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Hi and Welcome!

Many students of music have problems “Understanding” the basic modes of the major scale. This is generally due to a lack of understanding of the corresponding harmony and the application and transposition necessary to reach this goal. Forget the myths, it’s actually quite easy and logical.



Please note: This book is only dealing the the modes of the Major scale and not the melodic minor etc

WHAT IS A MODE?

A mode of a major scale is just basically an INVERSION of that scale. This means that it is the same scale starting on a different note. What would be the point of this you may ask? Well each mode has its own unique flavour and corresponding harmony.

Many Guitarists/Musicians look at the Modes through the key of C major. This tends to leave them very “Confused” when for example someone says play C Locrian. Here many musicians will just play a scale of C major starting on a note of B natural when in fact they should be playing a Db major scale starting on a note of C natural. Why is this?

First lets have a look at the Modes in C major, C major [or C Ionian]

The image shows the C major scale (C Ionian mode) in 4/4 time. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a staff with notes. Below the staff are three lines labeled T, A, and B, representing guitar strings, with fret numbers written below them.

String	Fret
T	3 5 7 4 5 7 5 6 8 5 7 8 7 5 8 6 5 7 5 4 7 5 3 7 5 3
A	
B	

D Dorian starts on 2nd degree of the C major Scale

The image shows the D Dorian mode in 4/4 time. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a staff with notes. Below the staff are three lines representing guitar strings, with fret numbers written below them.

String	Fret
T	5 7 8 5 7 9 5 7 9 6 8 10 7 8 10 8 7 10 8 6 9 7 5 9 7 5 8 7 5
A	
B	

E Phrygian starts on the 3rd degree of the C Major scale

Musical notation for the E Phrygian scale. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom two staves show the fretboard with fingerings: 7 8 10, 7 9 10, 7 9 10, 8 10 12, 8 10 12 10, 8, 12 10 8, 10 9 7, 10, 9 7, 10 8 7.

F Lydian starts on the 4th degree of the C Major scale

Musical notation for the F Lydian scale. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom two staves show the fretboard with fingerings: 8 10 12, 9 10 12, 9 10 12, 10 12 13, 10 12 13 12, 10, 13 12 10, 12 10 9, 12, 10 9, 12 10 8.

G Mixolydian starts on the 5th degree of the C Major scale

Musical notation for the G Mixolydian scale. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom three staves are labeled T, A, and B, showing the fretboard with fingerings: 10 12 14, 10 12 14, 10 12 14, 12 13 15, 12 13 15 13, 12, 15 13 12, 14 12 10, 14, 12 10, 14 12 10.

A Aeolian starts on the 6th degree of the C Major scale

Musical notation for the A Aeolian scale on a guitar. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef. The bottom two staves show fret numbers for the left hand.

12 14 15	12 14 15	12 14	16	13 15 17	13 15 17 15	13	17 15 13	16 14 12	15	14 12	15 14 12
----------	----------	-------	----	----------	-------------	----	----------	----------	----	-------	----------

B Locrian starts on the 7th degree of the C Major scale

Musical notation for the B Locrian scale on a guitar. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef. The bottom two staves show fret numbers for the left hand.

14 15 17	14 15 17	14 16	17	15 17 18	15 17 19 17	15	18 17 15	17 16 14	17	15 14	17 15 14
----------	----------	-------	----	----------	-------------	----	----------	----------	----	-------	----------

SIDE NOTE:

PENTATONIC SCALES WITHIN THE C MAJOR SCALE

Also within the most used scale in western music is the most used scale in Pop and Rock. **The minor and major pentatonic.** [Again, you could start the pentatonic scale on any other degree of the major scale].

