Single-Note Playing in Minor Keys

Ted Greene 3-25-1976 thru 3-28-1976

[Note: Ted uses a slash through 7, 9, and 13 to indicate major 7, major 9, or major 13]

Minor keys are very interesting for quite a few reasons, one of which is that there are lots of different types of minor scales (there are actually quite a few different types of "major" scales also, but more on this later). Let's start with the **NATURAL MINOR** (also called the Aeolian minor or Pure minor). This scale is constructed by lowering the 3rd, 6th and 7th tones of a major scale (the word lower here means 1/2 step lower).

A common way to write the formula for this scale is: 1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7 (8). Applying this to the key of B(m) for example, the scale would change from B C# D# E F# G# A# B to B C# D E F# G A B.

Following is a list of fingerings to learn, given in the key of Bm. Because the natural minor scale often tends to sound a little bland to 20th century ears, the following techniques are suggested, to increase your acceptance of the sound:

- 1) Play the first five notes of the scale up and back down (B C# D E F# E D C# B).
- 2) Play the first six notes in a similar fashion (B C# D E F# G F# E D C# B).
- 3) Play the first seven notes in a similar fashion (B C# D E F# G A G F# E D C# B).
- 4) Finally, the whole scale up and down (B C# D E F# G A B A G F# E D C# B).
- 5) Now play the following: B C# D C# B A B; B C# D C# B A G A B; B C# D E D C# B A B; B C# D E F# E D C# B A G A B.

These techniques please the ear because they gradually introduce the "funny" notes while revolving around the keynote (root) of the scale, which, for whatever reasons, has a very meaningful and welcome effect in most cases. In the future, these techniques will be referred to collectively as the EXPANDING technique.

Another way to help the ear accept a new scale is with a technique we will call CENTERING. An example of this technique is as follows:

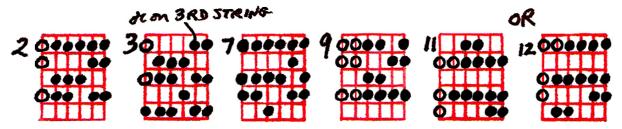
Ascending \rightarrow B B C# B D B E B F#;

B B C# B D B E B F# B G B F#;

B B C# B D B E B F# B G B A B B (octave);

Descending \rightarrow B B A B G B F# B E B D B C# B B (octave).

Anyway, here are the diagrams:



After playing through these diagrams, have you noticed something coincidental?

If these scales sound too much like D major scales to your ears, review the expanding techniques and then play the following chord progressions:

Bm F#m Bm: Bm Em Bm: Bm Em F#m Bm: Bm A G A Bm.

Now quickly, while the sound of the chords is still slightly lingering in your ears, play each diagram of the scale again; this should help. The reason that the above chords are used is because, as you may have guessed, they are diatonic to the B natural minor scale.

Before you apply the above scale patterns, you should know about the diatonic triads—they are as follows:

F#	G	A	В	C#	D	E
D	E	F#	G	A	В	C#
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G	A
Bm	C#°	D	Em	F#m	G	A
i	ii o	III	iv	v	VI	VII

Some common progressions to play the scale over are:

Actually, most chord progressions in minor keys don't stay exclusively in the natural (or any other kind of) minor, but instead, mixtures of the different types (such as Harmonic minor, Melodic minor, etc.) are commonly used—more on this soon.

The diatonic 7th chords in the B natural minor scale are:

i7	iiø ⁷	III 7	iv7	v7	VI7	VII7
Bm7	C#m7b5	D7	Em7	F#m7	G 7	A7
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G	A
D	E	F#	G	A	В	C#
F#	G	A	В	C#	D	E
A	В	C#	D	E	F#	G

The other common extensions (9ths, 11th, etc.) are:

i: Bm/9, Bm+(BDG[orFX]), Bm7/11, Bm9, Bm11

ii°: C#m7b5/11, C#m7/11(no 5th)

III: D/9, D9, D6/9, D13, D6

iv: Em/9, Em9, Em7/11, Em11, Em13

v: F#m7/11

VI: G/9, G9, G6/9, G13, G6, G/9+11, G6/9+11, G7+11

VII: A9, A13, A7/6, A7sus, A11, A13sus, A/9, A6, A6/9

Actually, extensions have not been used all that much in most natural minor progressions (for whatever reasons), but *you* may wish to use them, and you will still run into them every once in awhile so you should be at least familiar with them.

