

Guitar Secrets – Melodic Minor Revealed

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Unit 1: Melodic Minor Scale History

Before we jump into playing the melodic minor scale, here is a quick lesson on where it came from. First off, it's very important to remember that the melodic minor is not a "version" or "mode" of the major scale. Many people like to think of the melodic minor as a modified major scale; simply flat the third and instant melodic minor. Fine, but let's take a slightly more "classical" look at where the scale really comes from.

Traditionally, there are basically two tonalities in music: major and minor. Compositions in major keys generally use melodies and harmonies (chords) from a major key. It's very important to understand the diatonic system and how scales are harmonized. Below is the C major scale harmonized in thirds, resulting in 7th chords built off each scale tone.

Example 1A



Example 1B



When a composition is said to be in a minor key, the scale from which the minor key chords are built is usually the relative minor (also known as the natural minor). In Example 2, you can see that the key of A minor is the same as C major (starting on A). That is why they are considered relative major and minor. All major keys have a relative minor key (a minor third below).

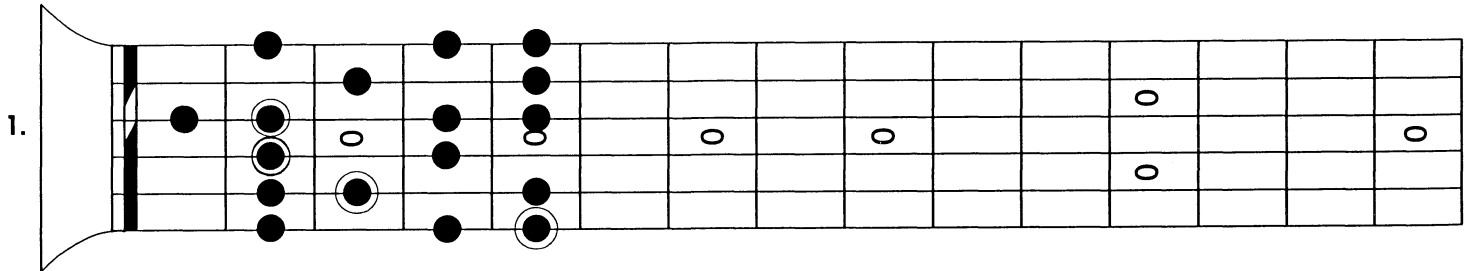
Example 2A

C major scale

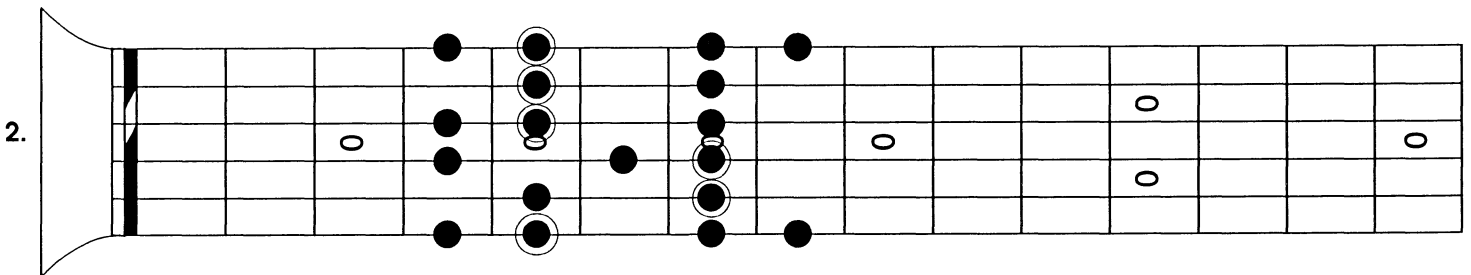
A treble clef staff showing the C major scale with notes numbered 1 through 8/1. Below the staff are the 7th chords of the C major scale: Cmaj7, Dm7, Em7, Fmaj7, G7, Am7, and Bm7(b5). Below the chords are Roman numerals I through VII.

