

A Jazz Melodic Minor Workout

In the jazz idiom, the melodic minor scale can be applied to different chords. The resulting sounds and patterns are common in mainstream jazz, and were utilized by practically every great player of the jazz tradition.

The jazz melodic minor scale is basically a major scale with a flatted third:
(The courtesy accidentals emphasize the scale's structure).



Preparatory Exercises

Before you can explore the different applications of this scale, you should practice this scale in all 12 keys, utilizing the full range of your instrument.

For example, if you play saxophone, C melodic minor would sound like this:



Other technical exercises that are usually played in major sound great in melodic minor.
For example, ascending/descending diatonic seventh chords:



...and so on.

Playing diatonic thirteenth chords on each degree of the scale - using melodic minor - is a great technical exercise and it explores different sonorities.

For example,



...etc.



Application

The melodic minor scale can be applied to the following chords:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 of Minor Δ 7 chord | (C melodic minor on C- Δ 7) |
| 5 of Dominant #11 chord | (C melodic minor on F7#11) |
| b9 of altered dominant chord | (C melodic minor on B7 #9#5) |
| b3 of half diminished chord | (C melodic minor on A \flat 7) |

As you apply the melodic minor scale to these different chords, it is important that you use the scale in a way that captures its essential sound. Merely running the scale up and down is aurally meaningless.

The following are examples of common vocabulary which captures the minor or melodic minor sound.

- (a)  "Cry Me a River"
- (b)  "Gone but Not Forgotten"
- (c)  Sonny Stitt
- (d)  Charlie Parker, Moose the Mooch Solo
- (e)  Charlie Parker, Moose the Mooch Solo

Apply each of these suggested patterns to Minor Δ 7 chords, Dominant #11 chords, altered dominant chords, and half diminished chords. Test yourself using the *Random Root Progression* handout.