Some new progressions to practice your scales with are:

7) ||:
$$Bm - F\#m7 : ||$$
 8) ||: $Bm7 - F\#m7 : ||$ 9) ||: $Bm7 - Em7 : ||$ 10) ||: $Bm7 - F\#m7 - G7 - F\#m7 : ||$ i $v7 - v7 - v17 - v7 - v17 - v17 - v19 - v1$

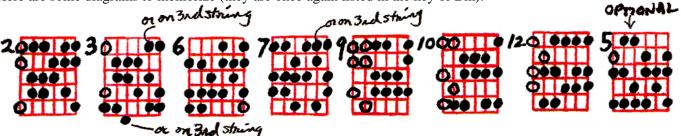
Even though most of these progressions here do not use the "fancier" extensions, feel free to substitute them. Example: For progression 7) play \parallel : Bm/9 - F#m7 : \parallel or \parallel : Bm9 - F#m7/11 : \parallel

Key	Scale	Key	Scale
Am	ABCDEFGA	Dm	D E F G A Bb C D
Em	EF#GABCDE	Gm	G A Bb C D Eb F G
Bm	B C# D E F# G A B	Cm	C D Eb F G Ab Bb C
F#m	F# G# A B C# D E F#	Fm	F G Ab Bb C Db Eb F
C#m	C# D# E F# G# A B C#	Bbm	Bb C Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb
G#m	G# A# B C# D# E F# G#	Ebm	Eb F Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb
D#m	D# E# F# G# A# B C# D#	Abm	Ab Bb Cb Db Eb Fb Gb Ab
A#m	A# B# C# D# E# F# G# A#		

Assignment: Write out and memorize the diatonic triads in all 15 keys. Apply all this material so far to all the keys.

HARMONIC MINOR

Another commonly used minor scale is the **Harmonic Minor**. This scale is formed by raising the 7th tone of the natural minor (the word raise here means 1/2 step higher). The formula can be written: 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, 7 (or R7) (8). Here are some diagrams to memorize (they are once again listed in the key of Bm).



The diatonic triads of the B harmonic minor scale are:

F#	G		В	C#	D	E
D	E	F#	G	A#	В	C#
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G	A#
Bm	C#°	\mathbf{D} +	Em	F #	G	A # ⁰
i	ii ^o	III+	iv	V	VI	Rvii ^o

Some common progressions to practice your scales over are:

As mentioned earlier, you can expect to see a lot of progressions in minor keys that use chords from more than one kind of minor scale. Examples:

 $(N = Natural\ minor;\ H = Harmonic\ minor)$

<u>Assignment:</u> Write out the harmonic minor scales in all 15 keys; you will get a **X** (*double-sharp*) in the keys of G#m, D#m and A#m. You will also get notes like E# and B# in some of the other keys. Then write out the diatonic triads in all the keys, practice the above progressions in them, and finally, commit all of this to memory.

The diatonic 7th chords in the B harmonic minor scale are:

i 7	iiø ⁷	III 7 +	iv7	V7	VI7	Rvii ^o 7
Bm7	C#m7b5	D7 +	Em7	F#7	G 7	A# ⁰ 7
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G	A#
D	E	F#	G	A#	В	C#
F#	G	A #	В	C#	D	E
A#	В	C#	D	E	F#	G

Smoother, common diatonic chords in the scales are:

i: Bm/9, Bm9, Bm+

ii^o: C#m7b5, C#m7/11(no 5th)

III: (D_{9}^{+})

iv: Em/9, Em9, Em6, Em6/9

V: F#7b9, F#7+, F#7b9+, F#7sus

G6, G7+11 VI:

Rvii^o: ———

Some more progressions to play around with:

iiø7

VI7

i

23) ||:
$$Bm7 - Em7 - A7 - D7 - G7 - C#m7b5 - F#7 - Bm :||$$

Scale:

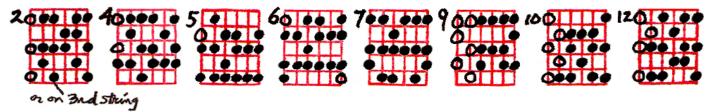
|-----natural minor-----|

|----harmonic minor-----|

Assignment: Apply these progressions, possibly with some extensions, to all keys.

