

# Using Scales For Melody Playing and Improvising

Up to this point in *Fear of Ukulele*, scales have been presented to help you understand chord construction. This section will show you how to use scales as melodic devices, for playing melodies, and improvising.

There are dozens of scales that you should learn, but the four scales presented here are the most widely used.

They are the major scale, minor scale (dorian mode), the minor pentatonic scale, and the major pentatonic scale.

The structure of the four scales is:

Major R 2 3 4 5 6 7

Dorian R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7

Major Pentatonic R 2 3 5 6

Minor Pentatonic R b3 4 5 b7

The scales in the next section will be displayed in notation and TAB, and the scale degrees will be notated under each measure. When you play through each scale, you should start on the root note of the scale to get a sense of how the scale sounds. When you are using a scale to create melodies, you can start on whatever scale degree you choose. But when just playing through the scale hearing the root first sets your ear up to hear the scale based on that note.

## Using Scales To Create Solos

The major scale is the mother ship of all scales and can be used to create countless melodic ideas. As shown earlier, this scale contains seven notes, so when you use it to create melodies and licks, you have to be selective as to which notes you play. Some notes create dissonance when played over certain chords.

The dorian mode also contains seven notes.

The pentatonic scales, however, only contain five notes, and can be played more freely over a given chord sequence. Blues, rock and country players use these scales extensively, since you can play endless patterns from them, and rarely clash with the chords being played over.

Just as with the chords on the uke, scales can be played in both open and moveable shapes.

These scales will be presented with the five forms in both open and moveable configurations, followed by examples of patterns and licks that can be used to improvise solos. A sample solo for each scale will also be shown.

If you plan on playing a lot of single note melodies, you should consider putting your G string tuned an octave lower on your uke. As explained earlier, this will give you a greater range of notes from bass to treble that you will want in creating solos on only four strings.

# Open Major Scale Patterns

Here are a series of patterns that are a great way to develop your facility with linear playing. They can also be used as fodder for soloing. You can apply these patterns to any type of scale.

Pattern 1 (ascending)

Musical notation for Pattern 1 (ascending) in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody in treble clef. The second staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers: 0 2 4 0 2 0 1 2 | 0 1 3 0 1 3 0 1.

Musical notation for Pattern 1 (ascending) in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody in treble clef. The second staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers: 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 | 2 3 5 2 3.

Pattern 1 (descending)

Musical notation for Pattern 1 (descending) in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody in treble clef. The second staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers: 3 2 0 3 2 0 3 2 | 0 3 1 0 3 1 0 3.

Musical notation for Pattern 1 (descending) in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody in treble clef. The second staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers: 1 0 2 1 0 2 0 0 | 2 0 4 2 0.

Pattern 2 (ascending)

Musical notation for Pattern 2 (ascending) in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody in treble clef. The second staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers: 0 4 2 1 4 3 1 0 | 3 2 0 3 2 5 3.

Pattern 2 (descending)

Musical notation for Pattern 2 (descending) in 4/4 time. The first staff shows the melody in treble clef. The second staff shows the guitar tablature with fret numbers: 3 0 2 3 0 1 3 4 | 1 2 4 0 2 4 0.

# Using Major Scales to Create Solos

The following studies shows how a major scale can be used to create melodies over a chord progression

The chord sequence is C G Am F, and the two examples use a C major scale to create melodies that are consonant with those chords.

If you look closely at the melody notes you can see that ever time a new chord is introduced, the melody in that measure begins with the same note as the root of that chord, all the time keeping within the c major scale.

As you progress as a melody player, you will start including a variety of scales and tricks to make your melodies more compelling, but as this exercise demonstrates, with just a basic major scale, you can create really interesting melodies over chord progressions.

Example 1

Example 1, measures 1-2. Chords: C, G. The melody starts on C4 and moves up stepwise to G4. The guitar tablature shows the fretting for the C and G chords.

Example 1, measures 3-4. Chords: Am, F. The melody starts on A3 and moves up stepwise to F4. The guitar tablature shows the fretting for the Am and F chords.

Example 2

Example 2, measures 1-2. Chords: C, G. The melody starts on C4 and moves up stepwise to G4. The guitar tablature shows the fretting for the C and G chords.

