

MODES AND APPLICATIONS OF THE ASCENDING MELODIC MINOR SCALE

MODES

Ascending Melodic Minor...	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G#	A
Javanese.....	B	C	D	E	F#	G#	A	B
Lydian Augmented.....	C	D	E	F#	G#	A	B	C
Lydian Dominant.....	D	E	F#	G#	A	B	C	D
Hindu.....	E	F#	G#	A	B	C	D	E
Locrian #2.....	F#	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#
Diminished/Whole-tone.....	G#	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G#

APPLICATIONS

As shown below, the ascending melodic minor scale or any of its modes will accommodate (perfectly) five different chord-types (see left-hand column below). Three of these chord-types are frequently found adjacent to one another in the chord progressions of countless tunes, namely the II, V, I progression in minor (II \emptyset , V7 with +5 and +9, I- Δ). Furthermore many tunes, such as "Woodyn' You" ("Algo Bueno") and "Stella By Starlight", use extended sequences of II \emptyset - V7 +5 and +9 (V7 alt.) which modulate downward in whole steps, without resolving to a I- Δ chord.

The problem that frequently arises for the player stems from the fact that many books and methods for improvisation recommend using Locrian #2 for \emptyset chords, diminished/whole-tone for V7 alt., and ascending melodic minor for - Δ chords. This questionable practice is the result of an effort to have all scales begin on the roots of the chords, though a glance at the chart shown above will show that all three of the aforementioned scale-types are modes of the ascending melodic minor scale. Furthermore, there is no virtue in using scales which begin on the roots of chords, as such practice encourages the improviser to overuse the chord roots in their improvised melodies. Then there is the wasted time and effort taken up with learning three different scale structures in twelve keys (plus learning two more structures for the 7 +4 chord and the Δ 7 +5 chord)! Any of the modes of the ascending melodic minor will accommodate all five chord-types. The choice of mode rests with the individual player. This writer uses the lydian augmented scale, because its only application to a chord-root is on the Δ +5 chord, which is the least common of the five chord-types, thereby creating the most subtle effect in improvisation on the other four chord-types. The beginning student of improvisation may want to select the most familiar mode (usually ascending melodic minor), perhaps learning a less-familiar mode at a later time.

One more point should be made with regard to applying scales and melodies to the II, V, I progression in minor: the successive scale roots and/or starting pitches of sequential patterns or melodies will shift up a minor third interval when moving from the II chord to the V chord, then up a major third interval when going from the V chord to the I chord, spelling a hypothetical minor triad with the starting pitches. For example, if the first scale root or starting pitch of a phrase (on the II \emptyset) is F#, then the next roots/starting pitches will be A (for the V7 alt.) and C# (on the I- Δ). This reduces the problem of application to figuring only the scale root/starting pitch for the II \emptyset , as the remaining two applications will fall into place via the hypothetical minor triad system, making for ease of scalar application. To develop facility with using the system, practice scales, patterns, and improvisation with the II, V, I (in minor) track of Aebersold's Volume 3.

PLACEMENT OF MODES WITHIN CHORDS

	asc.m.m.	javanese	lyd.aug.	lyd.dom.	hindu	loc.#2	dim./w.t.
\emptyset	3	4	b5	b6	7	root	2
7 alt.	b2	#2	3	#4	#5	7	root
- Δ	root	2	3	4	5	6	7
7 +4	5	6	7	root	2	3	#4
Δ +5	6	7	root	2	3	#4	#5

2nd Degree
OF \emptyset Chord
IN W/USE