

## PART III: MELODIC MINOR FOUR-NOTE SCALES

There are two gestures, groups of notes, that succinctly and unambiguously define the sound of a melodic minor scale. They are root, minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, major 7<sup>th</sup> and minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, major 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>. Pianists use these structures often as left-hand voicings (they're known as 'grips'). They are given here in C melodic minor:

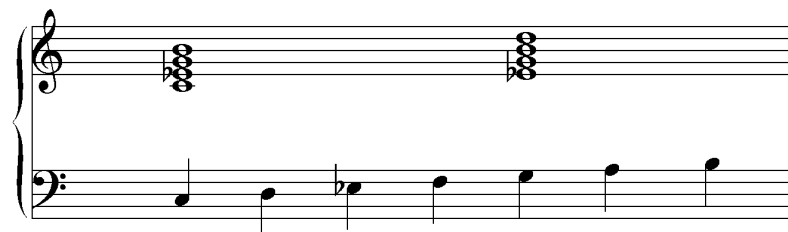


They can also be used as four-note scales:



### THE FOUR-NOTE SCALES OVER CHORDS

These scales will fit over any chord from the parent melodic minor key – in fact, they do more than fit, they describe the tonality very accurately in a minimum of notes. Here is the full breakdown of chords from C melodic minor (the chords that aren't often used are given for reference in brackets):



C $\Delta$  (Dsusb9) Eb $\Delta$ +5 F7+11 (G7b13) A $\emptyset$  B7alt

Having just four notes to work with may seem limiting. But these groups have the virtue of pinpointing the interesting chord tones. They are very useful in situations where the chords are flashing by quickly. You can also cascade them up and down to change register, or work them into other gapped scale lines.

As before, when we looked at pentatonics, it's best to learn the chords from each melodic minor key as a set. Internalising these four-note structures will help you to see the geography of the melodic minor keys very quickly.

Note that in certain cases the root is absent from the four-note scale. In these cases you can expand the scale to five notes by adding it:

C $\Delta$



F7+11



A $\emptyset$



Which effectively gives us another batch of pentatonics to play with.

While we're on the subject, this idea holds true for pentatonics as well. Wherever the pentatonic is missing the root of the chord you're playing it over, that root is always fair game – but be aware that you are slightly disrupting the pure pentatonic sound.