

Lydian Tracks Pt. 2

Improvising Lydian: Chord extensions and pentatonic tricks

By Ted Eschliman



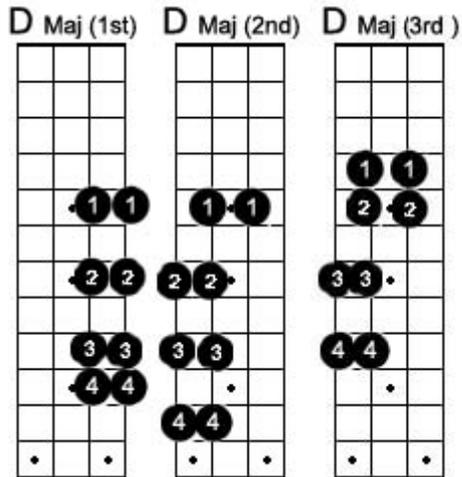
Continuing Lydian

We want to continue from our last entry, so if you haven't read the February issue, it's critical to start there, or none of this issue will mean much to you: **Lydian Tracks Pt. 1; A path to Modal improvising** <http://mandolinsessions.com/feb09/Eschliman.html>. Remember we looked at multiple closed finger patterns based on a major scale, and that was certainly a great place to start. We altered one note, raising the **4th scale** degree to create the **Lydian mode**, but another tactic you can use is to apply the same pattern approach based on the **5th** scale degree.

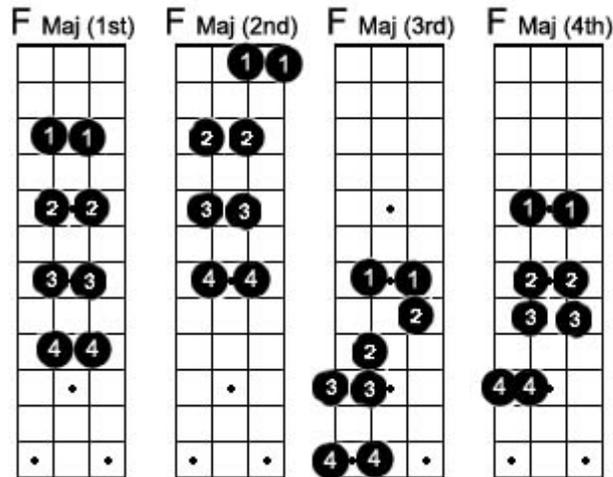
The image shows two musical exercises for the Lydian mode on a mandolin. The first exercise is for G Major, showing the G Major Scale and the G Major Scale with the 4th degree raised to C#. The second exercise is for Bb Major, showing the Bb Major Scale and the Bb Major Scale with the 4th degree raised to E natural. Both exercises include fingerings for the mandolin.

Pleading the 5th

Our first pattern set for **G Lydian** raised the **C#**, so if you base the Lydian improvisation on the **5th** not **D**, you're actually using a **D major scale**, **D, E, G#, G, A, B, C#, D**. You may well have already been ahead of us on this, it's not terribly challenging:



Same for the **Bb** Lydian, we base the patterns on the **F** Scale, **F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E** (natural), **F**.

