

MODAL MAPS

A short History

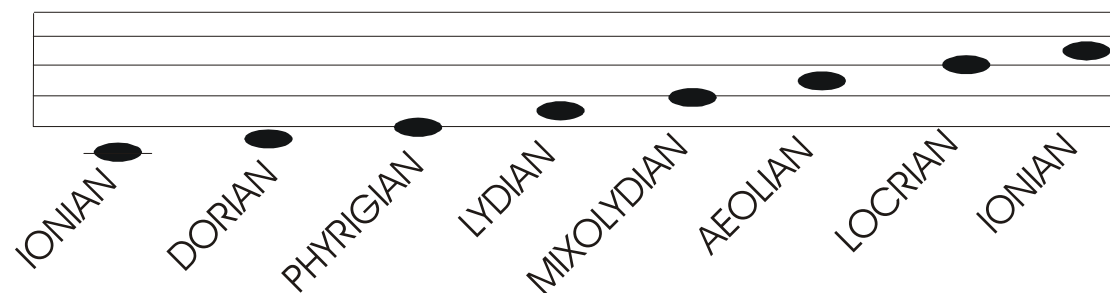
People in the western hemisphere have been brought up for centuries listening to music based on the fundamental major scale. Melodies and chords have all derived from the eight notes that comprise the scale. Twelve if we consider the sharps and flats in its chromatic counterpart. These notes have been constantly arranged to form the tunes and sounds we are familiar with, from the simple melodies like Three Blind Mice, or the theme tune from Eastenders, to the complex classical compositions of Mozart and Bach.

We can easily recognise the happy tones of the major scale or the melancholy sounds of it's minor relatives, we are used to these and are content to employ them in our composition or improvisation. If we think about it, the notes and sounds we use don't strictly belong to any hemisphere they are movements, vibrations of air that have been arranged in a set way by the composers and players. Modal playing is way of rearranging these sounds into perhaps less familiar territory and discovering that within our very own system we have the music of the whole world.

The ancient Greeks were the first to create a system and arrange the sounds into a pattern of notes starting from IONIAN. These names are derived from names of Greek towns and have since become known as Modes each creating individual scales, and unique flavours. They are familiar to us in music as diverse as Blues or Chinese.

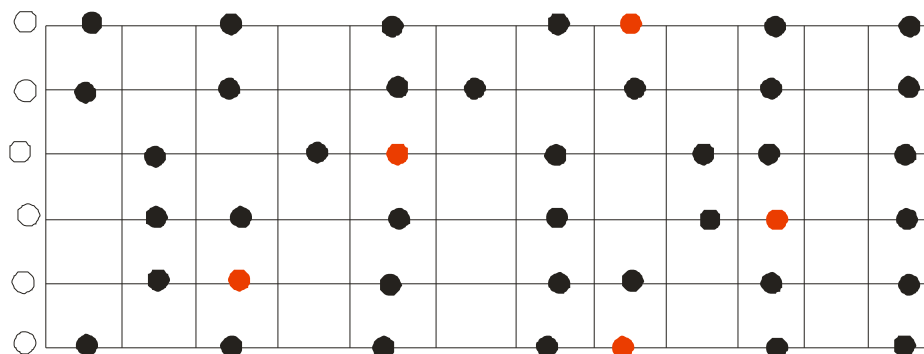
In order to explore these modes I've found it very useful to lay these down as charts or maps with which we can navigate the fret board.

All my maps are based on the Ionian mode of **C** major but as you discover will help you to play in many different keys.



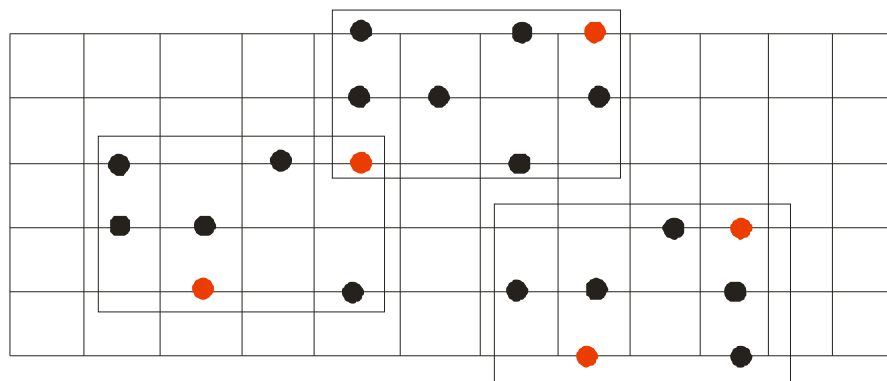
The chart below shows all the notes on the fret board that you would play in **C** major, from the 1st to the 12th fret. The key centre is **C** and is shown in red. This is the first mode of the major scale called **the IONIAN** mode.

Play major scale pointing out starting point red



If we play the notes in patterns the chart can change to the one below. These patterns can be used for improvising over **C major** chords such as **C** or **C maj7** and **C maj6**. You can play these notes in different orders but try and aim towards the key centre in red.

