

Chords for Scales and Ragas

Chords for the
seven modes of
Melodic Minor

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Jazz and melodic minor

This report looks at chords from the melodic minor harmony. Melodic minor and its chords are used much in modern jazz improvisation.

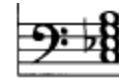
Working with these chord symbols, finding the notes and interval, deducting the chord – this process will make you more familiar with chord symbols, the process of choosing chords for scales, ragas and songs, and the considerations one makes when playing more involved chords.



The staff notation of each chord is given. The notes of treble clef and bass clef are given above for reference.

All the chord notations which do not show any clefs have treble clef on the top and bass clef on the bottom.

1st mode : Minor major chord



The notes in the figure are (bottom to top):

- C – root
- Eb - minor 3rd
- G - fifth
- B – major seventh

Minor 3rd and major 7th intervals in the chord gives us a Minor major seventh chord.

C minor major seventh could be written as

- C Δ
- C- Δ
- C- $\#7$ (The jazz theory book, Mark Levine, p.g.58)

Example 1



Notes (bottom to top):

- F – root
- Ab - minor 3rd
- C – fifth
- E – major 7th
- G – major 2nd (ninth)

F, A \flat , C and E forms **the F minor major 7th** chord (minor 3rd and major 7th intervals in the chord).

F minor major 7th or 9th will be part of the **F melodic minor scale (first mode)** :


F	G	A \flat	B \flat	C	D	E
Root	Maj 2	Min 3	4 th	Fifth	Maj 6	Maj 7

The G note is a ninth note (major 2nd interval) from the root F. So the chord can be called a **F minor major 9th** (minor major 7th + major 2nd or ninth note)

From the table, we see that the major 2nd note is present in the first mode of melodic minor scale, so no harm including it in the chord for the mode.

Example 2

Notes (bottom to top):



- B \flat - root
- A – major 7th
- D \flat - minor 3rd
- F – fifth
- A – major 7th
- C – major 2nd


B \flat , D \flat , F and A gives us the **B \flat minor major 7th** chord.

The C note added to the minor major 7th chord gives **B \flat minor major 9th**.

B \flat minor major 7th is part of the B \flat melodic minor scale (first mode).

Example 3

Notes (bottom to top):

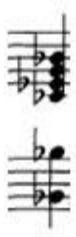


- A \flat - root
- G – major 7th
- C \flat - minor 3rd (C \flat is the same note as B)
- E \flat - fifth
- F – major 6th

A \flat , C \flat , E \flat and G forms the **A \flat minor major 7th** chord, part of the A \flat melodic minor scale (first mode).

F, the major 6th interval is found in the A \flat melodic minor scale, so no harm including it in the chord for the first mode.

2nd mode: Sus b9



The notes (bottom to top):

- Bb note (played in two octaves)
- Cb - b9 note (minor 2nd interval)
- Eb – perfect 4th
- G – major 6th
- Bb - root

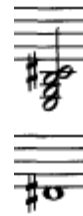
These notes form the **Bb sus b9** chord.

The sus b9 chord comes as part of the second mode of the melodic minor scale.

Bb sus b9 chord is derived from the 2nd mode of Ab melodic minor scale harmony. The second note of Ab melodic minor is Bb, from the where the 2nd mode of the scale starts.

The characteristic notes

The 3rd and 7th notes are the most important notes for most chords. But in the case of Sus b9 chords, the characteristic notes are the b9, 4th and 6th notes.



Example 1

Notes (bottom to top):

- F# - root
- E – minor 7th
- G - b9 note
- B – perfect 4th
- C# - fifth

Those are the notes of **F# sus b9 chord**, the chord for the second mode of the **E melodic minor** scale

E melodic minor scale: E F# G A B C# D# E

2nd mode of E melodic minor (starts from F#):

F#	G	A	B	C#	D#	E
Root	Min 2	Min 3	4th	fifth	Maj 6	Min 7

The minor 7th note E is part of the scale, so it is fine to be played. Playing D# instead of E would include major 6th interval instead of minor 7th in the chord.