MELODIC MINOR

The **Melodic Minor** scale is formed by raising the 6th and 7th tones of the natural minor. Formula: 1 2 b 3 4 5 6 (or R6) 7 (or R7) (8). Some fingerings to memorize in the key of B minor, as usual:



The diatonic triads of the B melodic minor scale are:

i	ii	III+	IV	\mathbf{V}	Rvi ^o	Rvii ⁰
Bm	C#m	\mathbf{D} +	\mathbf{E}	F#	G#º	A # o
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G#	A#
D	E	F#	G#	A #	В	C#
F#	G#	A#	В	C#	D	E

Some progressions to practice the scale with:

27) ||:
$$Bm - C\#m - F\# - Bm : ||$$
 28) ||: $Bm - E - C\#m - F\# : ||$ i i i i i i i

Assignment: Write out and memorize the melodic minor scales and diatonic triads in all 15 keys; then try the progressions in all keys.

The diatonic 7th chords in the B melodic minor scale are:

i 7	ii7	III7 +	IV7	V7	Rviø ⁷	Rviiø ⁷
Bm7	C#m7	D7 +	E7	F#7	G#m7b5	A#m7b5
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G#	<u>A#</u>
D	E	F#	G#	A#	В	C#
F#	G#	A#	В	C#	D	E
A#	В	C#	D	E	F#	G#

Some common extensions in the scale are:

i: Bm6, Bm6/9, Bm9, Bm/9 ii: C#m7/11, C#m7b9, C#m6

III+: (D_9+)

IV: E9, E13, E7/6, E+11, E9b5, E13+11, E7b5, E6, E6/9

V: F#9, F#7+, F#9+, F#11, F#7sus

Rvi^o: G#m7b5/11, G#m7/11(no 5th), G#m9b5

Rvii^o: ———

More progressions to solo over:

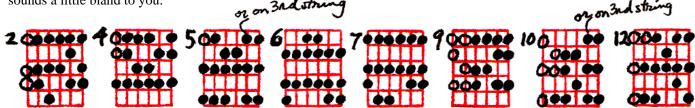
Now go back to #23) and substitute ii7 for ii \(\varrho\)7; this enables you to play the melodic minor scale (instead of the harmonic) over the last three chords.

Assignment: Memorize the diatonic 7th chords and extensions in all the melodic minor keys. Then apply the above progressions, possibly with some extensions to all the keys.

DORIAN MINOR

The **Dorian Minor** scale is formed by raising the 6th tone of the natural minor.

Formula: 1 2 b3 4 5 6 (or R6) b7 (8). Some fingerings to memorize in the key of B minor are given below; you may find it necessary to use the expanding or centering techniques if you can't hear the B note as being the root, or if the scale sounds a little bland to you.



The diatonic triads of the B Dorian minor scale are:

i	ii	III	IV	\mathbf{v}	Rvi ^o	VII
Bm	C#m	D	\mathbf{E}	F#m	$G\#^{o}$	A
В	C#	D	Е	F#	G#	A
D	E	F#	G#	A	В	C#
F#	G#	A	В	C#	D	E

Some progressions to practice the scale with:

31) ||:
$$Bm - E : ||$$
 32) ||: $Bm - C\#m : ||$ 33) ||: $Bm - F\#m : ||$ 34) ||: $Bm - A : ||$ i VII

35) ||:
$$Bm - C\#m - D - C\#m : ||$$
 36) ||: $Bm - C\#m - D - E : ||$ i ii III IV

Assignment: Write out and memorize the Dorian scales and diatonic triads in all the keys except D#m and A#m (you won't need these); then try the progressions in the 13 keys.