Example 2, measures 3-4. Chords: Am, F, C. The melody starts on A3 and moves up stepwise to C4. The guitar tablature shows the fretting for the Am, F, and C chords.

# Minor Pentatonic and Blues Scale Licks

The next couple of pages show some of the many licks that can be created using the minor pentatonic scale. The blues scale will also be introduced. The blues scale is a slight variation to

C Minor Pentatonic Scale (R b3 4 5 b7)

T  
A  
B

If you add the flatted 5th degree to a minor pentatonic scale, you get the blues scale, which adds a bit more color, and edge to the scale.

C Minor Blues Scale (R b3 4 b5 5 b7)

T  
A  
B

Lick 1 minor pentatonic

T  
A  
B

Lick 2 minor pentatonic

T  
A  
B

Lick 3 minor pentatonic

T  
A  
B

# Dorian Mode

The dorian mode is a minor scale that sounds good when played over minor chords, and often 7th chords. Modes are scales that are extracted from major scales. The dorian mode is basically a major scale played from the 2nd degree to the 2nd degree (instead of from root to root). Every major scale contains seven modes that can be used to play over a variety of chords. They are all very useful, but the dorian mode has the most utility for basic improvising. All of the modes are explored in my book *Fear of Soloing*.

C dorian

5 6 b7 R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7 R

A dorian

b7 R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7 R 2 b3

G Dorian

R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7 R 2 b3 4  
R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7 R 2 b3 4

2 b3 4 5 6 b7 R 2 b3 4 5

D Dorian

4 5 6 b7 R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7

# Solo Using Dorian Mode

You don't need to feel relegated to playing only one type of scale in a given solo. Many solos include elements of several scales and modes. The study below is a minor chord progression that uses the D dorian mode over the D minor chord, the G dorian mode over the G minor chord and the A minor pentatonic scale over the A minor chord.

Dm (D dorian)

TAB 4/4 7 5 7 4 | 5 7 5 8 | 5 7 5 8 | 5 7 5 5

Gm (G dorian)

TAB 6 5 7 5 | 7 5 6 8 | 5 6 8 5 | 6 5 7 5

A7 (A minor pentatonic)

TAB 5 8 7 5 | 7 5 7 5 | 7 8 7 5 | 7 5 7 5

Dm

TAB 7

# All of Me

1                      1                      3<sup>M</sup>                      3<sup>M</sup>

6<sup>7</sup>                      6<sup>7</sup>                      2<sup>m</sup>                      2<sup>m</sup>

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 1, 1, 3<sup>M</sup>, and 3<sup>M</sup>. The bottom staff has four measures with fingerings 6<sup>7</sup>, 6<sup>7</sup>, 2<sup>m</sup>, and 2<sup>m</sup>. The first measure of the top staff shows a G major chord (x02333).

1.

3<sup>7</sup>                      3<sup>7</sup>                      4<sup>M</sup>                      4<sup>M</sup>

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 3<sup>7</sup>, 3<sup>7</sup>, 4<sup>M</sup>, and 4<sup>M</sup>. The bottom staff is empty.

1<sup>M</sup>                      1<sup>M</sup>                      6<sup>m</sup>                      6<sup>m</sup>

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 1<sup>M</sup>, 1<sup>M</sup>, 6<sup>m</sup>, and 6<sup>m</sup>. The bottom staff is empty. The final measure of the top staff shows a G major chord (x02333).

2..

4                      4<sup>m</sup>                      1                      6<sup>7</sup>

2<sup>m</sup>                      5<sup>7</sup>                      1                      1

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 4, 4<sup>m</sup>, 1, and 6<sup>7</sup>. The bottom staff has four measures with fingerings 2<sup>m</sup>, 5<sup>7</sup>, 1, and 1.

# Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain

## Verse

1                      1                      1                      1

5                      5                      1                      1

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 1, 1, 1, and 1. The bottom staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 5, 1, and 1. The first measure of the top staff shows a G major chord (x02333).

## Chorus

4                      4                      4                      4

1                      1                      5                      5

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 4, 4, 4, and 4. The bottom staff has four measures with fingerings 1, 1, 5, and 5.

## Verse

1                      1                      1                      1

5                      5                      1                      1

Detailed description: This system contains two staves of guitar tablature. The top staff has four measures with fingerings 1, 1, 1, and 1. The bottom staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 5, 1, and 1.