Guitar Cliches

A minor Pentatonic

1

3/4

8 5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 8 5

C Major Pentatonic

1

3/4

8 10 7 10 7 10 7 9 8 10 8

Intervallic Relationships

C to D=1 tone

C to E=Major third

C to F=Perfect fourth

C to G=Perfect fifth

C to A=Major sixth

C to B=Major seventh

HOW TO REMEMBER THEIR NAMES IN ORDER

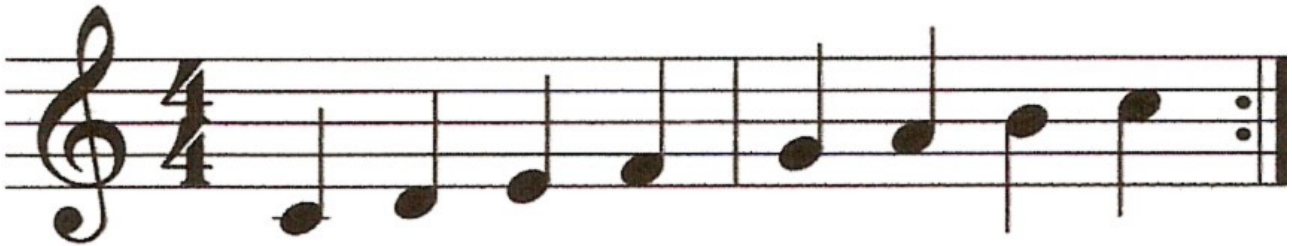
Ionian Dorian Phrygian Lydian Mixolydian Aeolian Locrian

“If Dora Plays Like Me Al Listens”

TRANSPOSING THE MODES OF THE MAJOR SCALE

If we count up one whole tone [2 half steps] from C then we have a note of D the 2nd degree of the C major scale. From this D note we begin the D dorian mode.

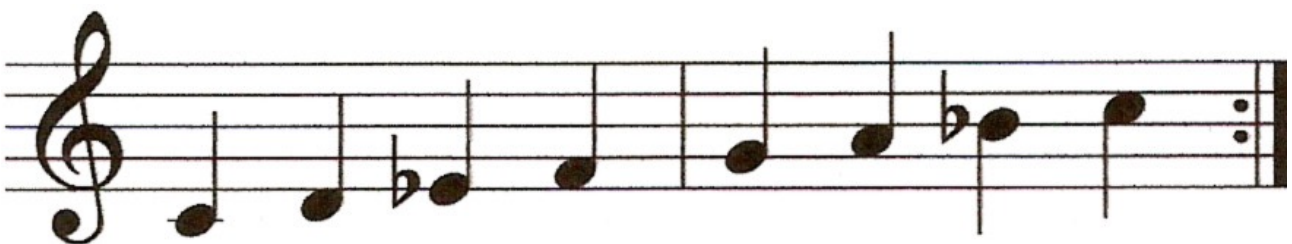
D dorian -----



So if the note D is the second note of C then what is C the second note of? Answer = Bb. You can either count down two half steps from C or up two half steps from Bb. So C dorian will have the same notes as Bb major and starting on its 2nd degree note of C [see ex.1]

EX.1 C Dorian

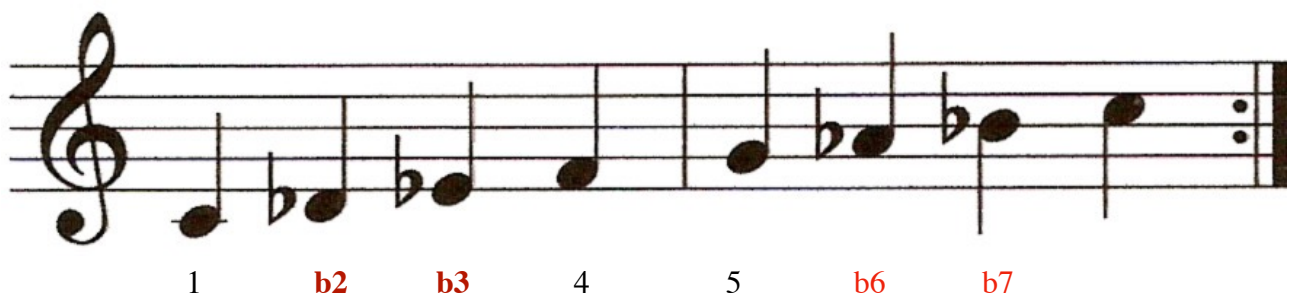
1 2 **b3** 4 5 6 **b7** C dorian 2 octaves



1 2 **b3** 4 5 6 **b7**

If E Phrygian is the 3rd degree [or a Major 3rd up from C] then what is C the 3rd degree of [or a Major 3rd up from]. Answer Ab. You can either count down five half steps from C or up five half steps from Ab.