The diatonic 7th chords in the B Dorian minor scale are:

i7	•	ii7	III 7	IV7	v7	Rviø ⁷	VII 7
B	m7	C#m7	D 7	E7	F#m7	G#m7b5	A7
В		C#	D	Е	F#	G#	A
D		E	F#	G#	A	В	C#
\mathbf{F}	#	G#	A	В	C#	D	E
Α		В	C#	D	E	F#	G#

Some common extensions in the scale are:

i: Bm7/11, Bm9, Bm11, Bm/9, Bm6, Bm6/9

ii: C#m7/11, C#m7b9, C#m+

III: D/9, D9, D6, D6/9, D13, D6/9+11, D/9+11, D7+11

IV: E9, E13, E7/6, E7sus, E11, E13sus, E6, E6/9

v: F#m7/11, F#m9, F#m11, F#m+

Rvi^o: G#m7b5/11, G#m7/11(no 5th)

VII: A/9, A9, A6, A6/9, A13

Some progressions with 7ths and extensions to solo over:

39) ||:
$$Bm7 - C\#m7$$
 :|| 40) ||: $Bm7 - C\#m7 - D7 - C\#m7$:|| 41) ||: $Bm7 - E9$:|| i7 ii7 III7 ii7 ii7 IV7

Assignment: Memorize the diatonic 7th chords, and at least the extensions on i and IV, in the 13 Dorian keys. Then apply the above progressions, possibly with some extensions to the different keys.

PHRYGIAN MINOR

The **Phrygian Minor** scale is formed by flatting the 2nd tone of the natural minor. Formula: 1 b2 b3 4 5 b6 b7 (8). Some fingerings to memorize in the key of B minor (once again, you may start to try the expanding and centering techniques):



The diatonic triads of the B Phrygian minor scale are:

i	bII	III	iv	\mathbf{V}^{o}	VI	bvii
Bm	C	D	Em	F#°	\mathbf{G}	Am
В	C	D	Е	F#	G	A
D	E	F#	G	A	В	C
F#	G	Α	В	C	D	Е

Some progressions to practice the scale with:

42)
$$\parallel$$
: Bm - C : \parallel 43) \parallel : Bm - C - D - C : \parallel i bII ii bII

Assignment: Write out and memorize the Phrygian scales and triads in all the minor keys except Abm; then try the progressions in these keys.

The diatonic 7th chords [in the B Phrygian minor scale are]:

i7	bH7	1117	vi7	vø7	VI7	bvii7
Bm7	C 7	D7	Em7	F#m7b5	G7	Am7
В	C	D	Е	F#	G	A
D	E	F#	G	A	В	C
F#	G	A	В	C	D	E
A	В	C	D	E	F#	G

Extensions:

i: Bm+, Bm7/11

bII: C/9, C9, C6, C6/9, C7+11, C6/9+11, C13

III: D/9, D13, D7/6, D7sus, D11, D13sus, D6, D6/9

iv: Em7/11, Em9, Em11, Em+, Em9

 v^{o} : F#m7b5/11, F#m7/11 (no 5th)