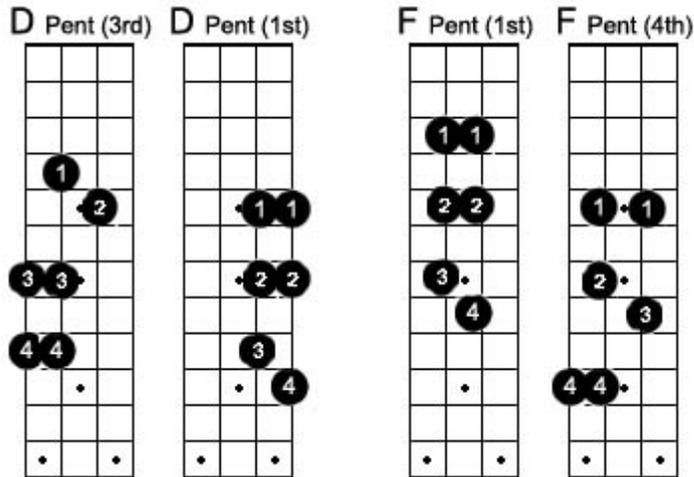


Best of Pentatonic

What we want to set you up for is a magnificent use of a scale you're likely already familiar with if you're into **Folk/Bluegrass**, the **Pentatonic Scale**. It's a no-brainer you could use **G** and **Bb** pentatonic respectively: **G, A, B, D, E**, and **Bb, C, D, F, G**. However, though these effectively outline the lower triad of the **G** and **Bb** triads, the color notes of the chord are "missing in action," the **7th**, and the **raised 4th** (raised 11th) **F#** and **C#** (in **G**), **A** and **E** natural (in **Bb**).

Here's where it gets fresh...

We'll grab the **Pentatonics** based on the **5th scale degree** comprised of the notes **D, E, F#, A, and B**. This injects the **7th degree in G**, or **F#**. This improvises intuitively over the **key of G**, and though we didn't mention it in our **Arpeggio** studies last time, if you took a **Major 7** chord based on this same **Pentatonic**, you could improvise similarly, with **D, F#, A, C#** in **G**, and **F, A, C, E** in **Bb**. Note, in both cases you have the defining chord tones of the **3rd** and **7th**, lending strong harmonic identity and definition as you improvise.

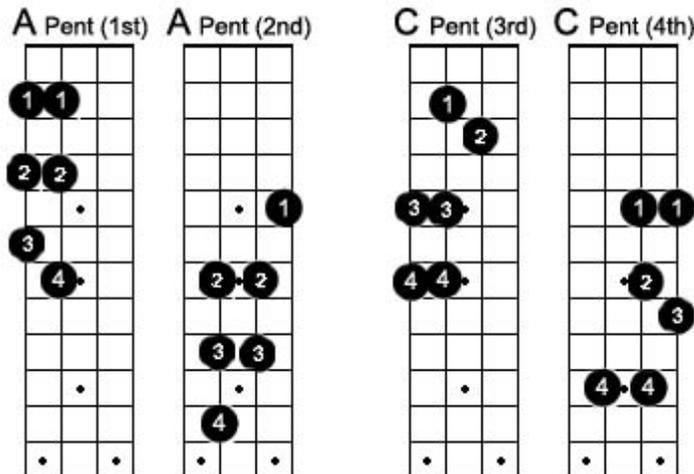


Something missing

Still, we are neglecting the inclusion of the most important color note, the raised **C#** (4th) in **G**. Here's where we can have fun with yet another **Pentatonic scale**, based on the **2nd scale degree A** (in **G**). Take a look at this set of notes:

A, B, C#, E, F#

Granted, you don't have the **tonic G**, but chances are the bass player or some other instrument is pounding out that note somewhere. Here are some **FFcP** possibilities for both key centers, **A pentatonic** for the key of **G**, **C Pentatonic** for the key of **Bb**:



Take a look at the **Bb Lydian** section of the song and try the same trick in **Bb** with the 2nd pair, the color note **E** as your **raised 4th**:

C, D, E, G, A

Musicianship on another scale

The innate hazard approaching improvisation with scales is all your solos can sound like scales. If you used chord arpeggios only as we suggested last time, it would sound like an arpeggio drill. **Pentatonic scales**

can yield the same vanilla monotony (we'd argue in some Bluegrass circles it often does), but utilizing the keys based on extended chord ranges, you pop in a new sonority and tonality consistent with the jazz genre. If you could combine all these, your solos will be even more fresh and creative, combinations of up and down stepwise motions and skips for variety. You want your scales learned so well as to be automatic and subliminal, but as an approach, not as rote. **Scales**, **chord arpeggios**, and **Pentatonics** are not the music, but a way to the music.

The next chorus is yours...



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