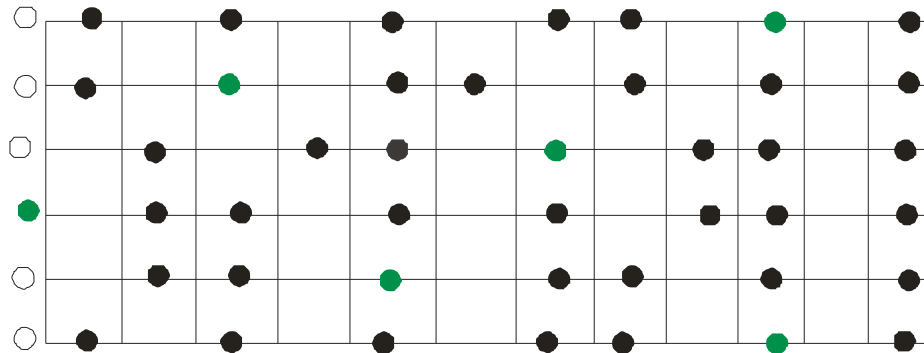
Play patterns from red – riff ideas played over backing track for each chord



Now let's begin to change our modes:

If we change the key centre of our original chart to **D** we now have the **DORIAN** mode. This is the 2nd mode in the key of **C**. The key centre is shown in green.

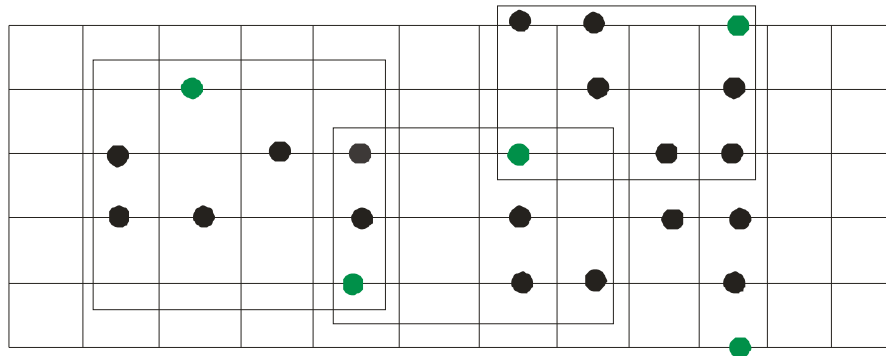
Play dorian pattern from green starting point



The sound is minor and can be used over chords such as **D minor** or **D minor7** or **m6**

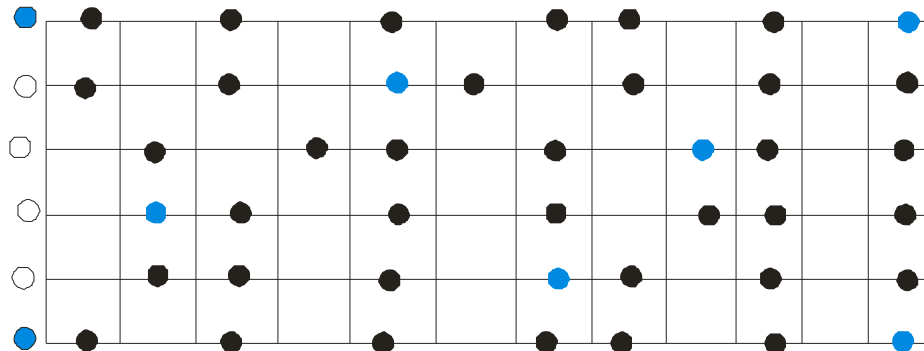
Here it is arranged in patterns. Once again play towards the key centre.

Play patterns and riff ideas over chords and backing track - style



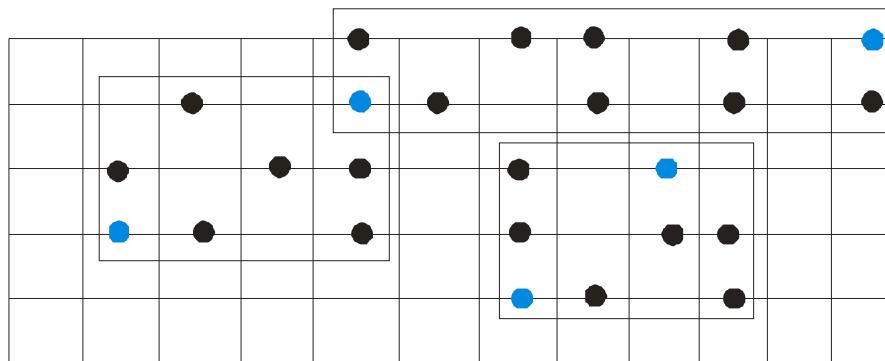
The 3rd mode of the **C Major** scale is the **PHYRIGIAN** and is shown on our original chart by changing the key centre to **E** marked in blue. It is a mix between a minor and major sound and is good for improvising over **E** or **Em** chords. Also **E7** and **Em7**. It is a favourite with flamenco guitarists due to its Moorish flavour.