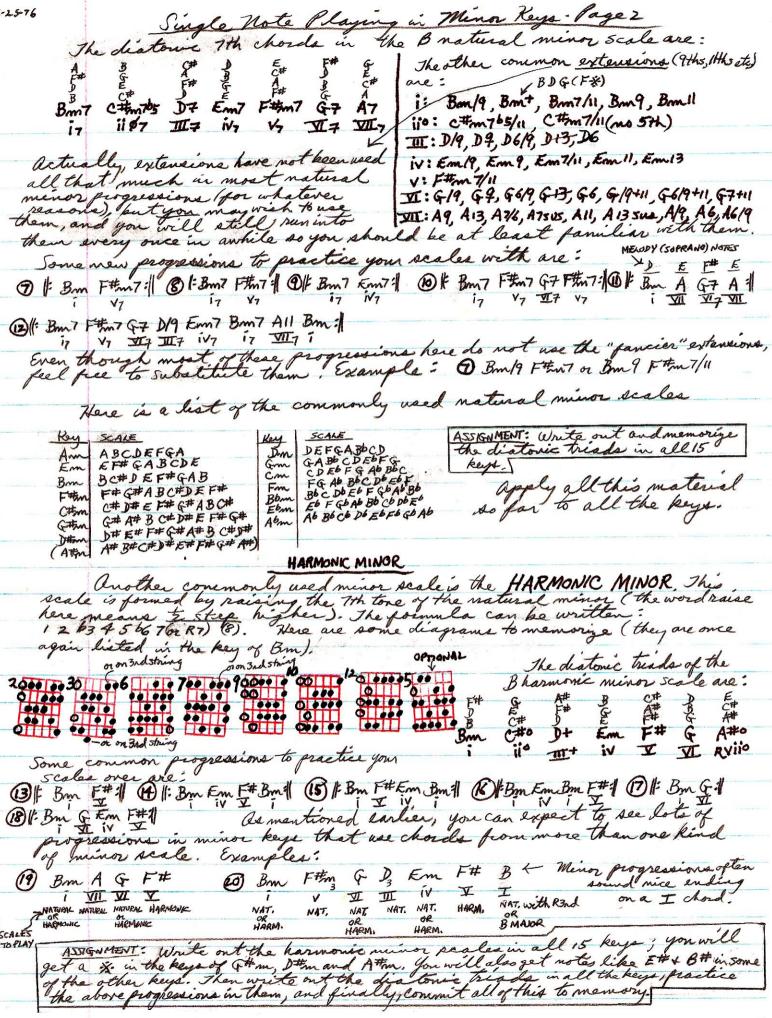
VI: G/9, G9, G6, G6/9, G13

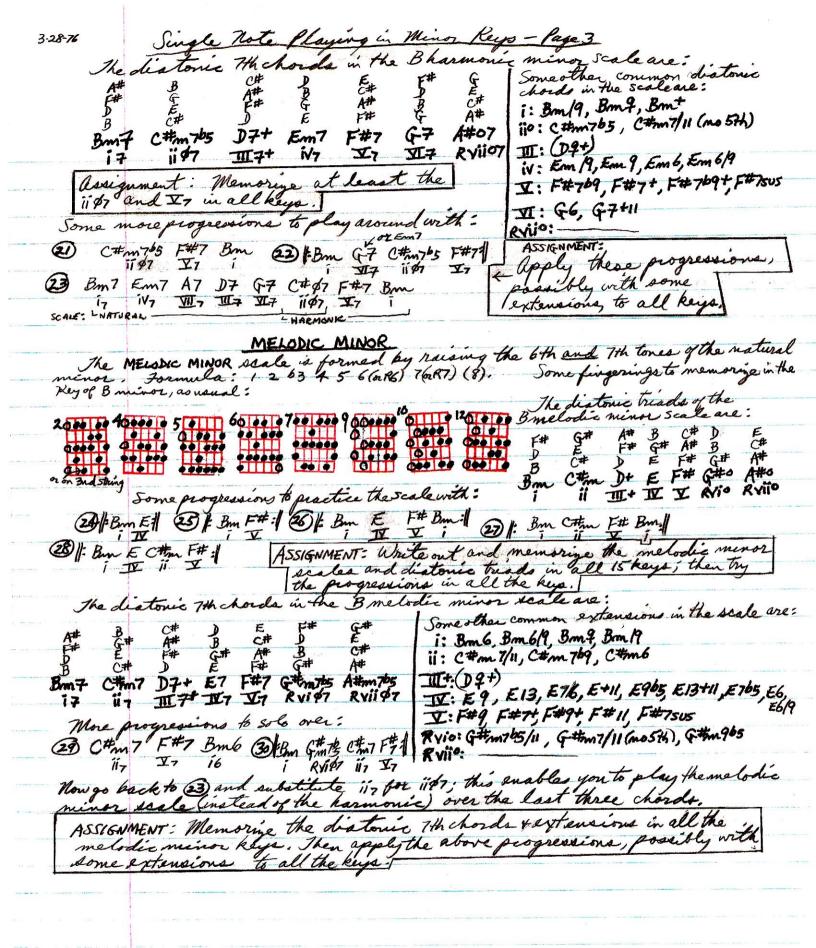
bvii: Am7/11, Am9, Am11, Am/9, Am6, Am6/9

Some progressions with 7ths and extensions to solo over:

Assignment: Memorize the diatonic 7ths, and at least the extensions on bII in the 14 Phrygian keys; then try the progressions in these keys.

