

Something Old. Something New.

New ways of looking at old scales

By Ted Eschliman



The Augmented 11th.

We brought up the concept of the **Augmented 11th** in a MandolinSessions article over five years ago. Sometimes when you get bombarded with technical terms, you lose some of the simple ideas in the message, and we've seen players give up on jazz, simply because they didn't want to be bothered with the technical side of music creation, the notion "I asked you the time, you told me how to build a watch." At the risk of repetition, we want to rehash this very unique set of notes that can energize your soloing. Keep in mind, these are three different ways of looking at the same concept, review material. You don't have to know all three; pick one and run with it...

A new language with some familiar words.

We are big on the **Major Scale**. There is just so much versatility in this verdant sequence of notes, one of Western European Music's most important melodic building tools. Not only do you have the popular scale in its purest form itself, its progressive whole/whole/half/whole/whole/half pitch relationships translate into other modes simply by starting these relationships on a different note. Modes you've probably heard of like **Lydian**, **Dorian**, **Minor** (Aeolian), and the rest of the **Church Modes** are the grist of Folk/Bluegrass, and in more complex variations, classical and jazz. Its weaker sister, the **Pentatonic** scale, though useful, pales in comparison with its lack of horizontal half-note propulsion in most of the more complex harmonic musical genres.

We like to think of music theory as not just a way to *expand* your world, but to create *shortcuts*. You could be confounded with all kinds of names and labels of some complex terminology, but most would be intimidated by the verbiage, so let's just introduce you to a whole new world of melodic fodder by simply changing one note in a familiar scale. We'll be so bold as to say this one-note change will give you a whole new sound.

Lydian is not hard

The **Lydian** mode is kind of a restless, haunting sound. Some think of it as a major scale based on the **4th** scale degree. If you conceptualize it aurally as a sound unto itself, you'll take this harmonic identity and immerse yourself into its playful nature. Take a **G scale** and rather than using a **C natural**, raise the **4th** scale degree to a **C#** and play around with it. Improvise over a G chord, or a **G Maj7**, and you'll have fun with this teasing sound.

G Lydian: G, A, B, **C#**, D, E, F# G

Mixolydian--you're already there

If you've played "Old Joe Clark," "Sweet Home Alabama," or the Beatles', "Norwegian Wood," you are already familiar with the **Mixolydian** mode. From a theoretical point of view, it's a scale based on the **5th** note of a scale degree, but again, we prefer to give it its one aural identity and think of it as major scale with a lowered **7th**, and in the key of **G**, the **F#** would be changed to an **F natural**.

G Mixolydian: G, A, B, C, D, E, **F**, G

Change one note only

Here's where we can have some fun by changing one of the above scales, or you can think of it as a **Major Scale** with two notes altered. If you think of this as a **Mixolydian**, it will be this scale with a raised **4th**. If you fancy a **Lydian Scale**, it will lower the **7th**. Of course, you can also take a **Major Scale** and lower the **7th**, raise the **4th**, all for something we've called the **Augmented 11th Scale** (+11, #11).

Three ways, one scale:

G Mixolydian w/ raised 4th: G, A, B, **C#**, D, E, F, G

G Lydian w/ lowered 7th: G, A, B, C#, D, E, **F** G

G Augmented 11th: G, A, B, **C#**, D, E, **F** G

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled "G Major Scale" and shows the notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The second staff is labeled "G Major Scale, raised 4th (C#), lowered 7th (F)" and shows the notes G, A, B, C#, D, E, F, G. Below each staff are guitar fretboard diagrams for the open G string, with fret numbers 5, 7, 2, 3, 5, 7, 2, 3 for the first scale and 5, 7, 2, 4, 5, 7, 1, 3 for the second scale.

There is a theoretical reason for calling it this, and we introduce this label at the risk of throwing you in the deep waters of Theory Land. Best thing is just to listen to it and absorb it as its own kind of flavor. If you listen to much Django "Gypsy" Jazz, you'll hear this all over the place. If Brazilian Choro is your thing, it will also be somewhat recognizable. Listen to Jobim and you discover it's quite common in Bossa Nova.

Harmonic implications

Back to the **Augmented 11th** concept, consider the harmonic ingredients of a **G7(#11)** chord:

G, B, D, F, A (implied), C#

Notice the similarity with the notes **G, A, B, C#, D, E, F, G**, we are calling the **Augmented 11th Scale**. Really, the only thing missing is the E, and that can be used as a benign passing tone. Recall the **G7(#11)** is a dominant functioning chord, so you can use these altered tones in just about any **V7** chord you want. With few exceptions, it will sound terrific in all forms of jazz.

Not to make it more complicated

We don't want to go too deeply under the hood in talking about other implications for this chord, but it's important to point out this sequence of note relationships can be represented in two other incarnations: the **Melodic Minor** scale. Does **D Melodic Minor, D, E, F, G, A, B, C#, D** look familiar? For you advance theory buffs, how about a **C# Altered Scale, C#, D, E, F, G, A, B, C#**.

We point out these incarnations of the same note sequence, not to confound you, but to demonstrate these really can be invaluable. If you're taking the time to learn these in one form, the transition from one to the next is very simple. It's in your fingers and ears; should be little problem getting your brain to go along. Again, we're working on short cuts, not throwing you a bunch of superfluous secret jazz theory code.

Work it into your fingers

We cover this scale in the book "**Getting into Jazz Mandolin**" with some exercises to familiarize your fingers with the feel and your ears for the sound. The following additional exercises in a different key will also help induce familiarity; note after playing the scale, we start mixing this up in thirds, arpeggios, fourths, and some contrary

motion, similarly to how we introduce the FFcP Patterns. You'll want to do this in **1st FFcP** to start with, but take some time to learn these patterns in the other keys and the other three **FFcP** fingerings.

Aug 11th Exercises

www.JazzMando.com

Mandolin

Key of Eb

3 Thirds

Arpeggios

7 Fourth

Contrary Motion

Get to know these. Next time, we'll look at some patterns you can develop out of this great scale, and apply them to some "V7 I" progressions.



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