Play phrygian scale from blue – one or two octaves



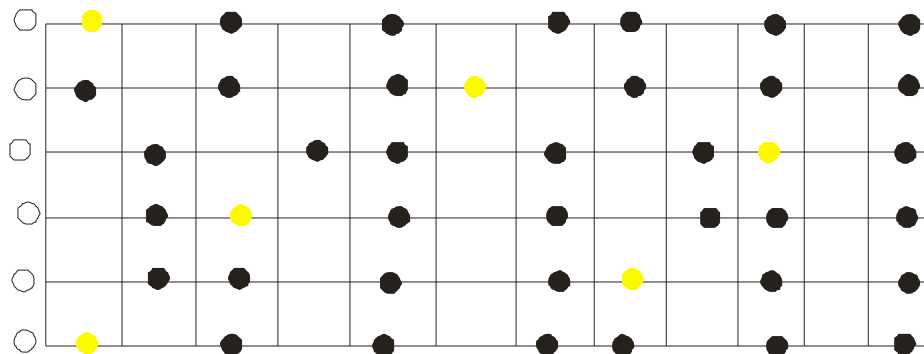
Try these patterns:

Play patterns and riff ideas over chords – talk about style



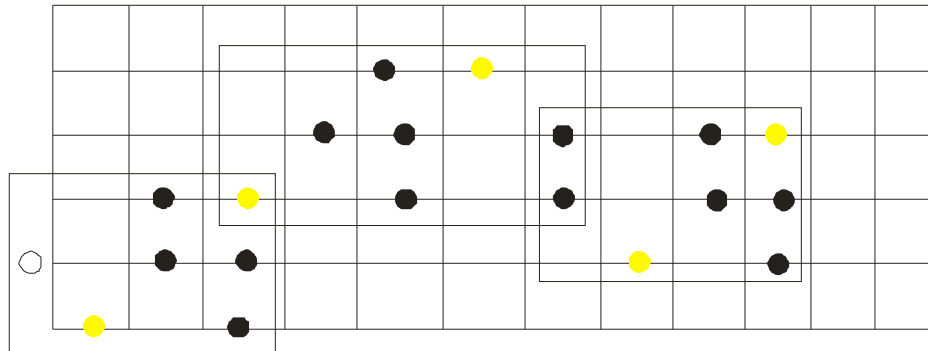
The 4th mode is known as the **LYDIAN** mode the key centre being **F**, this is shown in yellow. It is well known among Jazz players due to its quirky sound and good for improvising over **F** and **Fmaj7**.

Play scale from yellow



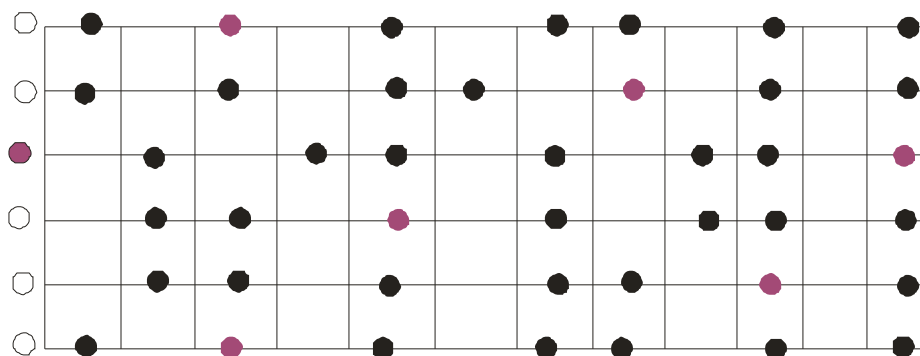
Once again here are some manageable patterns:

Play patterns' then over chords – riff ideas and style



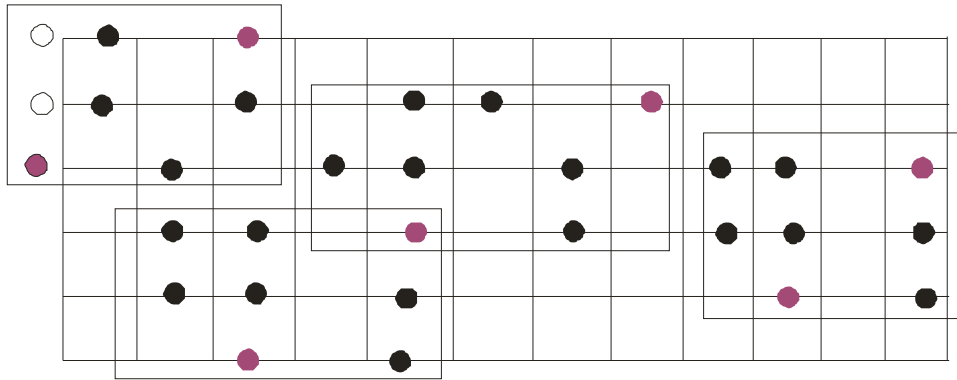
The 5th mode is shown in purple and changes the key centre to **G**. It is called the **MIXOLYDIAN**. Because it has a flattened 7th note it is a widely used scale over 7th chords in this case **G7** or extensions such **G9 G13**. The scale is very important for all kinds of music though, is especially good for jazz and blues.