You might also wish to investigate the *Hungarian Minor*: 1 2 b3 #4 5 b6 7 (8) and the *Romanian Minor*: 1 2 b3 #4 5 6 7 (8)





Single Note Playing in Minor Keys-Page +

DORIAN MINOR The DORIAN MINOR scale is formed by Raising the 6th tone of the natural minor. Formula: 1263 456 (or RG) 67 (8). Some fingerings to memorine in the key of Bruinor are given below; you may find it necessary to use the expanding or centering techniques if you can't hear the B note as being the root, or if the scale sevends a little bland to you.

Scale sevends a little bland to you. Bom C#m D E F#m G#0 A Some progressions to practice the sale with: 32 / Bm C#m 1 33 / Bm F#mil 31 Bm A 1 35 1 Bm C#m D C#m 1 30 Bm C#m D E 1 37 Bm D E Bmill ASSIGNMENT: Write out + memori 39 | Bm DE F# | See if you can deduce allog the it III I I M I different Scale possibilities for this progression. the dorian scales and distoric trisds in all keys except D#m + A#m - you want need these; then try the The diatorice 7th chords in the Bdosian Scale are progressions in the 13 keys. Some other common extensions in the scale are: 1: Bm7/11, Bm9, Bm11, Bm19, Bm6, Bm6/9 A B ii: C#m7/11, C#m769, C#m+ 3m7 C#m7 J7 E7 F#m7 G#m165 A7 17 117 117 N7 V7 RVI 97 117 TI: DA, D4, D6, D619, D13, D619+11, D9+11, D7+11 IV : E9, E13, E7/6, E7505, E11, E13505, E6, E6/9 Some progressions with 7ths +2 ytensions V: F#m7/1, F#m9, F#mil, F#m+ (39) Bm7 C#m7: 1 40 Bm7 C#m7 D7 C#m7 7 Rvio: 6#m765/11 6#m7/11 (ma 57h) 17 117 117 117 TI: A 19, A9, A6, A619, A13 (4) Bm7 E9:1 ASSIGNMENT: Memoring the distonic 7th chords, and at least the extensions on ; and IV, in the 13 dorian keys. Then apply the above progressions, possibly with some extensions to the different keys. 17 117 ASSIGNMENT: Write out + memorine the Phrygian scales and triads in all the minor keys except Alm. then try the progressions in these keys. The diatoric 7ths: 5# & i: Bont, Bon7/11

G A B C B C B C DII: CA, C4, C6, C6, C6

G A B C B C DII: CA, C4, C6, C6, C6 Vo: F#m705/11, F#m1/11(n05th) bu: ch, c4, c6, с6, с4, с7+1, с6, 9+1, с, 9+1, сВ VI: G/9, 99, 96, 96/9, 9-13-Bon C7 D7 Em7 Ftm765 G7 Am7 II: D9, D13, D76, D75us, D11, D13sus, D6, i7 bII7 III iv vor III bviir iv: Emilli, Em9, Emill, Emt 169

Some progressions with 7ths extensions to solo over:

(42) | Bru C7: | (45) | Bru C7+11: | (46) | Bru C7 D6 C7: |

bil 7 byii: Am7/1, Am9, Am11, Am19, Am6, Am6/4 you might also wish to investigate the HUNGARIAN MINOR: 12 13#4 5 66 7 (8) ASSIGNMENT: Memorize the distonic this, and at least the extreversions on bit in the 14 phygian keys; then try the progressions in these keys. ROMANIAN MINOR: 1263#4567 (8) progressions in these keys.