place:

- Lydian – refers to a raised 4th or 11th.
 - Augmented – A raised 5th.
 - Dominant – refers to a lowered 7th.
 - Altered – refers to altered (raised and/or lowered) 5ths and 9ths.
-

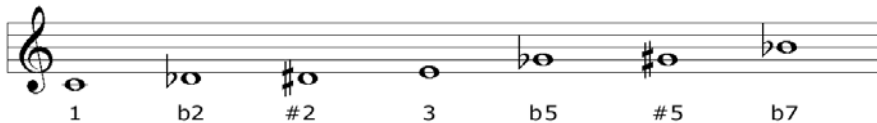
□ The Altered Mode

Let's start with one of the most popular modes of the melodic minor scale, the altered mode. The altered mode is based on seventh degree of the melodic minor scale and is dominant by nature. If we compare the altered mode below to the mixolydian mode from the major scale, we can see that the altered mode contains both the altered 5ths and altered 9ths. If you stack all the notes in thirds to make chords you will find quite a wide variety of altered dominant chords.

Analyzing the Altered Mode

By comparing the mixolydian mode to the altered mode below we can see that while the mixolydian mode basically contains no alterations, the altered mode contains all of them. I have notated the altered mode using all enharmonic notes for comparative purposes:

C altered mode



C mixolydian mode



Harmonizing the Altered Mode

Just as we did with the modes of the major scale, we must harmonize the altered mode to find out what kind of chords can be made from it. As you can see from the analysis below, all altered extensions available using this scale. Keep in mind; #11ths and b5ths are the same as well as b13ths and #5ths.

Chords from the altered mode: 7b5, 7#5, 7b13, 7b9, 7#9, 7(b5,b9), 7(#5,b9), 7(b5,#9), 7(#5,#9), 7(b9,#9), 7(b5,#5), 7(b5,#5,b9,#9), or any other combination of altered extensions.

C7(b5,b9) C7(#5,b9) C7(b5,#9) C7(#5,#9)

Playing the Altered Mode

Anytime you run into an altered dominant chord; any dominant chord with an altered 5th and/or 9th, use the altered mode. Remember the altered mode rule: **altered mode = melodic minor scale up a minor 2nd**. What does that mean? Just play the melodic minor scale that is up one fret.

Melodic Minor scale ←
Altered mode } up a minor 2nd.

BOOK PREVIEW