

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).

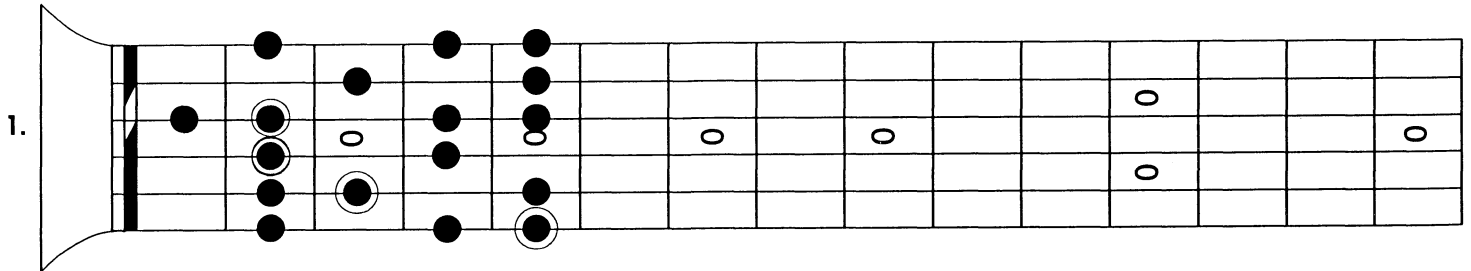
Example 2A

C major scale

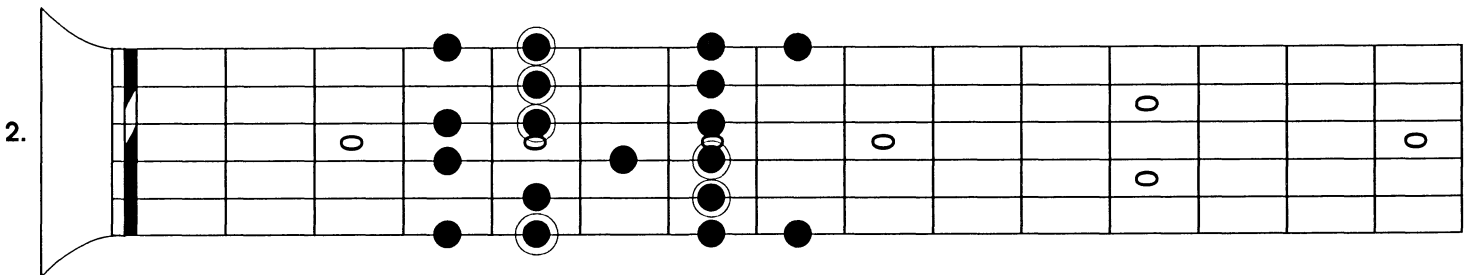
A treble clef staff showing the C major scale with notes numbered 1 through 8/1. Below the staff are the 7th chords of the C major scale: Cmaj7, Dm7, Em7, Fmaj7, G7, Am7, and Bm7(b5). Below each chord is a Roman numeral: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and VII.