EX.2 C Phrygian



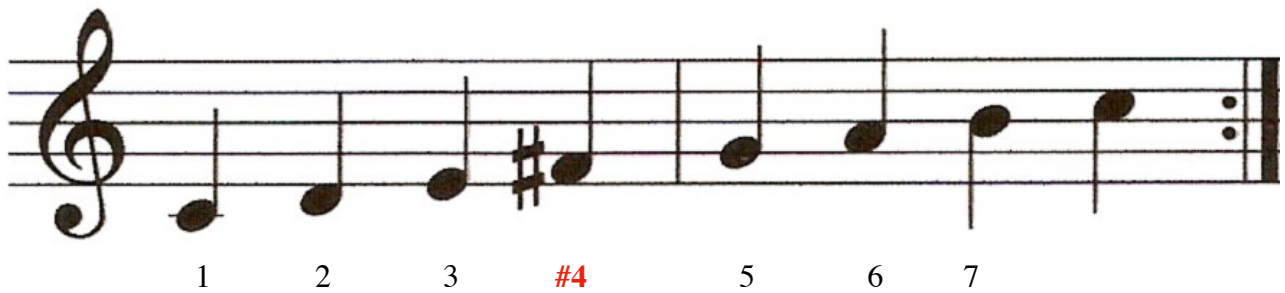
A single staff of music in treble clef showing the C Phrygian scale. The notes are C, Bb, Ab, G, F, E, D, C. The notes Bb, Ab, and D are marked with red flat symbols. Below the staff, the scale degrees are labeled: 1, b2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7.



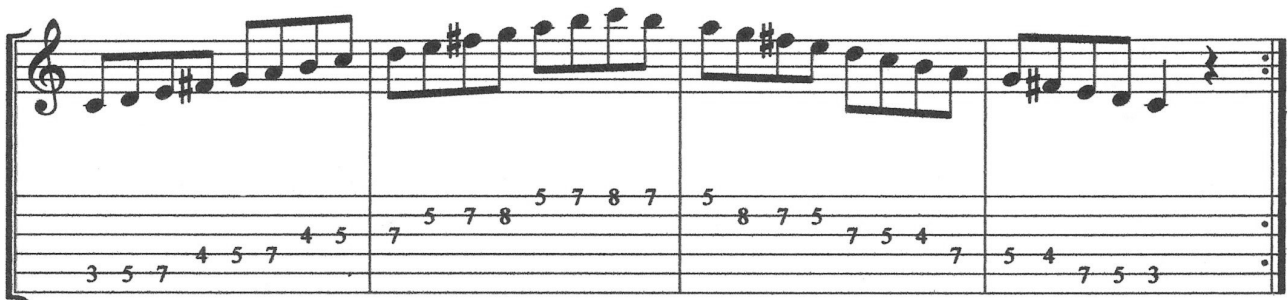
A musical score for guitar showing the C Phrygian scale. The top staff is in treble clef and contains the scale notes with accidentals. The bottom two staves show guitar fingering: the first staff is the bass line and the second is the treble line. The fingering sequence is: 3 4 6 | 3 5 6 | 3 5 6 | 6 4 6 8 | 4 6 8 6 | 4 8 6 4 | 6 5 3 | 6 5 3 | 6 4 3.

If F Lydian is the Fourth degree of C [or a perfect fourth up from C] then what is C the fourth degree of [or a perfect fourth up from]. Answer is G.

EX.3 C Lydian

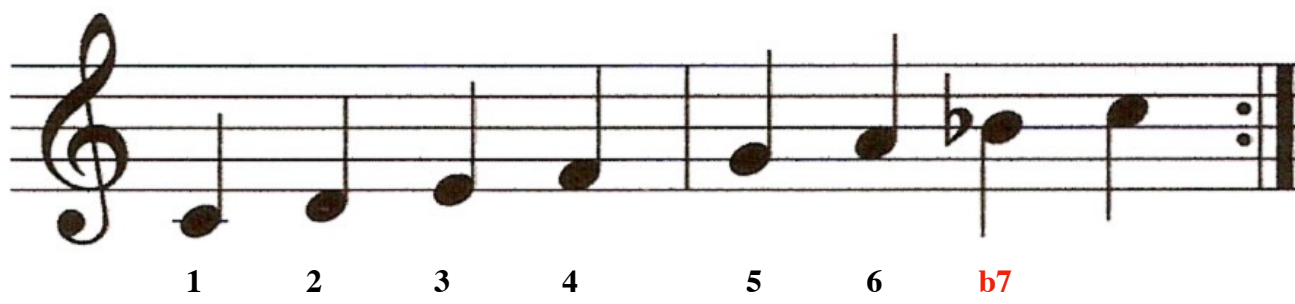


C Lydian 2 octaves



If G Mixolydian is the fifth of C [or a perfect fifth up from C] then what is C the fifth of [or a perfect 5th up from]. Answer is F.