Play scale from purple



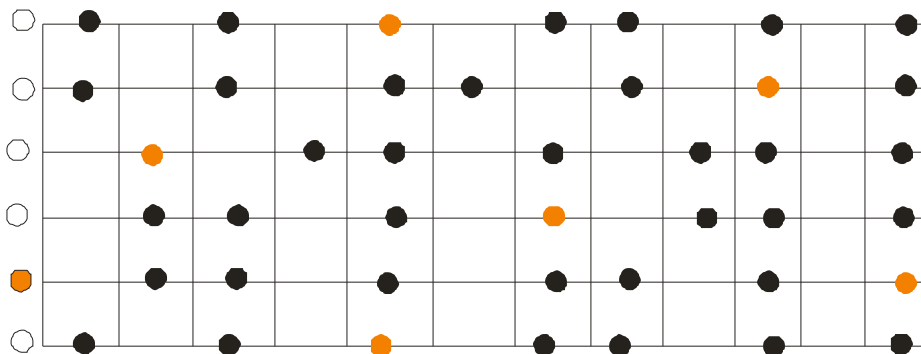
Once again here are some patterns to try:

Play patterns
Riffs over chords
style



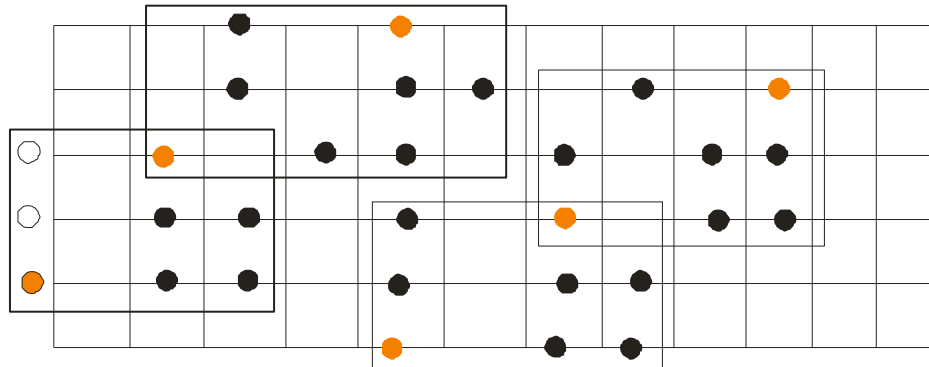
The next mode from our original chart is known as the **AEOLIAN** and can be seen in orange. This changes the key centre to A. It is a natural minor scale and good for improvising over minor chords in this case **Am** or **Am7**, **Am9**. It is a widely used scale and is great for Rock, Jazz and Blues.

Play scale over from orange

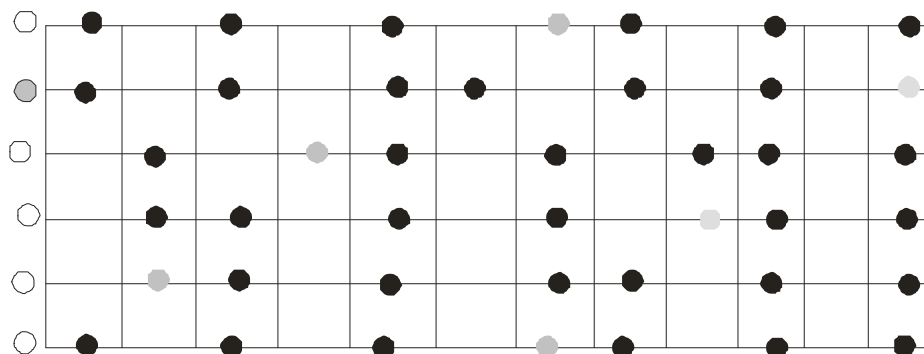


Here are the patterns:

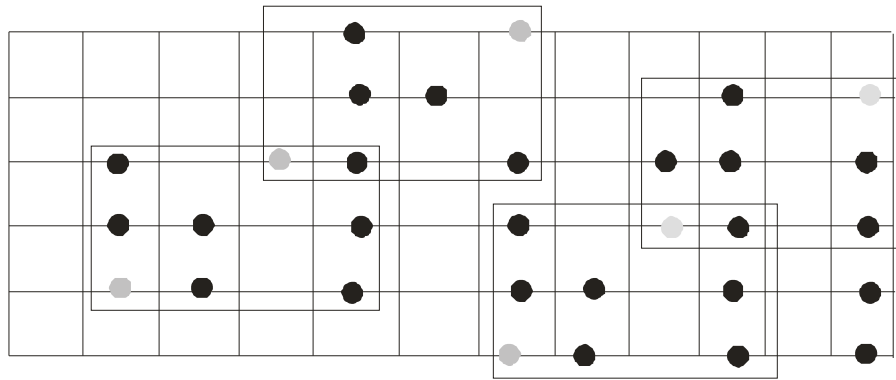
Play patterns
Patterns over chords
style



The last mode of our original scale is the **LOCRIAN** and changes the key centre to B. This is shown in grey. It is **M7b5** scale or **half diminished** so can be used over **M7b5** chords or diminished chords i.e. **Bm7b5** or **Bdim** chords. It is a useful scale for all kinds of music as it helps as a connecting scale. For example between **Bm7b5** and **Cmaj**.