A Melodic Minor

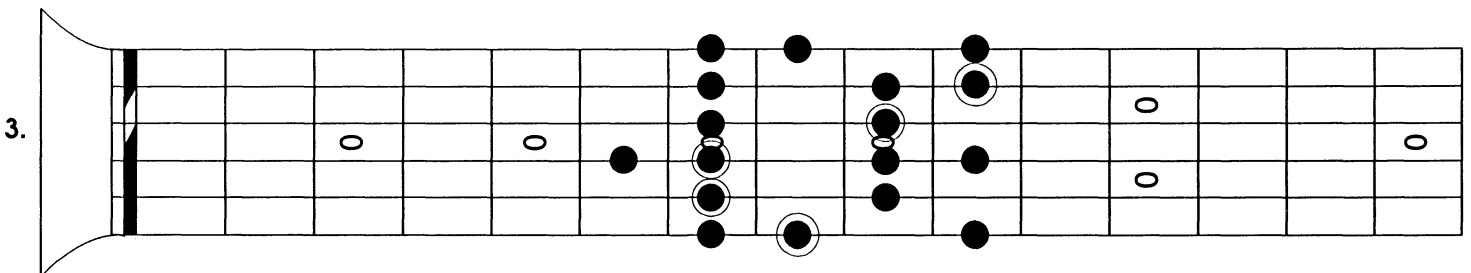
③ Example 5A



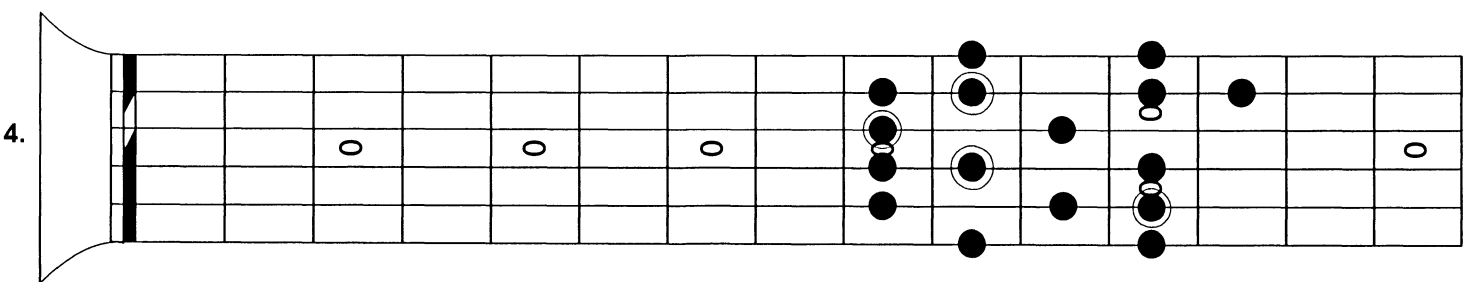
Example 5B



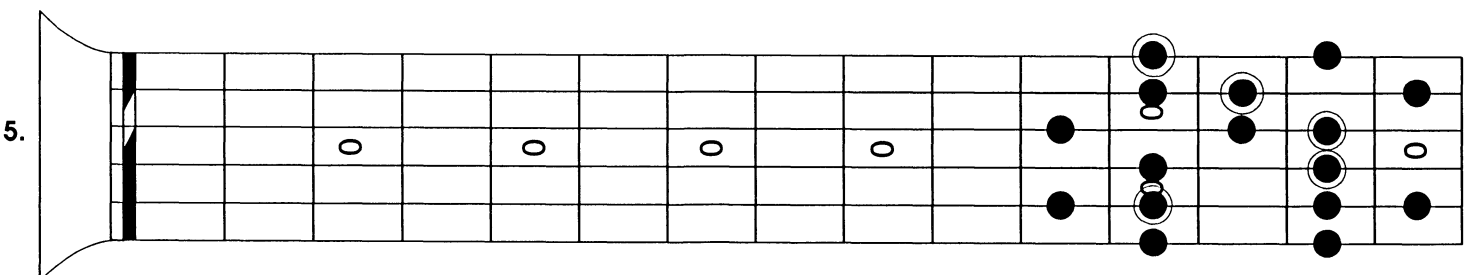
Example 5C



Example 5D



Example 5E



● = Reference Am chords.

4 Example 6

A melodic minor

D7(#11)

The musical score for Example 6 consists of four systems. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line in A melodic minor (4/4 time) and a guitar staff with TAB notation. The guitar accompaniment is in D7(#11) and uses a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The TAB notation is as follows:

- 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 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 6 4 | 7 6 4 7 6 4 | 7 | 6 4 7 5 | 7 5 8 | 7 5 8 | 7 5 8 | 7 5 8 | 8 7 5 4 0

5 Example 7

A melodic minor

Am(maj7)

The musical score for Example 7 consists of one system. It includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line in A melodic minor (4/4 time) and a guitar staff with TAB notation. The guitar accompaniment is in Am(maj7) and uses a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The TAB notation is as follows:

- 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