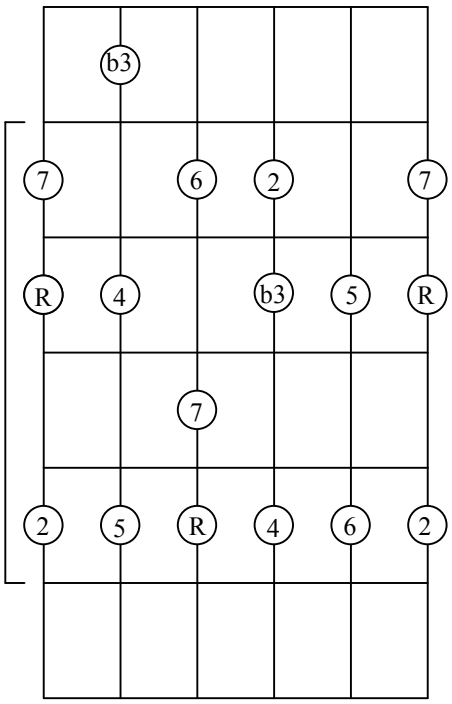
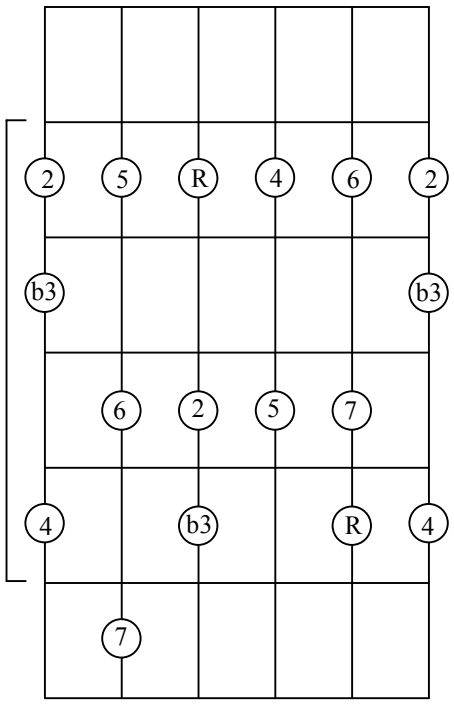
Jazz Minor Scale and Related Mode Fingerings