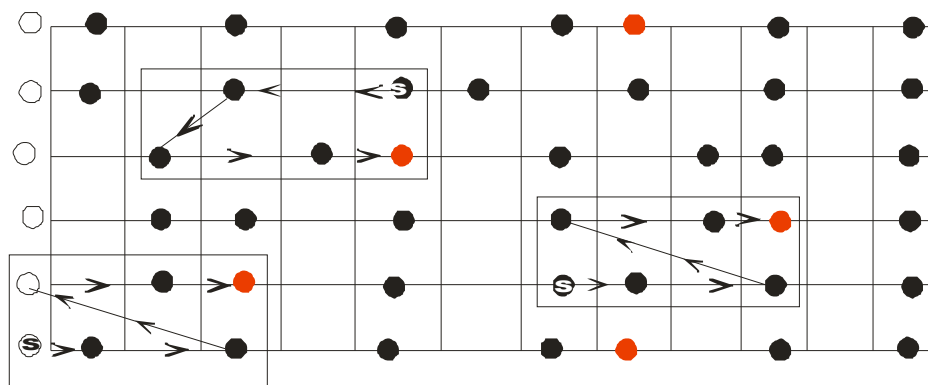
Here are some patterns:



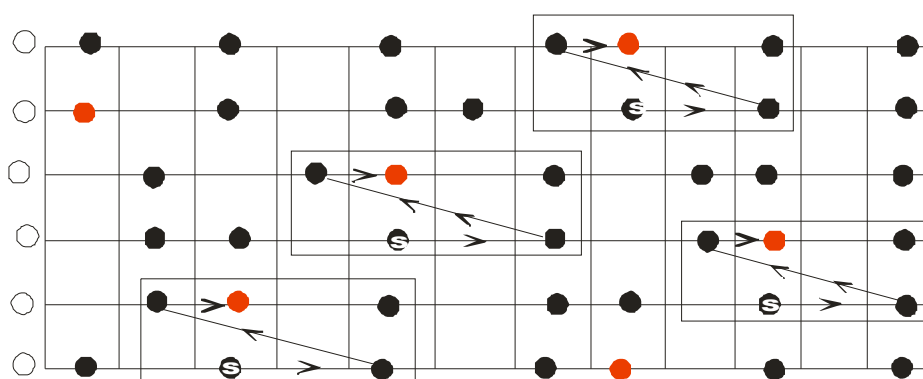
MODAL MAP 2

TOWARDS THE KEY CENTRE

The great thing about the modal map is that it helps us see the possibilities for improvising around chords. If we go back to our original chart, the **C major** scale or Ionian mode, we can begin to map out some changes. For example we can play towards the red key centre by starting on the note **E**. This makes our scale less predictable and more interesting while playing over the **C** chords:

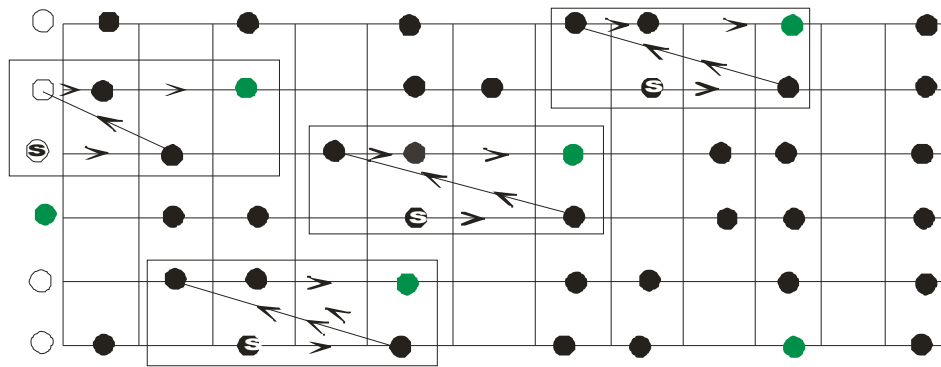


Here are some patterns starting on the **G** working towards the key centre **C**



Experiment by choosing your own notes from which to play towards the key centre.

