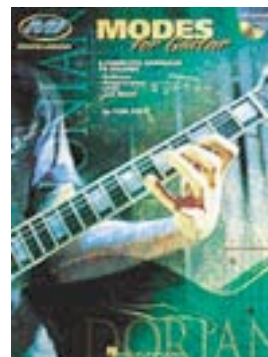


FENDER PLAYERS CLUB THE THEORY OF THE MODES

From the book:
Modes for Guitar
Musicians Institute Press
by Tom Kolb

#HL 695555. Book/CD \$16.95 (US).



The Theory of the Modes

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What Are Modes?

Modes are simply scales, or more precisely, “scales within scales.” They are created by shifting the tonal center away from the root—or tonic—of a scale, to another note of that same scale, thereby creating a new tonality. For example, when you play the C major scale from its root (C) to its octave, it has the familiar “do-re-mi...” major scale sound due to the order of intervals, or intervallic formula: whole–whole–half–whole–whole–whole–half.

C major scale (root to root)

W = whole step
H = half step

T
A
B

8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10

Now, if you play the C major scale again but start on the second note (D) and play up to its octave, you are playing a “mode” of the C major scale. You should notice that it doesn’t sound like C major at all, even though you’re playing the same notes. This is because you’ve “shifted” the order of the intervals by starting on the second note. Now the intervallic formula is: whole–half–whole–whole– whole–half–whole. Thus, a “scale within a scale.”

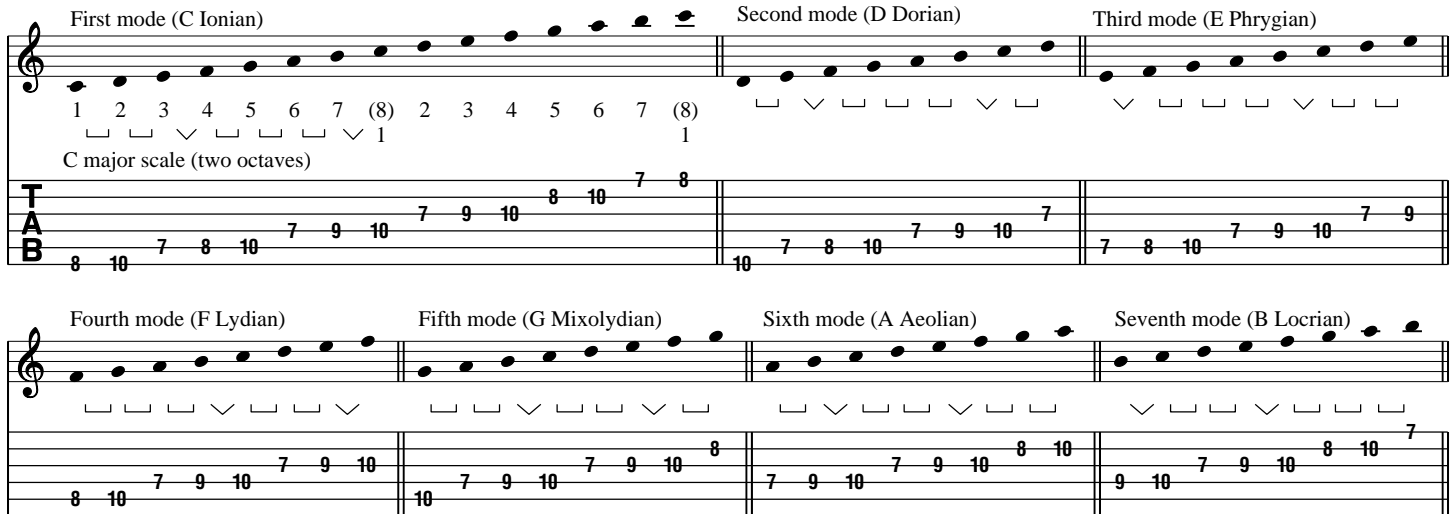
C major scale (D to D)

T
A
B

10 7 8 10 7 9 10 7

This process can be applied to the other notes of the C major scale as well. And since the C major scale has seven notes (C–D–E–F–G–A–B), it contains seven modes.

AUDIO CLIP



First mode (C Ionian) Second mode (D Dorian) Third mode (E Phrygian)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8)

C major scale (two octaves)

TAB: 8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 7 8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 7 8 10 7 9 10 7 9

Fourth mode (F Lydian) Fifth mode (G Mixolydian) Sixth mode (A Aeolian) Seventh mode (B Locrian)

8 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 10 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 7 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 9 10 7 9 10 8 10 7

The Names of the Modes

The unusual names of the major scale modes are derived from the Greek language. You'll want to memorize them—and their order—as quickly as possible:

1. **Ionian** (modal name for the major scale, pronounced "eye-own-ee-un")
2. **Dorian** (pronounced "door-ee-un")
3. **Phrygian** (pronounced "fridge-ee-un")
4. **Lydian** (pronounced "lid-ee-un")
5. **Mixolydian** (pronounced "mix-oh-lid-ee-un")
6. **Aeolian** (modal name for the natural minor scale, pronounced "ay-oh-lee-un")
7. **Locrian** (pronounced "low-kree-un")

Even though they may contain various sharps or flats, all major scales share the same intervallic formula. Therefore, the process for constructing the seven modes of each is exactly the same as illustrated in the key of C. So, for example, if you were to play an E major scale (E–F#–G#–A–B–C#–D#) starting from the second degree (F#), you would be playing F# Dorian (second mode). Likewise, if you were to start on the fifth degree (B) of E major, you would be playing B Mixolydian (fifth mode).

NOTE: Any diatonic, seven-note, scale contains within it seven modes (see the "Other Modes" chapter for examples). But for purposes of clarity, this chapter will focus on the modes of the major scale—by far, the most common.

The Parent Scale

A term that will be used throughout this book is **parent scale**. Simply put, this refers to the major scale that a mode is derived from. For example, C major is the parent scale of D Dorian. C major is also the parent scale of E Phrygian, F Lydian, G Mixolydian, and so on. The importance of knowing the parent scale of a mode will become clear as you work your way through this book. For now, here is a three-step, fill-in-the-blanks process that will help you to name the parent scale of any mode:

EXAMPLE:

To find the parent scale of **A Lydian**:

- Step 1) **Lydian** is the **fourth** mode.
- Step 2) **A** is the **fourth** scale step of **E** major.
- Step 3) **E** major is the parent scale of **A Lydian**.

Using this process, spend some time drilling yourself to find the parent scales to all of the modes, in as many keys as possible. Here's a blank form to help you get started.

To find the parent scale of ___ _____:

- Step 1) _____ is the _____ mode.
- Step 2) ___ is the _____ scale step of ___ major.
- Step 3) ___ major is the parent scale of ___ _____.

Needless to say, your knowledge of major scales and their key signatures will determine how rapidly you will find the answers. (NOTE: The music notation in this book uses the key signature of the parent scale to represent each mode.)