Mike Dana, Jazz Education Abroad

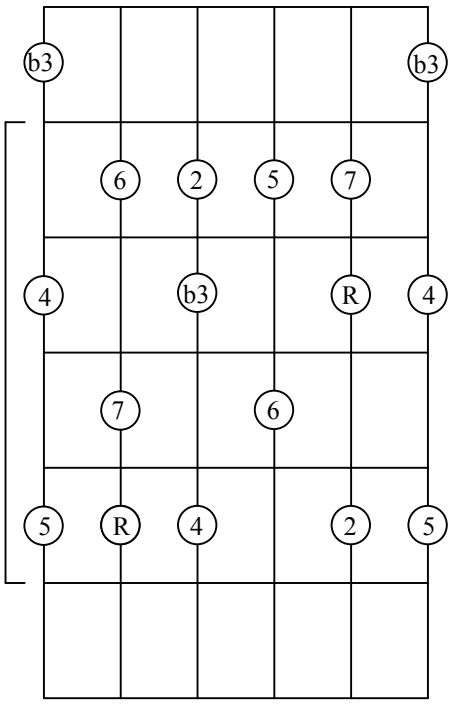
6 - 2



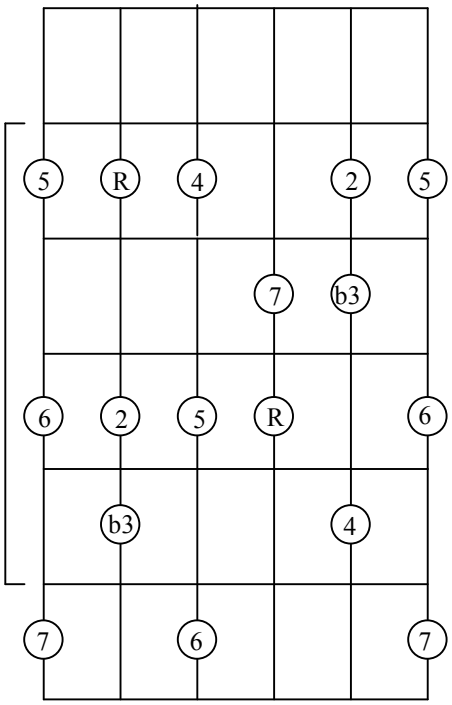
4 - 1



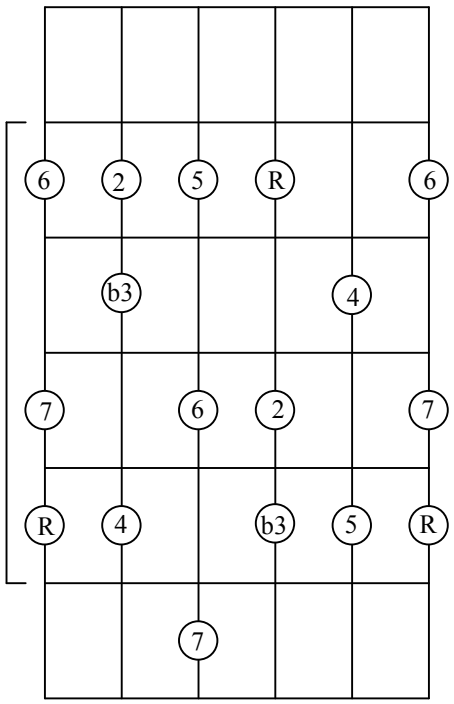
5 - 4



5 - 1



6 - 2



Jazz Minor Modes

Jazz minor starts from R
Lydian aug. starts from b3
Lydian dom. starts from 4
Locrian nat. 9 starts from 6
Altered dom. starts from 7

Legend

- Bracket on left = LH fingers 1 – 4
- Fingers not included in brackets are "stretches"
- Numbers in circles = scale degrees
- 6 – 2 = start on 6th string 2nd finger

© 2019 Mike Dana
mikedanamusic.com

Notes For Practicing and Using the Jazz Minor Scale

What it is

- Jazz Minor is another name for the ascending form of the melodic minor scale (melodic minor has raised/major 6 and 7 going up, lowered/minor 6 and 7 coming down.)
- The formula is 1 2 b3 4 5 6 7 8 [for C minor, C D Eb F G A B C]
  - This looks like a major scale with a lowered 3rd, another way to think of it.
- Obviously, it can be used with minor chords, but keep in mind:
  - It works great for **tonic minor** chords (chords that are resolved into, usually by a minor ii – V^7)
  - It fits perfectly with chords like C mi(Ma7), C mi9(Ma7)C mi6, C mi 6/9
  - It does NOT fit over regular mi7 chords (because of the natural 7!)
  - …and so it's NOT a good choice for use over a ii chord (say, in a ii - V^7 - 1)
- Muscle memory can be tricky…you'll want to play major scales a lot! So…
- Start slow…quarter notes, then eighths, then (if no mistakes) gradually faster.

The Next Level

- **One key per day** *(follow the circle!);* play scale of that key **up and down** the neck (they ascend in the same order as the scale fingering PDF)
- Simple **sequences/patterns**. (Remember…metronome!)
- Use iReal tracks to practice improvising, using jazz minor scales in all 12 keys.
- Lock in on the eighth notes.

The Next Next Level:

- The modes of the jazz minor are a gold mine of jazz vocabulary!! These will be introduced in the materials that follow. If you really shed these "parent" scales, the cool modes will come to you faster. Trust me on this. ☺
- Most minor scales begin the same way: 1 2 b3 4 5. It's the 6 and 7 that are critical. Here's the breakdown:
  - 1 2 b3 4 5 **b6 b7** 8 is the natural minor (Aeolian mode.)
  - 1 2 b3 4 5 **6 b7** 8 is the Dorian mode (note the nat. 6, b7!).
  - 1 2 b3 4 5 **b6 7** 8 is the harmonic minor (note the b6, nat. 7…very recognizable!)
  - 1 2 b3 4 5 **6 7** 8 is the jazz minor (ascending melodic minor)

Use What You Know!

- Start identifying **tonic minors** as you learn new tunes; make sure you are in the correct position for the "key of the moment." Invitation, Nica's Dream, Recordame (the A section) are good examples.
- Not all chord tones are created equal. I think the **most "color"** comes from the b3 (sounds minor), the **natural 6 and/or 7** (sounds like jazz minor now!) and the **9** (it always sounds great!)
- As you listen to great jazz players, notice when and how they introduce jazz minor sounds into their solos.
- A very nice arpeggio sound is **1 b3 5 7 9**…try it!
- Remember: scales are NOT melodies! Look for the beautiful notes and shapes. **Play ideas**, not scales. ☺
- Don't play favorites; master and use all 5 fingering patterns.

© 2019 by Mike Dana
mikedanamusic.com