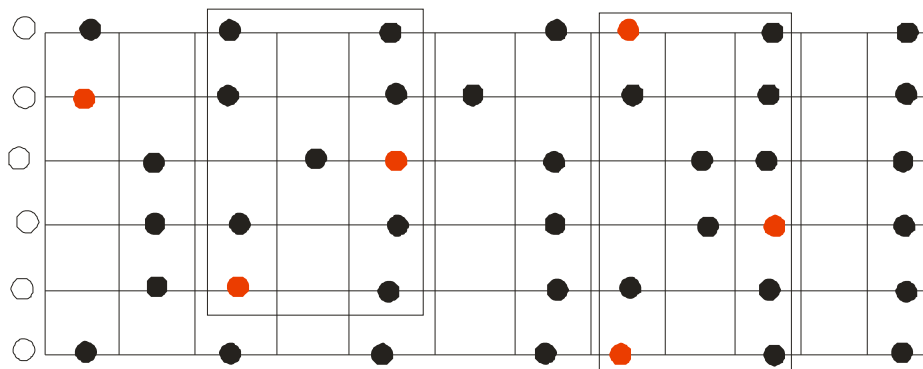
The same methods apply to all the other modes. In the **DORIAN** mode try playing towards the key centre **D** starting from the **G**



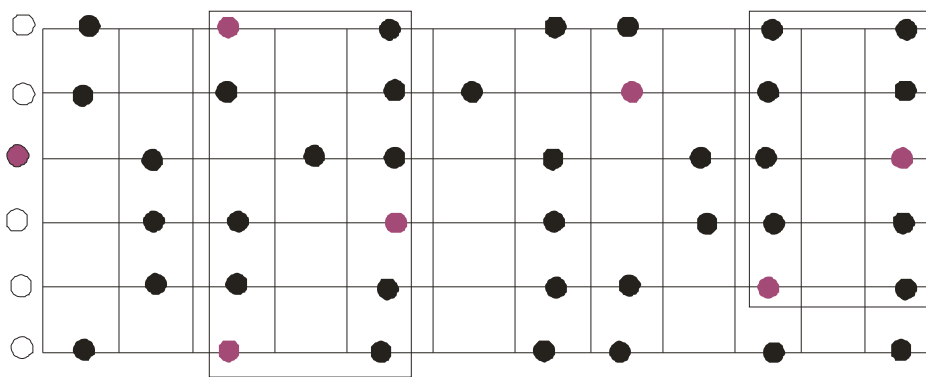
EXTENDED PATTERNS

The possibilities with modal maps are endless here is another idea to keep you going.

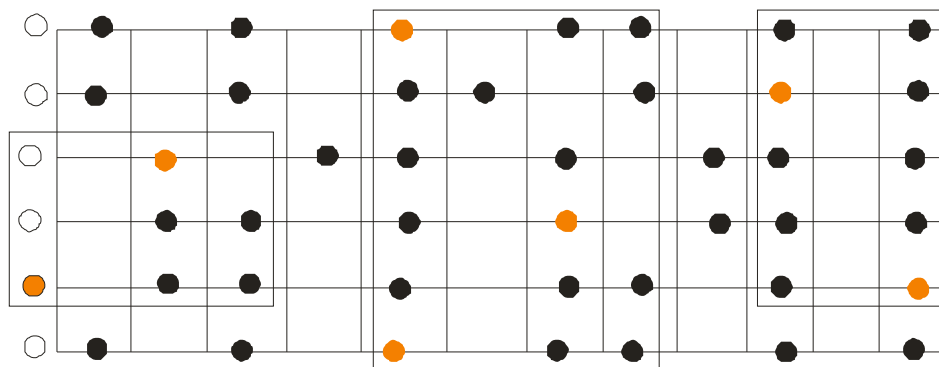
We can discover other scale patterns to extend around the fret board. Try these from the Ionian chart. These patterns start from the key centre **C** so are played around **C** chords, but you can try experimenting from other notes to work towards the key centre and at the same time extend the patterns.



The same applies to the other modes try to find your own extended patterns. Here are some from the **MIXOLYDIAN** mode:



Here's some from the **AEOLIAN** chart for our **Am** riffs:



Many patterns can be arranged if you play in and around the key centre or towards the key centre as we discussed earlier.

There are many ways to improvise using the modal map and can help you plan out a solo when faced with different chord combination.

Here are a few tips to guide you through;

If for example if you are in the key of **C** you are likely to come across some of the chords if not all of them. The chords are:

C Dm Em F G Am Bm7b5

Check out your **IONIAN** map and locate your key centres for the chords you need.

If the chord combination is:

C Am F G7

You could use the **IONIAN** for the C chord

AEOLIAN for the **Am**

LYDIAN for the **F**

MIXOLYDIAN for the **G7**

Remember all the notes you need are in our original **IONIAN** chart so you can play in and around the key centre of the chord you need.

Use the charts but let your ear guide you remember there's no such thing as a wrong note – it's just jazz!