EX.4 C Mixolydian



A musical staff in treble clef showing the C Mixolydian scale. The notes are C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C. The notes are numbered 1 through 7 below the staff, with 'b7' written in red below the Bb note.

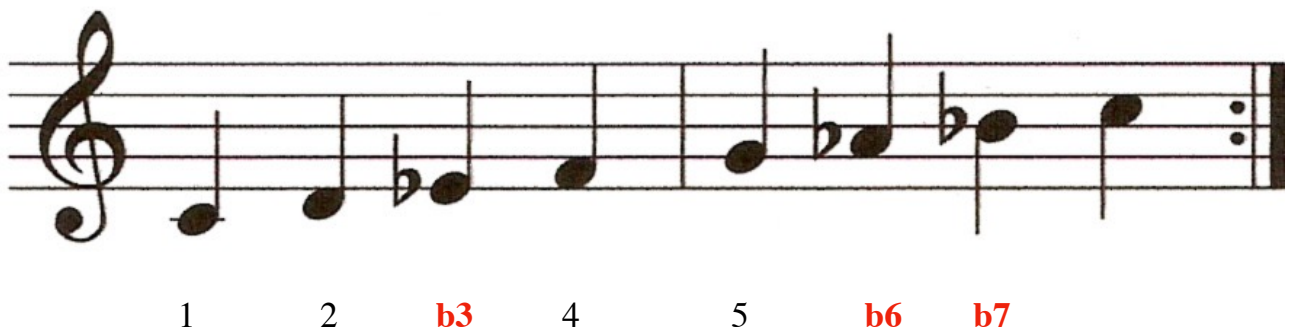
C Mixolydian 2 octaves



A musical staff in treble clef showing the C Mixolydian scale over two octaves. The notes are C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C. Below the staff, there are two lines of guitar fingering: the top line shows 3 5 7 3 5 7 3 5 7 5 6 8 5 6 8 6 5 8 6 5 7 5 3 7 5 3 7 5 3 and the bottom line shows 3 5 7 3 5 7 3 5 7 5 6 8 5 6 8 6 5 8 6 5 7 5 3 7 5 3 7 5 3.

If A Aeolian is the sixth of C [or a major 6th up from C] then what is C the sixth of [or a major 6th up from] Answer is Eb.

EX.5 C Aeolian



A single staff of music in treble clef showing the C Aeolian scale. The notes are C, D, E-flat, F, G, A-flat, B-flat, and C. Below the staff, the scale degrees are numbered: 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7.

C Aeolian 2 octaves



Two staves of music. The top staff shows the C Aeolian scale over two octaves in treble clef. The bottom staff shows the corresponding fingering for the right hand, with numbers 1-8 placed above the notes and 3-5, 7, 8, 6, 4, 7, 5, 3, 6, 5, 3, 6, 5, 3 placed below the notes.

If B Locrian is the seventh of C [or a major seventh up from] then what is C the seventh of [or a major seventh up from]. Answer Db.

EX.6 C Locrian

1 **b2** **b3** 4 **b5** **b6** **b7**

B locrian 2 octaves

3 4 6 3 5 6 3 5 6 4 6 8 4 6 8 6 4 8 6 4 6 5 3 6 5 3 6 4 3

LOOKING AT HARMONY FOR TRANSPosed MODES OF THE MAJOR SCALE

These next examples are played over a C Pedal Note in the bass to establish the Harmony and flavour of each mode. This is also useful for putting together little Vamps for practicing the Modes.

C Ionian

C Dorian

Cmaj7 G/C F/C G/C Cm9 Bb/C Eb/C F/C

Mode	Chord	T	A	B
C Ionian	Cmaj7	5	4	5
	G/C	3	4	5
	F/C	1	2	3
	G/C	3	4	5
C Dorian	Cm9	3	3	1
	Bb/C	3	3	3
	Eb/C	3	4	3
	F/C	1	2	3

C Phrygian

C Lydian

Ab/C Eb/C Db/C Eb/C Cmaj7 D/C G/C D/C

Mode	Chord	T	A	B
C Phrygian	Ab/C	1	1	1
	Eb/C	3	3	3
	Db/C	6	6	6
	Eb/C	3	4	3
C Lydian	Cmaj7	5	4	5
	D/C	2	3	2
	G/C	3	4	5
	D/C	2	3	2

C Mixolydian

C Aeolian

Bb/C	C7sus4	C7	F/C	Ab/C	Bb/C	Eb/C	Ab/C
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Musical notation for C Mixolydian and C Aeolian scales. The C Mixolydian section (left) shows chords Bb/C, C7sus4, C7, and F/C. The C Aeolian section (right) shows chords Ab/C, Bb/C, Eb/C, and Ab/C. Each chord is represented by a treble clef staff with notes and a bass staff with fingerings. A double bar line separates the two sections.

