

Ten Minute Tech

Scales & Arpeggios- An introduction

A scale is a group of notes that work together. We commonly play scales up and down to understand their shape and intervals (the "space" or "distance" between each of the notes) and to practice technique. However, they are in fact the building blocks of melodies and we will later use them to improvise and create music. When improvising you can think of the notes in the scale as words that you can swap around to make different sentences. On that note- most musicians have a deep appreciation for the fact that music is actually a language- there is a written form and spoken form and grammatical rules to follow in order to make sense. These rules can of course be broken by the experienced musician -much as most people do not obey correct grammar all the time (I'm sure there are many examples in these paragraphs!).

Arpeggios are the other building blocks of music. Lets have a look at how they are made. There are 7 notes in a scale so we number them 1,2,3,4,5,6,7. When talking theory we seldom count the 8th note as that is the same as the first, just an octave higher- So that is the start of the next scale!

A chord is 2 or more notes played at the same time. The most common chord that people think of is a Triad. The Triad is 3 notes of a scale- the 1st, 3rd & 5th.

An Arpeggio is simply made by playing these notes one after the other! We often play the 8ve (octave) to finish the arpeggio because it sounds nice. The 1st, 3rd & 5th steps of the C Major scale are highlighted in blue below. Then below that is the arpeggio on it's own. This gives us the C Major Arpeggio.

C Major Scale

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	(C)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(1)
3	0	2	3	0	2	0	1

C Major Arpeggio

C	E	G	C	G	E	C
1	3	5	(1)	5	3	1
3	2	0	1	0	2	3

Next we have the A minor scale and A minor Arpeggio. Most people find that this has a more Spanish or sadder sound. It's my favourite!

A Minor Scale

5

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	(A)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(1)
T							
A							
B	0	2	3	0	2	3	0

A Minor Arpeggio

7

A	C	E	A	E	C	A
1	3	5	1	5	3	1
T						
A						
B	0	3	2	2	2	3