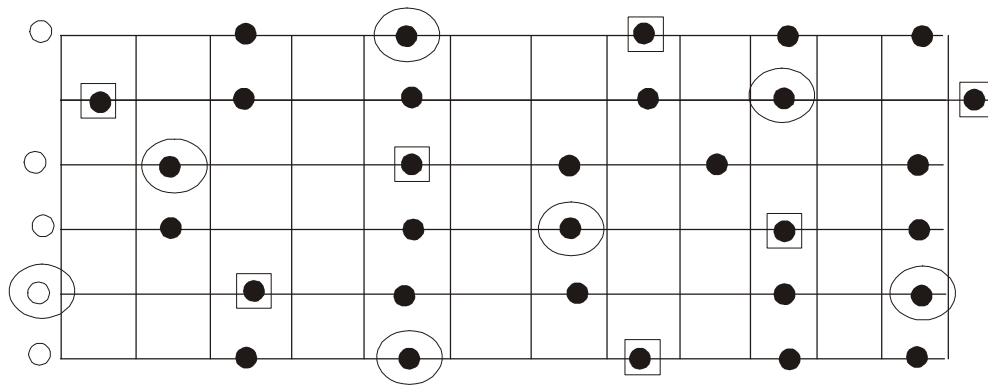
MODAL MAP 3

PENTATONIC

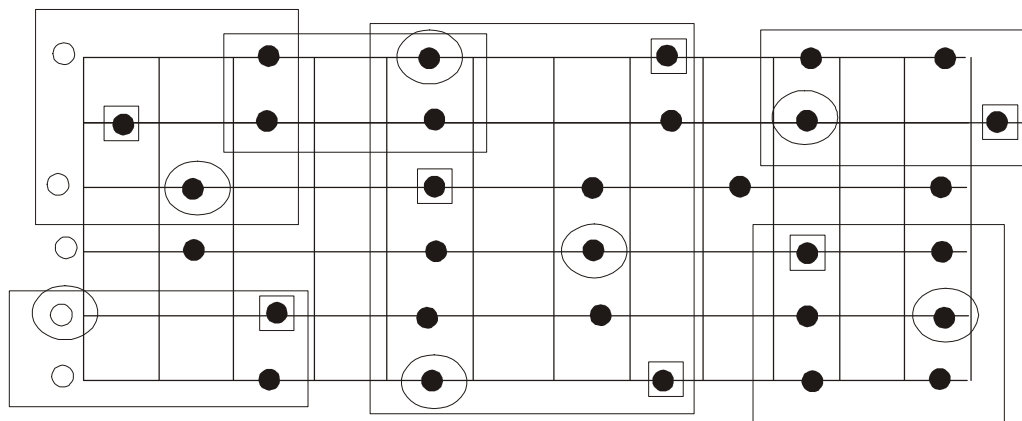
The **PENTATONIC SCALE** is itself a modal scale. It uses only five notes – these are taken from our **IONIAN** scale. It is a popular scale for improvising because you can play it over all the chords in that key.

If our **IONIAN** chart is in the key of **C** the notes are. **C D E G A**.

Here they are displayed in a chart. The dots with squares show the Major key centre which is **C** and the circled dots indicate its relative minor key- **A Minor**



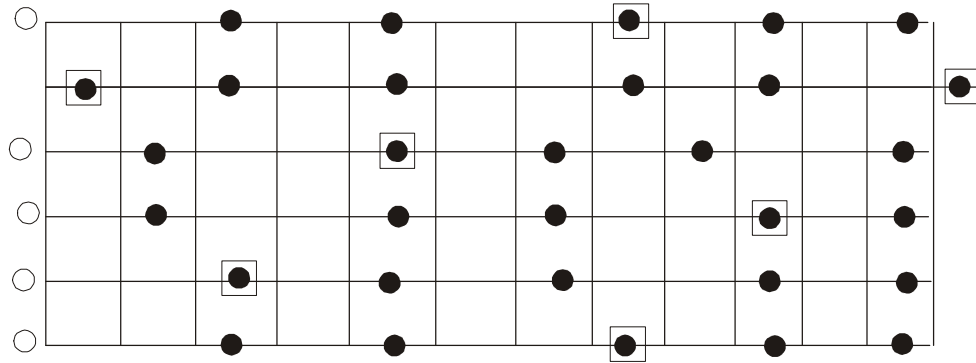
Let find some scale patterns within the chart, which we can use for our improvising:



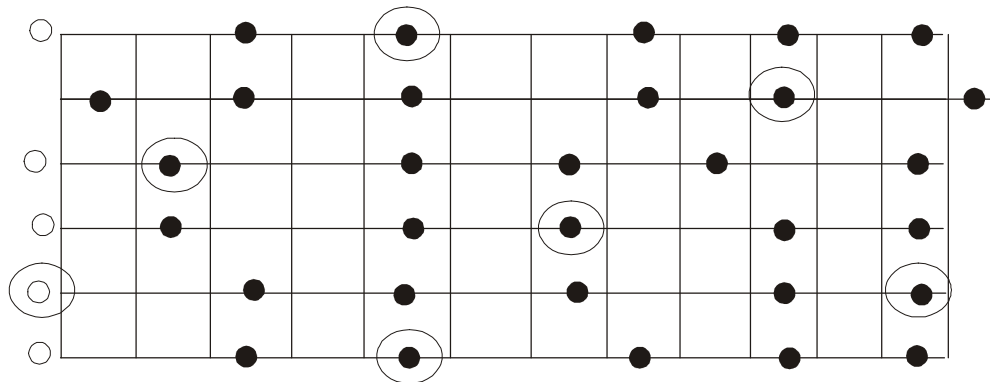
As you can see there are lots of possibilities, the trick is to keep the patterns as manageable as you can. Although the combination of notes is only restricted by your imagination.