C Locrian

Ab/C	Db/C	Ab/C	Gb/C
------	------	------	------

Musical notation for C Locrian scale. It shows chords Ab/C, Db/C, Ab/C, and Gb/C. Each chord is represented by a treble clef staff with notes and a bass staff with fingerings.

BEING CREATIVE WITH THE MODES

Back to Basics: To explore the “Harmony” of the modes we need to look at the arpeggios/chords contained within them. We will look at the C major [Ionian] for simplicity’s sake.

Arpeggios contained within the C Ionian Mode [or C Major]

Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7 [Dominant]

T
A
B

Am7 Bm7b5

C major Pentatonic

A minor Pentatonic

EXTENDING THE CHORDAL ARPEGGIOS: C IONIAN

With this in mind we can now extend the C Major [Ionian] arpeggios contained in the harmony. [Starting on the 4th degree F as it opens out the whole fingerboard for us].

Fmaj7 Dm7 Bm7b5 G7 Em7 Cmaj7 Am7 Fmaj7 Dm7

The first system of musical notation shows three measures of arpeggiated chords. The treble clef staff is in 3/4 time. The guitar TAB staff shows the following fret numbers for each note in the arpeggios:

- Measure 1 (Fmaj7): 1 5 3 2 5 3
- Measure 2 (Dm7 Bm7b5 G7): 3 7 5 3 7 5
- Measure 3 (Em7 Cmaj7 Am7 Fmaj7 Dm7): 5 8 7 5 8 7

Bm7b5 G7 Em7 Cmaj7 Am7 Fmaj7

The second system of musical notation shows three measures of arpeggiated chords. The treble clef staff is in 3/4 time. The guitar TAB staff shows the following fret numbers for each note in the arpeggios:

- Measure 1 (Bm7b5 G7 Em7): 7 10 8 7 10 9
- Measure 2 (Cmaj7 Am7 Fmaj7): 8 12 10 9 12 10
- Measure 3 (Bm7b5 G7 Em7 Cmaj7 Am7 Fmaj7): 8 12 10 12 10 12

This is how we start to create improvisation with the modes rather than just playing a scale over some chord or the other. In truth if you miss the harmony then you miss the value of the modes altogether both as a composer and as an improviser.

MODES AS QUARTAL HARMONY

It is quite common to employ Quartal Harmony. This harmony in 4ths gives a very intense jazzy sound as used by John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner. [This is only one way of harmonising this, but it is quite common amongst jazz musicians].

Chords: Cm7⁴, Dm7⁴, Ebmaj7^{b5}, F7⁴, Gm7⁴, Am7⁴

1	4	6	8	10	11	13	13
2	3	5	7	8	10	12	14
1	3	5	7	8	10	12	13
1	3	5	6	8	10	12	13

CONSTRUCTING SIMPLE REPETITIVE VAMPS FOR PRACTICE:

From the chords of the harmony above here is a simple “Dorian Mode” vamp.

Chords: Cm7⁴, Dm7⁴, Cm7⁴, Dm7⁴, Cm7⁴

T	4	6	6	4	6	4
A	3	5	5	3	5	3
B	3	5	5	3	5	3

DORIAN MODE IMPROVISATION

Below are a couple of pentatonic ideas to get you started. If we look at these elementary examples we can already see that within this modal scale there is much creative room for pentatonic and motivic development.

Cm9 [C dorian]

Typical Pentatonic flourish

The image shows two musical examples. The first, labeled 'Cm9 [C dorian]', consists of a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass line with fingerings. The second, labeled 'Typical Pentatonic flourish', shows a similar structure with a different melodic line and bass line fingerings.

SUPERIMPOSITION

In this final Example [Using C dorian again] we can Exploit the Mode by Superimposing and flowing through its triads. [Starting on Bb to open up the Full finger board for us].

Bbmaj7 Cm7 F Eb F Gm Dm Cm7

The image shows a musical exercise for superimposition. It features a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass line with fingerings. Above the staff, a series of chords are indicated: Bbmaj7, Cm7, F, Eb, F, Gm, Dm, and Cm7. The exercise starts on Bb to open up the full finger board.