Example 2



Notes (bottom to top):

- D – root
- Eb - b9 note
- G – perfect 4th
- B – major 6th

D, Eb, G and B form the notes of the D sus^b9 chord, the chord for the second mode of the C melodic minor scale.

3rd mode: Δ#5 – Lydian augmented

The Lydian augmented chord appears as part of the third mode of the melodic minor scale. The mode of the scale and the chord are both referred to as Lydian Augmented.

- The term Lydian suggests that the chord or scale has **the sharp 4th note**.
- Augmented refers to a **raised fifth** (sharp 5th).

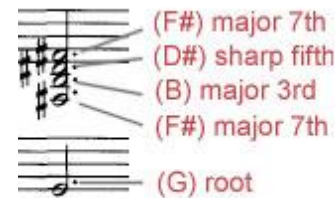
Chord symbol

The complete chord symbol for a Lydian augmented chord should be XΔ#4#5.

Mostly used in jazz kind of situations, the long chord symbol of **XΔ#4#5** is **shortened to XΔ#5** for simplicity. Also, the musician probably is already familiar with the chord and knows what she is expected to make out of the symbol and play.

This is an example of a chord symbol which does not indicate all the notes the chord may have.

Example 1



The notes are indicated along with their respective interval name when G is the root.

- The chord has a **major 3rd and major 7th** (doubled on two octaves) which satisfies the ‘Δ’ part of the chord name.
- The chord has a **sharp fifth** note, hence satisfying the #5 part of the chord name.

The chord notes in the image satisfy the chord symbol GΔ#5. But the chord does not have a sharp fourth or raised fourth note which the term ‘Lydian’ implies.

Lydian augmented chord without the Lydian

GΔ#5 is included as an example of Lydian Dominant chord on pg.62 of Mark Levine’s [Jazz Theory Book](#), though it does not have a Lydian note in it.

This is an example of a chord that has to be understood in relation to the third mode of melodic minor, from which it is usually derived from.

When you see the Lydian augmented chord symbol while improvising, think about the third mode of the melodic minor scale.

G Δ #5 is part of the E melodic minor scale harmony. (third note of E melodic minor is G, from which note the third mode starts).

Example 2



Notes from bottom to top:

- Ab - root
- E – sharp fifth
- G – major 7th
- E – sharp fifth
- G - major seventh

This chord can be called the Ab Δ #5, though the chord does not have a major third to fulfill the major seventh part or a sharp fourth for the Lydian part. (page. 63 the jazz theory book).

Example 3



Notes from bottom to top:

- Eb - root
- G – major 3rd
- B – sharp fifth
- D – major 7th

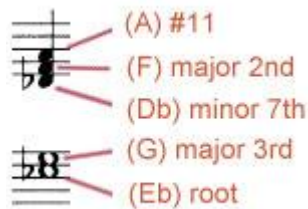
The notes form the chord Eb Δ #5.

Eb is the third note of C melodic minor. Eb Δ #5 is the part of the third mode of the C melodic minor.

4th mode: 7 #11 – Lydian dominant

As the name suggests, the chord has a sharp 4th (lydian) and the notes major 3rd and minor 7th (dominant).

This chord is usually derived from the 4th mode of the melodic minor.



- Major 3rd and minor 7th notes in the chord satisfies the 'dominant' part of the chord name.
- #11th note satisfies the Lydian part of the chord name.
- The major 2nd note is an additional note in the chord, which can be added when the Lydian dominant chord since it is a part of the 4th mode of the B \flat melodic minor scale. (see table below)

The notes in the figure form the **E \flat 7 #11 chord**, derived from the 4th mode of the B \flat melodic minor scale.

