

LEARNING THE DORIAN SCALE & IMPROVISING THROUGH CHORD CHANGES

As an example, let's say you want to study the Dorian scale. This is the second mode of the major scale - it happens to be the "sweetest" sounding of the minor modes as it contains a major 6th.

DORIAN? MODES? SCHMODES!

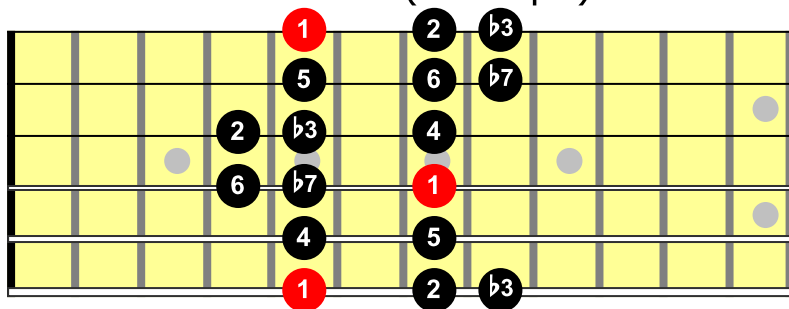
If you're not familiar with modes a common way of explaining them is that they are simply scales built starting from each degree of a parent scale, in this case the major scale, or the first mode (Ionian). This isn't necessarily that helpful as most folks will think "great, but it's the same notes, so what?!".

Well this is true, but the important thing is that when played over the corresponding chord you will hear a change in tonality. So as Dorian is the 2nd mode, playing a G major scale starting from the 2nd degree A up to the A an octave up will be a one octave A Dorian scale. Playing this over an Am7 chord will highlight the sound of the scale.

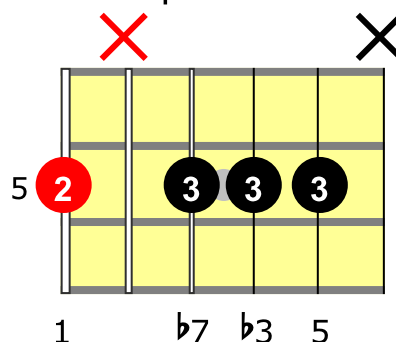
THE DORIAN SCALE INTERVALS

So let's fire up Neck Diagrams and create ourselves a fretboard diagram of the A Dorian scale:

A Dorian Position 1 (E Shape)



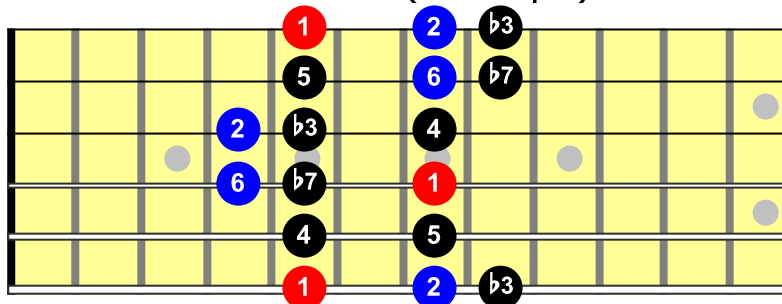
Am7 position 1



A Dorian, in first position CAGED shape

Now we can see the intervals! Note that the important intervals are the minor 3rd, giving the minor flavour, and the major 6th which gives the scale its Dorian characteristic by distinguishing it from the natural minor scale (Aeolian) which differs from the Dorian by having a flat 6th. Notice also how this scale simply adds two more notes to each octave of the pentatonic minor scale:

A Dorian Position 1 (E Shape)



The new Dorian notes are highlighted in blue.

See how all the other notes not highlighted in blue make up the first position minor pentatonic?

DOESN'T LOOK SO SCARY NOW, HUH?!!