

Pentatonic Scales

Perhaps the most commonly used and familiar sounding scales to western culture are pentatonic scales. A very large percentage of the most famous melodies, licks, and legendary solos make heavy use of pentatonic scales. R&B, pop, blues, rock, and funk vocabulary is largely created with these scales.

The reason that pentatonic scales make such effective melodies is that there are wide intervals built into the scale, which creates interest for the listener. As you develop as an improviser, learning to control and incorporate these scales will become very important. You will also notice that many of the players that you are listening to are creating those great licks by controlling pentatonic scales. Depending on the chord progression, (by considering the chord of the moment) many players will play through the entire progression using the same pentatonic scale. David Sanborn is a master of this.

The **Major Pentatonic** scale is an Ionian scale with the fourth and seventh notes omitted.

The **Minor Pentatonic** scale is the relative minor mode of the Major Pentatonic scale. (A minor is the relative minor of C Major)

The **Blues scale** is a Minor Pentatonic scale with a passing tone added.

C Maj Pent	C D E f G A b (C)
A min Pent	A b C D E f G (A)
A Blues scale	A b C D D# E f G (A)

12 bar Blues is a perfect example of where one scale can get you through a progression.

A Blues

	A7		D7		A7		A7	
	D7		D7		A7		A7	
	E7		D7		A7		E7	

Everything I have said to this point about the chord/scale relationship also applies to Blues, but if you consider the *A Blues* scale over a basic 12 bar Blues progression, there are chord tones from each chord in the scale.

A7- A, E, G D7 - D, A, C E7 - D, E

Your goal is to combine your knowledge of chord/scale relationship with your knowledge of Blues scale.