B \flat melodic minor scale: B \flat C D \flat E \flat F G A B \flat

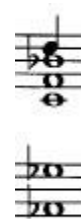
4th mode of B \flat melodic minor scale:

E \flat	F	G	A	B \flat	C	D \flat
Root	Maj 2	Maj 3	#4	Fifth	Maj 6	Min 7

The **chord symbol usage goes beyond** just finding the intervals mentioned in the name.

The chord symbol reminds one of the respective mode of the scale, giving one the freedom to add other notes in the mode from which the chord is derived.

Example 1 – almost a scale



Find the notes in the figure.

Bass clef : A \flat (root) and G \flat (minor 7th) notes an octave away

Treble clef : C (major 3rd), F(major 6th), B \flat (major 2nd), D (#11th)

These notes form the A \flat 7 #11 (part of the E \flat melodic minor harmony, whose fourth mode would start from A \flat)

- The #11th note satisfies the Lydian part of the chord.
- Major 3rd note with a minor 7th note is called the 'dominant'. Both those intervals are present in the chord
- Major 2nd note is present as with the first example
- Major 6th note is present in the chord

There are 6 notes in the chord. These notes form the notes of the 4th mode of the melodic minor scale. Add a fifth to the notes and you have the full scale of seven notes.

Here the chord symbol usage has gone to the extend of the chord symbol representing almost the scale from which it was derived.

Example 2



Notes from bottom to top:

- D \flat - root
- F – major 3rd
- B – minor 7th
- E \flat - major 2nd
- G – sharp 4th (#11)

The major 3rd and minor 7th forms a dominant seventh chord. Along with the #11 note, we get the **D \flat 7#11** chord. D \flat is the 4th note of the A \flat melodic minor, so D \flat 7#11 chord comes from the 4th mode of the A \flat melodic minor scale.

What about the **major 2nd note**? Below, we will see that the major 2nd interval is part of the 4th mode of the melodic minor scale and therefore can be used.

A \flat melodic minor: A \flat B \flat C \flat D \flat E \flat F G A \flat

4th mode of the A \flat Melodic minor scale:

D \flat	E \flat	F	G	A \flat	B \flat	C \flat
Root	Major 2	Major 3	Sharp 4	Fifth	Major 6	Minor 7

The Major 2nd interval is part of the 4th mode of melodic minor, as seen above, and can be used as an additional note in a chord meant for the 4th mode of melodic minor. So the E \flat note can be added to the **D \flat 7#11** chord when playing over the 4th mode of A \flat melodic minor scale.

5th mode of Melodic minor scale

When used in the jazz improvisation context, this mode takes a bit of explanation.

C melodic minor: C D E \flat F G A B C

5th mode of C melodic minor starts from G

G	A	B	C	D	E \flat	F
Root	Major 2	Major 3	4 th	Fifth	Minor 6	Minor 7

The Dominant seventh $\flat 13$ chord, but...

Root – major 3rd – fifth - minor 7th intervals gives us the dominant seventh chord. Adding the minor 6th ($\flat 13^{\text{th}}$ interval) gives us the 7 $\flat 13$ chord.

When G is the root, this gives us the G7 $\flat 13$ chord.

Clashing notes

The C and D notes may not sound right when played over the G7 $\flat 13$ chord, though it is subjective and such usages can be found in recordings.

For a better sound, it is suggested that we use the chords of the C melodic minor scale, with a slash G for the fifth mode of the C melodic minor.

The chords of each mode of the C melodic minor with a slash G are:

- CmM7/G (from the 1st mode)
- Dsus $\flat 9$ (from the 2nd mode)
- E $\flat \Delta\#5$ /G (from the 3rd mode)
- F7 $\#11$ /G (from the 4th mode)
- A \emptyset /G (from the 6th mode)
- B alt/G (from the 6th mode)

Popular Indian Raga

According to Mark Levine, the 5th mode is the least used mode in jazz improvisation.

But in Indian music, the Raga Charukesi which is very popular shares the same notes as the 5th mode of melodic minor. Learning the phrases of Charukeshi maybe useful in a jazz improvisation context too, when used as the 5th mode of the corresponding melodic minor.

