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ELLEN CONTINUES HER BEGINNERS' EXPLORATION OF THE MODES OF THE MAJOR SCALE

Last month we looked in some depth at the three more 'major' sounding modes, which are Ionian, Lydian and Mixolydian. The reason these scales have a more 'major' tonality is due to the presence of the major 3rd.

A quick recap! The Ionian can be viewed as simply the major scale starting on the root: one note, the #4, changes in this scale to make it Lydian; and the b7 is the note that's changed to make it Mixolydian. The Lydian is the mode that starts on the 4th degree or IV chord, and the Mixolydian is the mode that starts on the 5th degree or V chord. Roman numerals are used when talking about chords within a key, and the modes directly correlate with these chords. As you can see in the table below, the I, IV and V chords are associated with the 'major' sounding modes.

Cord Number	Related mode
I	Ionian
IV	Lydian
V	Mixolydian

The remaining modes have a more 'minor' sound due to the presence of the minor 3rd and flat or minor 7th. These modes are Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian and Locrian, and they consist of the following formulas.

Dorian: Root - major 2nd - minor 3rd - perfect 4th - perfect 5th - major 6th - minor 7th - octave

Phrygian: Root - minor 2nd - minor 3rd - perfect 4th - perfect 5th - minor 6th - minor 7th - octave

Aeolian: Root - major 2nd - minor 3rd - perfect 4th - perfect 5th - minor 6th - minor 7th - octave

Locrian: Root - minor 2nd - minor 3rd - perfect 4th - flattened 5th - minor 6th - minor 7th - octave

The chord tones (the individual notes of a chord) present in each of these modes are the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th. The chords that directly correlate with the 'minor' sounding modes are indicated in the table below.

Cord Number	Related mode
II	Dorian
III	Phrygian
VI	Aeolian
VII	Locrian

So, what does all this mean for bass players, I hear you ask?

Just this: if you want to navigate the fretboard as melodically as possible, these modes will help you achieve fretboard fluency. Choose a key, and play each mode starting from each degree of the scale. Jam with a guitarist or keyboardist and try playing the mode that fits over the chords that the other musician is playing. You'll be surprised how quickly it all starts to make sense. ■

Example 1

Example 1 shows the first seven modes of the major scale in 4/4 time, starting on the root note (B) in the bass clef. The modes are: C Ionian, D Dorian, E Phrygian, F Lydian, G Mixolydian, A Aeolian, and B Locrian. Each mode is represented by a staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are written in a sequence that covers the fretboard, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.

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