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Exotic Scales in A

Many of these scales are used in classical and metal guitar playing. We have tabbed and noted them in the key of A, but they are transposable. Take your time with each one and gradually build up the speed.

Phrygian Dominant Scale

The most famous exotic scale, and one of the best sounds of metal. It is a very dramatic scale. The A Phrygian Dominant scale has the following notes into it: A B $\flat$ C $\sharp$ D E F G. Note how the scale contains the note of the A major chord (A C $\sharp$ E) indicating that you can play this scale on any major chord with the same root.

This pattern repeats every two strings. We have indicated the left hand fingers to use above the score (1-index, 2-middle, 3-ring, 4-pinky). On the 5th string, you slide up with your index finger or pinkie to continue the scale.

The image shows the musical notation for the A Phrygian Dominant scale. It consists of two systems of notation. The first system shows the ascending scale: the treble clef staff has notes A4 (fret 8), B $\flat$ 4 (fret 9), C $\sharp$ 4 (fret 10), D4 (fret 11), E4 (fret 12), F4 (fret 13), and G4 (fret 14). The bass staff shows fret numbers 5, 6, 9, 5, 7, 8, 10, 7, 8, 11, 7, 9, 10, 12, 10, 11. The second system shows the descending scale: the treble clef staff has notes G4 (fret 14), F4 (fret 13), E4 (fret 12), D4 (fret 11), C $\sharp$ 4 (fret 10), B $\flat$ 4 (fret 9), and A4 (fret 8). The bass staff shows fret numbers 10, 12, 13, 15, 13, 12, 10, 14, 11, 10, 12, 10, 9, 7, 11, 8, 7, 10, 8, 7, 5, 9, 6, 5.

Lydian Scale

A favourite of Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, and John Petrucci (Dream Theater). The A Lydian scale, that we see here, is made by the notes: A B C# D# E F# G#. As the Phrygian Dominant scale, the Lydian scale contains an A major chord, but their sound is completely different.

1 2 4 1 2 4 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2

5 7 9 6 7 9 11 7 9 11 8 9 11 13 10 12

11-12-14-16-14-12-11 14-12-10 13-11-9 8 11 9-7 11-9-7-6 9-7-5

Hungarian Minor Scale

Less used than the previous ones, it's still a favourite of many players for its exotic oriental sound. The A Hungarian Minor scale is made by the notes A B C D# E F G#. Contrary to the previous two scales, the Hungarian Minor contains an A minor chord (A C E) rather than an A major chord.

The pattern shown here requires a bit of stretch to be played, but it's very easy to remember and to speed it up.

1 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 1

5 7 8 11 7 8 11 7 9 10 13 9 10 9 10 12

12-13-16-13-12 16-13-12-10-9 10-9 13-10 9-7 11-8-7 11-8-7-5

Diminished Scale

The diminished scale is different from the other scales presented here in that it has 8 notes rather than 7. The A diminished scale is: A B $\flat$ C C $\sharp$ E $\flat$ E F $\sharp$ G. The Diminished scale, quite uniquely, contains all of the following: an A major chord (A C $\sharp$ E), an A minor chord (A C E), and an A diminished chord (A C E $\flat$). This means that a diminished scale can potentially fit both a major and a minor chord with the same root.

The musical score for "The Rose Tree" is presented in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in C major, 4/4 time. The treble staff contains the melody with fingerings (1, 1, 3, 4, 1, 1, 3, 4, 1, 1, 3, 4, 1, 1, 3, 4) and a key signature change to one sharp (F#) indicated by a sharp sign on the F line. The bass staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. Below the staves is a guitar-style tablature with fret numbers (5, 6, 8, 9, 6, 7, 9, 10, 7, 8, 10, 11, 8, 9, 11, 12) and a string indicator (T, A, B). The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with the treble staff showing more complex rhythmic patterns and the bass staff providing a steady accompaniment. The tablature continues with fret numbers (10, 11, 13, 14, 11, 12, 14, 15, 14, 12, 11, 14, 13, 11, 10, 12, 11, 9, 8, 11, 10, 8, 7, 10, 9, 7, 6, 9, 8, 6, 5) and string indicators (T, A, B).