A Melodic Minor

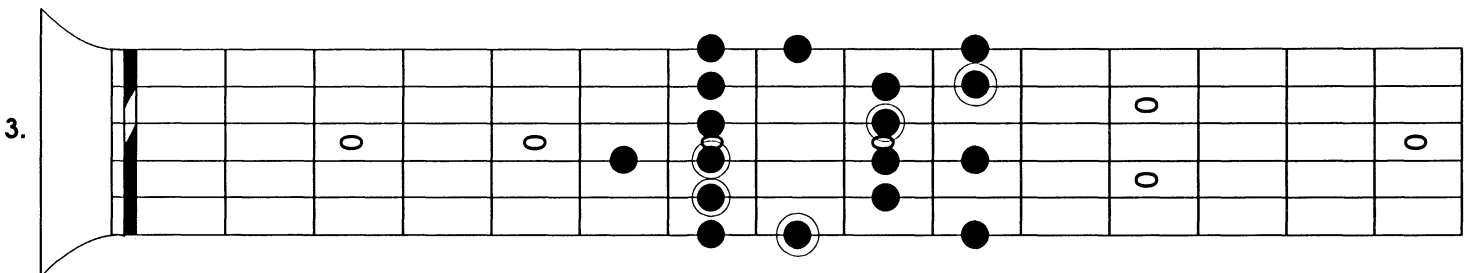
③ Example 5A



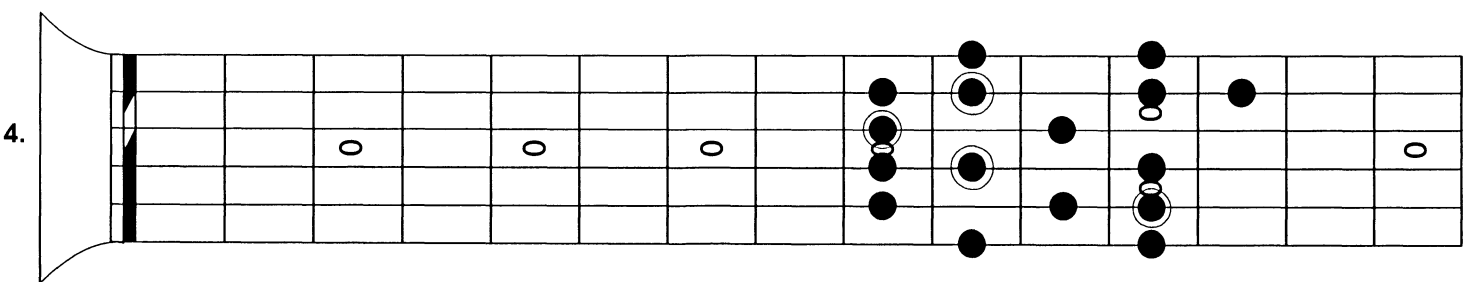
Example 5B



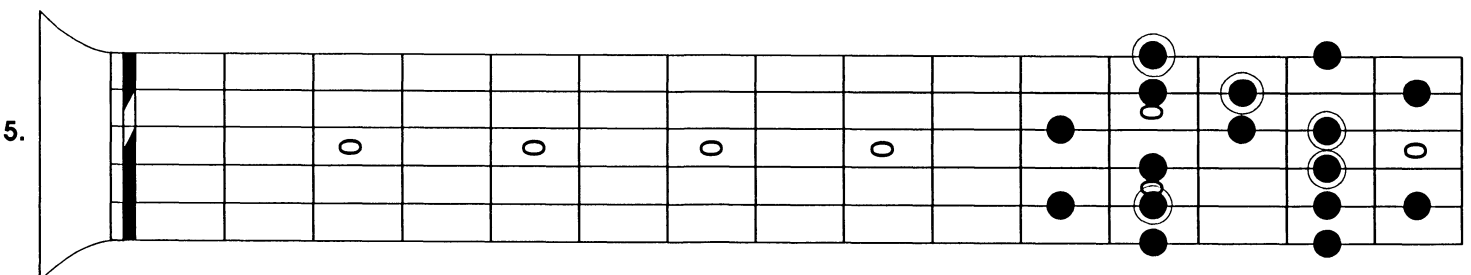
Example 5C



Example 5D



Example 5E



● = Reference Am chords.

4 Example 6

A melodic minor

D7(#11)

Example 6 consists of four systems of musical notation. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line in A melodic minor (4/4 time) and a guitar accompaniment staff with TAB notation. The guitar accompaniment is in the key of D7(#11). The melodic line starts with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The guitar accompaniment uses various fretting techniques, including natural harmonics (indicated by 'n') and specific fret numbers (4, 5, 7, 8).

System 1 TAB: 4 5 7 | 8 5 7 8 | 5 7 8 | 5 7 8 | 5 7 4 | 5 7 4

System 2 TAB: 6 7 4 6 7 4 6 7 | 4 6 7 4 5 7 | 4 5 7 | 4 5 7 | 5 5 7 | 5 7 7 | 5 7 4 | 5 7 4

System 3 TAB: 5 7 4 5 7 4 5 7 | 8 7 5 4 7 5 4 | 7 | 5 4 7 5 4 | 7 5 7 | 7 5 7 | 5 7 5 4

System 4 TAB: 7 5 4 5 4 7 | 7 6 4 7 6 4 | 7 | 6 4 7 5 7 | 5 8 7 5 | 8 7 5 | 8 7 5 4 0

5 Example 7

A melodic minor

Am(maj7)

Example 7 consists of one system of musical notation. It includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line in A melodic minor (4/4 time) and a guitar accompaniment staff with TAB notation. The guitar accompaniment is in the key of Am(maj7). The melodic line starts with a series of eighth and quarter notes. The guitar accompaniment uses various fretting techniques, including natural harmonics (indicated by 'n') and specific fret numbers (4, 5, 7, 8, 9).

System 1 TAB: 4 5 7 4 | 5 7 4 | 5 5 7 5 | 5 6 7 9 6 | 7 9 6 | 7 8 5 7 | 8 4