6th mode – the half diminished seventh chord



Notes from bottom to top:

- A – root
- G – minor 7th
- C – minor 3rd
- E \flat - flat fifth

The minor 7th and minor 3rd intervals along with the flattened fifth note forms the **minor 7th flat five chord**.

The minor seventh flat five chord is also called the **half diminished seventh chord**.

Since the root is A, we have the A half diminished seventh chord.

The A half diminished chord can be written as:

- A^ø
- Am7b5

Example 1



Notes from bottom to top:

1. G – root
2. F – minor 7th
3. B^b - minor 3rd
4. D^b - fifth

The minor 7th and minor 3rd intervals along with the flattened fifth note with the root note G, forms **the G minor seventh flat five chord or the G half diminished seventh chord.**

Example 2



Notes from bottom to top:

- C – root
- B^b - minor 7th
- E^b - minor 3rd
- G^b - flat fifth

C half diminished seventh chord.

7th mode – altered dominant



Notes from bottom to top:

- A^b - root
- G^b - minor 7th
- C – major 3rd
- E - ^b13th (^b6th note)
- C^b - #9th

Major 3rd and minor 7th intervals along with the root A^b forms the A^b7 chord. The 6th has been altered to ^b6, and second has been altered to #9th giving us the **A^b7alt chord** which comes from the 7th mode of the A melodic minor scale.

A melodic minor: A – B - C - D - E - F#(G^b) - G#(A^b) - A

7th mode of A melodic minor:

A ^b	A	B	C	D	E	G ^b
Root	^b 9	#9	Maj 3	#4	^b 6	Min 7

The major 3rd and minor 7th intervals along with the root gives us the **dominant 7th chord.**

The alterations:

- 9th (2nd note) has been flattened and sharpened – altered both ways
- The 4th has been sharpened – the only alteration possible since flattening the 4th would give a major 3rd interval
- The 6th has been flattened – the only alteration possible, since sharpening a 6th would give us a minor 7th
- The scale does not have a fifth note

The root, major 3rd and minor 7th if changed, we would no more have the 7th dominant chord from the given root.

Other than the ‘core’ notes, all other intervals have been altered in all possible ways in the 7th mode of the melodic minor scale.

Hence the mode and the chord are referred to as the altered dominant.

Example 1



Notes from bottom to top:

- C – root
- E – major 3rd
- B \flat - minor 7th
- E \flat - #9th

- A \flat - b13th (b6th note)

C as the root along with the major 3rd and major 7th intervals gives the C dominant 7th chord (C7).

Two altered notes - #9th and b13th – added to the C7th chord gives us the C7alt chord (C altered dominant)

C altered dominant is the 7th mode of the C# melodic minor scale or D \flat melodic minor.

C# melodic minor scale: C# D# E F# G# A# B#(C) C#

D \flat melodic minor scale: D \flat E \flat F \flat G \flat A \flat B \flat C D \flat

C altered dominant scale (7th mode of the D \flat melodic minor):

C	D \flat	E \flat	F \flat	G \flat	A \flat	B \flat
Root	b9	#9	Maj 3	#4	b6	Min 7

The altered notes: D \flat (b9), E \flat (#9), G \flat (#4), A \flat (b13)

#9 and b13 have already been used in the example chord. b9 (D \flat) and #4 (G \flat) are the two other altered notes that can be added to the C7 chord when played over the 7th mode of D \flat (C#) melodic minor scale.

Example 2



Notes from bottom to top:

- D – root
- F# - major 3rd
- C – minor 7th
- F - #9th
- Bb - b13th
- Eb - b9th

The root D along with the major 3rd and minor 7th intervals forms the D7 chord.

All possible alterations except the #4th are there in the chord making it a **D7alt** or the **D altered dominant chord**, which is derived from the 7th mode of the D# (Eb) melodic minor scale.

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