Note: *You can also make "Triad Pairs" From the above exercise*

C LYDIAN MODE

Here we will look at the Lydian mode of C. Below this is a Variation of the same exercise but in plain C major [C Ionian]. Notice the difference that the F# adds to the flavour and harmonic content of C Lydian as opposed to the F Natural of C Ionian [C major].

C LYDIAN MODE

85 bpm

Cmaj7 9b5 D/E D/E D/C C/D Bm6/E Cmaj7

T 2 3 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 7 5 5 5 7 7 7 3 2 3

A 4 4 2 4 5 4 3 7 3 5 8 7 5 7 7 7 5 3 3 5

B 3 5 4 4 5 4 3 7 7 7 7 5 5 2 5 5 7 7 5 5 2 3

0 0 0 8 5 0 0 0

C IONIAN MODE

85 bpm

Cmaj7 Dsu4/E Dm/C C/D Bm7b5 Em7sus4

5 5 4 3 6 6 5 8 7 5 5 5 5 5 3 1 0

4 4 2 4 5 6 5 8 7 5 8 8 6 5 3 3 3

2 3 5 4 5 6 5 7 7 7 5 7 7 5 2 2

3 5 3 5 4 5 6 7 7 7 5 2 2 0 0

0 0 0 8 5 0 0 0

MIXOLYDIAN FOR DOMINANT 7THS

This scale can be used like a modulating scale. This is the Mixolydian. This is because whenever you have a Dominant 7th chord you will need to change the scale. E.g From C major C D E F G A B - to C7 you would need a Bb [b7 to resolve to the major 3rd of the new chord/harmony] , so, you would have - C D E F G A Bb or C Mixolydian.

Below we can see this scalar approach in action.

C MIXOLYDIAN

F MIXOLYDIAN

	C9	Fmaj7	F9	Bbmaj7
T	3	5	8	10
A	3 2 3 5	5	8 7 8 10	10
B	2 3 5 6 3	7	7 8 10 11	10
B	3	8	8	13

C AEOLEAN MODE

In this example Listen to the sound of the Harmony as you play through this simple Vamp. You will hear that the “Dominant” Chord is Minor and Not Major. I have left out the G note to create a C chord riff as you would hear in much AOR Rock/Pop Music.

Cm Ab/C Gm [Bb/C] Cm

Musical notation for a C Aeolian mode vamp. The top staff shows a 4/4 rhythm with chords Cm, Ab/C, Gm, and Cm. The bottom staff shows the corresponding guitar TAB with fret numbers and a triplet of 3s in the bass line.

Below is a simple Triplet Arpeggio idea of the above. Again listen to the sound of the Minor Dominant Chord in the last bar.

Musical notation for a triplet arpeggio idea. The top staff shows a series of triplet arpeggios. The bottom staff shows the corresponding guitar TAB with fret numbers and triplet markings.

This last Aeolian example is a modern fusion-esque approach

Musical notation for a modern fusion-esque approach. The top staff shows a complex melodic line with many flats. The bottom staff shows the corresponding guitar TAB with fret numbers and triplet markings.

LASTLY,

Blues through the modes of C major for improvisation practice

The image shows three staves of musical notation, each with four measures. The notes are represented by diagonal slashes. The chord symbols above each measure are as follows:

Staff	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4
1	Cmaj ⁷	B ^b /C	D/C	C/D
2	E ^b /C	A ^b /C	D ^b /C	Cmaj ⁷
3	E ^b /F	F/B ^b	Bm ^{7b5}	Fm ⁶ /G

Record yourself playing the chords and then improvise over the top using the relevant modes for that chord. For example, Cmaj⁷ use C ionian [Or even C Lydian]. For B^b/C use C dorian or C Aeolian etc.

It's amazing how quickly all of this makes sense when you practice this way. It's also amazing how quickly you develop new and creative ideas from this.

THANKS FOR READING THIS BOOK!

Thank you so much for taking the time out to study this E-Book. There is so much more that I wanted to add, But, due to the nature of studying the modes sometimes a less is more approach is necessary when it comes to comprehending and putting into practice the element of transposition for improvisational/compositional purposes. I hope that this book has helped to get across the flavours that the modes give in regards to their harmonic and melodic content.

Always remember that without looking at how to “**Transpose the modes**” the harmony and the harmonic implications for improvisation and composition gets lost.

Thanks again for reading this book and good luck!

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