

USES OF THE MINOR SCALE IN JAZZ

The minor scale is the name I give to the ascending form of the melodic minor scale which is used for both ascending and descending. It is identical to a major scale but the third is minor, not major.

The same minor scale can be used for the following chords:

Cm⁶ Cm⁶9 Cm^Δ very common - default scale

and with added 9th, 11th & 13th

Dm⁷ Dm⁷(b9) rare

E^bΔ+5 E^bΔ-5 the first chord is quite rare but the second is widely found

F⁷ F⁷⁻⁵ F⁹ F⁹⁺¹¹ F¹³⁺¹¹ very common

or with b5

G⁷ G⁷⁺⁵ common - but other scales tend to be used more

A[∅] A[∅] add B (9th) A[∅] add D (11th) A[∅] add F (13th) very common - 1 of 2 default scales

B⁷⁻⁵ B⁷⁺⁵ B⁷⁻⁹ B⁷⁺⁹ very common - the "altered scale"

or D#

plus any combination of these altered notes
eg. B7(+9-5)
the chord is sometimes written B7alt

In general terms:

a minor chord (but not a m7) takes the minor scale on the same root note

a minor seventh chord can take a minor scale a tone below the root note

a major seventh with a #5 or b5 can take a minor scale a minor 3rd below the root-note

a dominant seventh with unaltered ninth can take a minor scale a perfect 4th below the root note

a dominant seventh or augmented 7th/9th can take a minor scale a perfect 5th below the root note

a half-diminished with unaltered extensions can take a minor scale a minor 3rd above the root note

an altered seventh chord (9ths and 5ths) can take a minor scale a semitone above the root note

THE MELODIC MINOR SCALE

The melodic minor scale is not very useful in jazz because the major 6th and 7th notes used in ascending change to the minor 7th and 6th in descending. Clashes can occur between this scale and any chords which have any of these notes in them.

There are some chords which this does not effect and the scale can be used for these:

Cm triad Cm2 Cm(add D)



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. It contains three chords: Cm triad (C3, Eb3, G3), Cm2 (C3, Eb3, G3, Bb3), and Cm(add D) (C3, Eb3, G3, Bb3, D4). To the right of these chords, the melodic minor scale is written: C4, D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, G4, F4, Eb4, E4, D4.

This is the most obvious one.

It can also be used with a suspended dominant seventh, provided the 9th is not added to it:

G7sus4



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. It contains a G7sus4 chord (G3, Bb3, D4, G4) and the melodic minor scale: C4, D4, Eb4, E4, F4, G4, Ab4, A4, G4, F4, Eb4, E4, D4.

Note that the scale is a perfect fourth above the root-note of the chord.

USES OF HARMONIC MINOR SCALE

The harmonic minor scale, which has a minor 3rd and minor 6th, is a useful scale for improvising on.

It can be used for any chord which is derived from the scale:

Cm^Δ Cm² root-note same as 1st note of scale

The first staff shows two chords: Cm^Δ (C minor major 7) and Cm² (C minor 7 sharp 9). To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on C. The notes are C, D, E^b, F, G, A^b, B, C.

D[∅] scale is a tone below root-note of half-diminished chord

The second staff shows the D[∅] (D half-diminished) chord. To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on D. The notes are D, E, F^b, G, A, B^b, C, D.

E^bΔ+5 scale is a minor 3rd below root-note of major seventh with #5

The third staff shows the E^bΔ+5 (E^b major 7 sharp 5) chord. To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on E^b. The notes are E^b, F, G^b, A, B, C^b, D, E^b.

Fm⁷ scale is a perfect fourth below the minor seventh chord

The fourth staff shows the Fm⁷ (F minor 7) chord. To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on F. The notes are F, G, A^b, B, C, D^b, E, F.

G7 scale is a perfect fifth below the dominant seventh

The fifth staff shows the G7 (G dominant 7) chord. To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on G. The notes are G, A, B^b, C, D, E^b, F, G.

A^bΔ scale is a major 3rd above the major seventh

The sixth staff shows the A^bΔ (A^b major 7) chord. To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on A^b. The notes are A^b, B, C^b, D, E, F^b, G, A^b.

D[∅] F[∅] A^b∅ B[∅] scale is a tone, pf 4th below and major 3rd and semitone above respective dim chords

The seventh staff shows four half-diminished chords: D[∅], F[∅], A^b∅, and B[∅]. To the right, the harmonic minor scale is written in treble clef, starting on D. The notes are D, E, F^b, G, A, B^b, C, D.

It is used most often for a minor major7 chord or a minor chord without a sixth - the second can be added to it to enrich it. In a minor 251 sequence it can be played over all three chords with the above proviso with regard to the tonic chord. It is often used for the shorter 25 sequence. And it can be used for the individual half-diminished chord and dominant seventh chords which have a flattened ninth and no alteration to the fifth.

It can be used for a major seventh with a sharpened (but not flattened) fifth, depending on the context. Sometimes a minor scale would be better.

Although rarely encountered, it can be used for a minor seventh chord built on the 4th note of the scale and a major seventh chord built on the 6th note.

In theory, it could also be used for a half-diminished chord on the 4th note or a major minor seventh chord on the 6th note, but this would be very unusual.

It is especially useful as an alternative to the diminished scale when applied to the four diminished chords which are derived from the scale, particularly the chord built on the 7th note (the leading note).

Because of the interval of a minor third between the b6 and 7th, the scale can sound exotic.

If desired, an extra note - a minor seventh (Bb in the C harmonic minor scale) can sometimes be added to the scale.

The scale can also be used for a B13th-5 chord (ie. down a semitone from the starting note):

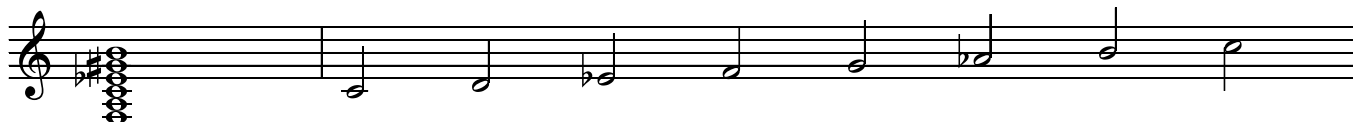
B13+9-5



The scale would also apply if the chord was spelt with a flattened 9th and sharpened fifth. It is usual to find a scale which applies to a sharpened fifth and a thirteenth. Note that the seventh of the chord does not appear in the scale.

Another possibility is using the scale for a dominant seventh on the subdominant:

F13+11+9



The chord has a natural ninth and a sharpened ninth but no flattened ninth. The scale does not contain the third of the chord.