WORKING AROUND C MAJOR AND Am

If the key centre of your improvising is in **C** major your note movement should aim towards **C**, the fret board dots marked with the square:



If the key centre is **Am** your movement should aim towards **A**, the notes marked by the circle:



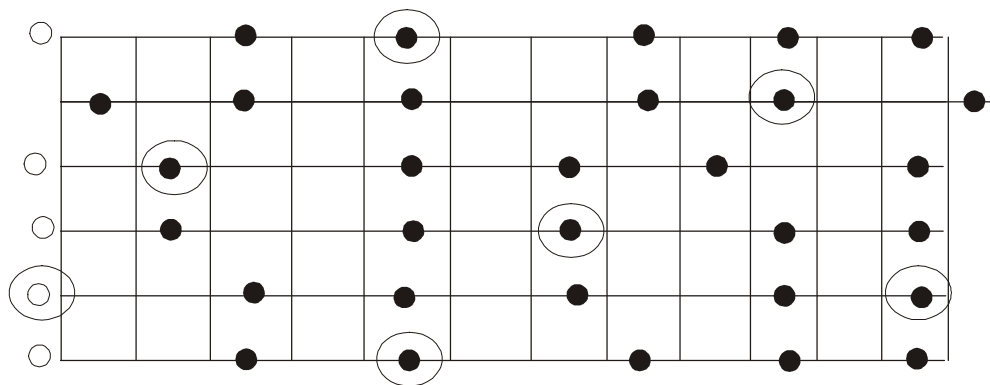
Technical note;

If your key centre is **C** chords will be those in **C major**, which are **C Dm Em F G Am**

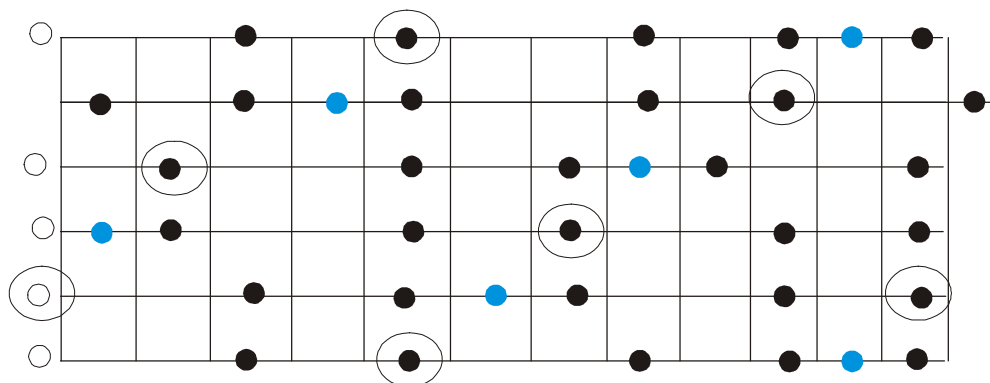
If the key centre is **Am** the chords will be **Am G F Em Dm C**.

THE MODAL BLUES FRETBOARD

We have seen how the **Ionian** fret board offers many modal alternatives and how from this the pentatonic fret boards of **C** and **Am** are formed. The modal blues fret board can be taken from the Am pentatonic mode:



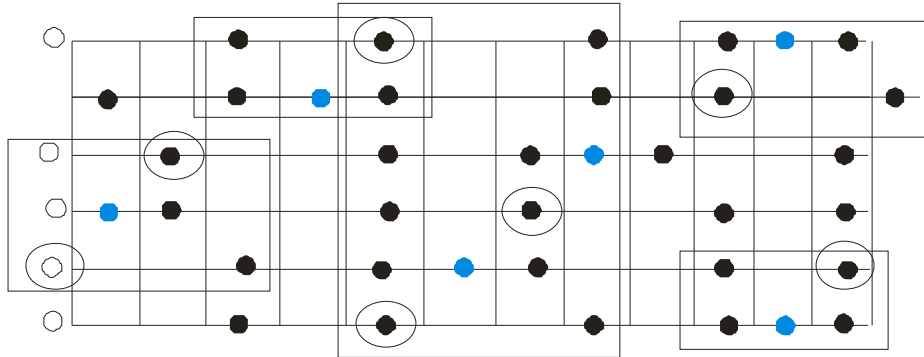
By the addition of an extra note, the **E flat**, shown in blue, we now have the modes Am blues pentatonic or simply the A blues scale:



We can now play bluesy riffs in **Am** around all the chords in this key as with the straight forward **Am** pentatonic mode or play in the key of **A** using the chords

A D and **E7**

Here are some patterns you can try:



Don't forget you can work in any pattern you like and also find your own. Working towards the key centre of **A** will produce some good riffs

More attention to the formation of blues fret boards is made in my course **Pentatonic to the Blues** so please check this out.